



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

XIV. On the same subject. Concerning Rondeaux.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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L E T T E R X I V .

June 24, 1710.

TIS very natural for a young friend, and a young lover, to think the persons they love have nothing to do but to please them; when perhaps they, for their parts, had twenty other engagements before. This was my case when I wonder'd I did not hear from you; but I no sooner receiv'd your short letter, but I forgot your long silence: and so many fine things as you said of me could not but have wrought a cure on my own sickness, if it had not been of the nature of that, which is deaf to the voice of the charmer. 'Twas impossible you could have better tim'd your compliment on my philosophy; it was certainly properest to commend me for it just when I most needed it, and when I could least be proud of it; that is, when I was in pain. 'Tis not easy to express what an exaltation it gave to my spirits, above all the cordials of my doctor; and 'tis no compliment to tell you, that your compliments were sweeter than the sweetest of his juleps and syrups. But if you will not believe so much,

*Pour le moins, votre compliment
M'a soulagé dans ce moment;
Et dès qu'on me l'est venu faire
J'ai chassé mon apoticaire,
Et renvoyé mon lavement.*

Never.

Nevertheless I would not have you entirely lay aside the thoughts of my epitaph, any more than I do those of the probability of my becoming (e're long) the subject of one. For death has of late been very familiar with some of my size; I am told my Lord Lumley and Mr. Litton are gone before me; and tho' I may now, without vanity, esteem myself the least thing like a man in England, yet I can't but be sorry, two heroes of such a make should die inglorious in their beds; when it had been a fate more worthy our size, had they met with theirs from an irruption of Cranes, or other warlike animals, those ancient enemies to our Pygmæan ancestors! You of a superior species little regard what befalls us *homunciones sesquipedales*; however, you have no reason to be so unconcern'd, since all physicians agree there is no greater sign of a plague among men, than a mortality among frogs. I was the other day in company with a lady, who rally'd my person so much, as to cause a total subversion of my countenance: some days after, to be revenged on her, I presented her, among other company, the following Rondeau on that occasion, which I desire you to shew Sappho.

*You know where you did despise
(T'other day) my little eyes,*

I

Little

*Little legs, and little thighs,
And some things of little size,
You know where.*

*You, 'tis true, have fine black eyes,
Taper legs, and tempting thighs,
Yet what more than all we prize
Is a thing of little size,
You know where.*

This sort of writing call'd the Rondeau is what I never knew practis'd in our nation, and, I verily believe, it was not in use with the Greeks or Romans, neither Macrobius nor Hyginus taking the least notice of it. 'Tis to be observ'd, that the vulgar spelling and pronouncing it Round O, is a manifest corruption, and by no means to be allow'd of by critics. Some may mistakenly imagine that it was a sort of Rondeau which the Gallick soldiers sung in Cæsar's triumph over Gaul—*Gallias Cæsar subegit*, &c. as it is recorded by Suetonius in Julio, and so derive its original from the ancient Gauls to the modern French: but this is erroneous; the words there not being ranged according to the Laws of the Rondeau, as laid down by Clement Marot. If you will say, that the song of the soldiers might be only the rude beginning of this kind of poem, and so consequently imperfect, neither Heinſius nor I
can

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can be of that opinion; and so I conclude, that we know nothing of the matter.

But, Sir, I ask your pardon for all this buffoonery, which I could not address to any one so well as to you, since I have found by experience, you most easily forgive my impertinencies. 'Tis only to show you that I am mindful of you at all times, that I write at all times; and as nothing I can say can be worth your reading, so I may as well throw out what comes uppermost, as study to be dull. I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

From Mr. CROMWELL.

July 15, 1710.

AT last I have prevail'd over a lazy humour to transcribe this elegy: I have changed the situation of some of the Latin verses, and made some interpolations, but I hope they are not absurd, and foreign to my author's sense and manner; but they are refer'd to your censure, as a debt; whom I esteem no less a critic than a poet: I expect to be treated with the same rigour as I have practis'd to Mr. Dryden and you.

Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.