[*two rules*]

# PREFACE.

*T2HE writing of Characters was a Kind of Wit*  
*much in Faſhion in the Beginning of the laſt*  
*Century, The two principal Authors in this Way*  
*were Sir* Thomas Overbury, *and Dr.* John  
Earle *Tutor to Prince* Charles *in* 1643, *and after*  
*the Reſtoration Dean of* Weſtminſter, *and ſuc-*  
*ceſſively Biſhop of* Worceſter *and* Saliſbury. *How*  
*agreeable theſe Sorts of Eſſays were to the public*  
*Taſte may be judged from Sir* Thomas's *little Book*  
*having fourteen Editions before* 1632, *and the*  
*Biſhop's ſix between* 1628 *and* 1633. *Whether*  
Butler *has equalled or excelled them, and what*  
*Place he is to hold in this Claſs of Writers muſt*  
*be left to the Deciſion of the Public, as the Inte-*  
*reſt and Prejudice of a Publiſher may render me*  
*a ſuſpected or an incompetent Judge. The Reader*  
*will have an Opportunity of determining for him*  
*ſelf, as they have all attempted to draw the ſame*  
*Pictures.*

*As in ſuch a Variety of Characters there muſt*  
*be ſome drawn from Originals in general the ſame,*  
*and only differenced by particular Circumſtances,*  
*the ſame Obſervations are ſometimes repeated.*  
*Whether the Author in this Caſe requires any Apo-*  
*logy muſt be left to his Judges the Critics ; it is*  
*enough for me that I can ſay I have done him*  
*Justice in publiſhing them.*

*As moſt of theſe Characters are dated when they*  
*were compoſed, I can inform the curious, that they*  
*were chiefly drawn up from* 1667 *to* 1669, *at*  
*which time, as has been before obſerved,* Butler  
*reſided in* Wales *under the Protection of Lord*  
Carbery.

[*double rule*]

# A HUFFING COURTIER

I2s a Cypher, that has no Value himſelf, but  
from the Place he ſtands in. All his Hap-  
pineſs conſiſts in the Opinion he believes others  
have of it. This is his Faith, but as it is he-  
retical and erroneous, though he ſuffer much  
Tribulation for it, he continues obſtinate, and  
not to be convinced. He flutters up and down  
like a Butterfly in a Garden ; and while he is  
pruning of his Peruque takes Occaſion to con-  
template his Legs, and the Symmetry of his  
Britches. He is part of the Furniture of the  
Rooms, and ſerves for a walking Picture, a  
moving Piece of Arras. His Buſineſs is only  
to be ſeen, and he performs it with admirable  
Industry, placing himself always in the beſt  
Light, looking wonderfully Politic, and cau-  
tious whom he mixes withal. His Occupation  
is to ſhow his Cloaths, and if they could but  
walk themselves, they would ſave him the

Labour, and do his Work as well as himſelf.  
His Immunity from Varlets is his Freehold,  
and he were a loſt Man without it. His  
Cloaths are but his Taylor's Livery, which he  
gives him, for ’tis ten to one he never pays for  
them. He is very careful to diſcover the Lining  
of his Coat, that you may not ſuſpect any  
Want of Integrity of Flaw in him from the  
Skin outwards. His Taylor is his Creator,  
and makes him of nothing ; and though he  
lives by Faith in him, he is perpetually com\_  
mitting Iniquities againſt him. His Soul dwells  
in the Outſide of him, like that of a hollow  
Tree ; and if you do but pill the Bark off him  
he deceaſes immediately. His Carriage of  
himſelf is the wearing of his Cloaths, and,  
like the Cinamon Tree, his Bark is better than  
his Body. His looking big is rather a Tumor,  
than Greatneſs. He is an Idol, that has juſt  
ſo much Value, as other Men give him that  
believe in him, but none of his own. He  
makes him Ignorance paſs for Reſerve, and, like  
a Hunting-nag, leaps over what he cannot get  
through. He has juſt ſo much of Politics, as  
Hoſtlers in the Univerſity have *Latin*. He is  
as humble as a Jeſuit to his Superior ; but re-

pays himſelf again in Inſolence over thoſe, that  
are below him ; and with a generous Scorn  
deſpiſes thoſe, that can neither do him good,  
nor hurt. He adores thoſe, that may do him  
good, though he knows they never will ; and  
deſpiſes thoſe, that would not hurt him, if  
they could. The Court is his Church, and he  
believes as that believes, and cries up and down  
every Thing, as he finds it paſs there. It is a  
great Comfort to him to think, that ſome who  
do not know him may perhaps take him for a  
Lord ; and while that Thought laſts he looks  
bigger than uſual, and forgets his Acquain-  
tance ; and that's the Reaſon why he will ſome-  
times know you, and ſometimes not. Nothing  
but want of Money or Credit puts him in  
mind that he is mortal ; but then he truſts  
Providence that ſomebody will truſt him ; and  
in Expectation of that hopes for a better Life,  
and that his Debts will never riſe up in Judg-  
ment against him. To get in debt is to labour  
in his Vocation ; but to pay is to forfeit his  
Protection ; for what’s that worth to one that  
owes Nothing ? His Employment being only to  
wear his Cloaths, the whole Account of his  
Life and Actions is recorded in Shopkeepers  
Books, that are his faithful Hiſtoriographers to

their own Poſterity ; and he believes he loſes  
ſo much Reputation, as he pays off his Debts ;  
and that no Man wears his Cloaths in Faſhion,  
that pays for them, for noting is further from  
the Mode. He believes that he that runs in  
Debt is beforehand with thoſe that truſt him,  
and only thoſe, that pay, are behind. His  
Brains are turned giddy, like one that walks  
on the Top of a Houſe ; and that’s the Reaſon  
it is ſo troubleſome to him to look downwards.  
He is a Kind of Spectrum, and his Cloaths are  
the Shape he takes to appear and walk in ; and  
when he puts them off he vaniſhes. He runs  
as buſily out of one Room into another, as a  
great Practiſer does in *Weſtminſter*-Hall from  
one Court to another. When he accoſts a  
Lady he puts both Ends of his Microcoſm in  
Motion, by making Legs at one End, and  
combing his Peruque at the other. His Gar-  
niture is the Sauce to his Cloaths, and he walks  
in his Portcannons like one, that ſtalks in long  
Graſs. Every Motion of him crys *Vanity of*  
*Vanities, all is Vanity,* quoth the Preacher. He  
rides himself like a well-managed Horſe, reins  
in his Neck, and walks *Terra Terra*. He  
carries his elbows backward, as if he were

pinioned like a truſt-up Fowl, and moves as  
ſtiff as if he was upon the Spit. His Legs are  
ſtuck in his great voluminous Britches, like  
the Whiſtles in a Bagpipe, thoſe abundant  
Britches, in which his nether Parts are not  
cloathed, but packt up. His Hat has been long  
in a Conſumption of the Faſhion, and is now  
almoſt worn to Nothing ; if it do not recover  
quickly it will grown too little for a Head of  
Garlick. He wears Garniture on the Toes of  
his Shoes to juſtify his Prentenſions to the Gout,  
or ſuch other Malady, that for the Time being  
is moſt in Fashion or Requeſt. When he  
ſalutes a Friend he pulls off his Hat, as Wo-  
men do their Vizard-Maſques. His Ribbons  
are of the true Complexion of his Mind, a  
Kind of painted Cloud or gawdy Rainbow,  
that has no Colour of it ſelf, but what is bor-  
rows from Reflection. He is as tender of his  
Cloaths, as a Coward is of his Fleſh, and as  
loth to have them diſordered. His Bravery  
is all his Happineſs ; and like *Atlas* he carries  
his Heaven on his Back. He is like the golden  
Fleece, a fine Outſide on a Sheep’s Back. He  
is a Monſter or an *Indian* Creature, that is  
good for nothing in the World but to be ſeen.  
He puts himſelf up into a Sedan, like a Fiddle

in a Caſe, and is taken out again for the La-  
dies to play upon, who when they have done  
with him, let down his treble-String, till they  
are in the Humour again. His Cook and Va-  
let de Chambre conſpire to dreſs Dinner and  
him ſo punctually together, that the one may  
not be ready before the other. As Peacocks and  
Oſtridges have the gaudieſt and fineſt Feathers,  
yet cannot fly ; ſo all his Bravery is to flutter  
only. The Beggars call him *my Lord,* and he  
takes them at their Words, and pays them for  
it. If you praiſe him, he is ſo true and faith-  
ful to the Mode, that he never fails to make  
you a Preſent of himſelf, and will not be re-  
fuſed, tho’ you know not what to do with him  
when you have him.

[*double rule*]

# AN ANTIQUARY

I2s one that has his Being in this Age, but  
his Life and Converſation is in the Days of  
old. He deſpiſes the preſent Age as an Inno-  
vation, and ſlights the future ; but has a great  
Value for that, which is paſt and gone, like  
the Madman, that fell in Love with *Cleopatra*.  
He is an old frippery-Philoſopher, that has  
ſo ſtrange a natural Affection to worm-eaten  
Speculation, that it is apparent he has a Worm  
in his Skull. He honours his Forefathers and  
Fore-mothers, but condemns his Parents as  
too modern, and no better than Upſtarts. He  
neglects himſelf, becauſe he was born in his  
own Time, and ſo far off Antiquity, which  
he ſo much admires ; and repines, like a  
younger Brother, becauſe he came ſo late into  
the World. He ſpends the one half of his  
Time in collecting old inſignificant Trifles,

and the other in ſhewing them, which he takes  
ſingular Delight in ; becauſe the oftener he does  
it, the further they are from being new to him.  
All his Curiouſities take place of one another  
according to their Seniority, and he values  
them not by their Abilities, but their Standing.  
He has a great Veneration for Words that are  
ſtricken in Years, and are grown ſo aged, that  
they have out-lived their Employments---Theſe  
he uſes with a Reſpect agreeable to their An-  
tiquity, and the good Services they have done.  
He throws away his Time in enquiring after  
that which is paſt and gone ſo many Ages ſince,  
like one that ſhoots away an Arrow, to find  
out another that was loſt before. He fetches  
things out of Duſt and Ruins, like the Fable  
of the chymical Plant raiſed out of its own  
Aſhes. He values one old Invention, that is  
loſt and never to be recovered, before all the  
new ones in the World, tho’ never ſo uſeful.  
The whole Buſineſs of his Life is the ſame with  
his, that ſhows the Tombs at *Westminster*, only  
the one does it for his Pleaſure, and the other  
for Money. As every Man has but one Fa-  
ther, but two Grand-Fathers and a World  
of Anceſtors ; ſo he has a proportional Value

for Things that are antient, and the further off  
the greater.

He is a great Time-ſerver, but it is of Time  
out of Mind, to which he conforms exactly,  
but is wholly retied from the preſent. His  
Days were ſpent and gone long before he came  
into the World, and ſince his only Buſineſs is  
to collect what he can out of the Ruins of  
them. He has ſo ſtrong a natural Affection to  
any Thing that is old, that he may truly *ſay to*  
*Duſt and Worms you are my Father, and to Rot-*  
*tenneſs thou are my Mother*. He has no Provi-  
dence nor Fore-ſight ; for all his Contempla-  
tions look backward upon the Days of old,  
and his Brains are turned with them, as if he  
walked backwards. He had rather interpret  
one obſcure Word in any old ſenſeleſs Diſ-  
courſe, than be the Author of the moſt ingenious  
new one ; and with *Scaliger* would ſell the  
Empire of *Germany*[[1]](#footnote-24) (if it were in his Power)  
for an old Song. He devours an old Manuſ-  
cript with greater Reliſh than Worms and Moths  
do, and, though there be nothing in it, values

it above any Thing printed, which he accounts  
but a Novelty. When he happens to cure a  
ſmall Botch in an old Author, he is as proud  
of it, as if he had got the Philoſophers Stone,  
and could cure all the Diſeaſes of Mankind.  
He values things wrongfully upon their Anti-  
quity, forgetting that the moſt modern are  
really the moſt ancient of all Things in the  
World, like thoſe that reckon their Pounds  
before their Shillings and Pence, of which they  
are made up. He eſteems no Cuſtoms but ſuch  
as have outlived themſelves, and are long ſince  
out of Uſe ; as the *Catholics* allow of no Saints,  
but ſuch as are dead, and the *Fanatics*, Op-  
poſition, of none but the Living.

[*two rules*]

# AN ALDERMAN

H2AS taken his Degree in Cheating, and  
the higheſt of his Faculty ; or paid for  
refuſing his *MANDAMUS*. He is a Peer of the  
City, and a Member of their upper Houſe,  
Who, as ſoon as he arrives at ſo many thouſand  
Pounds, is bound by the Charter to ſerve the  
Public with ſo much Underſtanding, what  
ſhift ſoever he make to raiſe it, and wear a  
Chain about his Neck like a Raindeer, or in  
Default to commute, and make Satisfaction in  
ready Money, the beſt Reaſon of the Place;  
for which hi has the Name only, like a titular  
Prince, and is an *Alderman extraordinary*. But  
if his Wife can prevail with him to ſtand, he  
becomes one of the City-ſupporters, and, like  
the Unicorn in the King's Arms, wears a Chain  
about his Neck very right-worſhipfully. He  
wears Scarlet, as the Whore of *Babylon* does,  
not for her honeſty, but the Rank and Quality

ſhe is of among the Wicked, When he ſits  
as a Judge in his Court he is abſolute, and uſes  
arbitrary Power ; for he is not bound to un-  
derſtand what he does, nor render an Account  
why he gives Judgment on one Side rather  
than another ; but his Will is ſufficient to ſtand  
for his Reaſon, to all Intents and Purpoſes.  
He does no public Buſineſs without eating and  
drinking, and never meets about Matters of Im-  
portance, but the Cramming his Inſide is the  
moſt weighty Part of the Work of the Day.  
He diſpatches no public Affair until he has  
thoroughly dined upon it, and is fully ſatisfied  
with Quince-Pye and Cuſtard : for Men are  
wiſer, the *Italians* ſay, after their Bellies are  
full, than when they are faſting, and he is very  
cautious to omit no Occaſion of improving his  
Parts that Way. He is ſo careful of the In-  
tereſt of his Belly, and manages it ſo induſ-  
triouſly, that in a little Space it grows great  
and takes Place of all the reſt of his Members,  
and becomes ſo powerful, that they will never  
be in a Condition to rebel againſt it any more.  
He is cloathed in Scarlet the Livery of his Sins,  
like the rich Glutton, to put him in Mind of  
what Means he came to his Wealth and Pre-  
ferment by. He makes a Trade of his Eat-

ing, and, like a Cock, ſcrapes when he feeds ;  
for the Public pays for all and more, which he  
and his Brethren ſhare among themſelves ; for  
they never make a dry Reckoning. When he  
comes to be Lord-Mayor he does not keep a  
great Houſe, but a very great Houſe-warming  
for a whole Year ; for though he invites all the  
*Companies* in the City he does not treat them,  
but they club to entertain him, and pay the  
Reckoning beforehand. His Fur-gown makes  
him look a great deal bigger than he is, like  
the Feathers of an Owl, and when he pulls  
it off, he looks as if he were fallen away, or  
like a Rabbet, had his Skin pulled off.

1. *And with* Scaliger *would ſell the Empire of Germany*] This al-  
   ludes to a ranting Exclamation of *Scaliger*’s upon an Ode in *Horace*,  
   which he was particularly pleased with. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)