



## **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**

XX. Of Philips's pastoral.

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**Nutzungsbedingungen**

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-56122](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-56122)

*Unum opus & requiem pariter disponimus ambo,  
Atque verecunda laxamus seria mensa.*

By these *Epulæ*, as I take it, Persius meant the Portugal snuff and burnt Claret, which he took with his master Cornutus; and the *verecunda mensa* was, without dispute, some coffee-house table of the ancients.—I will only observe, that these four lines are as elegant and musical as any in Persius, not excepting those six or seven which Mr. Dryden quotes as the only such in all that author.—I could be heartily glad to repeat the satisfaction describ'd in them, being truly

Your, &c.

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L E T T E R XX.

October 28, 1710.

**I** Am glad to find by your last letter that you write to me with the freedom of a friend, setting down your thoughts as they occur, and dealing plainly with me in the matter of my own trifles, which, I assure you, I never valued half so much as I do that sincerity in you which they were the occasion of discovering to me; and which while I am happy in, I may be trusted with that dangerous weapon, Poetry; since  
I shall



I shall do nothing with it but after asking and following your advice. I value sincerity the more, as I find by sad experience, the practice of it is more dangerous; writers rarely pardoning the executioners of their verses, even tho' themselves pronounce sentence upon them.— As to Mr. Philips's Pastorals, I take the first to be infinitely the best, and the second the worst; the third is for the greatest part a translation from Virgil's Daphnis. I will not forestal your judgment of the rest, only observe in that of the Nightingale these lines (speaking of the musician's playing on the harp)

*Now lightly skimming o'er the strings they pass,  
Like winds that gently brush the plying grass,  
And melting airs arise at their command;  
And now, laborious, with a weighty hand,  
He sinks into the cords, with solemn pace,  
And gives the swelling tones a manly grace.*

To which nothing can be objected, but that they are too lofty for pastoral, especially being put into the mouth of a shepherd, as they are here; in the poet's own person they had been (I believe) more proper. They are more after Virgil's manner than that of Theocritus, whom yet in the character of pastoral he rather seems to imitate. In the whole, I agree with the Tatler, that we have no better Eclogues in  
our



our language. There is a small copy of the same author publish'd in the Tatler N<sup>o</sup> 12. on the Danish winter: 'Tis poetical painting, and I recommend it to your perusal.

Dr. Garth's poem I have not seen, but believe I shall be of that critic's opinion you mention at *Will's*, who swore it was good: for, tho' I am very cautious of swearing after critics, yet I think one may do it more safely when they commend, than when they blame.

I agree with you in your censure of the use of sea-terms in Mr. Dryden's *Virgil*; not only because Helenus was no great prophet in those matters, but because no terms of Art or cant words suit with the majesty and dignity of style which epic poetry requires.—*Cui mens divini-  
nior atque os magna sonaturum.*—The Tarpawlin phrase can please none but such *qui au-  
rem habent Batavam*; they must not expect *auribus Atticis probari*, I find by you. (I think I have brought in two phrases of Martial here very dextrously.)

Tho' you say you did not rightly take my meaning in the verse I quoted from Juvenal, yet I will not explain it; because, tho' it seems you are resolv'd to take me for a critic, I would by no means be thought a commentator.—And for another reason too, because I have quite forgot both the verse and the application.

I hope



I hope it will be no offence to give my most hearty service to Mr. Wycherley, tho' I perceive by his last to me, I am not to trouble him with my letters, since he there told me he was going instantly out of town, and till his return was my servant, &c. I guess by yours he is yet with you, and beg you to do what you may with all truth and honour, that is, assure him I have ever borne all the respect and kindness imaginable to him. I do not know to this hour what it is that has estranged him from me; but this I know, that he may for the future be more safely my friend, since no invitation of his shall ever more make me so free with him. I could not have thought any man so very cautious and suspicious, as not to credit his own experience of a friend. Indeed to believe no body, may be a maxim of safety, but not so much of honesty. There is but one way I know of conversing safely, with all men, that is, not by concealing what we say or do, but by saying or doing nothing that deserves to be conceal'd, and I can truly boast this comfort in my affairs with Mr. Wycherley. But I pardon his Jealousy, which is become his nature, and shall never be his enemy whatsoever he says of me.

Your, &c.