



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

VII. From the same. On a manuscript of Huetius, and the epitaph on Mr. Harcourt.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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LETTER VII.

From the Bishop of ROCHESTER.

March 26, 1721.

YOU are not yourself gladder you are well, than I am; especially since I can please myself with the thought that when you had lost your health elsewhere, you recovered it here. May these lodgings never treat you worse, nor you at any time have less reason to be fond of them!

I thank you for the sight of your^a Verses, and with the freedom of an honest, tho' perhaps injudicious friend, must tell you, that tho' I could like some of them, if they were any body's else but yours, yet as they are yours and to be own'd as such, I can scarce like any of them. Not but that the four first lines are good, especially the second couplet; and might, if followed by four others as good, give reputation to a writer of a less established fame: but from you I expect something of a more perfect kind, and which the oftener it is read, the more it will be admired. When you barely exceed other writers, you fall much beneath yourself: 'tis your misfortune now to write

^a Epitaph on Mr. Harcourt. P.

without a rival, and to be tempted by that means to be more careless, than you would otherwise be in your composures.

Thus much I could not forbear saying, tho' I have a motion of consequence in the House of Lords to day, and must prepare for it. I am even with you for your ill paper; for I write upon worse, having no other at hand. I wish you the continuance of your health most heartily; and am ever

Yours, &c.

I have sent Dr. Arbuthnot^b the Latin MS. which I could not find when you left me; and I am so angry at the writer for his design, and his manner of executing it, that I could hardly forbear sending him a line of Virgil along with it. The chief Reasoner of that philosophic farce is a *Gallo-Ligur*, as he is call'd—what that means in English or French, I can't say—but all he says, is in so loose and slippery and

^b Of Huetius, bishop of Avranches, left after his death. He was a mean reasoner: he once attempted it in a vast collection of fanciful and extravagant conjectures, which he called a *Demonstration*; mixed up with much reading, which his friends called learning, and

delivered (by the allowance of all) in good latin. This not being received for what he would give it, he composed a treatise of *the weakness of the human understanding*: a poor system of scepticism; indeed little other than an abstract from *Sextus Empiricus*.

trickish

trickish a way of reasoning, that I could not forbear applying the passage of Virgil to him,

*Vane Ligur, frustra que animis elate superbis!
Nequicquam patrias tentasti lubricus artes —*

To be serious, I hate to see a book gravely written, and in all the forms of argumentation, which proves nothing, and which says nothing; and endeavours only to put us into a way of distrusting our own faculties, and doubting whether the marks of truth and falshood can in any case be distinguished from each other. Could that blessed point be made out (as it is a contradiction in terms to say it can) we should then be in the most uncomfortable and wretched state in the world; and I would in that case be glad to exchange my Reason, with a dog for his Instinct, to-morrow.

L E T T E R VIII.

L. Chancellor HARCOURT to Mr. POPE.

Decemb. 6, 1722.

I Cannot but suspect myself of being very unreasonable in begging you once more to review the inclos'd. Your friendship draws this trouble on you. I may freely own to you, that