

For, if the first, I greatly fear
You'll think I hold myself too dear,
Or you too cheap, which much the same is,
And an unpardonable shame is:
And, if the second, then must I
That rule grammatical defy,
Which says that Number One is reckoned
Ever more worthy than its second.
So, that we too may not fall out,
I'll leave that knotty point in doubt.
Now comes the rub:—Shall you or I
Encounter first the public eye,
On this fair page depicted lying,
Whilst all our merits are deservyng?
Aye, there's the point: the reason why 'tis,
Not over easy to decide is
That nought, I fear, can well be said,
Which by the million may be read
Without exciting dire confusion
In us, by personal allusion
To all our foibles, virtues, graces
Of mind, or character, or faces.
Perhaps then, you'll agree to this;—
Seeing that ignorance is bliss,
To make men wise were foolishness;
And that 'tis better, on the whole,
The cacöethes to control
Of writing all that's true or pleasant
On two such subjects as the present.
So, by your leave, at once will I
My drowsy quill proceed to dry,
(For now-a-days, you've doubtless heard,
Steel pens are grown upon the bird),
Begging you'll not be too severe,
But shut one eye and close one ear,
Ere you begin to criticise
What will not bear both ears and eyes:
For thus, perhaps, you may excuse
The fruitless efforts of my muse;
And kindly take, when this you read,
The will to please you for the deed.