

[*double rule*]

## A SMALL POET

I<sup>2</sup>S one, that would fain make himself that,  
which *Nature* never meant him ; like a *Fa-*  
*natic*, that inspires himself with his own  
Whimfies. He fets up Haberdasher of fmall  
Poetry, with a very fmall Stock, and no Credit.  
He believes it is Invention enough to find out  
other Men's Wit ; and whatfoever he lights upon  
either in Books, or Company, he makes bold  
with as his own. This he puts together fo un-  
towardly, that you may perceive his own Wit  
has the Rickets, by the fwelling Difproportion  
of the Joints. Imitation is the whole Sum of  
him ; and his Vein is but an Itch or Clap, that  
he has catched of others ; and his Flame like  
that of Charcoals, that were burnt before :  
But as he wants Judgment to underftand what  
is beft, he naturally takes the worft, as being  
moft agreeable to his own Talent. You may

---

know his Wit not to be natural, 'tis fo un-  
quiet and troublefome in him : For as thofe,  
that have Money but feldom, are always fhak-  
ing their Pockets, when they have it ; fo does  
he, when he thinks he has got fomething, that  
will make him appear. He is a perpetual Tal-  
ker ; and you may know by the Freedom of his  
Difcourfe, that he came light by it, as Thieves  
fpend freely what they get. He meafures other  
Men's Wits by *their* Modefty, and his own by  
*his* Confidence. He makes nothing of writing  
Plays, becaufe he has not Wit enough to un-  
derftand the Difficulty. This makes him ven-  
ture to talk and fcribble, as Chowfes do to play  
with cunning Gamefters, until they are cheated

and laughed at. He is always talking of Wit, as those, that have bad Voices, are always fingering out of Tune ; and those, that cannot play, delight to fumble on Instruments. He grows the unwiser by other Men's Harms ; for the worse others write, he finds the more Encouragement to do so too. His Greediness of Praise is so eager, that he swallows any Thing, that comes in the Likeness of it, how notorious and palpable soever, and is as Shot-free against any Thing, that may lessen his good Opinion

---

of himself—This renders him incurable, like Diseases, that grow insensible.

If you dislike him it is at your own Peril ; he is sure to put in a Caveat beforehand against your Understanding ; and, like a Malefactor in Wit, is always furnished with Exceptions against his Judges. This puts him upon perpetual Apologies, Excuses, and Defences, but still by Way of Defiance, in a Kind of whiffling Strain, without Regard of any Man, that stands in the Way of his Pageant. Where he thinks he may do it safely, he will confidently own other Men's Writings ; and where he fears the Truth may be discovered, he will by feeble Denials and feigned Insinuations give Men Occasion to suppose so.

If he understands *Latin* or *Greek* he ranks himself among the Learned, despises the Ignorant, talks Criticisms out of *Scaliger*, and repeats *Martial's* bawdy Epigrams, and sets up his Reft wholly upon Pedantry. But if he be not so well qualified, he cries down all Learning as pedantic, disclaims Study, and professes to write with as great Facility, as if his Muse was

---

fliding down *Parnaffus*. Whatsoever he hears well faid<sup>1</sup> he feizes upon by poetical Licence ; and one Way makes it his own, that is by ill repeating of it—This he believes to be no more Theft, than it is to take that, which others throw away. By this means his Writings are, like a Taylor's Cushion, of mofaic Work, made up of feveral Scraps fewed together. He calls a flovenly nafty Defcription *great Nature*, and dull Flatnefs *strange Eafinefs*. He writes down all that comes in his Head, and makes no Choice, becaufe he has nothing to do it with, that is Judgment. He is always repealing the old Laws of Comedy, and like the *long Parliament* making *Ordinances* in their Stead ; although they are perpetually *thrown out* of Coffee-Houfes, and come to Nothing. He is like an *Italian* Thief, that never robs, but he murders, to prevent Difcovery ; fo fure is he to cry down the Man from whom he purloins, that his petty Larceny of Wit may pafs unfufpected. He is but a Copier at beft, and will never arrive to practice by the Life : For bar him the Imitation of fomething he has read, and he has no Image in his Thoughts.

---

Obfervation and Fancy, the Matter and Form of juft Wit, are above his Philofophy. He appears fo over concerned in all Men's Wits, as if they were but Difparagements of his own ; and crys down all they do, as if they were Encroachments upon him. He takes Jefts from the Owners and breaks them, as *Justices* do falfe Weights, and Pots that want Meafure. When he meets with any Thing, that is very good, he changes it into fmall Money, like three Groats for a Shilling, to ferve feveral Occafions. He difclaims Study,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Whatsoever he hears well faid, &c.* ] In this *Butler* alludes to *Martial's* Epigram to *Fidentinus*. [*footnote cont. next page*][<sup>2</sup>]

pretends to take Things in Motion, and to fhoot flying, which appears to be very true by his often miffing of his Mark. His Wit is much troubled with Obftructions ; and he has Fits as painful as thofe of the Spleen. He fancies himfelf a dainty fpruce Shepherd, with a Flock and a fine filken Shepherdess, that follows his Pipe, as Rats did the Conjurers in *Germany*.

As for *Epithets*, he always avoids thofe, that are near akin to the Senfe. Such matches are unlawful, and not fit to be made by a *Chriftian* Poet ; and therefore all his Care is to chufe out  
 [^2]: [footnote cont'd from prev. page] *Quem recitas meus eft, O Fidentine, libellus*  
 :  
*Sed male dum recitas, incipit effe tuus.* *Mart. L. 1. Ep. 39.*

---

fuch, as will ferve, like a wooden Leg, to piece out a main'd Verfe, that wants a Foot or two ; and if they will but rhimes now and then into the Bargain, or run upon a Letter, it is a Work of Supererrogation.

For *Similitudes*, he likes the hardeft and moft obfcure beft : For as Ladies wear black Patches, to make their Complexions feem fairer than they are ; fo when an Illuftration is more obfcure than the Senfe that went before it, it muft of Necessity make it appear clearer than it did : For Contraries are beft fet off with Contraries.

He has found out a Way to fave the Expence of much Wit and Senfe : For he will make lefs than fome have prodigally laid out upon five or fix Words ferve forty or fifty Lines. This is a thrifty Invention, and very eafy ; and, if it were commonly known, would much increafe the Trade of Wit, and maintain a Mul-

---

titude of fmall Poets in conftant Employment. He has found out a new Sort of poetical *Geor-*

*gics*, a Trick of fowing Wit like clover-grafs  
 on barren Subjects, which would yield nothing  
 before. This is very useful for the Times,  
 wherein, fome Men fay, there is no Room left  
 for new Invention. He will take three Grains  
 of Wit like the Elixir, and projecting it upon  
 the *Iron-Age* turn it immediately into *Gold*—  
 All the Bufinefs of Mankind has prefently  
 vanifhed, the whole World has kept Holiday ;  
 there has been no Men but Heroes and Poets,  
 no Women but Nymphs and Shepherdesses ;  
 Tress have born Fritters, and Rivers flowed  
 Plum-Porrige.

We read that *Virgil* ufed to make<sup>2</sup> fifty or  
 fixty Verfes in a Morning, and afterwards re-  
 duce them to ten. This was an unthrifty  
 Vanity, and argues him as well ignorant in the  
 Hufbandry of his own Poetry, as *Seneca* fays  
 he was in that of a Farm ;<sup>3</sup> for in plain *Englifh*

it was no better than bringing a Noble to Nine-  
 pence. And as fuch Courfes brought the  
*prodigal Son* to eat with Hogs : So they did him  
 to feed with Horfes,<sup>4</sup> which were not much  
 better Company, and may teach us to avoid  
 doing the like. For certainly it is more noble

<sup>2</sup> [footnote for next page] We read that *Virgil* ufed to make, &c.] This alludes to a Paffage  
 in the Life of *Virgil* afcribed to *Donatus*. “ Cum Georgica fcribe-  
 “ ret traditur quotidie meditato mane plurimos verfus dictare fo-  
 “ litus, ac per totum diem retracando ad pauciffimos redigere :  
 “ non abfurde carmen fe urfæ more parere dicens, et lambendo  
 “ demum effingere.

<sup>3</sup> As *Seneca* fays he was in that of a farm.] *Seneca* in his 86th  
 Epiftle finds feveral Faults with *Virgil*'s Rules and Obfervations in  
 Hufbandry, as they are delivered in his *Georgics*, and adds of him —  
 “ Qui non quod veriffime, fed quid decentiffime diceretur, ad-  
 “ fpexit ; nec Agricolas docere voluit, fed legentes delectare.”

<sup>4</sup> So they did him to feed with Horfes] This muft be explained by  
 the fame Writer of *Virgil*'s Life, who informs us, that *Virgil* in  
 his Youth ftudied Phyfic, in which having made great Proficiency,  
 he repaired to *Rome*, and applying himfelf to that Branch of it [footnote cont. next page][^6]

to take four or five Grains of Senfe, and, like a Gold-Beater, hammer them into fo many Leaves as will fill a whole Book ; than to write nothing but Epitomies, which many wife Men believe will be the Bane and Calamity of Learning.

When he writes, he commonly fteers the Senfe of his Lines by the Rhime that is at the End of them, as Butchers do Calves by the Tail. For when he has made one Line, which is eafy enough ; and has found out fome fturdy hard Word, that will but rhyme, he will hammer the Senfe upon it, like a Piece of hot Iron upon an Anvil, into what Form he pleafes.

There is no Art in the World fo rich in Terms as Poetry ; a whole Dictionary is fcarce

able to contain them : For there is hardly a Pond, a Sheep-walk, or a Gravel-pit in all *Greece*, but the antient Name of it is become a Term of Art in Poetry. By this means fmall Poets have fuch a Stock of able hard Words lying by them, as *Dryades, Hamadryades, Aonides, Fauni, Nymphae, Sylvani, &c.* that fignify nothing at all ; and fuch a World of pedantic Terms of the fame Kind, as may ferve to furnifh all the new Inventions and *thorough-Reformations*, that can happen between this and *Plato's* great Year.

When he writes he never propofes any Scope or Purpofe to himfelf, but gives his Genius all Freedom : For as he, that rides abroad for his Pleafure, can hardly be out of his Way ; fo he that writes for his Pleafure, can feldom be befide his Subject. It is an ungrateful Thing to a noble Wit to be confined to any Thing—To what Purpofe did the Antients feign *Pegafus* to have Wings, if he muft be confined to the Road and Stages like a Pack-Horfe, or be forced to be obedient to Hedges and Ditches? There-

fore he has no Respect to Decorum and Propriety of Circumstance ; for the Regard of Persons, Times, and Places is a Reftraint too fervile to be impofed upon poetical Licence ; like him that made *Plato*<sup>5</sup> confefs *Juvenal* to be a Philofopher, or *Persius*, that calls the *Athenians Quirites*.

For *Metaphors*, he uſes to chuſe the hardeſt, and moſt far-fet that he can light upon—Theſe are the Jewels of Eloquence, and therefore the harder they are, the more precious they muſt be.

He'll take ſcant Piece of coarſe Senſe, and ſtretch it on the Tenterhooks of half a ſcore Rhimes, until it crack that you may ſee through it, and it rattle like a Drum-Head. When you ſee his Verſes hanged up in Tobacco-Shops, you may ſay, in defiance of the Proverb, *that the weakeſt does not always go to the Wall* ; for 'tis

---

well known the Lines are ſtrong enough, and in that Senſe may juſtly take the Wall of any, that have been written in our Language. He ſeldom makes a Conſcience of his Rhimes ; but will often take the Liberty to make *preach* rhyme with *Cheat*, *Vote* with *Rogue*, and *Committee-Man* with *Hang*.

He'll make one Word of as many Joints, as the Tin-Pudding, that a Jugler pulls out of his Throat, and chops in again—What think you of *glud-fum-flam-haſta-minantes* ? Some of the old *Latin Poets*<sup>6</sup> bragged, that their Verſes

---

<sup>5</sup> *Like him that made Plato, &c.*] Who this Blunder is to be fa-thered upon I cannot diſcover ; but that which he imputes to *Persius*, and another of *Juvenal's*, a Paſſage of his own in a Part of his Proſe Collections called *Criticifms upon Books and Authors*, will explain — *Persius*, ſays he, commits a very great Abſurdity, when laying the Scene of his fourth Satyr in *Greece*, and bringing in *Socrates* reproving a young Stateſmen, he makes him call the *Græcians Quirites*. [*footnote cont. next page*][<sup>8</sup>]

were tougher than Brafs, and harder than  
Marble ; what would they have done, if they  
had feen thefe ? Verily they would have had  
more reafon to wifh themfelves an hundred  
Throats, than they then had, to pronounce them.

There are fome, that drive a Trade in writ-  
ing in praife of other Writers, (like Rooks,

*Exegi monumentum ære perennius  
Regalique fitu Pyramidum altius*

*Hor. L. 3. O. 30*

---

118 A SMALL POET. that bet on Gamesters Hands) *not at all to ce- lebrate the learned Author's Merits, as they would shew, but their own Wits, of which he is but the Subjec\_t. The Letchery of this Va- nity has spawned more Writers than the [i] civil Law: [i] For those, whose Modesty must notorious Va- pours imaginable. For if the Privilege of Love be allowed-[i] Dicere quae puduit, scribere jussit Amor,[i] why should it not be so in Self- Love too? For if it be Wisdom to conceal our Imperfec\_tions, what is it to discover our Vir- tues? It is not like, that [i] Nature [i] gave Men great Parts upon such Terms, as the [i] Fairies [i] use to give Money, to pinch and leave them if they speak of it. They say-[i]Praise is but the Shadow of Virtue; [i] and s\*ure that Virtue is very foolish, that is afraid of its own Shadow.*

When he writes [i] Anograms, [i] he uses *to lay the Outsides* of his Vers\*es even (like a Brick-

---

A SMALL POET.

119

layer) by a Line of Rhime and Acrostic, *and fill th eMiddle with Rubbish*—In this he imi- tates [i] Ben Johnson, [i] but in nothing els\*e.

There was one, that lined a Hat-Case *with a Paper of [i] Benlowse'[i]s Poetry—[i] Prynne [i] bought it by Chance, and put a new Demi-Castor into it. The first Time he wore it he felt only a singing in his Head, which within two Days turned to a Vertigo—He was let Blood in the Ear by one of the State-Physicians, and reco- vered; but before he went abroad he writ a Poem of Rocks and Seas, in a Stile s\*o proper and natural, that it was hard to determine, which was rugged.*

---

<sup>6</sup> *Some of the old Latin Poets, &c.] Thus Horace*



There is no Fear of Ac\_tivity, nor Gambol of Wit, that ever was performed by Man, from him that vaults on [i] Pegasus, [i] to him that tumbles through the Hoop of an Anagram, but [i] Benlows [i] has got the Mas\*tery in it, whether it be high-rope Wit, or low-rope Wit. He

son means was .....

---

120 A SMALL POET./ has all Sorts of [i] Echoes, Rebus's, Chronograms,/ &c.[i] besides [i] Carwichets, Clenches, [i] and [i] Quibbles-[i]/ As for [i] Altars [i] and [i] Pyramids [i] in Poetry, he has/ out-done all Men that Way; for he has/ made a [i] Gridiron, [i] and a [i] Frying-Pan [i] in Verse,/ that, beside the Likeness in Shape, the very/ Tone and Sound of the Words did perfec\_tly/ represent the Noise, that is made by those/ Utensils, such as the old Poet called [i] sartago lo-/ quendi. [i] When he was Captain, he made all/ the Furniture of his Horse, from the Bit to/ the Crupper, in beaten Poetry, every Verse/ being fitted to the Proportion of the Thing,/ with a moral Allusion of the Sense to the/ Thing; as the [i] Bridle of Moderation, the Saddle/ of Content, [i] and [i] the Crupper of Constancy;[i] so that/ the same Thing was both Epigram and Emblem,/ even as Mule is both Horse and Ass./ / / {New Paragraph} Some Critics are of Opinion, that Poets/ ought to apply themselves to the Imitation of/ [i] Nature, [i] and make a Conscience of digressing/ from her; but he is none of thes\*e. The an-/ tient Magicians could charm down the Moon,/ and force Rivers back to their Springs by the/

---

## A SMALL POET. 121/

Power of Poetry only; and the Moderns will/ undertake to turn the Inside of the Earh out-/ ward (like a Jugler's Pocket) and shake the/ [i] Chess[i] out of it, make [i] Nature [i] shew Tricks like/ an Ape, and the Stars run on Errands; but/ still it is by dint of Poetry. And if Poets can/ so such noble Feats, they were unwise to des-/ cend to mean and vulgar: For where the rarest/ and most common Things are of a Price (as/ they are all one to Poets) it argues Disease in/ Judgement not to chuse the most curious. Hence/ some infer, that the Account they give of things/ deserves no Regard, because they never receive/ any Thing, as they find it, into their Compo-/ sitions, unless it agree both with the Measure/ of their own Fancis, and the Measure of their/ Lines, which can very seldom happen: And/ therefore when they give a Character of any/ Thing or Person, it does commonly bear no/ more Proportions to the Subject, than the Fishes/ and Ships in a Map

*do to the Scale. But let/ such know, that Poets, as well as Kings, ought/ rather to cons\*ider what is fit for them to give,/ than others to receive; that they are fain to/ have regard to the Exchange of Language, and/ /*

---

122 A SMALL POET. / write high or low, according as that runs:/ For in this Age, when the *smallest Poet* seldom/ goes below more then most, *it were a Shame for/ a grater and more noble Poet not to out-throw/ that cut a Bar.* / / / ##*There was a [i] Tobacco-Man, [i] that wrapped / [i]Spanish [i] Tobacco in a Paper of Verses, which/ [i]Benlows[i] had written against the [i] Pope, [i] which/ by a natural Antipathy, that his Wit has to / any Thing that's Catholic, spoiled the Tobacco;/ for it presently turned Mundungus.* This Au-/ thor will take an [i] English [i] Word, and, like the/ [i] Frenchman, [i] that *swallowed Water and spit it/ out Wine*, with a little Heaving and Straining/ would turn it immediately into [i] Latin,[i] as [i] plun-/ derat ille Domos[i]—Mille [i] Hocopokiana, [i] and a thou-/ sand such./ / ##*There was a young Practitioner in Poetry,/ that found there was no good to be done with-/ out a Mistress: For he, that writes of Love/ before he hath tried it, doth but travel by the/ Map; and he, that makes Love without a/ Dame, does like a Gamester, that plays for/ / #[i]More the most*] There is an appearance Defect or Error in these/ Words; but I leave it to the Reader to supply or correct./

---

## A SMALL POET. 123/

Nothing. He thought it convenient therefore,/ *first to furnish himself with a Name for his/ Misstress* beforehand, that he might not be to/ seek, *when his Merit or good Fortune* should/ bestow her upon him: *for every Poet is his/ mistresse's Godfather*, and gives her a new/ Name, like a Nun that takes Orders. He was/ very curious to *sit himself with a handsome/ Word* of a turnable Sound; but could light/ upon none, that *some Poet or other had not / made use of* before. He was therefore forced/ to fall to coining, and was *several Months be-/ fore he could light on one, that pleased him/ perfectly.* But after he had overcome that Dif-/ ficulty, he found a greater remaining, to get a/ Lady to own him. He accosted some of all/ Sorts, and gave them to understand, *both in/ Prose and Verse, how incomparably happy it/ was in his Power to make his Mistress, but/ could never convert any of them.* At length/ he was fain to make his Landress supply that/ Place as Proxy, until his good Fortune, or/ somebody of better Quality would be more / kind to him, which after a while he neither/ hoped nor cared for; for how

mean Toever her/ Condition was before, when he had once pre-/ tended to her,  
*she was* sure to be a Nymph and/

---

124 A SMALL POET./ a Goddess. *For what greater Honour can a/ Woman  
 be capable of, than to be translated/ into precious Stones and Stars? No Herald  
 in/ the World can go higher. Besides se found no/ Man can use that Freedom  
 of Hyperbole in the/ Character of a Person commonly known (as/ great Ladies  
 are) which we can in describing/ one so obscure and unknown, that nobody can/  
 disprove him. For he, that writes but one/ Sonnet upon any of the public Persons,  
 shall/ be sure to have his Reader at ever third Word/ cry out—What an Ass is  
 this to call [i] Spanish/ paper and Ceruse Lillies and Roses, [i] or [i] claps In-/  
 fluences—[i] To say, [i] the Graces are her waiting Wo-/ men, [i] when they are  
 known to be no better/ than her Bawdes—that [i] Day breaks from her/ Eyes,  
 [i]when she looks asquint—Or that [i] her/ Breath perfumes the Arabian Winds,  
 [i] when she/ puffs Tobacco?/ / ##It is no mean Art to improve a Language,/*

---

and find out Words, that are not only removed/ from common use, *but rich in*  
*Consonanats,*/ the Nerves and Sinews of Speech, to rais\*e a/ / —

---

## A SMALL POEt. 125/

*sft and feeble Language like ours to the Pitch/ of [i] High-Dutch,[i] as he did,  
 that writ/ / ## [i] Arts rattling Foreskins shrilling Bagpipes quell.[i]/ / #This  
 is not the only the most elegant, but most po-/ litic Way of Writing, that a Poet  
 can use; for I/ know no Defence like it to preserve a Poem from/ the Torture of  
 those that lisp and stammer./ He that wants Teeth may as well venture upon/ a  
 Piece of tough horny Brawn as such a Line,/ for he will look like an Ass eating  
 Thistles./ / # He never begins a Work without an Invoca-/ tion of his [i] Muse;  
 [i] for it is not fit that she should/ appear in public, to shew her Skill before she/  
 is entreated, as Gentlewomen do not use to / sing, until they are applied to, and  
 often desired./ / # I shall not need to say any this of the Ex-/ cellence of Poetry,  
 since it has been already/ performed by many excellent Persons, among/ whom  
 some have lately undertaken to prove, that/ the civil Government cannot possibly  
 subsist with-/ out it, which, for my Part, I believe to be true/ / [i] S\*ome have  
 lately. [i] This alludes to [i] Davenant—See [i] G—*

---

126 A SMALL POET./ in a poetical Sense, *and more probable to be/ received  
 of it, than those strange Feats of/ building Walls and making Trees dance,/*

*which Antiquity ascribes to Verse. And though/ [i] Philosophers [i] are of a contrary Opinion, and will/ not allow Poets fit to live in a Commonwealth,/ their Partiality is plainer than their Reasons;/ for they have no other Way to pretend to this/ Prerogative themselves, as they do, but by re-/ moving Poets, whom they know to have a/ fairer Title; and this they do unjustly, that/ [i] Plato, [i] who first banished Poets his Republic,/ forgot that the very Commonwealth was poe-/ tical. I shall say nothing to them, but only/ desire the World to consider, how happily it is/ like to be governed by those, that are as so per-/ petual a civil War among themselves, that if we/ should submit ourselves to their own Resolution/ of this Question, and be content to allow them/ only fit to rule if they could but conclude it/ so themselves, they would never agree upon it-/ Mean while there is no less Certainty and Agree-/ ment in Poetry than the Mathematics; for they/ all submit the to the same Rules without Dispute or/ Controversy. But whosoever shall please to look/ into the Records of Antiquity shall find their/ Title so unquestioned, that the greatest Princess/ / / 4*

---

A SMALL POET. 127/ in the whole World have been glad to derive/ their Pedigrees, and their Power too, from/ Poets. [i] Alexander [i] the great had no wiser a Way/ so secure the Empire to himself by [i] Right, [i]/ which he had gotten by [i] Force, [i] then by de-/ claring himself the Son of [i] Jupiter; [i] and who/ was [i] Jupiter [i] but the Son of a Poet? So [i] Caes\*ar [i]/ and all [i] Rome [i] was transported with Joy, when a/ Poet made [i] Jupiter [i] his Colleague in the Empire;/ and when [i] Jupiter [i] governed, what did the/ Poets, that governed Jupiter?/

---