



The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Being The Second of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

Letters to and from Edward Blunt Esq. From 1714 to 1725.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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LETTERS

TO AND FROM

EDWARD BLOUNT, Esq.
The Hon. ROBERT DIGBY,
Dr. ATTERBURY,
Bishop of ROCHESTER,
Mr. GAY, and Others.

LETTERS

TO AND FROM

EDWARD BLOUNT, Esq.

From 1714 to 1725.

LETTER I.

Mr. POPE to EDWARD BLOUNT, Esq.

August 27, 1714.

WHatever studies on the one hand, or amusements on the other, it shall be my fortune to fall into, I shall be equally incapable of forgetting you in any of them. The task I undertook^a, though of weight enough in itself, has had a voluntary increase by the inlarging my design of the *Notes*^b; and the necessity of consulting a num-

^a The Translation of Homer's Iliad.

^b The notes on the Iliad were his own: Those on the

Odysssey were Dr. Broome's. —But they speak their respective Authors.

ber of books has carry'd me to Oxford: but, I fear, thro' my Lord Harcourt's and Dr. Clarke's means, I shall be more conversant with the pleasures and company of the place, than with the books and manuscripts of it.

I find still more reason to complain of the negligence of the Geographers in their Maps of old Greece, since I look'd upon two or three more noted names in the public libraries here. But with all the care I am capable of, I have some cause to fear the engraver will prejudice me in a few situations. I have been forced to write to him in so high a style, that, were my epistle intercepted, it would raise no small admiration in an ordinary man. There is scarce an order in it of less importance, than to remove such and such mountains, alter the course of such and such rivers, place a large city on such a coast, and raze another in another country. I have set bounds to the sea, and said to the land, Thus far shalt thou advance, and no further^c. In the mean time, I, who talk and command at this rate, am in danger of losing my horse, and stand in some fear of a country Justice^d. To disarm me indeed may be but prudential, con-

^c This relates to the Map of ancient Greece, laid down by our Author in his observations on the second Iliad. P.

^d Some of the Laws were, at this time, put in force against the Papists.

sidering

considering what Armies I have at present on foot, and in my service; a hundred thousand Grecians are no contemptible body; for all that I can tell, they may be as formidable as four thousand Priests; and they seem proper forces to send against those in Barcelona. That siege deserves as fine a poem as the Iliad, and the machining part of poetry would be the juster in it, as, they say, the inhabitants expect Angels from heaven to their assistance. May I venture to say who am a Papist, and say to you who are a Papist, that nothing is more astonishing to me, than that people so greatly warm'd with a sense of Liberty, should be capable of harbouring such weak superstition^e, and that so much bravery and so much folly can inhabit the same breasts?

I could not but take a trip to London on the death of the Queen, mov'd by the common curiosity of mankind, who leave their own business to be looking upon other mens. I thank God, that, as for myself, I am below all the accidents of state-changes, by my circumstances, and above them by my philosophy. Common charity of man to man, and universal good-will

^e Were not the old Romans as *warm'd* and as *weak*?
And could a man, inflamed
with the love of civil Liberty,

which he sees falling a prey
to Tyranny, imagine a cause
more worthy the interposi-
tion of Heaven?

to all, are the points I have most at heart ; and, I am sure, those are not to be broken for the sake of any governors, or government. I am willing to hope the best, and what I more wish than my own or any particular man's advancement, is, that this turn may put an end entirely to the divisions of Whig and Tory ; that the parties may love each other as well as I love them both, or at least hurt each other as little as I would either : and that our own people may live as quietly as we shall certainly let theirs ; that is to say, that want of power itself in us may not be a surer prevention of harm, than want of will in them. I am sure, if all Whigs and all Tories had the spirit of one Roman Catholic that I know, it would be well for all Roman Catholics ; and if all Roman Catholics had always had that spirit, it had been well for all others ; and we had never been charged with so wicked a spirit as that of Persecution.

I agree with you in my sentiments of the state of our nation since this change : I find myself just in the same situation of mind you describe as your own, heartily wishing the good, that is, the quiet of my Country, and hoping a total end of all the unhappy divisions of mankind by party-spirit, which at best is but the madness of many for the gain of a few.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R

LETTER II.

From Mr. BLOUNT.

IT is with a great deal of pleasure I see your letter, dear Sir, written in a style that shews you full of health, and in the midst of diversions: I think those two things necessary to a man who has such undertakings in hand as Yours. All lovers of Homer are indebted to you for taking so much pains about the situation of his Heroes' kingdoms; it will not only be of great use with regard to his works, but to all that read any of the Greek historians; who generally are ill understood thro' the difference of the maps as to the places they treat of, which makes one think one author contradicts another. You are going to set us right; and 'tis an advantage every body will gladly see you engross the glory of.

You can draw rules to be free and easy, from formal pedants; and teach men to be short and pertinent, from tedious commentators. However, I congratulate your happy deliverance from such authors, as you (with all your humanity) cannot wish alive again to converse with. Critics will quarrel with you, if you dare to please without their leave; and Zealots will shrug up their shoulders at a man, that pre-
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§ L E T T E R S T O A N D

tends to get to Heaven out of their form, dress, and diet. I would no more make a judgment of an author's genius from a damning critic, than I would of a man's religion from an unfavouring zealot.

I could take great delight in affording you the new glory of making a Barceloniad (if I may venture to coin such a word:) I fancy you would find a juster parallel than it seems at first sight; for the Trojans too had a great mixture of folly with their bravery; and I am out of countenance for them when I read the wise result of their council, where, after a warm debate between Antenor and Paris about restoring Helen, Priam sagely determines that they shall go to supper. And as for the Greeks, what can equal their superstition in sacrificing an innocent lady?

Tantum Relligio potuit, &c.

I have a good opinion of my politics, since they agree with a man who always thinks so justly as you. I wish it were in our power to persuade all the nation into as calm and steady a disposition of mind.

We have receiv'd the late melancholy news, with the usual ceremony, of condoling in one breath for the loss of a gracious Queen, and in another rejoicing for an illustrious King. My
views

FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 9

views carry me no farther, than to wish the peace and welfare of my Country; and my morals and politics teach me to leave all that to be adjusted by our representatives above, and to divine providence. It is much at one to you and me, who sit at the helm, provided they will permit us to sail quietly in the great ship. Ambition is a vice that is timely mortify'd in us poor Papists; we ought in recompence to cultivate as many virtues in ourselves as we can, that we may be truly great. Among my Ambitions, that of being a sincere friend is one of the chief: yet I will confess that I have a secret pleasure to have some of my descendants know, that their Ancestor was great with Mr. Pope.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R III.

From Mr. BLOUNT.

Nov. 11, 1715.

IT is an agreement of long date between you and me, that you should do with my letters just as you pleased, and answer them at your leisure; and that is as soon as I shall think you ought. I have so true a taste of the substantial
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part of your friendship, that I wave all ceremonials; and am sure to make you as many visits as I can, and leave you to return them whenever you please, assuring you they shall at all times be heartily welcome to me.

The many alarms we have from your parts, have no effect upon the genius that reigns in our country, which is happily turn'd to preserve peace and quiet, among us. What a dismal scene has there been opened in the North? what ruin have those unfortunate rash gentlemen drawn upon themselves and their miserable followers, and perchance upon many others too, who upon no account would be their followers? However, it may look ungenerous to reproach people in distress. I don't remember you and I ever used to trouble ourselves about politics, but when any matter happened to fall into our discourse, we us'd to condemn all undertakings that tended towards the disturbing the peace and quiet of our Country, as contrary to the notions we had of morality and religion, which oblige us on no pretence whatsoever to violate the laws of charity. How many lives have there been lost in hot blood, and how many more are there like to be taken off in cold? If the broils of the nation affect you, come down to me, and though we are farmers, you know Eumeus made his
friends

FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. II

friends welcome. You shall here worship the Echo at your ease; indeed we are forced to do so, because we can't hear the first report, and therefore are obliged to listen to the second; which, for security sake, I do not always believe neither.

'Tis a great many years since I fell in love with the character of Pomponius Atticus: I long'd to imitate him a little, and have contriv'd hitherto, to be, like him, engaged in no party, but to be a faithful friend to some in both: I find myself very well in this way hitherto, and live in a certain peace of mind by it, which, I am persuaded, brings a man more content than all the perquisites of wild ambition. I with pleasure join with you in wishing, nay I am not ashamed to say, in praying for the welfare temporal and eternal of all mankind. How much more affectionately then shall I do so for you, since I am in a most particular manner, and with all sincerity, Your, &c.

L E T T E R I V .

Jan. 21, 1715-16.

I Know of nothing that will be so interesting to you at present, as some circumstances of the last act of that eminent comic poet, and
our

our friend, Wycherley. He had often told me, as I doubt not he did all his acquaintance, that he would marry as soon as his life was despair'd of: Accordingly a few days before his death he underwent the ceremony; and join'd together those two sacraments which, wise men say, should be the last we receive; for, if you observe, Matrimony is placed after Extreme unction in our Catechism, as a kind of hint of the order of time in which they are to be taken. The old man then lay down, satisfy'd in the conscience of having by this one act paid his just debts, obliged a woman, who (he was told) had merit, and shewn an heroic resentment of the ill usage of his next heir. Some hundred pounds which he had with the Lady, discharged those debts; a jointure of four hundred a year made her a recompence; and the nephew he left to comfort himself as well as he could, with the miserable remains of a mortgaged estate. I saw our friend twice after this was done, less peevish in his sickness than he used to be in his health; neither much afraid of dying, nor (which in him had been more likely) much ashamed of marrying. The evening before he expired, he called his young wife to the bedside, and earnestly entreated her not to deny him one request, the last he should make. Upon her assurances of consenting to

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it, he told her, "My dear, it is only this, that
 "you will never marry an old man again." I
 cannot help remarking, that sickness, which of-
 ten destroys both wit and wisdom, yet seldom
 has power to remove that talent which we call
 humour: Mr. Wycherley shew'd his, even in
 this last compliment; tho' I think his request
 a little hard, for why should he bar her from
 doubling her Jointure on the same easy terms?

So trivial as these circumstances are, I should
 not be displeas'd myself to know such trifles,
 when they concern or characterise any eminent
 person. The wisest and wittiest of men are
 seldom wiser or wittier than others in these so-
 ber moments: At least, our friend ended much
 in the character he had lived in: and Horace's
 rule for a play, may as well be apply'd to him
 as a play-wright,

Servetur ad imum

Qualis ab inceptu processerit, et sibi constet.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R V.

Feb. 10, 1715-16.

I Am just return'd from the country, whither
 Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and pass'd a
 week in the forest. I need not tell you how
 much

much a man of his turn entertain'd me; but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition almost peculiar to him, which make it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness which generally succeeds all our pleasures. I have been just taking a solitary walk by moon-shine, full of reflections on the transitory nature of all human delights; and giving my thoughts a loose in the contemplation of those satisfactions which probably we may hereafter taste in the company of separate spirits, when we shall range the walks above, and perhaps gaze on this world at as vast a distance as we now do on those worlds. The pleasures we are to enjoy in that conversation must undoubtedly be of a nobler kind, and (not unlikely) may proceed from the discoveries each shall communicate to another, of God and of Nature; for the happiness of minds can surely be nothing but knowledge.

The highest gratification we receive here from company is Mirth, which at the best is but a fluttering unquiet motion, that beats about the breast for a few moments, and after leaves it void and empty. Keeping good company, even the best, is but a less shameful art of losing time. What we here call science and study, are little better: the greater number of arts to which we apply ourselves are mere groping
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in the dark; and even the search of our most important concerns in a future being, is but a needless, anxious, and uncertain haste to be knowing, sooner than we can, what without all this solicitude we shall know a little later. We are but curious impertinents in the case of futurity. 'Tis not our business to be guessing what the state of souls shall be, but to be doing what may make our own state happy; we cannot be knowing, but we can be virtuous.

If this be my notion of a great part of that high science, Divinity, you will be so civil as to imagine I lay no mighty stress upon the rest. Even of my darling poetry I really make no other use, than horses of the bells that gingle about their ears (tho' now and then they toss their heads as if they were proud of them) only to jog on, a little more merrily.

Your observations on the narrow conceptions of mankind in the point of Friendship, confirm me in what I was so fortunate as at my first knowledge of you to hope, and since so amply to experience. Let me take so much decent pride and dignity upon me, as to tell you, that but for opinions like these which I discover'd in your mind, I had never made the trial I have done; which has succeeded so much to mine, and, I believe, not less to your satisfaction: for, if I know you right, your pleasure is greater
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in obliging me, than I can feel on my part, till it falls in my power to oblige you.

Your remark, that the variety of opinions in politics or religion is often rather a gratification, than an objection, to people who have sense enough to consider the beautiful order of nature in her variations; makes me think you have not construed Joannes Secundus wrong, in the verse which precedes that which you quote: *Bene nota Fides*, as I take it, does no way signify the Roman Catholic Religion, tho' Secundus was of it. I think it was a generous thought, and one that flow'd from an exalted mind, That it was not improbable but God might be delighted with the various methods of worshipping him, which divided the whole world^a. I am pretty sure you and I should no more make good Inquisitors to the modern tyrants in faith, than we could have been quali-

^a This was an opinion taken up by the old Philosophers, as the last support of Paganism against Christianity: And the Missionaries, to both the Indies, tell us, it is the first answer modern barbarians give to the offer made them of the Gospel. But Christians might see that the notion is not only *improbable*, but impossible to be true, if the redemption of

mankind was purchased by the death of Jesus, which is the gospel idea of his Religion. Nor is there any need of this opinion to discredit persecution. For the iniquity of that practice does not arise from restraining what God permits or delights in, but from usurping a jurisdiction over conscience, which belongs only to his tribunal.

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FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 17

fied for Lictors to Procrustes, when he converted refractory members with the rack. In a word, I can only repeat to you what, I think, I have formerly said; that I as little fear God will damn a man who has Charity, as I hope that any Priest can save him without it.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

March 20, 1715-16.

I Find that a real concern is not only a hindrance to speaking, but to writing too: the more time we give ourselves to think over one's own or a friend's unhappiness, the more unable we grow to express the grief that proceeds from it. It is as natural to delay a letter, at such a season as this, as to retard a melancholy visit to a person one cannot relieve. One is ashamed in that circumstance, to pretend to entertain people with trifling, insignificant affectations of sorrow on the one hand, or unseasonable and forced gaieties on the other. 'Tis a kind of profanation of things sacred, to treat so solemn a matter as a generous voluntary suffering, with compliments, or heroic gallantries. Such a mind as your's has no need of being spirited up into honour, or like
c a weak

a weak woman, praised into an opinion of its own virtue. 'Tis enough to do and suffer what we ought; and men should know, that the noble power of suffering bravely is as far above that of enterprizing greatly, as an unblemish'd conscience and inflexible resolution are above an accidental flow of spirits, or a sudden tide of blood. If the whole religious business of mankind be included in resignation to our Maker, and charity to our fellow creatures, there are now some people who give us as good an opportunity of practising the one, as themselves have given an instance of the violation of the other. Whoever is really brave, has always this comfort when he is oppress'd, that he knows himself to be superior to those who injure him: for the greatest power on earth can no sooner do him that injury, but the brave man can make himself greater by forgiving it.

If it were generous to seek for alleviating consolations in a calamity of so much glory, one might say, that to be ruin'd thus in the gross, with a whole people, is but like perishing in the general conflagration, where nothing we can value is left behind us.

Methinks, the most heroic thing we are left capable of doing, is to endeavour to lighten each other's load, and (oppress'd as we are) to succour such as are yet more oppress'd. If there
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are too many who cannot be assisted but by what we cannot give, our money ; there are yet others who may be relieved by our counsel, by our countenance, and even by our chearfulness. The misfortunes of private families, the misunderstandings of people whom distresses make suspicious, the coldnesses of relations whom change of religion may disunite, or the necessities of half-ruin'd estates render unkind to each other ; these at least may be softened in some degree, by a general well-managed humanity among ourselves ; if all those who have your principles of belief, had also your sense and conduct. But indeed most of them have given lamentable proofs of the contrary ; and 'tis to be apprehended that they who want sense, are only religious through weakness, and good-natured thro' shame. These are narrow-minded creatures that never deal in essentials, their faith never looks beyond ceremonials, nor their charity beyond relations. As poor as I am, I would gladly relieve any distressed, conscientious French refugee at this instant : what must my concern then be, when I perceive so many anxieties now tearing those hearts, which I have desired a place in, and clouds of melancholy rising on those faces, which I have long look'd upon with affection ? I begin already to feel both what some apprehend, and what others

are yet too stupid to apprehend. I grieve with the old, for so many additional inconveniencies and chagrins, more than their small remain of life seem'd destined to undergo; and with the young, for so many of those gaieties and pleasures (the portion of youth) which they will by this means be deprived of. This brings into my mind one or other of those I love best, and among them the widow and fatherless, late of —. As I am certain no people living had an earlier and truer sense of others misfortunes, or a more generous resignation as to what might be their own, so I earnestly wish that whatever part they must bear, may be render'd as supportable to them, as it is in the power of any friend to make it.

But I know you have prevented me in this thought, as you always will in any thing that is good, or generous: I find by a letter of your lady's (which I have seen) that their ease and tranquillity is part of your care. I believe there's some fatality in it, that you should always, from time to time, be doing those particular things that make me enamour'd of you.

I write this from Windsor-Forest, of which I am come to take my last look. We here bid our neighbours adieu, much as those who go to be hang'd do their fellow-prisoners, who are condemn'd to follow them a few weeks after.

FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 21

ter. I parted from honest Mr. D* with tenderness; and from old Sir William Trumbull as from a venerable prophet, foretelling with lifted hands the miseries to come, from which he is just going to be remov'd himself.

Perhaps, now I have learnt so far as

Nos dulcia linquimus arva,

my next lesson may be

Nos Patriam fugimus.

Let that, and all else be as Heaven pleases! I have provided just enough to keep me a man of honour. I believe you and I shall never be ashamed of each other. I know I wish my Country well, and, if it undoes me, it shall not make me wish it otherwise.

L E T T E R VII.

From Mr. BLOUNT.

March 24, 1715-16.

YOUR letters give me a gleam of satisfaction, in the midst of a very dark and cloudy situation of thoughts, which it would be more than human to be exempt from at this time, when our homes must either be left, or

be made too narrow for us to turn in. Poetically speaking, I should lament the loss Windsor-forest and you sustain of each other, but that, methinks, one can't say you are parted, because you will live by and in one another, while verse is verse. This consideration hardens me in my opinion rather to congratulate you, since you have the pleasure of the prospect whenever you take it from your shelf, and at the same time the solid cash you sold it for, of which Virgil in his exile knew nothing in those days, and which will make every place easy to you. I for my part am not so happy; my *parva rura* are fasten'd to me, so that I can't exchange them, as you have, for more portable means of subsistence; and yet I hope to gather enough to make the *Patriam fugimus* supportable to me: 'tis what I am resolv'd on, with my *Penate*. If therefore you ask me, to whom you shall complain? I will exhort you to leave laziness and the elms of St. James's Park, and choose to join the other two proposals in one, safety and friendship (the least of which is a good motive for most things, as the other is for almost every thing) and go with me where War will not reach us, nor poultry Constables summon us to vestries.

The future epistle you flatter me with, will find me still here, and I think I may be here
a month

FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 23

a month longer. Whenever I go from hence, one of the few reasons to make me regret my home will be, that I shall not have the pleasure of saying to you,

Hic tamen hanc mecum poteris requiescere noctem,

which would have render'd this place more agreeable, than ever it else could be to me; for I protest, it is with the utmost sincerity that I assure you, I am entirely,

Dear Sir,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R VIII.

June 22, 1717.

IF a regard both to public and private affairs may plead a lawful excuse in behalf of a negligent correspondent, I have really a very good title to it. I cannot say whether 'tis a felicity or unhappiness, that I am obliged at this time to give my whole application to Homer; when without that employment, my thoughts must turn upon what is less agreeable, the violence, madness, and resentment of modern War-makers^a, which are likely to prove (to some

^a This was written in the year of the affair of Preston. P.

people at least) more fatal, than the same qualities in Achilles did to his unfortunate country-men.

Tho' the change of my scene of life, from Windsor-forest to the side of the Thames, be one of the grand *Æra's* of my days, and may be called a notable period in so inconsiderable a history; yet you can scarce imagine any hero passing from one stage of life to another, with so much tranquillity, so easy a transition, and so laudable a behaviour. I am become so truly a citizen of the world (according to Plato's expression) that I look with equal indifference on what I have left, and on what I have gained. The times and amusements past are not more like a dream to me, than those which are present; I lie in a refreshing kind of inaction, and have one comfort at least from obscurity, that the darkness helps me to sleep the better. I now and then reflect upon the enjoyment of my friends, whom, I fancy, I remember much as separate spirits do us, at tender intervals, neither interrupting their own employments, nor altogether careless of ours, but in general constantly wishing us well, and hoping to have us one day in their company.

To grow indifferent to the world is to grow philosophical, or religious (which soever of those turns we chance to take) and indeed the
world

FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 25

world is such a thing, as one that thinks pretty much, must either laugh at, or be angry with: but if we laugh at it, they say we are proud; and if we are angry with it, they say we are ill-natur'd. So the most politic way is to seem always better pleas'd than one can be, greater admirers, greater lovers, and in short greater fools, than we really are: so shall we live comfortably with our families, quietly with our neighbours, favoured by our masters, and happy with our mistresses. I have filled my paper, and so adieu.

L E T T E R IX.

Sept. 8, 1717.

I Think your leaving England was like a good man's leaving the world, with the blessed conscience of having acted well in it; and I hope you have received your reward, in being happy where you are. I believe, in the religious country you inhabit, you'll be better pleased to find I consider you in this light, than if I compared you to those Greeks and Romans, whose constancy in suffering pain, and whose resolution in pursuit of a generous end, you would rather imitate than boast of.

But I had a melancholy hint the other day, as if you were yet a martyr to the fatigue your
virtue

virtue made you undergo on this side the water. I beg, if your health be restored to you, not to deny me the joy of knowing it. Your endeavours of service and good advice to the poor papists, put me in mind of Noah's preaching forty years to those folks that were to be drowned at last. At the worst I heartily wish your Ark may find an Ararat, and the wife and family (the hopes of the good patriarch) land safely after the deluge, upon the shore of Tottenes.

If I durst mix prophane with sacred history, I would chear you with the old tale of Brutus the wandering Trojan, who found on that very coast the happy end of his peregrinations and adventures.

I have very lately read Jeffery of Monmouth (to whom your Cornwall is not a little beholden) in the translation of a clergyman in my neighbourhood. The poor man is highly concerned to vindicate Jeffery's veracity as an historian; and told me he was perfectly astonished, we of the Roman communion could doubt of the legends of his Giants, while we believe those of our Saints. I am forced to make a fair composition with him; and, by crediting some of the wonders of Corinaeus and Gogmagog, have brought him so far already, that he speaks respectfully of St. Christopher's carrying Christ,
and

and the refuscitation of St. Nicholas Tolentine's chicken. Thus we proceed apace in converting each other from all manner of infidelity.

Ajax and Hector are no more to be compared to Corinæus and Arthur, than the Guelphs and Ghibellines are to the Mohocks of ever dreadful memory. This amazing writer has made me lay aside Homer for a week, and, when I take him up again, I shall be very well prepar'd to translate, with belief and reverence, the speech of Achilles's Horse.

You'll excuse all this trifling, or any thing else which prevents a sheet full of compliment: and believe there is nothing more true (even more true than any thing in Jeffery is false) than that I have a constant affection for you, and am, &c.

P. S. I know you will take part in rejoycing for the victory of Prince Eugene over the Turks, in the zeal you bear to the Christian interest, tho' your Cousin of Oxford (with whom I dined yesterday) says, there is no other difference in the Christians beating the Turks, or the Turks beating the Christians, than whether the Emperor shall first declare war against Spain, or Spain declare it against the Emperor.

L E T T E R X.

Nov. 27, 1717.

THE question you proposed to me is what at present I am the most unfit man in the world to answer, by my loss of one of the best of Fathers.

He had lived in such a course of Temperance as was enough to make the longest life agreeable to him, and in such a course of Piety as sufficed to make the most sudden death so also. Sudden indeed it was: however, I heartily beg of God to give me such an one, provided I can lead such a life. I leave him to the mercy of God, and to the piety of a religion that extends beyond the grave: *Si qua est ea cura, &c.*

He has left me to the ticklish management of so narrow a fortune, that any one false step would be fatal. My mother is in that dispirited state of resignation, which is the effect of long life, and the loss of what is dear to us. We are really each of us in want of a friend, of such an humane turn as yourself, to make almost any thing desirable to us. I feel your absence more than ever, at the same time I can less express my regards to you than ever; and shall make this, which is the most sincere letter

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FROM EDW. BLOUNT, Esq. 29

ter I ever writ to you, the shortest and faintest perhaps of any you have received. 'Tis enough if you reflect, that barely to remember any person when one's mind is taken up with a sensible sorrow, is a great degree of friendship. I can say no more but that I love you, and all that are yours; and that I wish it may be very long before any of yours shall feel for you what I now feel for my father. Adieu.

L E T T E R XI.

Rentcomb in Gloucestershire, Oct. 3, 1721.

YOUR kind letter has overtaken me here, for I have been in and about this country ever since your departure. I am well pleas'd to date this from a place so well known to Mrs. Blount, where I write as if I were dictated to by her ancestors, whose faces are all upon me. I fear none so much as Sir Christopher Guise, who, being in his shirt, seems as ready to combat me, as her own Sir John was to demolish Duke Lancaſtere. I dare say your lady will recollect his figure. I look'd upon the mansion, walls, and terraces; the plantations, and slopes, which nature has made to command a variety of valleys and rising woods; with a veneration
mix'd

mix'd with a pleasure, that represented her to me in those puerile amusements, which engaged her so many years ago in this place. I fancied I saw her sober over a sampler, or gay over a jointed baby. I dare say she did one thing more, even in those early times; "remember'd her Creator in the days of her youth."

You describe so well your hermitical state of life, than none of the ancient anchorites could go beyond you, for a cave in a rock, with a fine spring, or any of the accommodations that besit a solitary. Only I don't remember to have read, that any of those venerable and holy personages took with them a lady, and begat sons and daughters. You must modestly be content to be accounted a patriarch. But were you a little younger, I should rather rank you with Sir Amadis, and his fellows. If Piety be so romantic, I shall turn hermit in good earnest; for, I see, one may go so far as to be poetical, and hope to save one's soul at the same time. I really wish myself something more, that is, a prophet; for I wish I were, as Habakkuk, to be taken by the hair of his head, and visit Daniel in his den. You are very obliging in saying, I have now a whole family upon my hands to whom to discharge the part of a friend; I assure you, I like them all so well, that I will never
quit

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quit my hereditary right to them; you have made me yours, and consequently them mine. I still see them walking on my green at Twickenham, and gratefully remember, not only their green-gowns, but the instructions they gave me how to slide down and trip up the steepest slopes of my mount.

Pray think of me sometimes, as I shall often of you; and know me for what I am, that is,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XII.

Oct. 21, 1721.

YOUR very kind and obliging manner of enquiring after me, among the first concerns of life, at your resuscitation, should have been sooner answer'd and acknowledged. I sincerely rejoice at your recovery from an illness which gave me less pain than it did you, only from my ignorance of it. I should have else been seriously and deeply afflicted, in the thought of your danger by a fever. I think it a fine and a natural thought, which I lately read in a letter of Montaigne's publish'd by P. Coste, giving an account of the last words of an intimate friend of his: "Adieu, my friend!
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“ the pain I feel will soon be over ; but I grieve
 “ for that you are to feel, which is to last you
 “ for life.”

I join with your family in giving God thanks
 for lending us a worthy man somewhat longer.
 The comforts you receive from their attend-
 ance, put me in mind of what old Fletcher of
 Saltoune said one day to me. “ Alas, I have
 “ nothing to do but to die ; I am a poor indivi-
 “ dual ; no creature to wish, or to fear, for
 “ my life or death : ’Tis the only reason I have
 “ to repent being a single man ; now I grow
 “ old, I am like a tree without a prop, and
 “ without young trees to grow round me, for
 “ company and defence.”

I hope the gout will soon go after the fever,
 and all evil things remove far from you. But
 pray tell me, when will you move towards us ?
 If you had an interval to get hither, I care not
 what fixes you afterwards except the gout.
 Pray come, and never stir from us again. Do
 away your dirty acres, cast them to dirty people,
 such as in the Scripture-phrase possess the land.
 Shake off your earth like the noble animal in
 Milton,

*The tawny lyon, pawing to get free
 His hinder parts, he springs as broke from bonds,
 And rampant shakes his brinded main : the ounce,*
The

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*The lizard, and the tiger, as the mole
Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
In hillocks!*

But, I believe, Milton never thought these fine verses of his should be apply'd to a man selling a parcel of dirty acres; tho' in the main, I think, it may have some resemblance. For, God knows! this little space of ground nourishes, buries, and confines us, as that of Eden did those creatures, till we can shake it loose, at least in our affections and desires.

Believe, dear Sir, I truly love and value you: let Mrs. Blount know that she is in the list of my *Memento, Domine, famulorum famularumque's*, &c. My poor mother is far from well, declining; and I am watching over her, as we watch an expiring taper, that even when it looks brightest, wastes fastest. I am (as you will see from the whole air of this letter) not in the gayest nor easiest humour, but always with sincerity,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R XIII.

June 27, 1723.

YOU may truly do me the justice to think no man is more your sincere well-wisher than myself, or more the sincere well-wisher of
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my whole family; with all which, I cannot deny but I have a mixture of envy to you all, for loving one another so well; and for enjoying the sweets of that life, which can only be tasted by people of good-will.

*They from all shades the darkness can exclude,
And from a desert banish solitude.*

Torbay is a paradise, and a storm is but an amusement to such people. If you drink Tea upon a promontory that over-hangs the sea, it is preferable to an Assembly: and the whistling of the wind better music to contented and loving minds, than the Opera to the spleenful, ambitious, diseas'd, distast'd, and distracted souls which this world affords; nay, this world affords no other. Happy they, who are banish'd from us! but happier they, who can banish themselves; or more properly banish the world from them!

Alas! I live at Twickenham!

I take that period to be very sublime, and to include more than a hundred sentences that might be writ to express distraction, hurry, multiplication of nothings, and all the fatiguing perpetual business of having no business to do. You'll wonder I reckon translating the Odysey as nothing. But whenever I think seriously (and of late I have met with so many occasions
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of thinking seriously, that I begin never to think otherwise) I cannot but think these things very idle; as idle as if a beast of burden should go on gingling his bells, without bearing any thing valuable about him, or ever serving his master.

*Life's vain Amusements, amidst which we dwell;
Not weigh'd, or understood, by the grim God of
Hell!*

said a heathen poet; as he is translated by a christian Bishop, who has, first by his exhortations, and since by his example, taught me to think as becomes a reasonable creature — but he is gone!

I remember I promis'd to write to you, as soon as I should hear you were got home. You must look on this as the first day I've been myself, and pass over the mad interval un-imputed to me. How punctual a correspondent I shall hence-forward be able or not able to be, God knows: but he knows, I shall ever be a punctual and grateful friend; and all the good wishes of such an one will ever attend you.

L E T T E R X I V .

Twick'nam, June 2, 1725.

YOU shew yourself a just man and a friend in those guesses and suppositions you make at the possible reasons of my silence; every one of which is a true one. As to forgetfulness of you or yours, I assure you, the promiscuous conversations of the town serve only to put me in mind of better, and more quiet, to be had in a corner of the world (undisturb'd, innocent, serene, and sensible) with such as you. Let no access of any distrust make you think of me differently in a cloudy day from what you do in the most sunshiny weather. Let the young ladies be assured I make nothing new in my gardens without wishing to see the print of their fairy steps in every part of them. I have put the last hand to my works of this kind, in happily finishing the subterraneous way and grotto: I there found a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual rill, that echoes thro' the cavern day and night. From the river Thames, you see thro' my arch up a walk of the wilderness, to a kind of open Temple, wholly compos'd of shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple you look down thro' a sloping arcade of trees,
and

and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as thro' a perspective glass. When you shut the doors of this grotto, it becomes on the instant, from a luminous room, a *Camera obscura*; on the walls of which all the objects of the river, hills, woods, and boats, are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations: and when you have a mind to light it up, it affords you a very different scene; it is finished with shells interspersed with pieces of looking-glass in angular forms; and in the ceiling is a star of the same material, at which when a lamp (of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster) is hung in the middle, a thousand pointed rays glitter, and are reflected over the place. There are connected to this grotto by a narrower passage two porches, one towards the river of smooth stones full of light, and open; the other toward the Garden shadow'd with trees, rough with shells, flints, and iron-ore. The bottom is paved with simple pebble, as is also the adjoining walk up the wilderness to the temple, in the natural taste, agreeing not ill with the little dripping murmur, and the aquatic idea of the whole place. It wants nothing to complete it but a good statue with an inscription, like that beautiful antique one which you know I am so fond of,

more ashamed to tell a lye, or to make an excuse, which is worse than a lye (for being built upon some probable circumstance, it makes use of a degree of truth to falsify with, and is a lye guarded.) Your letter has been in my pocket in constant wearing, till that, and the pocket, and the suit, are worn out; by which means I have read it forty times, and I find by so doing that I have not enough considered and reflected upon many others you have obliged me with; for true friendship, as they say of good writing, will bear reviewing a thousand times, and still discover new beauties.

I have had a fever, a short one, but a violent: I am now well; so it shall take up ~~no~~ more of this paper.

I begin now to expect you in town to make the winter to come more tolerable to us both. The summer is a kind of heaven, when we wander in a paradisaical scene among groves and gardens; but at this season, we are, like our poor first parents, turn'd out of that agreeable though solitary life, and forced to look about for more people to help to bear our labours, to get into warmer houses, and live together in cities.

I hope you are long since perfectly restor'd, and risen from your gout, happy in the delights of a contented family, smiling at storms, laugh-
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ing at greatness, merry over a christmas-fire, and exercising all the functions of an old Patriarch in charity and hospitality. I will not tell Mrs. B* what I think she is doing; for I conclude it is her opinion, that he only ought to know it for whom it is done; and she will allow herself to be far enough advanced above a fine lady, not to desire to shine before men.

Your daughters perhaps may have some other thoughts, which even their mother must excuse them for, because she is a mother. I will not however suppose those thoughts get the better of their devotions, but rather excite them and assist the warmth of them; while their prayer may be, that they may raise up and breed as irreproachable a young family as their parents have done. In a word, I fancy you all well, easy, and happy, just as I wish you; and next to that, I wish you all with me.

Next to God, is a good Man: next in dignity, and next in value. *Minuisti eum paullo minus ab angelis.* If therefore I wish well to the good and the deserving, and desire they only should be my companions and correspondents, I must very soon and very much think of you. I want your company, and your example. Pray make haste to town, so as not again to leave
us :

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us : discharge the load of earth that lies on you, like one of the mountains under which, the poets say, the giants (the men of the earth) are whelmed : leave earth, to the sons of the earth, your conversation is in heaven. Which that it may be accomplish'd in us all, is the prayer of him who maketh this short Sermon; value (to you) three-pence. Adieu.

Mr. Blount died in London the following Year, 1726. P.

LETTERS