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Alexander Pope: Selected Letters

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Alexander Pope: Selected Letters Alexander Pope
Pope's letters are fascinating documents, apart from his importance as a poet. Highly revealing of his remarkable character--ambitious, dangerous, trimming, ridiculous, intelligent, generous yet antagonistic--they also comprise a body of writing of extraordinary interest for an understanding of his times: its personalities, its plots, its tragedies and exiles, its loves, its scandals, the movement of its religious, political, and philosophical ideas, its sense of poetry, and its notions of poetic craft and genre. Moreover, Pope published a collection of his own letters: a selective and highly edited collection, in which (having retrieved the originals from some recipients) he revised their texts and on occasion claimed they had been written to other people. This came to light with the nineteenth-century discovery of transcripts of the original letters, made for Pope's correspondent Lord Caryll. Other letters preserved in the British Library's Homer MS are clearly ones the poet would not have chosen to keep, since he used their backs for drafts of his *Iliad* translation.

George Sherburn's scholarly five-volume *Collected Correspondence* (Oxford, 1956) is the necessary basis for any new edition. The collection presented here is in the first place a balanced and varied selection from Sherburn. Since 1956, however, many new letters have been discovered, and this volume includes most of them. Many are among Pope's best, though they have till now been scattered in learned journals**.**

This selection supplies an introduction, a commentary on each letter identifying allusions and quotations (with translations where necessary), and thematic and biographical indexes.

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