

[To James Blake]  
Felpham Jany 30--1803.  
Dear Brother

Your Letter mentioning Mr Butts's account of my Ague surprized me because I have no Ague but have had a Cold this Winter. You know that it is my way to make the best of every thing. I never make myself nor my friends uneasy if I can help it. My Wife has bad Agues & Rheumatisms almost ever since she has been here, but our time is almost out that we took the Cottage for. I did not mention our Sickness to you & should not to Mr Butts but for a determination which we have lately made namely To leave This Place--because I am now certain of what I have long doubted Viz [that H] is jealous as Stothard was & will be no further My friend than he is compell'd by circumstances. The truth is As a Poet he is frightend at me & as a Painter his views & mine are opposite he thinks to turn me into a Portrait Painter as he did Poor Romney, but this he nor all the devils in hell will never do. I must own that seeing H. like S Envious (& that he is I am now certain) made me very uneasy, but it is over & I now defy the worst & fear not while I am true to myself which I will be. This is the uneasiness I spoke of to Mr Butts but

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I did not tell him so plain& wish you to keep it a secret & to burn this letter because it speaks so plain I told Mr Butts that I did not wish to Explore too much the cause of our determination to leave Felpham because of pecuniary connexions between H & me--Be not then uneasy on any account & tell my Sister not to be uneasy for I am fully Employ'd & Well Paid I have made it so much H's interest to employ me that he can no longer treat me with indifference & now it is in my power to stay or return or remove to any other place that I choose, because I am getting before hand in money matters The Profits arising from Publications are immense & I now have it in my power to commence publication with many very formidable works, which I have finish'd & ready A Book price half a guinea may be got out at the Expense of Ten pounds & its almost certain profits are 500 G. I am only sorry that I did not know the methods of publishing years ago & this is one of the numerous benefits I have obtain'd by coming here for I should never have known the nature of Publication unless I had known H & his connexions& his method of managing. It now <would> be folly not to venture publishing. I am now Engraving Six little plates for a little work of Mr H's for which I am to have 10 G<uineas> each & the certain profits of that work are a fortune such as would make me independent supposing that I could substantiate such a one of my own& I mean to try many But I again say as I said before We are very Happy sitting at tea by a wood fire in our Cottage the wind singing above our roof& the sea roaring at a distance but if sickness comes all is unpleasant

But my letter to Mr Butts appears to me not to be so explicit as that to you for I told you that I should come to London in the Spring to commence Publisher & he <has> offer'd me every assistance in his power <without knowing my intention>. But since I wrote yours we had made the resolution of which we inform'd him viz to leave Felpham entirely. I also told you what I was about & that I was not ignorant of what was doing in London in works of art. But I did not mention Illness because I hoped to get better (for I was really very ill when I wrote to him the last time) & was not then perswaded as

I am now that the air tho warm is unhealthy

However this I know will set you at Ease. I am now so full of work that I have had no time to go on with the Ballads, & my prospects of more & more work continually are certain. My Heads of Cowper for Mr H's life of Cowper have pleasd his Relations exceedingly & in Particular Lady Hesketh & Lord Cowper <to please> Lady H was a doubtful chance who almost adord her Cousin the poet & thought him all perfection & she writes that she is quite satisfied with the portraits & charmd by the great Head in particular tho she never could bear the original Picture

But I ought to mention to you that our present idea is. To take a house in some village further from the Sea Perhaps Lavant. & in or near the road to London for the sake of convenience--I also ought to inform you that I read your letter to Mr H & that he is very afraid of losing me & also very afraid that my Friends in London should have a bad opinion of the reception he has given to me But My Wife has undertaken to Print the whole number of the Plates for Cowpers work which she does to admiration & being under my own

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eye the prints are as fine as the French prints & please every one. in short I have Got every thing so under my thumb that it is more profitable that things should be as they are than any other way, tho not so agreeable because we wish naturally for friendship in preference to interest.--The Publishers are already indebted to My Wife Twenty Guineas for work deliverd this is a small specimen of how we go on. then fear nothing & let my Sister fear nothing because it appears to me that I am now too old & have had too much experience to be any longer imposed upon only illness makes all uncomfortable & this we must prevent by every means in our power

I send with this 5 Copies of N4 of the Ballads for Mrs Flaxman & Five more two of which you will be so good as to give to Mrs Chetwynd if she should call or send for them. These Ballads are likely to be Profitable for we have Sold all that we have had time to print. Evans the Bookseller in Pallmall says they go off very well & why should we repent of having done them it is doing Nothing that is to be repented of & not doing such things as these

Pray remember us both to Mr Hall when you see him

I write in great haste & with a head full of botheration about various projected works & particularly. a work now Proposed to the Public at the End of Cowpers Life. which will very likely be of great consequence it is Cowpers Milton the same that Fuselis Milton Gallery was painted for,,& if we succeed in our intentions the prints to this work will be very profitable to me & not only profitable but honourable at any rate The Project pleases Lord Cowpers family. & I am now labouring in my thoughts Designs for this & other works equally creditable These are works to be boasted of & therefore I cannot feel depress'd tho I know that as far as Designing & Poetry are concernd I am Envied in many Quarters. but I will cram the Dogs for I know that the Public are my friends & love my works & will embrace them whenever they see them My only Difficulty is to produce fast enough.

I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin: am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy. am now learning my Hebrew I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master. astonishing indeed is the English Translation it is almost word for word & if the Hebrew Bible is as well translated which I do not doubt it is we need not doubt of its having been translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost

my wife joins me in Love to you both  
I am Sincerely yours  
W BLAKE