

RHYME AND REASON;
OR A NEW PROPOSAL TO THE PUBLIC RESPECTING POETRY
IN ORDINARY.^{1*}

A FRIEND of ours the other day, taking up the miscellaneous poems of Tasso,² read the title-page into English as follows:—"The Rhimes of the Lord Twisted Yew, Amorous, Bosky, and Maritime."* The Italian exhibit a modesty worthy of imitation in calling their Miscellaneous Poems, Rhimes. Twisted Yew himself, with all his genius, has put forth an abundance of these terminating blossoms, without any fruit behind them: and his countrymen of the present day do not scruple to confess, that their living poetry consists of little else. The French have a game at verses, called Rhymed Ends (*Bouts Rimees*) which they practise a great deal more than they are aware; and the English, though they are a more poetical people, and lay claim to a character of a less vain one, practice the same game to a very uncandid extent, without so much as allowing that the title is applicable to any part of it.

Yet how many "Poems" are there among all these nations, of which we require no more than the Rhymes, to be acquainted with the whole of them? You know that the rogues have done, by the ends they come to. For instance,

* *Rime del Signor Torquato Tasso, Amoroſe, Boſchereccie, Marittime, &c.*

*Author: Leigh Hunt / Transcribed by Elena Spandri; Annotated by Maria Elena Capitani.

what more is necessary to inform us of all which the following gentleman has for sale, than the bell which he tinkles at the end of his cry? We are as sure of him, as of the muffin-man.

Grove,	Heart	Kiss
Night,	Prove,	Blest
Rove,	Impart,	Bliss
Delight.	Love.	Rest.

Was there ever per-oration more eloquent? Ever a series of catastrophes more explanatory of their previous history? Did any Chinese gentleman ever shew the amount of his breeding and accomplishments more completely, by the nails which he carries at his fingers' ends?

The Italian Rimatori are equally comprehensive. We no sooner see the majority of their rhymes, than we long to save the modesty of their general pretensions so much trouble in making out the case. Their *cores* and *amores* are not to be disputed. Cursed is he that does not put implicit reliance upon their *fedeltà!*—that makes inquisition why the possessor *più superbo va*. They may take the oaths and their seat at once. For example—

Ben mio	Fuggito
Oh Dio	Rapito
Da me	La fe.

And again—

Amata
Sdegnata
Turbata
Irata
Furore
Dolore
Non so.

With—

O Cielo
 Dal cielo
 Tradire
 Languire
 Morire
 Soffrire
 Non può.

Where is the dull and inordinate person that would require these rhymes to be filled up? If they are brief as the love of which they complain, are they not pregnant in conclusions, full of a world of things that have past, infinitely retrospective, embracing, and enough? If not “vast”, are they not “voluminous?”

It is doubtless an instinct of this kind that has made so many modern Italian poets intersperse their lyrics with those frequent single words, which are at once line and rhyme, and which some of our countrymen have in vain endeavoured to naturalize in the English opera. Not that they want the same pregnancy in our language, but because they are neither so abundant nor so musical; and besides, there is something in the rest of our verses, however common-place, which seems to be laughing at the incursion of these vivacious strangers, as if it were a hop suddenly got up, and unseasonably. We do not naturally take to any thing so abrupt and saltatory.

This objection however does not apply to the proposal we are about to make. Our rhymers *must* rhyme; and as there is a great difference between single words thus mingled with long verses, and the same rhymes in their proper places, it has struck us, that a world of time and paper might be saved to the ingenious *rimatore*, whether Italian or English,

by foregoing at once all the superfluous part of his verses; that is to say, all the rest of them; and confining himself, entirely, to these very sufficing terminations. We subjoin some specimens in the various kinds of poetry; and inform the intelligent bookseller, that we are willing to treat with him for any quantity at a penny the hundred; which considering our characters, and how much more is obtained by the Laureate,³ and divers other tinkling old gentlemen about town, we trust will not be reckoned presuming.

A PASTORAL.

Dawn	Each	Fair	Me	Ray
Plains	Spoke	Mine	Too	Heat
Lawn	Beech	Hair	Free	Play
Swains.	Yoke.	Divine.	Woo.	Sweet.
Tune	Fields	Shades	Adieu	Farewell
Lays	Bowers	Darts	Flocks	Cows
Moon	Yields	Maids	Renew	Dell
Gaze.	Flowers.	Hearts.	Rocks.	Boughs.

Here, without any more ado, we have the whole history of a couple of successful rural lovers comparing notes. They issue forth in the morning; fall into the proper place and dialogue; record the charms and kindness of their respective mistresses; do justice at the same time to the fields and shades; and conclude by telling their flocks to wait as usual, while they renew their addresses under yonder boughs. How easily is all this gathered from the rhymes! and how worse than useless would it be in two persons, who have such interesting avocations, to waste their precious time and the reader's in a heap of prefatory remarks, falsely called verses!

Of Love-songs we have already had specimens; and by the bye, we did not think it necessary to give any French examples of our involuntary predecessors in this species of writing. The *yeux* and *dangereux*, *moi*, and *foi*, *charmes* and *larmes*, are too well-known as well too numerous to mention. We proceed to lay before the reader a Prologue; which, if spoken by a pretty actress, with a due sprinkling of nods and becks, and a judicious management of the pauses, would have an effect equally novel and triumphant. The reader is aware that a Prologue is generally made up of some observations on the drama in general, followed by an appeal in favour of the new one, some compliments to the nation, and a regular climax in honour of the persons appealed to. We scarcely need observe, that the rhymes should be read slowly, in order to give effect to the truly understood remarks in the intervals.

PROLOGUE.

Age	Fashion	Applause
Stage	British Nation.	Virtue's Cause
Mind		Trust
Mankind	Young	Just
Face	Tongue	Fear
Trace	Bard	Here
Sigh	Reward	Stands
Tragedy	Hiss	Hands
Scene	Miss	True
Spleen	Dare	You.
Pit	British fair	
Wit		

Here we have some respectable observations on the advan-

tages of the drama in every age, on the wideness of its survey, the different natures of tragedy and comedy, the vicissitudes of fashion, and the permanent greatness of the British empire. Then the young bard, new to the dramatic art, is introduced. He disclaims any hope of reward for any merit of his own, except that which is founded on a proper sense of the delicacy and beauty of his fair auditors, and his zeal in the cause of virtue. To this, and all events, he is sure his critics will be just; and though he cannot help feeling a certain timidity, standing where he does, yet upon the whole, as becomes an Englishman, he is perfectly willing to abide by the decision of his countrymen's hands, hoping that he shall be found

—— to sense, if not to genius, true,
And trusts his cause to virtue, and — to You.⁴

Should the reader, before he comes to this explication of the Prologue, have had any other ideas suggested by it, we will undertake to say, that they will at all events be found to have a wonderful general similitude; and it is to be observed, that this very flexibility of adaptation is one of the happiest and most useful results of our proposed system of poetry. It comprehends all the possible common-places in vogue; and it also leaves to the ingenuous reader something to fill up; which is a compliment, that has always been held due to him by the best authorities.

The next specimen is what, in a more superfluous condition of metre, would have been entitled *Lines* on Time. It is much in that genteel didactic taste, which is at once thinking and non-thinking, and has certain neat and elderly dislike of innovation in it, greatly to the comfort of the seniors who adorn the circles.

ON TIME.

Time	Child	Race	Hold
Sublime	Beguil'd	Trace	Old
Fraught	Boy	All	Sure
Thought	Joy	Ball	Endure
Power	Man	Pride	Death
Devour	Span	Deride	Breath
Rust	Sire	Aim	Forgiven
Dust	Expire.	Same	Heaven.
Glass		Undo	
Pass	So	New	
Wings	Go		
Kings.			

We ask any impartial reader, whether he could possibly want a more sufficing account of the progress of this author's piece of reasoning upon Time? There is first the address to a hoary god, with all his emblems and consequence about him, the scythe excepted; that being an edge-tool to rhymers, which they judiciously keep inside the verse, as in sheath. Then we are carried through all the stages of human existence, the caducity of which the writer applied to the world at large, impressing upon us the inutility of hope and exertion, and suggesting of course the propriety of thinking just as he does upon all subjects, political and moral, past, present, and to come. We really expect the thanks of the blue-stocking societies for this new-old piece of ethics, or at least of one of Mr. Southey⁵'s deputations of old women.

In Acrostics, the utility of the system would be too obvious to mention. But in nothing would it be more felicitous than in matters of Satire and Lampoon. Contempt is brief. Bitterness and venom are the better for being concentrated. A generous indignation wishes to save itself trouble:—a scan-

dal-monger would save himself detection and a beating; and every one would willingly be as safe as possible from the law. Now what can be briefer and more contemptuous than the mode in question? What a more essential salt or vitriolic aced, distilling in solitary and biting drops? What less exhausting to the writer's feelings? What more baffling to scrutiny, because able to dispense with all that constitutes style and peculiarity? What safer from the law, as far as any thing can be safe that is not supremely unlawful? Upon principles equally obvious it will be the same with flattery and panegyric, epithalamiums, odes on birth-days, &c. For instance—

A PANEGRICAL ADDRESS TO A CERTAIN HOUSE.

What	Tools	Backs	Seat
Use	Host	Throne	Sell
Rot	Fools	Tax	Complete
Abuse.	Most.	Alone.	Hell.
Part	Reform	Hire	Set
Vocation	Within	Breath	About
"Start	Storm	Tire	Get
Indignation."	Begin.	Death.	Out.

A CAT-O'-NINE-TAILS FOR LORD C.

Packing	Washy	Loathing
Hacking	Splashy	Frothing
Racking.	Flashy.	Nothing.

ANOTHER, WITH KNOTS IN IT.

Hydrophoby	Turn about on	Go get your
Of troops	Yourselves,	Self taught
Quoth the looby,	Quoth the spout on,	Beat your feature,
The booby.	The doat on.	Your creature.

A SOLILOQUY, BY THE SAME.

Folk	Say	Fate
Zoun's!	Blunder;	So
Smoke	Nay,	Great
Nouns:	Dunder!	Low.
Else	Hammer	Curse 'em
Miracles.	Grammar.	Disperse 'em.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

¹ In “Rhyme and Reason”, Hunt suggests that the English imitate the Italian *rimatori* in their use of one-word lines of verse. In Byron’s view the piece was meant as a satire on Thomas Moore’s love poetry.

² Torquato Tasso (1544-95), the greatest Italian poet of the late Renaissance, known for his 1581 heroic epic poem in ottava rima *Gerusalemme liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*), dealing with the capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade.

³ Robert Southey (1774-1843), English poet and prose writer, mainly remembered for his close association with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. After initially embracing the ideals of the French Revolution, he gradually became more conservative and was accused by Byron of siding with the Establishment. In 1813 Southey was appointed Poet Laureate, a post he held until his death.

⁴ Untraced quotation.

⁵ Robert Southey (1774-1843), English poet and prose writer, Poet Laureate (1813-43).