

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

“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

(From G. B. Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 1. London, 1881)