



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

IX. From the Bishop of Rochester. On his ill health. Waller's verses on sickness. Mr. Prior's funeral.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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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

pleasure in seeing me there. So much for my ill state of health, which I had not touch'd on, had not your friendly letter been so full of it. One civil thing, that you say in it, made me think you had been reading Mr. Waller; and possess'd of that image at the end of his copy, *à la malade*, had you not bestow'd it on one who has no right to the least part of the character. If you have not read the verses lately, I am sure you remember them because you forget nothing.

With such a grace you entertain,

And look with such contempt on pain, &c.

I mention them not on the account of that couplet, but one that follows; which ends with the very same rhymes and words (*appear* and *clear*) that the couplet but one after that does — and therefore in my Waller there is a various reading of the first of these couplets; for there it runs thus,

So lightnings in a stormy air

Scorch more, than when the sky is fair.

You will say that I am not very much in pain, nor very busy, when I can relish these amusements, and you will say true: for at present I am in both these respects very easy.

I had not strength enough to attend Mr. Prior to his grave, else I would have done it, to have shew'd his friends that I had forgot and forgiven

forgiven what he wrote on me^a. He is buried, as he desired, at the feet of Spencer, and I will take care to make good in every respect what I said to him when living; particularly as to the Triplet he wrote for his own Epitaph^b; which while we were in good terms, I promis'd him should never appear on his tomb while I was Dean of Westminster.

I am pleas'd to find you have so much pleasure, and (which is the foundation of it) so much health at Lord Bathurst's: may both continue till I see you! may my Lord have as much satisfaction in building the house in the wood, and using it when built, as you have in designing it! I cannot send a wish after him that means him more happiness, and yet, I am sure, I wish him as much as he wishes himself.

I am, &c.

^a Meek Francis lies here, Friend. Without stop or stay,
As you value your peace, make the best of your way.
Tho' at present arrested by Death's caitiff paw,
If he stirs, he may still have recourse to the law.
And in the King's bench should a verdict be found
That by liv'ry and seisin his grave is his ground,
He will claim to himself what is strictly his due,
And an action of trespass will straightway ensue,
That you, without right, on his Premises tread,
On a simple surmise that the owner is dead.

^b To me 'tis giv'n to dye, to you 'tis giv'n
To live: alas! one moment sets us ev'n.
Mark how impartial is the will of Heav'n.