



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

XXII. Answer to the former, with another criticism on Lucan.

Nutzungsbedingungen

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FROM H. CROMWELL, Esq. 131

Pray your opinion, if there be an Error-Sphaericus in this or no?

Your, &c.

LETTER XXII.

Nov 11, 1710.

YOU mistake me very much in thinking the freedom you kindly us'd with my love-verses, gave me the first opinion of your sincerity: I assure you it only did what every good-natur'd action of yours has done since, confirm'd me more in that opinion. The fable of the nightingale in Philips's pastoral, is taken from Famianus Strada's Latin poem on the same subject, in his *Prolusiones Academicæ*; only the tomb he erects at the end, is added from Virgil's conclusion of the *Culex*. I can't forbear giving you a passage out of the Latin poem I mention, by which you will find the English poet is indebted to it.

*Alternat mira arte fides : dum torquet acutas,
Inciditque, graves operoso verberere pulsat.
Jamque manu per fila volat ; simul hos, simul illos
Explorat numeros, chordaque laborat in omni.—
Mox silet. Illa modis totidem respondet, & artem
Arte refert. Nunc ceu rudis, aut incerta canendi,*

K 2

Præbet

*Præbet iter liquidum labenti e pectore voci,
Nunc cæsim variat, modulisque canora minutis
Delibrat vocem, tremuloque reciprocatur ore.*

This poem was many years since imitated by Crashaw, out of whose verses the following are very remarkable.

*From this to that, from that to this he flies,
Feels music's pulse in all its arteries;
Caught in a net which there Apollo spreads,
His fingers struggle with the vocal threads.*

I have (as I think I formerly told you) a very good opinion of Mr. Row's ixth book of Lucan: Indeed he amplifies too much, as well as Brebœuf, the famous French imitator. If I remember right, he sometimes takes the whole comment into the text of the version, as particularly in lin. 808. *Utque solet pariter totis se effundere signis Corycii pressura croci.*—And in the place you quote, he makes of those two lines in the Latin,

*Vidit quanta sub nocte jaceret
Nostra dies, risitque sui ludibria trunci,*

no less than eight in English.

What you observe, sure, cannot be an Error-Sphæricus, strictly speaking, either Ptolemaic, or our Copernican system; Tycho Brahe himself will be on the translator's side. For Mr.

Row here says no more, than that he look'd down on the rays of the sun, which Pompey might do, even tho' the body of the sun were above him.

You can't but have remarked what a journey Lucan here makes Cato take for the sake of his fine descriptions. From Cyrene he travels by land, for no better reason than this;

Hæc eadem suadebat hiems, quæ clauserat æquor.

The winter's effects on the sea, it seems, were more to be dreaded than all the serpents, whirlwinds, sands, &c. by land, which immediately after he paints out in his speech to the soldiers: Then he fetches a compass a vast way round about, to the Nasamones and Jupiter Ammon's temple, purely to ridicule the oracles: and Labienus must pardon me, if I do not believe him when he says—*sors obtulit, & fortuna viæ*—either Labienus or the map, is very much mistaken here. Thence he returns back to the Syrtes (which he might have taken first in his way to Utica) and so to Leptis Minor, where our author leaves him; who seems to have made Cato speak his own mind, when he tells his army—*Ire sat est*—no matter whither. I am,

Your, &c.