



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

XV. From Mr. Cromwell. On Priam's speech to Pyrrhus in Virgil.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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FROM H. CROMWELL, Esq. 115

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.

116 L E T T E R S T O A N D

I desire the favour of your opinion, why Priam, in his speech to Pyrrhus in the second Æneid, says this to him,

At non ille, satum quo te mentiris, Achilles.

He would intimate (I fancy by Pyrrhus's answer) only his degeneracy: but then these following lines of the version (I suppose from Homer's history) seem absurd in the mouth of Priam, viz.

*He chear'd my sorrows, and for sums of gold
The bloodless carcase of my Hector sold.*

I am

Your, &c.

L E T T E R X V I.

July 20, 1710.

I Give you thanks for the version you sent me of Ovid's elegy. It is very much an image of that author's writing, who has an agreeableness that charms us without correctness, like a mistress, whose faults we see, but love her with them all. You have very judiciously alter'd his method in some places, and I can find nothing which I dare insist upon as an error: what I have written in the margins being merely guesses

guesses at a little improvement, rather than criticisms. I assure you I do not expect you should subscribe to my private notions but when you shall judge them agreeable to reason and good sense. What I have done is not as a critic, but as a friend; I know too well how many qualities are requisite to make the one, and that I want almost all I can reckon up; but I am sure I do not want inclination, nor, I hope, capacity, to be the other. Nor shall I take it at all amiss, that another dissents from my opinion: 'Tis no more than I have often done from my own; and indeed, the more a man advances in understanding, he becomes the more every day a critic upon himself, and finds something or other still to blame in his former notions and opinions. I could be glad to know if you have translated the 11th elegy of lib. ii. *Ad amicam navigantem*. The 8th of book iii, or the 11th of book iii, which are above all others my particular favourites, especially the last of these.

As to the passage of which you ask my opinion in the second *Æneid*, it is either so plain as to require no solution; or else (which is very probable) you see farther into it than I can. Priam would say, that "Achilles (whom surely you only feign to be your father, since your actions are so different from his) did

" not use me thus inhumanly. He blush'd at
 " his murder of Hector, when he saw my for-
 " rows for him; and restored his dead body to
 " me to be buried." To this the answer of
 Pyrrhus seems to be agreeable enough. " Go
 " then to the shades, and tell Achilles how I
 " degenerate from him:" granting the truth
 of what Priam had said of the difference be-
 tween them. Indeed Mr. Dryden's mention-
 ing here what Virgil more judiciously passes in
 silence, the circumstance of Achilles's selling
for money the body of Hector, seems not so pro-
 per; it in some measure lessening the character
 of Achilles's generosity and piety, which is the
 very point of which Priam endeavours in this
 place to convince his son, and to reproach him
 with the want of. But the truth of this cir-
 cumstance is no way to be question'd, being
 expressly taken from Homer, who represents
 Achilles weeping for Priam, yet receiving the
 gold, Iliad xxiv. For when he gives the bo-
 dy, he uses these words, " O my friend Patro-
 " clus! forgive me that I quit the corpse of
 " him who kill'd thee; I have great gifts in
 " ransom for it, which I will bestow upon thy
 " funeral."

I am, &c.

L E T T E R