

James Smith (1775-1839)

1 *The Baby's Début*

My brother Jack was nine in May,
And I was eight on New Year's Day;
So in Kate Wilson's shop
Papa (he's my papa and Jack's)
Bought me last week a doll of wax, 5
And brother Jack a top.

Jack's in the pouts, and this it is —
He thinks mine came to more than his;
So to my drawer he goes,
Takes out the doll, and oh, my stars! 10
He pokes her head between the bars,
And melts off half her nose!

Quite cross, a bit of string I beg,
And tie it to his peg-top's peg,
And bang, with might and main, 15
Its head against the parlour door:
Off flies the head, and hits the floor,
And breaks a window-pane.

This made him cry with rage and spite:
Well, let him cry, it serves him right. 20
A pretty thing, forsooth!
If he's to melt, all scalding hot,
Half my doll's nose, and I am not
To draw his peg-top's tooth!

Aunt Hannah heard the window break, 25
And cried, "O naughty Nancy Lake,
Thus to distress your aunt:
No Drury Lane for you to-day!"
And while papa said, "Pooh, she may!"
Mamma said, "No, she shan't!" 30

Well, after many a sad reproach,
They got into a hackney coach,
 And trotted down the street.
I saw them go: one horse was blind,
The tails of both hung down behind, 35
 Their shoes were on their feet.

The chaise in which poor brother Bill
Used to be drawn to Pentonville,
 Stood in the lumber-room:
I wiped the dust from off the top, 40
While Molly mopped it with a mop,
 And brushed it with a broom.

My uncle's porter, Samuel Hughes,
Came in at six to black the shoes,
 (I always talk to Sam:)
So what does he, but takes and drags 45
Me in the chaise along the flags,
 And leaves me where I am.

My father's walls are made of brick,
But not so tall and not so thick 50
 As these; and, goodness me!
My father's beams are made of wood,
But never, never half so good
 As those that now I see.

What a large floor! 'tis like a town! 55
The carpet, when they lay it down,
 Won't hide it, I'll be bound;
And there's a row of lamps — my eye!
How they do blaze! I wonder why
They keep them on the ground. 60

At first I caught hold of the wing,
And kept away; but Mr. Thing-
 Umbob, the prompter man,
Gave with his hand my chaise a shove,
And said, "Go on, my pretty love; 65
 Speak to 'em, little Nan.

“You’ve only got to curtsey, whisp-
Er, hold your chin up, laugh, and lisp,
And then you’re sure to take: 70
I’ve known the day when brats, not quite
Thirteen, got fifty pounds a night;
Then why not Nancy Lake?”

But while I’m speaking, where’s papa?
And where’s my aunt? and where’s mamma? 75
Where’s Jack? Oh, there they sit!
They smile, they nod; I’ll go my ways,
And order round poor Billy’s chaise,
To join them in the pit.

And now, good gentlefolks, I go 80
To join mamma, and see the show;
So, bidding you adieu,
I curtsey, like a pretty miss,
And if you’ll blow to me a kiss,
I’ll blow a kiss to you. 85

1812

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