



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. Concerning the first publication of the author's poems.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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thoughts in the Lethe of cowslip-wine; as for Fame, Renown, Reputation, take 'em, Critics!

*Tradam protervis in Mare Criticum
Ventis.*

If ever I seek for Immortality here, may I be damn'd, for there's not so much danger in a Poet's being damn'd:

*Damnation follows death in other men,
But your damn'd Poet lives and writes agen.*

L E T T E R I V .

Nov. 1, 1708.

I Have been so well satisfy'd with the Country ever since I saw you, that I have not once thought of the Town, or enquir'd of any one in it besides Mr. Wycherley and yourself. And from him I understand of your journey this summer into Leicestershire; from whence I guess you are return'd by this time, to your old apartment in the widow's corner, to your old business of comparing Critics, and reconciling Commentators, and to your old diversions of a losing game at picquet with the ladies, and half a play, or a quarter of a play, at the theatre: where you are none of the malicious audience, but the chief of amorous spectators; and
for

for the infirmity of one ^a sense, which there, for the most part, could only serve to disgust you, enjoy the vigour of another, which ravishes you.

[^b *You know, when one sense is suppress'd,
It but retires into the rest.*

according to the poetical, not the learned, Dodwell; who has done one thing worthy of eternal memory; wrote two lines in his life that are not nonsense!] So you have the advantage of being entertain'd with all the beauty of the boxes, without being troubled with any of the dulness of the stage. You are so good a critic, that 'tis the greatest happiness of the modern Poets that you do not hear their works: and next, that you are not so arrant a critic, as to damn them (like the rest) without hearing. But now I talk of those critics, I have good news to tell you concerning myself, for which I expect you should congratulate with me: It is that, beyond all my expectations, and far above my demerits, I have been most mercifully repriev'd by the sovereign power of Jacob Tonson, from being brought forth to public punishment; and respited from time to time from the hands of those barbarous executioners of the Muses, whom I was just now speaking

^a His hearing. P.

^b Omitted by the Author in his own edition. P.

of. It often happens, that guilty Poets, like other guilty Criminals, when once they are known and proclaim'd, deliver themselves into the hands of justice, only to prevent others from doing it more to their disadvantage; and not out of any ambition to spread their fame, by being executed in the face of the world, which is a fame but of short continuance. That Poet were a happy man who could but obtain a grant to preserve his for ninety-nine years; for those names very rarely last so many days, which are planted either in Jacob Tonson's, or the Ordinary of Newgate's Miscellanies.

I have an hundred things to say to you, which shall be deferr'd till I have the happiness of seeing you in town, for the season now draws on, that invites every body thither. Some of them I had communicated to you by letters before this, if I had not been uncertain where you pass'd your time the last season: So much fine weather, I doubt not, has given you all the pleasure you could desire from the country, and your own thoughts the best company in it. But nothing could allure Mr. Wycherley to our forest, he continued (as you told me long since he would) an obstinate lover of the town, in spite of friendship and fair weather. Therefore henceforward, to all those considerable qualities I know you possess'd of, I shall add
that

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that of Prophecy. But I still believe Mr. Wy-
cherley's intentions were good, and am satis-
fy'd that he promises nothing, but with a real
design to perform it: how much soever his
other excellent qualities are above my imita-
tion, his sincerity, I hope, is not; and it is with
the utmost that I am,

Sir, &c.

L E T T E R V.

Jan. 22, 1708-9.

I Had sent you the inclos'd^a papers before
this time, but that I intended to have brought
them myself, and afterwards could find no op-
portunity of sending them without suspicion of
their miscarrying; not, that they are of the
least value, but for fear some body might be
foolish enough to imagine them so, and inquisi-
tive enough to discover those faults which I (by
your help) would correct. I therefore beg the
favour of you to let them go no farther than
your chamber, and to be very free of your re-
marks in the margins, not only in regard to the

^a This was a translation of the first book of Statius, done when the author was but fourteen years old, as appears by an advertisement before the first edition of it in a miscellany publish'd by B. Lintot. 8^o 1711. P.

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accuracy,