

HUMOROUS VERSES BY SAMUEL WESLEY

IN a copy of the first edition of Thomas Coryat's *Crudities Hastily gobbled up in five moneths travells in France, Savoy, etc.*, published in 1611, and formerly in the collection of the late Dr. Elmer T. Clark, there appears an early poetic effusion of Samuel Wesley the elder.

"*E Libris Samuelis Westly E Coll. Exon. Oxon. Dec. '86*" is written down the inside edge of the first of two old fly-leaves bound in the volume, and the verses occupy three of the four sides of paper, the fourth being blank.

The origin of the verses was no doubt suggested in part by the contents of the volume, which is, in the words of Messrs. Blackwell's catalogue, where it was offered for sale in 1947 (and by whose courtesy the verses were first transcribed),

as singular a book of travel as was ever written in any language. The peregrination extended over a distance of nearly 2,000 miles, and more than half this distance was accomplished in one pair of shoes, which were only once mended, and on his return were hung up in Odcombe [Somerset] Church, where they remained in "undisturbed dignity" for nearly a century.

Prefaced to the record of the journeyings is a collection of poems, in mock commendation of the author, written by the leading literary men of the day, and showing us the contemporary sense of humour. Apparently Samuel Wesley, who came into possession of the volume in 1686 at the age of twenty-four, decided to write some verses himself—concerning the travels not of Coryat, but of his friend John Dunton, an eccentric bookseller who the previous year had published Wesley's book of poems, *Maggots*.

John Dunton (1659-1735) had been apprenticed to a bookseller as a youth, and, coming of Dissenting Whig stock, had joined the Whig apprentices in the struggle leading to the Glorious Revolution. It was at this time that the young Samuel Wesley met him, and the two became fast friends, although by now Wesley had shed his family's nonconformity. Consequently when, in 1682, Dunton married Elizabeth,¹ the daughter of the celebrated Dr. Annesley, Wesley was invited to his friend's wedding—and met the Annesley family. What resulted is well known. It is one of the curious chances of history that if Samuel Wesley had not struck up this strange friendship, John Wesley would in all probability never have been "son to Susanna".

Dunton then set up in business in 1685 at the sign of the Raven,

¹ The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th edn.—Dunton does not figure in the latest edition) states that Dunton married a sister of Samuel Wesley, and a previous bookseller's announcement stuck in the volume repeats this assertion. It was, however, not his sister, but his sister-in-law; cf. J. S. Simon: *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 55.

near the Royal Exchange, but his wife managed the business (how like her younger sister!) while her husband was left to his own devices, rambling and writing. In 1686, as a result of the Monmouth rising, he prudently visited New England, and after eight months there went to Holland; both are referred to in the verses. On his return to Britain he opened a shop in the Poultry, where he published with Samuel Wesley the *Athenian Mercury*—a forerunner of *Notes and Queries*. This was discontinued in 1696, after six years. He wrote many curious books, now forgotten apart from his *Life and Errors*. His wife predeceased him, and he married (unhappily) a second time, dying in the same year (1735) as his friend and brother-in-law.

This prudent voyage to America and Holland is the subject of Wesley's verses. But the poet does not only have in mind Dunton's travels and Coryat's strange adventures; he remembers also another journey—the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and so comes to write the verses under the name of John Bunyan (who, assuming them to have been composed at the time of the journey in 1686), was still alive.

The verses have been printed as far as possible as written; but for the most part they are written in a very small script, scribbled fairly closely together, with very many false starts, erasures, corrections, interlinear insertions, etc., so that at times it is difficult to decipher the words, and at the top corner of the second page a word or so is lost. Page two of the fly-leaves has two columns, and this has occasioned some confusion in the order of the verses, so that there still remains a little doubt on that score. It is in fact a rough draft, as Wesley admits in the last verse but two:

Nor had I time to lick it or adorn it,

For 'twas just hammer'd out in one shower.

In view of all this, the reading is occasionally doubtful; a [?] has been put at the end of lines where some doubt as to a word exists. Abbreviations are frequently employed, and have been regularly expanded; thus

y ^e = the	y ⁿ = then	y ^w = thou (and sometimes you)	
y ^{ee} = thee	y ^t = that	y ^m = them	y ^u = you
y ^r = your	s ^{ll} = shall	w ^{ch} = which	w th = with
w ⁿ = when	w ^{re} = where	o ^r = our	w ^{se} = whose
w ^t = what	ō = not	y ^{wt} = thou'lt (i.e. thou wilt)	

and a line over a letter sometimes signifies omission, e.g. fr̄o for "from"; others are ag^t for "against" and 2ce, 3ce and 1 for "twice", "thrice" and "one"; & has also been expanded to "and". In one stanza—the second from the end—some correction is necessary: in the second line there are two syllables extra, and "each and" (inserted above the line) should presumably be suppressed. In the last line of the same stanza two syllables are missing. It would appear that Wesley noticed he was the two syllables short, and by accident added them to the wrong line.

Needless to say, there is little poetic merit in the verses; only once or twice does he achieve any real poetic feeling (e.g. in the stanzas beginning "Beauteous he was . . ." and "Smooth lay the sea . . ."). The polysyllabic rhymes (a customary trick in humorous poetry—cf. Byron and W. S. Gilbert) offer the greatest interest, as foreshadowing the occasional strange rhymes coined by his son.

Realized as explained above, the verses run as follows:

From Bedford Town, by my high birth notorious,
Lo I am come, Dear John, with staff and Wallet
And Budget eke to sing thy prayes glorious,
Stuff'd full with many a precious book and ballet.²

For how can I sit still and con old rogueries
When I, poor sheep, stuck in Abaddon's³ brambles, [?]
Whilst thou art acting a new Pilgrim's progress,
And choaking fame with thy renowned rambles?

For London then I jogg'd, where thee and I
Are for our pretty parts so much esteem'd;
But by the way under an oak full high
I fell asleep and thus behold I dreamed.⁴

Methought I saw you stow'd in Graves-end Barge
With wife and children on the shore attending,
Who for thy voy'ge wept tears so big and large
That its beginning almost prov'd thy ending.

Now down the stream thy boat went jogging, in which
Thou viewdst the City's dredfull arms undaunted,
Rolling by thy dear plum-cake Walls and Greenwich,
Like Quixot fam'd in Miller's Boat enchanted.

In search of Fame which Time nor can nor will bury,
Thou with the Thames to sea didst aim thy motion,
Which kissing thy old walls, O glorious Tilbury,
Dives in the bosom of her Father ocean.

Next to the Downs our pious pilgrim stagger'd,
Where what befall's so strange and wondrous rare-O,
That he that thinks to write it, Friend,'s a braggard,
Unless he write like thee, or I, or Maro.⁵

Lo, in my dream I saw where you were rideing
To thy impending Fate a perfect Stranger,
Feeding in peace the Haddock and the Whiteing,
And never dreaming of thy brooding danger.

Hobgoblins, Satyrs, fearfull Sprights and Dragons
Perke up their Heads above the waves like Porposes,
Raw heads, Gins, traps, fowl fiends as Pope and pagans, [?]
Cream'd on the sea as thick as gendring Tortoises.

March on, o Dunton John, with might and main then,
For know John Bunyan of thy worth has scribled;
Nor shall these rueful Rhimes be spent in vain then,
Which in thy prayes daintily down dribbled.

² ballad.

³ The Devil (cf. Revelation ix. 11).

⁴ A reminiscence of the opening words of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

⁵ i.e. Virgil (Publius Virgilius Maro).

[Gian] t Despair with grievous Crabtree Cudgel [?]

Thy heart was thro thy shoulders bluntly stabbing,
Rebukeing thee right sore, that thou couldst budge ill,
Tho 'twere to spew from Hamock or from cabin.

But worst of all—the huge fowl feend Apollyon
Trode water there breast-high, as far's the navel,
And ramping ore the ship as if he'd swallow one
Just made thee bid adieu to Life and Travel. [?]

Wings like a Bat he had, enough to fright one,
Tho arm'd with club, and courage of Alcides,⁶
Cover'd with scales also much like a Tryton,⁷

Tho skin was thicker than a Dragon's hide is !
Fire balls he spew'd till the sea round him glared
As light as Thames at Coronation clutter,⁸
Or if great things with small may be compared
Like squib or cracker hizzing in a gutter.

A Horn he had woud shake the ship and toss her out
Of sea and all, tho Remoras bid her tarry ;⁹ [?]

A Nose likewise like that of the Rhinocerot,
An elbow eke like to a Dromedary.

With Elbow, Nose and Horn he toss'd thy Carvel
As erst my Bed when me he would recover
When my poor Spows he thumpt, that 'twas a marvel
He had not slain us both, over and over.

Now the sick sea kickt, yawn'd and foamed and rumbled,
Striving to throw such dredfull Inmates from it,
Poor Amphytrite's¹⁰ Guts and Garbage grumbled,
Retching, while Neptune held her Head to vomit.

So in my dream I saw, as he approached
Altho for fear I stuck like rue or onion,
I stood and cry'd, as nearer he encroached,
" If you John Dunton take, take too John Bunyan.

" Nor shall you find me easily digestive,
Ime a tough bit as ere your feendness tasted ;
I'll make you turn me out tho nere so costive,
Nor will I tarry till one crum be wasted.

" Yet more I tell thee, when I pass thy Gullet
My tools will choke thee, if I chance to get across ;
For Lo ! I've stufft my Budget—alias mallet—¹¹
With Tinker's Brass and Similes and Metaphors."

For the poor Devil that nere before was us'd thus,
He knew not how to manage his behaviour ;
He curst and swore that he'd not be abus'd thus,
Tho I smept out he fear'd me by his Saviour.

He stampt, he star'd, he laught, he cry'd, he whistled,
He tore his Beard, he bit his Nayls and Thumb, too ;
He screech'd, he yeld, he roar'd, he belcht, he fizzled,
Then shook his Tayl and told me what 'twould come to.

⁶ A name for Hercules, as the grandson of Alcæus. ⁷ Half man, half fish.

⁸ A reference to the recent accession of James II.

⁹ The word is unclear ; a remora is a sucking fish.

¹⁰ Goddess of the sea, mother of Triton. ¹¹ Probably a mistake for *wallet*.

" I'll swear (said he) by my Infernall Dungeon,
 I'll smite thee thro, and spill thy soul like Buttermilk;
 I'll mawl thy tinker's hide; I'll . . . I'll . . ."
 Rage or the Ryme here stopt him, guess you whether;
 Yet still he gapet, and for the fight prepareing,
 Had eat the ship, and thee and I together,
 As easily as whales a shole of Herring:
 Hee'd gulpt us down as glib as Eggs or Oysters,
 Had not the sky all on the sudden cleared,
 And eke the sea was bright, but now so boystrous,
 On whose bright edg a golden Youth appeared.
 Beauteous He was, yet awfull, dredfull comly;
 He scar'd, and yet he pleas'd as much as maybe;
 So Sprawling Lover, be she nere so homely,
 Dreads and admires his charming, killing Lady;
 With Rays around his venerable Visage
 Brighter than those on sign of neighbring Tavern,
 And blith and bonny in the Flowr of his age
 He frights the feends to their Infernall cavern.
 Down sunk the little fry of sucking Devils
 Without a stroke—but now the wars begin hard,
 For gruff Apollyon, who far more uncivil is,
 Made th' Angel glad to draw his flaming whiniard.¹²
 Against whose hungry Edg was no resisting,
 So much was the poor Devil now astonisht,
 The Angel held him fast, for all his twisting,
 And warned him once, twice, thrice, and then he vanisht.
 Smooth lay the Sea without a blast or billow,
 In easy Curle fan'd by a gentle motion,
 Smooth as a Syren's or a Nereid's pillow,
 Or the calm pallace of old Father Ocean.
 Then to the Ship approacht the bright, sweet Singer,
 And softly onward in her voy'ge he jog'd her;
 Methought he jog'd but with his little finger,
 So soft and fair you'd think he'd scarce have wag'd her.
 'Twixt Earth and Heavn he hung like Roterdamus,¹⁸
 With ease he hung, for angels are not heavy;
 " O man by Fate belov'd! O pilgrim famous,
 Just one word more, he cry's, before I leave ye.
 " Go on, says he, for greater things prepared,
 Patience or I will succor still provide thee;
 Go on my charge, he cry'd, and be not scared
 With all the troubles which must yet betide thee.
 " The Light of thy most comely countenances
 Are doom'd to shine on the Sun-burnt American,
 And, more than all the Heroes of Romances,
 Scatter their cloudy griefs like any Hurricane.
 " The Heavens shall smile and laugh at thy returning
 To thy lov'd wife, unmawl'd by Shark or Haddock,

¹² A dagger or short sword.¹⁸ i.e. Erasmus; the reference is obscure.

To cheer thy friends, for thy sad absence mourning,
 As welcom as to your new country Madoc.¹⁴ [?]

"From Ship and Sea and Sergants more devouring,
 To the Myn-Heer's No-Landt thou'lt next be jogging;¹⁵
 And on som chimney Top shalt 'scape a scouring
 When Hood breaks in, in spight of Hogan-Mogan.¹⁴

"A Book you shall compose, which each notcht prentice
 Shall stretch to buy, altho he nere so cribb'd is ;
 Nay, ev'ry Master too, whateres his rent is,
 That dwells 'twixt London-stone and the Antipodes.

"And wisely too, for fear least Authors vary
 About thy deeds, and work thy Fame displeasure,
 Shal thy own Fist write thy own commentary,
 Like great Tom Coriat, or scarce greater Cesar.

"A word to th' wise ! I doubt not thy complying
 To Fate's behests, therefore no more hereof I say ;
 Thus act, or those who are inclin'd to Lyeing
 Will conjure thee up from Death and make thee prophesy."
 The Angel bow'd, tho he methought was still grim
 With the late fight, tho grim, yet he was mannerly ;
 The Angel bow'd (so did likewise the Pilgrim,
 Tho he for fear could hardly go, or stand or lie).

And now the flameing Youth unfolds each feather,
 With full intent heavn's gawdy gates to knock at ;
 Away he leaps, hop, stride and jump together,
 So ore Bowsteeples-vane leaps a Sky-rocket.

Whilst he athwart the clouds danc'd the canary,
 I cry'd in haste, "O stay, dear Youth, I prythee ;
 If thou hast any bowells, stay, and carry
 An Honest Bookseller and Tinker wi' thee."

Just as the loss of him my heart was killing,
 When all in vain were all my loud Beseeches,
 I woke, and found my courteous Tears distilling
 Had drown'd my face and Hands and coat and breeches.

My dream I pen'd, like to the little Hornet
 (Bee I shoud ha' bin) that sucks from each and every flower ;¹⁶
 Nor had I time to lick it or adorn it,
 For 'twas just hammer'd out in one shower.

We'll print 'em, John, my Fancys stick like Burs,
 If them thy Buyers will but well remember,
 And prove in each tough tempest comforters
 From New Year's Day to th' 30th of December.

March on, o Dunton John, with might and main then,
 And know John Bunyan in thy prais has scribbled ;
 Nor shall those ruefull Rymes be spent in vain then
 Which in thy praises daintily down dribbled.

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE,
 FRANK BAKER.

¹⁴ The allusions here are now lost.

¹⁵ A reference to Dunton's trip to Holland.

¹⁶ The words "each and" are superfluous to the metre, and should be suppressed.