

[107]

{Double Rule}

A

S M A L L P O E T

[I]s one, that would fain make himself that, []which {i} Nature{i} never meant him; like a {i}Fa- natic,{i} that insspires himssself with his own Whimsses. He ssets up Haberdassher of ssmall Poetry, with a very ssmall Stock, and no Credit. He believes it is Inventions enough to find out other Men's Wit; and whatsssoever he lights upon either in Books, or Company, he makes bold with as his own. This he puts together sso un- towardly, that you may perceive his own Wit has the Rickets, by the Sswelling Dissproportion of the Joints. Imitation is the whole Sum of him; 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 undersstand what is besst, he naturally takes the worsst, as being mosst agreeable to his own Talent. You may

108 A SMALL POET. know his Wit not to be natural, 'tis sso un- quiet and troublesome in him: For as thosse, that have Money but sseldom, are always sshak- ing their Pockets, when they have it; sso does he, when he thinks he has got ssomething, that will make him appear. He is a perpetual Tal- ker; and you may know by the Freedom of his Disscoursse, that he came light by it, as Thieves sspend fiercely what they get. He meassures other Men's Wits by {i}their{i} Modesty, and his own by {i}his{i} Confidence. He makes nothing of writing Plays, because he has not Wit enough to un- derstand the Difficulty. This makes him ven- ture to talk and sscribble, as Chowsses do to play with cunning Gamessters, until they are cheated and laughed at. He is always talking of Wit, as thosse, that have bad Voices, are always ssing- ing out of Tune; and thosse, that cannot play, delight to fumble on Insstruments. He grows the unwisser by other Men's Harms; for the worsse others write, he finds the more Encou- ragement to do sso too. His Greedinesss of Praise is sso eager, that he sswallows any Thing, that comes in the Likenesss of it, how notorious and palpable ssoever, and is as Shot-free againsst any Thing, that may lesssen his good Opinion

A SMALL POET.

109

of himssself—This renders him incurable, like Disseasses, 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 [i] Latin [i] or [i] Greek [i] he ranks himself among the Learned, despises the Ignorant, talks Criticisms out of [i] Scaliger[i], and repeats [i] Martial's [i] bawdy Epigrams, and sets up his Rest 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

110 A SMALL POET. sliding down [i]Parnassus[i]. Whatsoever he hears well said he seizes 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 mosaic Work, made up of several Scraps sewed together, He calls a slovenly nasty Description [i] great Nature,[i] and dull Flatness [i] strange Easiness.[i] He writes down all that comes in his Head, and makes no Choice, because he has nothing to do it with, that is Judgment. He is always repealing the old Laws of Comedy, and like the [i] long Parliament [i] making [i] Ordinances [i] in their Stead; although they are perpetually [i] thrown out [i] of Coffee-Houses, and come to Nothing. He is like an [i]Italian [i] Thief, that never robs, but he murders, to prevent Discovery; so sure is he to cry down the Man from whom he purloins, that his petty Larceny of Wit may pass unsuspected. He is but a Copier at best, and will never arrive to practice by the Life: For bar him the Imitation of something he has read, and he has no Image in his Thoughts.

[i] Whatsoever he hears well said, &c.[i]] In this Butler alludes to [i] Martial's [i] Epigram to [i] Fidentinus.

Observation and Fancy, the Matter and Form of just Wit, are above his Philosophy. He appears so over concerned in all Men's Wits, as if they were but Disparagements of his own; and cries down all they do, as if they were Encroachments upon him. He takes Jests from the Owners and breaks them, as [i] Justices[i] do false Weights, and Pots that want Measure. When he meets with

any Thing, that is very good, he change it into *small Money, like three Groats for a Shilling, to serve several Occasions*. He disclaims *Study, pretends to take Things in Motion, and to shoot flying*, which appears to be very true by his often missing of his Mark. His Wit is much troubled with *Obstruc_tions; and he has Fits as painful as those of the Spleen*. He fancies him- self a *dainty spruce Shepherd*, with a Flock and a fine *silken Shepherdss*, that follows his Pipe, as Rats did the Conjurers in [i] Germany.[i]

As for [i] Epithets, [i] he always avoids those, that are near akin to the *Sensse*. *Such matches are unlawful, and not fit to be made by a [i] Christian[i]* Poet; and therefore all his Care is to chus*e out

[i]Quem recitas meus est, O Fidentinus, libellus: sed male cum recitas, incipit esse tuus. Mare. L. 1. Ep 39 [i]

112 A SMALL POET. *such, as will serve*, like a wooden Leg, to piece out a main'd Vers*e, that wants a Foot or two; and if they will buy rhimes now and then into the Bargain, or run upon a Letter, it is a Work of Supererrogation.

For [i] Similtudes,[i] he likes the *hardest and most obscure best*: For as Ladies wear black Patches, to make their Complexions *seem fairer than they are*; so when an *Illustration is more ob- scure* than the *Sense that went before it, it must of Necessity make it appear clearer than it did*: For Contraries are best set off with Con- traries.

He has found out a Way to s*ave the Expence

of much Wit and Sense: *For he will make less than some have prodigally laid out upon five or six Words serve forty or fifty Lines. This is a thrifty Invention, and very easy*; and, if it were commonly known, would much in- creas*e the Trade of Wit, and maintain a Mul-

[i] We read that Virgil used to make, &c [i] This alludes to a Passage in the Life of [i] Virgil [i] ascribed to [i] Donatus[i]. " Cum Georgica scribe- " traditur quotidie meditato mane plurimos versus dic_tare s*o- " litus, —Illegible need to check original copy (sarah)"

titude of *small Poets in constant Employment*. He has found out a new Sort of poetical [i]Geor- gics, [i] a Trick of sowing Wit like *clover-grass* on barren Subjec_ts, which would yield nothing before. This is very useful for the *Times*, wherein, some men say, there is no Room left for new Invention. He will take

three Grains of Wit like the Elixir, and projec_ting it upon the [i] Iron-Age [i] turns it immediately into [i] Gold-[i] All the Business of Mankind has presently vanished, 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-Porridge.

We read that [i] Virgil [i] us*ed to make fifty or s*ixty Vers*es in a Morning, and afterwards re-duce them to ten. This was an unthrifty Vanity, and argues him as well ignorant in the Hus*bandry of his own Poetry, as [i] Seneca [i] s*ays he was in that of a Farm; for in plain [i] Englis*h[i]

[i] As Seneca s*ays he was in that of a farm.] Seneca [i] in his 86th Epis*tle finds s*everal Faults wich [i] Virgil's [i] Rules and Obs*ervations in

Hus*bandry, as they are delivered in his [i] Georgics, and adds of him--

"Qui nos quod veris*s*ime, s*ed quid decentis*s*ime diceretur, as-
" s*pexit; nec Agricolas docere voluit, s*ed legentes delec_tore".

Vol. II.

I

114 A SMALL POET.

it was no better than bringing a Noble to Nine- pence. And as *such Courses* brough the [i] prodigal Son [i] to eat with Hogs: So they did him to feed with Horses, *which were not much better Company, and may teach us to avoid doing the like. For certainly it is more noble to take four or five Grains of Sense*, and, like a Gold-Beater, hammer them into s*o many Leaves as will fill a whole Book; than to write nothing but Epitomes, which many wife Men believe will be the Bane and Calamity of Learning.

When he writes, he commonly *steers the Sense* 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 *easy enough; and has found out some sturdy hard Word, that will but rhyme, he will ham- mer the Sense* upon it, like a Piece of hot Iron upon an Anvil, into what Form he pleas*es.

There is no Art in the World so *rich in Terms as Poetry; a whole Dic_tionary is scarce*

[i] So they did him to feed with Horses/ *This must be explained by the same Writer of [i] Virgil's[i] Life, who informs us that [Virgil] in his Youth studied*

Physic, in which having made great Proficiency, he repaired to [i] Rome, [i] and applying himself to that Branch of it

A SMALL POET.

115

able to contain them: For there is hardly a Pond, a Sheep-walk, or a Gravel-pit in all [i] Greece, [i] but the antient Name of it is become a Term of Art in Poetry. By this means *small Poets have* such a Stock of able hard Words lying by them, as [i] Dryades, Hamadryades, Aonides, Fauni, Nymphae, Sylvani, &c.[i] that *signify nothing at all; and* such a World of pedantic Terms of the same Kind, *as may serve to furnis^{*h} all the new Inventions and* [i] thorough-Reformations, [i] that can happen between this and [i] Plato's[i] great Year.

When he writes he never proposes any Scope or Purpose *to himself*, but gives h Genius all Freedom: For as he, that rides abroad for his Pleasure, *can hardly be out of his Way*; so he that writes for his Pleasure, *can seldom be be- side his Subjec_t. It is an ungrateful Thing to a noble Wit to be confined to any Thing—To what Purpose* did the Antients feign [i] Pegasus *to have Wings, if he must be* confined to the Road and Stages like a Pack-Hors*e, or be forced to be obedient to Hedges and Ditches? There-

which relates to the *Distempers of Horses*, was employed in [i] Ae- gustus's Sta- bleswith great Success, *and by that Means introduced himself into the Favour of that Prince.*

12

116 A SMALL POET.

fore he has no Respec_t to *Decorum and Pro- priety of Circumstance*; for the Regard of Persons, Times, and Places *is a Restraint too servile to e imposed* upon poetical Licence; like him that made [i] Plato[i] confess [i] Juvenal [i] *to be a Philosopher, or* [i] Pers*ius, that calls teh [i] Athe- nians Quirites [i].

For [i] Metaphors, [i] 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, *utnil 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, [i] that the weakest does not always go to the Wall; [i] for 'tis*

[i] Like him that made Plaot, &c.] [i] Who this Blunder is to be fa-
thered upon I cannot discover; *but that which he imports to [i] Per-*sius, [i] and
another of Juvenal's Passage of his own in a Part of his Prose *Collec_tions called*
[i]Criticisms upon Books and Autohrs, [i] will ex-plain-[i] Persius, [i] says, *he*
commits a very great Absurdity, when laying the Scene of his fourth Satyr in [i]
Greece [i], and bringing in [i] So-crates reproving a young statesmen, he makes
him call the [i] Gre-cians [i] Quirites.

A SMALL POET. 117

well known the Lines are *strong enough, and in that Sense* may jus*_tly 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 [i] preach [i]
rhime with [i] Cheat, Vote [i] with [i] Rogue, and [i] Com-mittee-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 [i] glud-fum-flam-hasta-
minantes? [i] Some of the old [i] Latin [i] Poets bragged that their Verses *were*
tougher than Brass, and harder than Marble; what would they have done, if they
had *seen these*? Verily they would have had more reason *to wish* them*selves an
hundred Throats, than they then had, to pronounce them.

There are *some, that drive a Trade in writ-ing in praise* of other Writers, (like
Rooks,

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 pudit, *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 the Middle with Rubbish—In this he imitates [i] Ben Johnson, [i] but in nothing else.

There was one, that lined a Hat-Case with a Paper of [i] Benlowse'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 recovered; but before he went abroad he writ a Poem of Rocks and Seas, in a Style so proper and natural, that it was hard to determine, which was rugged.

There is no Fear of Activity, 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 Mastery 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 perfectly/ 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 these. 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?/
