

LETTER--To Herodotus

The author, addressing Herodotus of Halicarnassus, undertakes a quest to ascertain the truthfulness of the historical accounts provided by Herodotus. The journey leads to Britain, an island described with much intrigue, having a river called Thames, and a large city fraught with modern contrivances and a prevailing ignorance of the past.

The narrative unfolds as the author initially struggles to find anyone familiar with Herodotus but eventually is directed to the City of the Priests, possibly Oxford, known for its academic and ecclesiastical significance. The path to the city, engaging in its details about rivers and peculiar fishing practices, brings forth a nonchalant critique of local customs and a humorous comparison of ancient to modern life.

Upon reaching the city, the author notes its desolation during "The Long" or "The Vac," humorously attributing it to a tradition aimed at humbling the young priests through rowing and sports, hinting at the academic schedule of Oxford. The exploration leads to a priest, known for his supposed knowledge on a wide array of subjects including Herodotus, who dismissively labels Herodotus as "The Father of Liars."

The priest criticizes Herodotus for alleged fabrications and accuses him of willfully distorting facts, such as Solon's visit to Croesus and Xerxes' dreams. The priest's critique extends to accuse Herodotus of plagiarism and naivety, though it's clear that his arguments are selectively interpretive, humorous, and paradoxical, intentionally reflecting a lack of comprehensive understanding of Herodotus's context and the value of his works.

This letter blends factual historical inquiry with satirical observations of English life and academia, making playful jabs at the anachronisms of modernity viewed through ancient eyes. Its whimsy contrasts the earnestness typically expected in a letter to a revered historical figure, using this juxtaposition to both entertain and offer light

commentary on the timeless nature of historical scholarship and the subjective lens through which we view the past.

