

[double rule]

A
SMALL POET

I²S one, that would fain make himself that,
which Nature never meant him ; like a Fa-
natic, that inpires himself with his own
Whimfies. He sets up Haberdasher of small
Poetry, with a very small Stock, and no Credit.
He believes it is Invention enough to find out
other Men's Wit ; and whatsoever he lights upon
either in Books, or Company, he makes bold
with as his own. This he puts together so un-
towardly, that you may perceive his own Wit
has the Rickets, by the swelling Disproportion
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 understand what
is best, he naturally takes the worst, as being
most agreeable to his own Talent. You may

know his Wit not to be natural, 'tis so un-
quiet and troublesome in him : For as those,
that have Money but seldom, are always flak-
ing their Pockets, when they have it ; so does
he, when he thinks he has got something, that
will make him appear. He is a perpetual Tal-
ker ; and you may know by the Freedom of his
Discourse, that he came light by it, as Thieves
spend freely what they get. He measures other
Men's Wits by their Modesty, and his own by
his 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 scribble, as Chowfes do to play

with cunning Gamesters, 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 unwifer 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 faid¹ 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 Cufhion, of mofaic Work,
 made up of feveral Scraps fewed together.
 He calls a flovenly nafty Defcription great Na-
 ture, 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 pur-
 loins, 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
 Jests 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

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

Money, like three Groats for a Shilling, to serve several Occasions. He disclaims Study, pretends to take Things in Motion, and to float flying, which appears to be very true by his often missing of his Mark. His Wit is much troubled with Obstructions ; and he has Fits as painful as those of the Spleen. He fancies himself a dainty spruce Shepherd, with a Flock and a fine filken Shepherdes, that follows his Pipe, as Rats did the Conjurers in Germany.

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

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

For Similitudes, 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 obscure 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 Contraries.

He has found out a Way to save 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 increase the Trade of Wit, and maintain a Mul-

titude of small Poets in constant Employment. He has found out a new Sort of poetical Georgics, a Trick of fowing Wit like clover-grafs on barren Subjects, 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 projecting it upon the Iron-Age turn it immediately into Gold--- 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 ; Trees have born Fritters, and Rivers flowed Plum-Porridge.

We read that Virgil used to make² fifty or sixty Verses in a Morning, and afterwards reduce them to ten. This was an unthrifty Vanity, and argues him as well ignorant in the Husbandry of his own Poetry, as Seneca says he was in that of a Farm ;³ for in plain English

it was no better than bringing a Noble to Ninepence. And as such Courses brought the prodigal Son to eat with Hogs : So they did him

² [footnote for next page] We read that Virgil used to make, &c.] This alludes to a Passage

in the Life of Virgil ascribed to Donatus. “ Cum Georgica scriberet traditur quotidie meditando mane plurimos versus dictare folitus, ac per totum diem retracando ad paucissimos redigere : non absurde carmen se usque more parere dicens, et lambendo demum effingere.

³ As Seneca says he was in that of a farm.] Seneca in his 86th Epistle finds several Faults with Virgil's Rules and Observations in Husbandry, as they are delivered in his Georgics, and adds of him --- “ Qui non quod verissime, sed quid decentissime diceretur, adspexit ; nec Agricolas docere voluit, sed legentes delectare.”

to feed with Horfes,⁴ 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 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 rhime, 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 scarce

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

⁴ 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]

Pleasure, can hardly be out of his Way ; fo he that writes for his Pleasure, can feldom be befide his Subject. It is an ungrateful Thing to a noble Wit to be confined to any Thing--- To what Purpose 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 Refpect to Decorum and Propriety of Circumftance ; for the Regard of Perfons, Times, and Places is a Reftraint too fervile to be impofed upon poetical Licence ; like him that made Plato⁵ confefs Juvenal to be a Philofopher, or Perfius, that calls the Athenians Quirites.

For Metaphors, he ufes to chufe the hardeft, and moft far-fet that he can light upon---Thefe are the Jewels of Eloquence, and therefore the harder they are, the more precious they muft be.

He'll take fcant Piece of coarfe Senfe, and ftretch it on the Tenterhooks of half a fcore Rhimes, until it crack that you may fee through it, and it rattle like a Drum-Head. When you fee his Verfes hanged up in Tobacco-Shops, you may fay, in defiance of the Proverb, that the weakeft does not always go to the Wall ; for 'tis

⁵ Like him that made Plato, &c.] Who this Blunder is to be fathered upon I cannot difcover ; but that which he imputes to Perfius, and another of Juvenal's, a Paffage of his own in a Part of his Profe Collections called Criticifms upon Books and Authrs, will explain --- Perfius, fays he, commits a very great Abfurdity, 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][⁸]

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 Poets⁶ bragged, that their Verses were tougher than Brafs, and harder than Marble ; what would they have done, if they had seen these ? Verily they would have had more reason to wish themselves an hundred Throats, than they then had, to pronounce them.

There are some, that drive a Trade in writing in praise of other Writers, (like Rooks,

Exegi monumentum ære perennius
Regalique fitu Pyramidum altius

Hor. L. 3. O. 30

that bet on Gamesters Hands) not at all to celebrate the learned Author's Merits, as they would fiew, but their own Wits, of which he is but the Subject. The Letchery of this Vanity has spawned more Writers than the * civil Law: * For those, whose Modesty must notorious Vapours imaginable. For if the Privilege of Love be allowed--* Dicere quæ* pudit, scribere iuffit Amor,* why should it not be so in Self-Love too? For if it be Wisdom to conceal our Imperfections, what is it to discover our Virtues? It is not like, that * Nature * gave Men great Parts upon such Terms, as the * Fairies use to give Money, to pinch and leave them if they speak of it. They say--Praise is but the Shadow of Virtue; * and sure that Virtue is very foolish, that is afraid of its own Shadow.

When he writes * Anograms, * he uses to lay the Outfides of his Verses even (like a Brick-

⁶ Some of the old Latin Poets, &c.] Thus Horace

layer) by a Line of Rhime and Acroftic, and fill th eMiddle with Rubbifh--In this he imi- tates * Ben Johnson, * but in nothing elfe.

There was one, that lined a Hat-Cafe with a Paper of * Benlowfe's Poetry-- Prynne * bought it by Chance, and put a new Demi-Caftor into it. The firft Time he wore it he felt only a finging in his Head, which within two Days turned to a Vertigo-- He was let Blood in the Ear by one of the State-Phyficians, and reco- vered; but before he went abroad he writ a Poem of Rocks and Seas, in a Stile fo proper and natural, that it was hard to determine, which was ruggeded.

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

son means was

has all Sorts of * Echoes, Rebus's, Chronograms,/ &c.* befides * Carwichets, Clenches, * and * Quibbles--/ As for Altars * and * Pyramids * in Poetry, he has/ out-done all Men that Way; for he has/ made a * Gridiron, * and a * Frying-Pan * in Verfe,/ that, befide the Likenefs in Shape, the very/ Tone and Sound of the Words did perfec_tly/ reprezent the Noife, that is made by thofe/ Utenfils, fuch as the old Poet called * fartago lo-/ quendi. * When he was Captain, he made all/ the Furniture of his Horfe, from the Bit to/ the Crupper, in beaten Poetry, every Verfe/ being fitted to the Proportion of the Thing,/ with a moral Allufion of the Senfe to the/ Thing; as the * Bridle of Moderation, the Saddle/ of Content, * and * the Crupper of Conftancy;* fo that/ the fame Thing was both Epigram and Emblem,/ even as Mule is both Horfe and Afs.

Some Critics are of Opinion, that Poets/ ought to apply themselves to the Imi- tation of/ * Nature, * and make a Confcience of digreffing/ from her; but he is none of thefe. The an-/ tient Magicians could charm down the Moon,/ and force Rivers back to their Springs by the/

Power of Poetry only; and the Moderns will/ undertake to turn the Infide of the Earh out-/ ward (like a Jugler's Pocket) and fhake the/ Chesf out of it, make * Nature * fhew Tricks like/ an Ape, and the Stars run on Errands; but/ ftill it is by dint of Poetry. And if Poets can/ fo fuch noble Feats, they were unwife to def-/ cend to mean and vulgar: For where the rareft/ and moft 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- / fitions, unless it agree both with the Measure/ of their own Fancies, 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 consider what is fit for them to give,/ than others to receive; that they are fain to/ have regard to the Exchange of Language, and/

write high or low, according as that runs:/ For in this Age, when the smallest Poet seldom/ goes below more than most, it were a Shame for/ a greater and more noble Poet not to out-throw/ that cut a Bar.

There was a * Tobacco-Man, * that wrapped / Spanish Tobacco in a Paper of Verfes, which/ Benlows had written against the * Pope, * 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 * English * Word, and, like the/ * Frenchman, * that swallowed Water and spit it/ out Wine, with a little Heaving and Straining/ would turn it immediately into * Latin,* as * plun- / derat ille Domos--Mille Hocopokiana, * 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/ / #*More the most] There is an appearance Defect or Error in these/ Words; but I leave it to the Reader to supply or correct./

Nothing. He thought it convenient therefore,/ first to furnish himself with a Name for his/ Mistress beforehand, that he might not be to/ seek, when his Merit or good Fortune should/ bestow her upon him: for every Poet is his/ mistress's Godfather, and gives her a new/ Name, like a Nun that takes Orders. He was/ very curious to fit 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 accepted 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 Landlady supply that/ Place as Proxy,

until his good Fortune, or/ fomebody 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, fhe was fure to be a Nymph and/

a Goddefs. For what greater Honour can a/ Woman be capable of, than to be tranflated/ into precious Stones and Stars? No Herald in/ the World can go higher. Befides se found no/ Man can ufe that Freedom of Hyperbole in the/ Character of a Perfon commonly known (as/ great Ladies are) which we can in defcribing/ one fo obfcure and unknown, that nobody can/ difprove him. For he, that writes but one/ Sonnet upon any of the public Perfons, fhall/ be fure to have his Reader at ever third Word/ cry out--What an Afs is this to call * Spanifh/ paper and Cerufe Lillies and Rofes, * or * claps In-/ fluences--* To fay, * the Graces are her waiting Wo-/ men, * when they are known to be no better/ than her Bawdes--that * Day breaks from her/ Eyes, when fhe looks afquint--Or that her/ Breath perfumes the Arabian Winds, * when fhe/ puffs Tobacco?/ / ##It is no mean Art to improve a Language,/ and find out Words, that are not only removed/ from common ufe, but rich in Confonanats,/ the Nerves and Sinews of Speech, to raife a/ / ---

fft and feeble Language like ours to the Pitch/ of * High-Dutch,* as he did, that writ

- Arts rattling Forefkins fhrilling Bagpipes quell.* /

This is not the only the moft elegant, but moft po-/ litic Way of Writing, that a Poet can ufe; for I/ know no Defence like it to preferve a Poem from/ the Torture of thofe that lifp and ftammer./ He that wants Teeth may as well venture upon/ a Piece of tough horny Brawn as fuch a Line,/ for he will look like an Afs eating Thiftles.

He never begins a Work without an Invoca-/ tion of his * Muse; * for it is not fit that fhe fhould/ appear in public, to fhew her Skill before fhe/ is entreated, as Gentlewomen do not ufe to / fing, until they are applied to, and often defired.

I fhall not need to fay any this of the Ex-/ cellence of Poetry, fince it has been already/ performed by many excellent Perfons, among/ whom fome have lately undertaken to prove, that/ the civil Government cannot poffibly fubfift with-/ out it, which, for my Part, I believe to be true

- fome have lately.] This alludes to Davenant--See * G---

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 Verfe. And though/ * Philofophers * 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/ * Plato, * 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

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