



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

IV. From Mr. Walsh. On the same subjects.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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said ofteneft; and that writers, in the case of borrowing from others, are like trees which of themselves would produce only one sort of fruit, but by being grafted upon others may yield variety. A mutual commerce makes poetry flourish; but then poets, like merchants, should repay with something of their own what they take from others; not, like pyrates, make prize of all they meet. I desire you to tell me sincerely, if I have not stretch'd this licence too far in these Pastorals? I hope to become a critic by your precepts, and a poet by your example. Since I have seen your Eclogues, I cannot be much pleas'd with my own; however you have not taken away all my vanity, so long as you give me leave to profess myself Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

From Mr. WALSH.

July 20, 1706.

I Had sooner return'd you thanks for the favour of your letter, but that I was in hopes of giving you an account at the same time of my journey to Windsor; but I am now forced to put that quite off, being engaged to go to my corpora-

corporation of Richmond in Yorkshire. I think you are perfectly in the right in your notions of Pastoral; but I am of opinion, that the redundancy of wit you mention, tho' 'tis what pleases the common people, is not what ever pleases the best judges. Pastor Fido indeed has had more admirers than Aminta; but I will venture to say, there is a great deal of difference between the admirers of one and the other. Corisca, which is a character generally admir'd by the ordinary judges, is intolerable in a Pastoral; and Bonarelli's fancy of making his shepherdes in love with two men equally, is not to be defended, whatever pains he has taken to do it. As for what you ask of the liberty of Borrowing; 'tis very evident the best Latin Poets have extended this very far; and none so far as Virgil, who is the best of them. As for the Greek Poets, if we cannot trace them so plainly, 'tis perhaps because we have none before them; 'tis evident that most of them borrowed from Homer, and Homer has been accus'd of burning those that wrote before him, that his thefts might not be discover'd. The best of the modern Poets in all languages, are those that have the nearest copied the Ancients. Indeed in all the common subjects of Poetry, the thoughts are so obvious (at least if they are natural) that whoever writes last, must write things

things like what have been said before: But they may as well applaud the Ancients for the arts of eating and drinking, and accuse the moderns of having stolen those inventions from them; it being evident in all such cases, that whoever liv'd first, must first find them out. 'Tis true, indeed, when

unus et alter

Assuitur pannus,

when there are one or two bright thoughts stolen, and all the rest is quite different from it, a poem makes a very foolish figure: But when 'tis all melted down together, and the Gold of the Ancients so mix'd with that of the Moderns, that none can distinguish the one from the other, I can never find fault with it. I cannot however but own to you, that there are others of a different opinion, and that I have shewn your verses to some who have made that objection to them. I have so much company round me while I write this, and such a noise in my ears, that 'tis impossible I should write any thing but nonsense, so must break off abruptly. I am, Sir,

Your most affectionate,

and most humble Servant.

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LETTER