



The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Containing The First of his Letters

Pope, Alexander

London, 1751

Letter XI. Of the same, a plan for correcting and improving those poems.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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L E T T E R X I.

April 10, 1706.

BY one of yours of the last month, you desire me to select, if possible, some things from the ^a first volume of your Miscellanies, which may be alter'd so as to appear again. I doubted your meaning in this; whether it was to pick out the best of those verses (as those on the Idleness of business, on Ignorance, on Laziness, &c.) to make the method and numbers exact, and avoid repetitions? For tho' (upon reading 'em on this occasion) I believe, they might receive such an alteration with advantage; yet they would not be changed so much, but any one would know 'em for the same at first sight. Or if you mean to improve the worst pieces? which are such, as, to render them very good, would require great addition, and almost the entire new writing of them. Or, lastly, if you mean the middle sort, as the Songs and Love-verses? For these will need only to be shortened, to omit repetition; the words remaining very little different from what they were before. Pray let me know your mind in this, for I am utterly at a loss.

^a Printed in folio, in the year 1704. P.

Yet

Yet I have try'd what I could do to some of the songs, and the poems on Laziness and Ignorance, but can't (even in my own partial judgment) think my alterations much to the purpose. So that I must needs desire you would apply your care wholly at present to those which are yet unpublished, of which there are more than enough to make a considerable volume, of full as good ones, nay, I believe, of better than any in Vol. I. which I could wish you would defer, at least 'till you have finish'd these that are yet unprinted.

I send you a sample of some few of these; namely, the verses to Mr. Waller in his old age; your new ones on the Duke of Marlborough, and two others. I have done all that I thought could be of advantage to them: some I have contracted, as we do sun-beams, to improve their energy and force: some I have taken quite away, as we take branches from a tree, to add to the fruit; others I have entirely new express'd, and turned more into poetry. Donne (like one of his successors) had infinitely more wit than he wanted versification: for the great dealers of wit, like those in trade, take least pains to set off their goods; while the haberdashers of small wit, spare for no decorations or ornaments. You have commission'd me to paint your shop, and I have done
my

my best to brush you up like your neighbours*. But I can no more pretend to the merit of the production, than a midwife to the virtues and good qualities of the child she helps into the light.

The few things I have entirely added, you will excuse; you may take them lawfully for your own, because they are no more than sparks lighted up by your fire: and you may omit them at last, if you think them but squibs in your triumphs.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R X I I .

From Mr. W Y C H E R L E Y .

Nov. 11, 1707.

I Receiv'd yours of the 9th yesterday, which has (like the rest of your letters) at once pleas'd and instructed me; so that, I assure you, you can no more write too much to your absent friends, than speak too much to the present. This is a truth that all men own who have either seen your writings, or heard your dis-

* Several of Mr. Pope's lines, very easy to be distinguished, may be found in the Posthumous Editions of

Wycherley's Poems: particularly in those *on Solitude*, *on the Public*, and *on the Mixed life*.

course;