



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

Letter IV. On the finishing his translation of the Iliad. His situation at Twickenham, Planting, The death of a friend.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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in rags amongst you, we can never believe: our uninform'd minds represent her so noble to us, that we necessarily annex splendor to her: and we could as soon imagine the order of things inverted, and that there is no man in the moon, as believe the contrary. I can't forbear telling you we indeed read the spoils of Rapine as boys do the English rogue, and hug ourselves full as much over it; yet our roses are not without thorns. Pray give me the pleasure of hearing (when you are at leisure) how soon I may expect to see the next volume of Homer.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R I V.

May 1, 1720.

YOU'll think me very full of myself, when after long silence (which however, to say truth, has rather been employed to contemplate of you, than to forget you) I begin to talk of my own works. I find it is in the finishing a book, as in concluding a session of Parliament, one always thinks it will be very soon, and finds it very late. There are many unlook'd-for incidents to retard the clearing any public account, and so I see it is in mine. I have plagued myself, like great ministers, with undertaking too much for one man; and with a desire

of doing more than was expected from me, have done less than I ought.

For having design'd four very laborious and uncommon sort of Indexes to Homer, I'm forc'd, for want of time, to publish two only; the design of which you will own to be pretty, tho' far from being fully executed. I've also been obliged to leave unfinish'd in my desk the heads of two Essays, one on the Theology and Morality of Homer, and another on the Oratory of Homer and Virgil. So they must wait for future editions, or perish: and (one way or other, no great matter which) *dabit Deus his quoque finem*. I think of you every day, I assure you, even without such good memorials of you as your sisters, with whom I sometimes talk of you, and find it one of the most agreeable of all subjects to them. My Lord Digby must be perpetually remember'd by all who ever knew him, or knew his children. There needs no more than an acquaintance with your family, to make all elder sons wish they had fathers to their lives end.

I can't touch upon the subject of filial love, without putting you in mind of an old woman, who has a sincere, hearty, old-fashion'd respect for you, and constantly blames her son for not having writ to you oftener to tell you so.

I very much wish (but what signifies my wishing? my lady Scudamore wishes, your sisters wish) that you were with us, to compare the beautiful contrast this season affords us, of the town and the country. No ideas you could form in the winter can make you imagine what Twickenham is (and what your friend Mr. Johnson of Twickenham is) in this warmer season. Our river glitters beneath an unclouded sun, at the same time that its banks retain the verdure of showers: our gardens are offering their first nosegays; our trees, like new acquaintance brought happily together, are stretching their arms to meet each other, and growing nearer and nearer every hour; the birds are paying their thanksgiving songs for the new habitations I have made them; my building rises high enough to attract the eye and curiosity of the passenger from the river, where, upon beholding a mixture of beauty and ruin, he enquires what house is falling, or what church is rising? So little taste have our common Tritons of Vitruvius; whatever delight the poetical gods of the river may take, in reflecting on their streams, my Tuscan Porticos, or Ionic Pillars.

But to (descend from all this pomp of style) the best account of what I am building, is, that
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FROM MR. DIGBY. 51

It will afford me a few pleasant rooms for such a friend as yourself, or a cool situation for an hour or two for Lady Scudamore, when she will do me the honour (at this public house on the road) to drink her own cyder.

The moment I am writing this, I am surprized with the account of the death of a friend of mine; which makes all I have here been talking of, a mere jest! Building, gardens, writings, pleasures, works, of whatever stuff man can raise! none of them (God knows) capable of advantaging a creature that is mortal, or of satisfying a soul that is immortal! Dear Sir,
I am, &c.

L E T T E R V.

From Mr. DIGBY.

May 21, 1720.

YOUR letter, which I had two posts ago, was very medicinal to me; and I heartily thank you for the relief it gave me. I was sick of the thoughts of my not having in all this time given you any testimony of the affection I owe you, and which I as constantly indeed feel as I think of you. This indeed was a troublesome ill to me, till, after reading your letter,
E 2 I found