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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert London, 1758

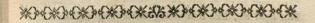
On Scribling against Genius. An Epistle.

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[67]

You should not rhyme in spite of nature?——true;
Yet sure 'tis greater trouble, if you do;
And if 'tis lab'ring only, men profess,
Who writes the hardest, writes with most success.

Thus for myself, and friends, I do my part;
Promoting doubly the pains-taking art:
First to myself, 'tis labour to compose;
To read such lines, is drudgery to those.



On SCRIBLING against GENIUS.

An EPISTLE.

O fingle rule's more frequently enjoin'd,
Than this; "Observe the byass of our mind."
However just by ev'ry one confess'd,
There not a rule more frequently transgress'd.
For mortals, to their int'rest blind, pursue
The thing they like, not that they're sit to do.

This Verro's fault: by frequent praifes fir'd, He feveral parts had try'd, in each admir'd. That Verro was not ev'ry way compleat, 'Twas long unknown, and might have been so yet:

E 2

But

OU

[68]

But mufick-mad, th' unhappy man pursu'd That only thing heav'n meant he never shou'd; And thus his proper road to same neglected, He's ridicul'd for that he but affected.

Wou'd men but act from nature's fecret call, Or only, where that fails, not act at all; If not their skill, they'd shew at least good sense,— They'd get no same—nor wou'd they give offence.

Not that where some one merit is deny'd,
Men must be ev'ry way unqualify'd;
Nor hold we, like that wrong-concluding wight,
A man can't fish—because he cou'd not write.
View all the world around: each man design'd
And furnish'd for some fav'rite part you find.
That, sometimes low: yet this, so small a gift,
Proves nature did not turn him quite adrist.
The phlegmatick, dull, aukward, thick, gross-witted,
Have all some clumsy work for which they're sitted.
'Twas never known, in men a persect void,
Ev'n I and T——ld might be well employ'd;
Wou'd we our poverty of parts survey,
And follow as our genius led the way.

What then? obedient to that turn of mind Shou'd men jog on to one dull path confin'd; From that small circle never dare depart, To strike at large, and snatch a grace from art? At least with care forbidden paths pursue? Who quits the road, should keep it sill in view:

From

[69]

From genius some sew 'scapes may be allow'd; But ever keep within its neighbourhood.

But C ——r, faithless to his byass see,
With giant-sin opposing heav'n's decree.
Still fond where he shou'd not, he blunders on
With all that haste fools make to be undone:
Want of success his passion but augments;
Like eunuchs rage of love, from impotence.

'Mongst all the instances of genius crost, The rhyming tribe are those who err the most. Each piddling wretch who hath but common fenfe, Or thinks he hath, to verse shall make pretence: Why not? 'tis their diversion, and 'twere hard If men of their estates shou'd be debarr'd. Thus wealth with them gives every thing befide; As people worth fo much are qualify'd: They've all the requifites for writing fit, All but that one -----fome little fhare of wit. Give way, ye friends, nor with fond pray'rs proceed To stop the progress of a pen full speed. 'Tis heav'n, incens'd by fome prodigious crime, Thus for men's fins determines them to rhyme. Bad men, no doubt! perhaps 'tis vengeance due For shrines they've plunder'd, or some wretch they slew. Whate'er it be, fure grievous is th' offence, And grievous is (heaven knows!) its recompence. At once in want of rhyme, and want of rest; Plagues to themselves, and to mankind a jest:

E 3

Seduc'd

T 70 7

Seduc'd by empty forms of false delight Such, in fome men, their deadly luft to write!

Ev'n I, whose genius seems as much forgot, (Mine when I write, as yours when you do not;) Who gravely thus can others faults condemn, My felf allowing, what I blame in them; With no pretence to Phœbus' aid divine, Nor the least int'rest in the tuneful Nine. With all the guilt of impotence in view, Griev'd for past fins, but yet committing new; Whate'er the wits may fay, or wife may think, Am fooling ev'ry way with pen and ink. When all who wish me best, begin t' advise,

That being witty, is not being wife;

'That if the voice of int'rest might be heard,

For one who wears a gown,—wou'd be prefer'd— Incorrigibly deaf, I feign a yawn; And mock their just conclusions, ere they're drawn.

If to my practice, they oppos'd my theme; And pointed, how I fwam against the stream : With all the rancour of a bard in rage, Pd quote 'em half the writers of the age; Who in a wrath of verse, with all their might Write on, howe'er unqualify'd to write.