



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

XIX. Concerning Miscellanies, and the danger of young poets.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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LETTER XIX.

May 20, 1709.

I Am glad you receiv'd the ^a Miscellany, if it were only to show you that there are as bad poets in this nation as your servant. This modern custom of appearing in miscellanies, is very useful to the poets, who, like other thieves, escape by getting into a crowd, and herd together like Banditti, safe only in their multitude. Methinks Strada has given a good description of these kind of collections; *Nullus hodie mortalium aut nascitur, aut moritur, aut præliatur, aut rusticatur, aut abit peregre, aut redit, aut nubit, aut est, aut non est, (nam etiam mortuis isti canunt) cui non illi extemplo cudant Epicedia, Genethliaca, Protreptica, Panegyrica, Epithalamia, Vaticinia, Propemptica, Soterica, Parænetica, Nænicas, Nugas.* As to the success which, you say, my part has met with, it is to be attributed to what you was pleas'd to say of me to the world; which you do well to call your prophecy, since whatever is said in my favour, must be a prediction of things that are not yet; you, like a true Godfather, engage on my part for much more than ever I can per-

^a Jacob Tonson's sixth Vol. of Miscellany Poems. P.

form.

form. My pastoral Muse, like other country girls, is but put out of countenance, by what you courtiers say to her; yet I hope you would not deceive me too far, as knowing that a young scribler's vanity needs no recruits from abroad: for nature, like an indulgent mother, kindly takes care to supply her sons with as much of their own, as is necessary for their satisfaction. If my verses should meet with a few flying commendations, Virgil has taught me, that a young author has not too much reason to be pleas'd with them, when he considers that the natural consequence of praise is envy and calumny.

— *Si ultra placitum laudarit, baccare frontem
Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro.*

When once a man has appear'd as a poet, he may give up his pretensions to all the rich and thriving arts: those who have once made their court to those mistresses without portions, the Muses, are never like to set up for fortunes. But for my part, I shall be satisfy'd if I can lose my time agreeably this way, without losing my reputation: as for gaining any, I am as indifferent in the matter as Falstaffe was, and may say of fame as he did of honour, "If it comes, it comes unlook'd for; and there's an end on't." I can be content with a bare saving game,

FROM MR. WYCHERLEY. 43

game, without being thought an eminent hand, (with which title Jacob has graciously dignify'd his adventurers and voluntiers in poetry.) Jacob creates poets, as Kings sometimes do knights, not for their honour, but for their money. Certainly he ought to be esteem'd a worker of miracles, who is grown rich by poetry.

*What Authors lose, their Booksellers have won,
So Pimps grow rich, while Gallants are undone.*

I am your, &c.

LETTER XX.

From Mr. WYCHERLEY.

May 26, 1709.

THE last I receiv'd from you was dated the 22d of May. I take your charitable hint to me very kindly, wherein you do like a true friend, and a true christian, and I shall endeavour to follow your advice, as well as your example.—As for your wishing to see your friend an Hermit with you, I cannot be said to leave the world, since I shall enjoy in your conversation all that I can desire of it; nay, can learn more from you alone, than from my
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