

27th October 2020

Rhymes

**“Prose poets like blank-verse, I’m fond of rhyme,
Good workmen never quarrel with their tools.”**

Lord Byron, Don Juan, canto 1

A confession: when I have a tricky task to complete in writing a hymn, I use a *Rhyming Dictionary*. Perhaps if Lord Byron used one, he might have found a rhyme for his lines from *Don Juan* about rhymes, don’t you think?

James Smith, a draper from Mauchline, was the brother of one of Robert Burns’ paramours. As companions in what one commentator calls their “amatory pursuits”, they corresponded frequently on the themes of love and marriage, sometimes in the frankest of terms. In his 29-verse *Epistle to James Smith*, Burns gives vent to a rip-roaring denunciation of the censorious bigots of the period. But my eye was drawn to this stanza:

*Some rhyme a neebor’s name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu’ cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An’ raise a din;
For me, an ain I never fash,
I rhyme for fun.*

“I rhyme for fun.” I was surprised to read that. But it’s interesting that Burns is telling us, in effect: “I’m a poet, not to run people down, or make money, or start an argument. But I write because it’s fun!” Even a poet of Burns’ undeniable ability didn’t take himself seriously all the time. Perhaps he deemed his affection for the ladies to be more important. Discuss ...

Finding rhymes is more serious for me, it would appear, than it was for Burns – as the forced attempt to rhyme “din” with “fun” might suggest. So I look for help when I need to, especially when rhymes are tricky.

We all need help in life, especially in these trying times. I hope, like me, you have something or someone to turn to, for fun, in seriousness, or even, like Burns with his friend James Smith, to give vent to a rip-roaring rant! Take it from me, it’s OK to look for any assistance you can find with the tricky tasks life puts in our way.

A prayer for today

Lord, will my love rhyme with yours today – again? Amen

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