PREFACE

TO THE

INDEX OF PERFECT AND ALLOWABLE RHYMES

As the principal object of the preceding Syllabic Dictionary was to throw light on the structure, orthography, and pronunciation of our language, it was necessary to adhere strictly to the inverted order of arrangement, that terminations of similar orthography might be classed together, though those of similar sound would sometimes, by this means, be separated; but as the inverted position of the words, though the simplest that could be chosen for this purpose, may possibly at first embarrass the inspector for poetry, an index of rhymes is annexed in the same order as in Pool and Bysshe, though much more copious and correct, besides a reference to an almost infinite number of allowable rhymes, with authorities for their usage from our best poets. As an index to allowable rhymes is an attempt perfectly new, it may not be improper to make a few observations with respect to its utility, and answer some objections to which it may be liable.

OBS. 1. Whatever has been constantly practised by our most harmonious poets, may be safely presumed to be agreeable to the genius of our poetry: it is highly probable that our prosody has passed its meridian, and that no reformation can possibly be made without injuring it. The delicate ears of a Pope or an Addison, would scarcely have acquiesced in the usage of imperfect rhymes, and sanctioned them so often by their practice, if such rhymes had been really a blemish. The same masculine force that supports our poetry without the assistance of any rhyme at all, seems to exempt it from that servile attention to perfectly similar rhymes, to which the French versification is inviolably bound. Nay, so far from a defect, there seems to be sometimes a beauty in departing from a perfect exactness of rhyme, as it agreeably breaks that sameness of returning sounds on the expecting ears which in poetry perhaps, as in music, requires something like an occasional discord to make even harmony itself more agreeable.

OBS. 2. But though an English ear will freely admit of a rhyme between a long and short sound of the same vowel, and sometimes
even between the long and short sounds of different vowels, yet
tese vowels that are suffered to rhyme are not of a different nature,
though called by a different name. The inaccuracy with which
they are denominated has but very little influence on the practice
of our poets, who, trying them by the only infallible touchstone,
the ear, discover the relation between similar vowels, better than
by a grammatical analysis. By the usage of the poets, we find the
vowels frequently associated according to their radical sound, and
that a union is lawful between any vowels of the same family, as it
may be called, though the name may be different; therefore, as the
s in led is by no means the real short sound of that letter as heard
in its name, or in the word gloh, it is no wonder if the poets very
often associate it with the slender a, as heard in lade, and of which
it is really the short sound. The same may be observed of almost
every other imperfect rhyme we meet with; if the family sound of
the vowel be preserved, the ear acknowledges the affinity; if a
vowel of a totally different sound be assumed, the ear immediately
detects the incongruous mixture.

Thus the different sounds of the vowels, i, e, a, o, u, slide into
each other by an easy gradation, each of which is sufficiently related
to the preceding and succeeding sound to form what is called an
allowable rhyme. And though it must be confessed that poets have
sometimes abused the liberty of rhyming, and wounded the ear by
an association of discordant vowels, yet this is no argument against
the occasional use of such rhymes as are but gentle inflections of
the same radical sound, as these circulate freely through our best
compositions, and actually form a part of our prosody.

Oss. 3. It will be necessary, therefore, to observe, that, although
authorities are not brought for the usage of every individual allow-
able rhyme, the species of these rhymes, if I may call them so, are
amply and repeatedly illustrated. For the same ear which allows
glass to rhyme with place, or place with peace and distress, will per-
mit decay'd to rhyme with fled, and shade with mead; for the con-
sonants with which they terminate do not alter the nature of the
preceding vowels, or occasion any diversity in the quality of the
rhyme. It would, therefore, have been sufficient to have adduced
a much smaller number of poetical examples than are here given;
as they are all founded on the same principles, and must neces-
sarily stand or fall together.

It may be objected, that a work of this kind contributes to ex-
tend poetic blemishes, by furnishing imperfect materials and apolo-
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... gifts for using them. But it may be answered, that, if these imperfect rhymes were allowed to be blemishes, it would still be better to tolerate them, than cramp the imagination by the too narrow boundaries of exactly similar sounds. A want of perfect rhyme, if a real impecation, is fully compensated by gaining access to a more eligible turn of thought; the most exact and harmonious rhyme would be dearly purchased at the expense of the most delicate abatement in the strength or beauty of an expression. And as Byshe supposes that the difficulty of finding rhymes has been the cause that such indifferent ones have been frequently chosen, so it may with as much reason be presumed, that the want of recollecting the licenses of our best writers, and how agreeable they occasionally are to the nature of our poetry, has often been the cause, either of choosing a weak expression for the sake of perfect rhyme, or of relinquishing a valuable one for no other reason than the want of it.

Directions for Finding Rhymes in the Index.

The simplest idea of the rhymes in this arrangement is, that the words are divided into five classes according to the vowel in their terminations: the first vowel in the last syllable of every word is first to be sought for, and every other subsequent letter in its natural order, that is, from the left hand to the right. Thus, if I want a rhyme to hand, I look in the first class of vowels a; the next letter is n, which obliges me to proceed till I come to ban, bron, &c.; the next letter is d, which I find after anch, and before I come to ane. If I want a rhyme to command, a is the first vowel in the last syllable, and I proceed therefore as in hand, and so of every other, but as every arrangement of words but the natural is attended with difficulty, I shall endeavour to make the rule for finding rhymes as plain as possible, by adopting the directions of Byshe, omitting that only which relates to the letter Y, as custom has entirely excluded the termination in the words defy, rely, &c., which in his time were frequently written dyfe, relie, &c.

1. In looking for a word, consider the five vowels, A, E, I, O, U, and begin at the vowel that precedes the last consonant of the word; for example, to find persuade, and the words that rhyme to it, D is the last consonant, A the vowel that precedes it, look for ade, and you will find made, fade, invade, and all the other words of that rhyme.

2. In like manner, if a word end in two or more consonants, begin at the vowel that immediately precedes the first of them; for
example, land, N is the first of the final consonants, A the vowel that
precedes it; see AND, and you will find band, stand, command, &c.

3. But if a diphthong, that is to say, two or more vowels together,
   precedes the last consonant or consonants of a word, begin at the
   first of these two vowels; thus, to find the rhymes to disdain, look
   not for IN, but for AIN, and you will find brain, chain, gain, &c.

4. To find a word that ends in a diphthong preceded by a con-
   sonant, begin only at the first vowel of the diphthong; for ex-
   ample, to find the rhymes to subdue, look for UE, and you will find
   clue, due, ensuing, &c.

5. All the words that end in a single vowel preceded by a con-
   sonant are found by looking for that vowel only, except always
   the words that end in mute E, which are constantly found by the
   same method that has been already prescribed for finding the
   rhymes to persuade, whose final E is silent, and serves only to
   lengthen the sound of the A in the last syllable.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Care has been taken in the compiling of this Index to class rhymes
altogether with the most scrupulous precision. Such are called
perfect rhymes are exactly similar; those that differ by nicer
shades are called nearly perfect, and the rest allowable only. So
that this collection of words is in some measure a dictionary of
pronunciation, and may answer very useful purposes to foreigners
and provincials, who, by understanding the sound of one word,
may become acquainted with the pronunciation of a whole class.
Thus, if I would know how the word gross is pronounced, that is,
whether according to the French or English analogy, I look into
that rank of words which terminate in ous, but do not find it: I
then look among those in ous, and find it rhymes perfectly with
verbose, jocose, &c. And at the same time I avoid being misled by
the licences of poets in their frequent usage of the looser and less
perfect rhymes.

No notice need be taken of the advantages arising from instances
being given of plurals and participes, as lays, days, obey'd, play'd,
&c., as this will immediately appear upon inspection, which, with
many other improvements, renders this Index of Rhymes, entirely
independent of its connection with the Pronouncing Dictionary,
greatly superior to every other work of the kind in our language.