

Letter from Newton to John Collins, dated 20 May 1673

Author: Isaac Newton

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Cambridg May 20th.

Sir

I received your two last letters with Heurets Optiques which (not being so ready in the French tongue my selfe as to reade it without the continuall use of a Dictionary) I committed to the perusal of another who gives me this account of it, That he is not so plain & methodicall as M. Boss, That he takes too much paines in demonstrating many things which, of themselves are sufficiently obvious especially to one a little versed in Euclide. That his reprehensions of M. Boss are usually groundless & frivolous; as for instance, being sometimes for his omission of some lines in his draughts as if done out of ignorance, which yet a candid reader would rather think omitted least his schemes should be cumbered with two great a multiplicity of lines, especially since the drawing of them might be deduced from his precepts. That his ways of designing without regard to the point of distance is not preferrable to the other ways in which the point of distance is considered. And that it is as convenient to make use of a scale as of those other ways which he would substitute in stead thereof. So that although this Author hath enriched Perspective with many new considerations yet those in practise will have little or no advantage above those which are already in use.

This Sir in short is the account of him which I received from my friend who esteems him a very good Author & one that throughly understands this science, yet of the two prefers M^r Boss. I committed it also to the perusall of another friend who out of curiosity desired it, but when he had looked upon two or three of his first propositions he became prejudiced by reason of some greater obscurity in them then in those which M. Boss begins with: saying to me that if he writing more at large than M. Boss, did yet begin with more intricate propositions; he could not expect to find him in the rest of his book so clear & methodicall as the other. I intended the last week to have returned your book with many thanks but was disappointed & so could not return it till now, which I doe herewith by J. Stiles. I have sent you also 10*shillings* for that part of Kersey which you sent me, & 30*shillings* more for 3 other Copies of the same which I subscribed for; If you please to direct J. Stiles where he may receive the books & pay the money.

I thank you that you are pleased to remember me about what that most excellent Author M. Hugen has lately published. I understand by M. Oldenburg that M. Slusius has some kind of information concerning my generall Method which I made mention of to you. But though I must acknowledg your good will to me in desiring M. Oldenburg to make it known to him, & see nothing in M. Slusius reply but what is free & generous, yet I think it most proper for me to wave an answer, there being nothing that requires it. Concerning the expenses of being a Member of the Royal Society I suppose < insertion from the left margin > there hath been done me no unkindness, for I met with nothing in that kind besides my expectations. But I could wish I had met with no rudeness in some other things. And therefore I hope you will not think it strange if to prevent accidents of that nature for the future I decline that conversation which hath occasioned what is past. I hope this, whatever it may make me appear to others, yet will not diminish your Friendship to me

Your humble Servant

I. Newton

< text from f 35r resumes >
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These

To M^r John Collins at M^r William
Austins house over against the
Adam & Eve in Petty France
in Westminster

London

With a thin Folio Book.

send by Stiles at the green dragon in bishops gate on thursday.
