



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

XL. A consultation about designing a garden: Various opinions, and some general reflections.

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LETTER XL.

To * * * *^a.

Sept. 13.

I Believe you are by this time immers'd in your vast Wood; and one may address to you as to a very abstracted person, like Alexander Selkirk, or the^b Self-taught Philosopher. I should be very curious to know what sort of contemplations employ you. I remember the latter of those I mention'd, gave himself up to a devout exercise of making his head giddy with various circumrotations, to imitate the motions of the celestial bodies. I don't think it at all impossible that Mr. L* may be far advanced in that exercise, by frequent turns towards the several aspects of the heavens, to which you may have been pleas'd to direct him in search of prospects and new avenues. He will be tractable in time, as birds are tamed by being whirl'd about; and doubtless come not to despise the meanest shrubs or coppice-wood, tho' naturally he seems more inclined to admire God, in his greater works, the tall timber: for, as Virgil has it, *Non omnes arbusta juvant, humilesque myricæ*. I wish myself with you both,

^a Lord Bathurst.^b The title of an Arabic| Treatise of the Life of Hai
| Ebn Yocktan.

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whether

whether you are in peace or at war, in violent argumentation or smooth consent, over Gazettes in the morning, or over Plans in the evening. In that last article, I am of opinion, your Lordship has a loss of me ; for generally after the debate of a whole day, we acquiesced at night in the best conclusion of which human Reason seems capable in all great matters, to fall fast asleep ! And so we ended, unless immediate Revelation (which ever must overcome human reason) suggested some new lights to us, by a Vision in bed. But laying aside Theory, I am told, you are going directly to Practice. Alas, what a Fall will that be ? A new Building is like a new Church ; when once it is set up, you must maintain it in all the forms, and with all the inconveniencies ; then cease the pleasant luminous days of inspiration, and there is an end of miracles at once !

That this Letter may be all of a piece, I'll fill the rest with an account of a consultation lately held in my neighbourhood about designing a princely garden. Several Critics were of several opinions : One declar'd he would not have too much Art in it ; for my notion (said he) of gardening is, that it is only sweeping Nature^a : Another told them that Gravel walks were not of a good taste, for all the finest

^a An expression of Sir T. H.

abroad

abroad were of loose sand : A third advis'd peremptorily there should not be one Lyme-tree in the whole plantation : A fourth made the same exclusive clause extend to Horse-chesnuts, which he affirmed not to be Trees, but Weeds : Dutch Elms were condemn'd by a fifth ; and thus about half the Trees were proscribed, contrary to the Paradise of God's own planting, which is expressly said to be planted with *all trees*. There were some who could not bear Ever-greens, and call'd them Never-greens ; some, who were angry at them only when cut into shapes, and gave the modern Gardeners the name of Ever-green Taylors ; some, who had no dislike to Cones and Cubes, but would have them cut in Forest-trees ; and some who were in a passion against any thing in shape, even against clipt-hedges, which they call'd green walls. These (my Lord) are our Men of Taste, who pretend to prove it by tasting little or nothing. Sure such a Taste is like such a stomach, not a good one, but a weak one. We have the same sort of Critics in poetry ; one is fond of nothing but Heroics, another cannot relish Tragedies, another hates Pastorals, all little Wits delight in Epigrams. Will you give me leave to add, there are the same in Divinity ; where many leading Critics are for rooting up more than they plant, and would leave

the Lord's Vineyard either very thinly furnish'd, or very oddly trimm'd.

I have lately been with my Lord * who is a zealous, yet a charitable Planter, and has so bad a Taste, as to like all that is good. He has a disposition to wait on you in his way to the Bath, and, if he can go and return to London in eight or ten days, I am not without a hope of seeing your Lordship with the delight I always see you. Every where I think of you, and every where I wish for you.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R X L I .

To Mr. C——.

Sept. 2, 1732.

I Affure you I am glad of your letter, and have long wanted nothing but the permission you now give me, to be plain and unreserved upon this head. I wrote to you concerning it long since; but a friend of yours and mine was of opinion, it was taking too much upon me, and more than I could be entitled to by the mere merit of long acquaintance, and good will. I have not a thing in my heart relating to any friend, which I would not, in my own nature,