



*The Prodigy. A Letter to a Friend
in the Country.*

THO' Rhyme serves the Thoughts of great Poets to
[fetter,
It sets off the Sense of small Poets the better :
When I've written in Prose, I often have found,
That my Sense, in a Jumble of Words, was quite drown'd.
In Verse, as in Armies that march o'er the Plain,
The least Man among them is seen without Pain.
This they owe to good Order, it must be allow'd,
Else Men that are Little, are lost in a Crowd.

So much for Simile : Now, to be brief,
The following Lines come to tell you my Grief.
'Tis well I can write, for I scarcely can speak,
I'm so plagued with my Teeth, which eternally ake.
When

On Several Occasions.

23

When the Wind's in the Point which opposes the South,
For fear of the Cold, I can't open my Mouth :
And you know, to the Sex it must be a Heart-breaking,
To have any Distemper, that keeps them from speaking.

WHEN first I was silent a Day, and a Night,
The Women were all in a terrible Fright.
Applications to Jove, in an Instant, they make—
“ Avert the Portent—a Woman not speak !
“ Since Poets are Prophets, and often have sung,
“ The last Thing that dies in a Woman's her Tongue ;
“ O Jove, for what Crime is SAPPHIRA thus curst ?
“ 'Tis plain, by her breathing, her Tongue has died first.
“ Ye Powers Coelestial, tell Mortals, what Cause
“ Occasions Dame Nature to break her own Laws ?
“ Did the Preacher live now, from his Text he must run,
“ And own there was something new under the Sun.
“ O Jove, for the future this Punishment spare,
“ And all other Evils we'll willingly bear.”

THEN

THE N they throng to my House, and my Maid they
[beseech,
To say, if her Mistress had quite lost her Speech.
Nell readily own'd, what they heard was too true,
That To-day I was dumb, give the Devil his Due;
And frankly confess'd, were it always the Case,
No Servant cou'd e'er have a happier Place.

WHEN they found it was Fact, they began all to fear me,
And, dreading Infec~~tion~~, would scarcely come near me;
Till a Neighbour of mine, who was famous for speeching,
Bid them be of good Cheer, the Disease was not catching:
And offer'd to prove, from Authors good Store,
That the like Case with this, never happen'd before;
And if Ages to come should resemble the past,
As 'twas the first Instance, it would be the last.
Yet against this Disorder we all ought to strive,
Were I in her Case, I'd been buried alive;
Were I One Moment silent, except in my Bed,
My good-natur'd Husband would swear I was dead.

On Several Occasions.

25

THE next said, her Tongue was so much in her Pow'r,
She was fullenly silent, almost—half an Hour ; ~~an hour~~
That to vex her good Man, she took this way to tease him,
But soon left it off, when she found it would please him ;
And vow'd, for the future, she'd make the House ring ;
For when he was dumb, he did nothing but sing.

Quite tir'd with their talking, I held down my Head ;
So she, who sat next me, cried out, I was dead.
They call'd for cold Water, to throw in my Face ; ~~in my Face~~
“ Give her Air, give her Air—and cut open her Lace.”
Says good Neighbour NEVIL, you're out of your Wits ;
She oft, to my Knowledge, has these fullen Fits : ~~it's~~ 30
Let her Husband come in, and make one Step that's wrong,
My Life for't, the Woman will soon find her Tongue.
You'll soon be convinc'd—O'my Conscience he's here—
“ Why what's all this Rout !—Are you sullen, my Dear ?

THIS

E

This struck them all silent; which gave me some Ease,
And made them imagine they'd got my Disease.
So they hastened away, in a terrible Fright,
And left me, in Silence, to pass the long Night in

Not the Women alone were scar'd at my Fate;
'Twas reckon'd of dreadful Portent to the State.
When the Governors heard it, they greatly were troubled,
And, whilst I was silent, the Guards were all doubled:
The Militia Drums beat a perpetual Alarm,
To rouze up the Sons of the City to arm.
A Story was rumour'd about, from *Lambe,¹⁶⁹³
Of a powerful Fleet, that was seen off at Sea.
With Horror all list to the terrible Tale,
The Barristers tremble, the Judges grow pale,
To the Castle the frightened Nobility fly,
And the Council were summon'd, they could not tell why.

* A small Island near Dublin.

On several Occasions.

27

The Clergy, in Clouds, to the Churches repair,
And Armies, embattled, were seen in the Air.

Why they were in this Fright, I have lately been told.
It seems, it was sung, by a *Druid* of old,
That the HANOVER RACE to *Great-Britain* should come,
And sit on the Throne, till a Woman grew dumb.

As soon as this Prophecy reach'd the Pretender,
He cry'd out, *My Claim to the Crown I surrender.*



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SIV.