



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

V. Of his translation of the first book of Statius.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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FROM H. CROMWELL, Esq. 81

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.

LETTER 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,

accuracy, but to the fidelity of the translation; which I have not had time to compare with its original. And I desire you to be the more severe, as it is much more criminal for me to make another speak nonsense, than to do it in my own proper person. For your better help in comparing, it may be fit to tell you, that this is not an entire version of the first book. There is an omission from the 168th line—*ſam murmura ſerpunt Plebis Agenoreæ*—to the 312th—*Interea patriis olim vagus exul ab oris*—(between these ^b two Statius has a description of the council of the Gods, and a speech of Jupiter; which contain a peculiar beauty and majesty, and were left out for no other reason, but because the consequence of this machine appears not till the second book.) The translation goes on from thence to the words *Hic vero ambobus rabiem fortuna cruentam*, where there is an odd account of a battle at fifty-cuffs between the two Princes on a very slight occasion, and at a time when, one would think, the fatigue of their journey, in so tempestuous a night, might have render'd them very unfit for such a scuffle. This I had actually translated, but was very ill satisfied with it, even in my own words, to which an author cannot but be partial enough of con-

^b These he since translated, and they are extant in the printed version. P.

science; it was therefore omitted in this copy, which goes on above eighty lines farther, at the words—*Hic primum lustrare oculis*, &c.—to the end of the book.

You will find, I doubt not, that Statius was none of the discreetest Poets, tho' he was the best versifier next Virgil: In the very beginning he unluckily betrays his ignorance in the rules of Poetry (which Horace had already taught the Romans) when he asks his Muse where to begin his Thebaid, and seems to doubt whether it should not be *ab ovo Ledæo*. When he comes to the scene of his Poem, and the prize in dispute between the brothers, he gives us a very mean opinion of it—*Pugna est de paupere regno*.—Very different from the conduct of his master Virgil, who at the entrance of his Poem informs his reader of the greatness of its subject.—*Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem*. [Bossu on Epic Poetry.] There are innumerable little faults in him, among which I cannot but take notice of one in this book, where, speaking of the implacable hatred of the brothers, he says, *The whole world would be too small a prize to repay so much impiety*.

*Quid si peteretur crimine tanto
Limes uterque poli, quem Sol emissus Eoo
Cardine, quem porta vergens prospectat Ibera?*

This was pretty well, one would think, already, but he goes on.

*Quasque procul terras obliquo sydere tangit
Avius, aut Boreæ gelidas, madidive tepentes
Igne Noti?*

After all this, what could a Poet think of but Heaven itself for the prize! but what follows is astonishing.

*Quid si Tyriæ Phrygiæve sub unum
Conveſcentur opes?*

I do not remember to have met with so great a fall in any antient author whatsoever. I should not have insisted so much on the faults of this Poet, if I did not hope you would take the same freedom with, and revenge it, upon his Translator. I shall be extremely glad if the reading this can be any amusement to you, the rather because I had the dissatisfaction to hear you have been confin'd to your chamber by an illness, which, I fear, was as troublesome a companion as I have sometimes been in the same place; where, if ever you found any pleasure in my company, it must surely have been that, which most men take in observing the faults and follies of another; a pleasure, which, you see, I take care to give you even in my absence.

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FROM H. CROMWELL, Esq. 85

If you will oblige me at your leisure with the confirmation of your recovery, under your own hand, it will be extremely grateful to me, for next to the pleasure of seeing my friends, is that I take in hearing from them; and in this particular I am beyond all acknowledgments obliged to our friend Mr. Wycherley. I know I need no apology to you for speaking of him, whose example as I am proud of following in all things, so in nothing more than in professing myself, like him,

Your, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

March 7, 1709.

YOU had long before this time been troubled with a letter from me, but that I deferred it till I could send you either the ^a Miscellany, or my continuation of the version of Statius. The first I imagin'd you might have had before now, but since the contrary has happen'd, you may draw this moral from it, That authors in general are more ready to write nonsense than booksellers are to publish it. I had

^a Jacob Tonson's sixth volume of Poetical Miscellanies, in which Mr. Pope's

Pastorals, and some versions of Homer and Chaucer were first printed. P.