

"You'll think I have been very poetical in this description, but it is pretty near the truth. I wish you were here to bear testimony how little it owes to art, either the place itself or the image I give of it."

At the entrance to the grotto was a stone, inscribed with the following line from Horace:—

"Secretum iter et fallentis semita vite."

In Pope's "Miscellanies," the following lines are addressed as an apostrophe to the pilgrim visitor:—

"Thou who shalt stop where
Thames' translucent wave
Shines a broad mirror through
the shadowy cave,
Where lingering drops from
mineral roofs distil,
And pointed crystals break the
sparkling rill,
Unpolish'd gems no ray on pride
bestow,
And latent metals innocently
glow:
Approach. Great Nature stu-
diously behold!
And eye the mine without a
wish for gold.
Approach: but awful! lo! the
Ægerian grot,
Where, nobly pensive, St. John*
sat and thought;
Where British sighs from dying
Wynllham stole,
And the bright flame was shot
through Marchmont's soul.
Let such, such only, tread this
sacred floor,
Who dare to love their country,
and be poor!"

On another occasion we find him writing:—

"Know, all the distant din that
world can keep
Rolls o'er my grotto, and but
soothes my sleep.

There, my retreat the best companions grace,
Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place.
There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
The feast of reason and the flow of soul:
And he, whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines,
Now forms my quincunx, and now ranks my vines,
Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain
Almost as quickly as he conquer'd Spain." †

Pope's fondness for and pride in his Twickenham villa—my "Tusculum," as he called it—is expressed by him in letters and poems continually. In a letter to his friend Mr. Digby, he writes:—

"No ideas you could form in the winter can

make you imagine what Twickenham is in the summer season. Our river glitters beneath an unclouded sun, at the same time that its banks retain the verdure of showers; our gardens are offering their first nosegays; our trees, like new acquaintances brought happily together, are stretching their arms to meet each other, and growing nearer and nearer every hour; the birds are paying their thanksgiving songs for the new habitations I have made them; my building rises high enough to attract the eye and curiosity of the passenger from the river, when beholding a mixture of beauty and ruin, he inquires what house is falling or what church is rising; so little taste have our common Tritons of Vitruvius, whatever delight the poetical god of the river may take in reflecting on their streams my Tuscan porticos or Ionic pilasters."

In some verses, entitled "The Cave of Pope: a Prophecy," to be seen in the third volume of "Dobley's Collection of Poems," the curiosity of future visitors and their pilfering of gems as relics is duly prophesied as follows:—

"When dark oblivion in her sable
cloak
Shall wrap the names of
heroes and of kings,
And their high deeds, submitting
to the stroke
Of time, shall fall amongst
forgotten things.

'Then, for the muse that distant
day can see,

On 'Thames' fair bank the
stranger shall arrive

With curious wish thy sacred grot to see;
Thy sacred grot shall with thy name survive.

"Grateful posterity from age to age
With pious hand the ruin shall repair;
Some good old man, to each inquiring sage,
Pointing the place, shall cry, 'The Bard liv'd
there.'

"Whose song was music to the listening ear,
Yet taught audacious vice and folly shame.
Easy his manners, but his life severe,
His word alone gave infamy or fame.

"Sequestered from the fool and coxcomb wit
Beneath this silent roof, the muse he found;
'Twas here he slept inspired, or sat and writ;
Here with his friends the social glass went round.



THE OBELISK TO POPE'S MOTHER.

* Lord Bolingbroke. † Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough.