

Elizabeth Tollet, “The Portrait”

Description

ELIZABETH TOLLET

“The Portrait”

Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
Vita — — — — Hor.

On what wou'd I my Wishes fix?
'Tis not upon a Coach and Six:
'Tis not your rich Brocades to wear;
'Tis not on Brilliants in my Ear.
'Tis not to hurry up and down 5
To *Tunbridge, Epson, Kensington*;
Much less to rub my wakeful Eyes
At Basset, till the Sun shou'd rise:
Had I a Foe I meant to curse,
Nay, Rival, I'd not wish her worse, 10
For once, to tell you what's the Lot
I like, I've told you what 'tis not;
A lazy Life I first wou'd choose,
A lazy Life best suits the Muse:
A few choice Books of ev'ry Sort; 15
But none that meddle with the Court.
Small Thoughts for Cloaths; 'tis all a Case:
They'll neither mend nor spoil my Face.
Money! Enough to serve my Ends:
An Hackney to go see my Friends; 20
That I may laugh if Fops pass by,
And they not know my Livery,
Friends that in any Dress would come;
To whom I'd always be at home:
My Table still shou'd cover'd be, 25
On this Side Books, on that Bohea;
While we sip on, and ne'er debate
Matters of Scandal, or of State.
For *Horace* tells us, as you know,
'Tis Sweet to fool it *a propos*. 30

Dulce est desipere in loco. Hor.

NOTES:

Epigraph *Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella* “Life may be laid out as if it were depicted on a votive tablet” (Horace, *Satires*, 2:1, ll. 3-4); Horace’s *Satires* were “published in 35 BCE” (*Oxford Bibliographies*).

6 *Tunbridge* Affluent town in Kent, England; *Epsom* Market town in Surrey; *Kensington* Royal palace in London.

8 *Basset* “An obsolete game of cards, resembling Faro, first played in Venice” (*OED*).

20 *Hackney* “A horse-drawn carriage which is let out for hire” (*OED*).

21 *Fops* “One who is foolishly attentive to and vain of his appearance, dress, or manners” (*OED*).

22 *Livery* “The dress, uniform, or insignia...by which a family, etc., may be identified” (*OED*).

26 *Bohea* “Name given in the early eighteenth century to finest kind of black tea” (*OED*).

29 *Horace* (65-8 BC), Latin lyric poet and satirist under the emperor Augustus.

30 *a propos* “To the purpose” (*OED*).

Postscript *Dulce est desipere in loco* “It is sweet to be silly at the appropriate time” (Horace, *Odes*, 4:12, l. 27).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions. With Ann Boleyn to King Henry VIII. An Epistle* (London, 1755), pp. 33-34. [[Google Books](#)]

Edited by Donna Hang