

Poplar Forest August 11th 1819

The mail which brought me your letter of the 7th my dear mother, brought one from Col. Nicholas to Grand-papa, informing him of his misfortunes, & that he had placed his estate in the hands of trustees to be sold for the payment of his debts; if it brought anything like its value, there would be enough left after all payments for the genteel support of his family. These are dreadful times to be forced to see, but we must hope for the best - I was so much shocked at hearing of this sudden failure that I cannot recover my spirits; God grant, we may be enabled to weather the storm, for ours is but a shattered bark to boast the waves which have overwhelmed so many goodly ships in our view; however the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, and perhaps after struggling all our lives with debt & difficulty, we may be reserved as another proof of the capriciousness of fortune, who sometimes takes pleasure in elevating the long-depreived in the midst of the fall and the ruin of her former favorite.

Grand-papa is suffering a great deal just now with an attack of the rheumatism, ^{only} the most severe he has ever had; his ~~weakened~~ knees are so much swelled that he walks with difficulty and his hands are very much disabled; I ~~am~~ ^{now} hoped it will pass away without further increase, for it is not in such weather as this that a person can suffer long with rheumatic affections. After having rain enough to revive the corn we are beginning to be very anxious no more, and if it does not soon come, we shall at last have only experienced a reprieve, which by giving false hopes will render disappointment more severe. Mr Burwell has been with us the last two days, he is the most striking exemplification of the old saying "out of debt

out of danger" that I have ever known. his manners preserve their serenity & his countenance its tranquility in the midst of the universal anxiety - verily day has no horrors for him, the thunders of the bark roll over his head, and leave him as they found him undismayed. if his corn crop fails he has but to replace it with his wheat, and to live with his negroes & perhaps as they do, on the products of his farm, regardless of foreign luxuries; and of the money which procures them, & which as he owes to no man he can very well do without, himself.

I think the prospect of soon having nothing to live on, makes people the more determined to live while they can - we have never been so much interrupted by visiting and invitations as since we have been here last; for the last three days the carriage has been ordered as regularly as the breakfast; yesterday we dined out with a large party, and have two invitations on hand for this week. our means of industry are much disengaged by all this - & I have never found my time pass so unpleasantly. the only compensation which could be offered me for the loss of my family society, was the uninterrupted indulgence of those pursuits most congenial to my taste, and the conscious rep of time usefully, profitably, employed. my studies here were but rendering me more fit for the society to which I was to return, more capable of understanding all its value - but now after the heat and tail^{of} dressing, we have home, at a time of day when the thermometer is perhaps 95° in a little confined carriage which has got so thoroughly heated standing a few moments before the door, that it is like entering the mouth of an oven, & after a ride of four five or six miles over a rough dusty road under a boiling sun we arrive fatigued, flushed and dirty, set up four or five hours, ^{in company} silent and uncomfortable, too much exhausted to enjoy society if we had it even ^{if it were} of the best kind, and return home in the evening to morn over the weary day and wasted hours. this sort of life seems however to agree with us both - I have never seen Corelia look better or handsomer:

Had it not been for these frequent interruptions, I should have done a great deal whilst I staid here. I am reading Virgil in Latin & reading with as much difficulty as I do, I find that I shall never again tolerate a translation. Dryden whom I admired so much; there is as much difference between his Aeneid & Virgil's as there is between a glass of rich, old, high flavored wine, and ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{the} wine thrown into a quart of duck-

- water, even the passages which I admired the most I can now criticise without mercy. I have not adoreded for in the original, & have discarded many beautifull passages, which I should never have suspected in the translate & not only the general strength and spirit of the poem is lost, but the beauty of detail are ~~passed~~ until they lose all their bloom and perhaps. ^{I feel a} quarrel with Dryden, for his most trifling infidelities, in that, in the description of the meeting of Venus & Eneas in the wood, - "He turned and made appear, her neck resplendent & dishevelled hair", it should be, "ambrosial hair" which is the literal translation, as good measure, and I think a more elegant idea - the epithet, rosy, which is applied in the original "rosa ariosa" is hardly indeed in our words resplendent. in another place I find the "Prenet horridus ore omnes" of Virgil very badly rendered by "threats the world with vain alarms" which is not at all the ~~same~~ idea ^{meaning} you recollect it is in the description of Quintus, imprisoned during the reign of Augustus. If instead of travelling about the country, from one hot house to another, over roads perfectly answering the description given by Southey in his "cool reflections", (to which ~~way of~~ spending time, "toasting Beers for a Beelyebul, would be" literally "a cool employment") I could only stay at home, and improve myself in a language, the knowledge of which promises to open to me so wide a field of enjoyment.

I dear my dearest Mother, I never recollect that there may be trouble to you, until after they are written, Give a ~~green~~ deal of love to every body, and accept for yourself the assurance of your daughter's devotion.

Ellen. W. Randolph.

Give my love to Papa particularly.

Mrs Burwell desire me to open my letter to add his complements &c.

New London
augt 10th

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