



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

VIII. From the Lord Chancellor Harcourt, on the epitaph of his son.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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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

my tenderneſs makes me exceeding hard to be ſatisfied with any thing which can be ſaid on ſuch an unhappy ſubject. I cauſ'd the Latin Epitaph to be as often alter'd before I could approve it.

When once your Epitaph is ſet up, there can be no alteration of it, it will remain a perpetual monument of your friendſhip, and, I aſſure myſelf, you will ſo ſettle it, that it ſhall be worthy of you. I doubt whether the word, *deny'd*, in the third line, will juſtly admit of that conſtruction which it ought to bear (*viz.*) renounced, deſerted, &c. *deny'd* is capable, in my opinion, of having an ill ſenſe put upon it, as too great uneaſineſs, or more good-nature, than a wiſe man ought to have. I very well remember you told me, you could ſcarce mend thoſe two lines, and therefore I can ſcarce expect your forgiveneſs for my deſiring you to re-consider them.

Harcourt ſtands dumb, and Pope is forc'd to ſpeak.

I can't perfectly, at leaſt without further diſcourſing you, reconcile myſelf to the firſt part of that line; and, the word *forc'd* (which was my own, and, I perſuade myſelf, for that reaſon only ſubmitted to by you) ſeems to carry too doubtful a conſtruction for an Epitaph, which, as I apprehend, ought as eaſily to be
underſtood

FROM DR. ATTERBURY. 101

understood as read. I shall acknowledge it as a very particular favour, if at your best leisure you will peruse the inclosed and vary it, if you think it capable of being amended, and let me see you any morning next week.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R IX.

The Bishop of ROCHESTER to Mr. POPE.

Sept. 27, 1721.

I Am now confin'd to my bed-chamber, and to the matted room, wherein I am writing, seldom venturing to be carried down even into the parlour to dinner unless when company to whom I cannot excuse myself, comes, which I am not ill pleas'd to find is now very seldom. This is my case in the sunny part of the year: what must I expect, when

inversum contristat Aquarius annum?

“ If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” Excuse me for employing a sentence of Scripture on this occasion; I apply it very seriously. One thing relieves me a little under the ill prospect I have of spending my time at the Deanry this winter; that I shall have the opportunity of seeing you oftener; tho', I am afraid, you will have little