

Monsieur Tonson.

A Comic Tale.

There liv'd, as Fame reports, in days of yore,
At least some fifty years ago, or more,
A pleasant wight in town, yclep'd Tom King;
A fellow that was clever at a joke;
Expert in all the arts to tease and smoke,
In short, for strokes of humour, quite the thing.

To many a jovial club Tom King was known,
With whom his active wit unrivalled shone—
Choice spirit, grave free-mason, buck, and blood,
Would crowd his stories and bon mots to hear;
And none a disappointment e'er could fear,
Tom's humours flow'd in such a copious flood.

To him a frolic was a high delight—
A frolic he would hunt for day and night,
Careless how prudence on the sport might frown:
If ever a pleasant mischief sprang to view,
At once o'er hedge and ditch away Tom flew;
Nor left the game till he had run it down.

One night, our hero, rambling with a friend,
Near fam'd St. Giles's chanc'd his course to bend,
Just by that spot, the Seven Dials light:
'Twas silence all around, clear was the coast;
The watch, as usual, dozing on his post;
And scarce a lamp display'd a twinkling light.

Around this place there liv'd the numerous clans
Of honest, plodding, foreign artisans,
Known at that time by name of Refugees—
The rod of Persecution from their home
Compell'd the inoffensive race to roam;

And here they lighted, like a swarm of bees.

Well! our two friends were sauntering thro' the street,
In hopes some food for humour soon to meet:

When in a window near, a light they view;
And, though a dim and melancholy ray,
It seemed the prologue to some merry play;
So towards the gloomy dome our hero drew.

Straight at the door Tom gave a thundering knock—
The time, we may suppose, near two o'clock.

I'll ask, says King, if Thompson lodges here—
Thompson! cries t'other; who the devils he?
I know not, King replies; but want to see
What kind of animal will now appear.

After some little time a Frenchman came—
One hand display'd a rush-light's trembling flame,
The other held the thing they call Culotte;
An old strip'd woollen night-cap grac'd his head,
A tatter'd waistcoat o'er one shoulder spread:—
Scarcely half awake, he heard a yawning note.

Though thus untimely roused, he courteous smiled;
And thus addressed our wag in accents mild,
Bending his head politely to his knee—
Pray, Sare, vat want you, dat you come so late?
I beg your pardon, Sare, to make you wait;
Pray tell me Sare, vat your commands vid me?

Sir, replied King, I merely sought to know,
As by your house I chanced to-night to go—
But really I've disturb'd your sleep, I fear—
I say, I thought that you, perhaps, could tell,
Among the folks who in this street do dwell,
If there's a Mr. Thompson lodges here?

The shivering Frenchman, though not pleased to find

The business of this unimportant kind,
Too simple to suspect 'twas meant in jeer,
Shrugg'd out a sigh that thus his rest should break,
And with unalter'd courtesy he spake -
No, Sare, no Monsieur Tonson lodges here.

Our way begg'd pardon, and towards home he sped,
While the poor Frenchman crawl'd again to bed:

But King resolv'd not thus to drop the jest:
So the next night, with more of whim than grace,
Again he made a visit to the place,

To break once more the poor old Frenchman's rest.

He knock'd - but waited longer than before;
No footstep seem'd approaching to the door:

Our Frenchman lay in such a sleep profound.
King, with the knocker, thundered then again,
Firm on his post determin'd to remain;
And oft, indeed, he made the door resound.

At last King hears him over the passage creep,
Wondering what fiend again disturb'd his sleep.

The wag salutes him with a civil leer,
Thus-drawling out, to heighten the surprise,
While the poor Frenchman rubb'd his heavy eyes -
Is there a Mr. Thompson lodges here?

The Frenchman falter'd with a kind of fright -
Vy, Sare, I'm sure I tell you, Sare, last night!

And here he labour'd with a sigh sincere -
No Monsieur Tonson in the world I know;
No Monsieur Tonson here - I tell you so.

Indeed, Sare, were no Monsieur Tonson here!

Some more excuses tender'd, off King goes;

And the old Frenchman sought once more repose;

The rogue next night pursu'd his old career,
Twas long indeed before the man came nigh;

And then he utter'd in a piteous cry—

Sare, pon my soul, no Monsieur Tonson here.

Our sportive wight his usual visit paid,

And the next night came forth a prattling maid;

Whose tongue indeed than any jack went faster;
Anxious she strove his errand to enquire:

He said, 'twas vain her pretty tongue to tire;

He should not stir till he had seen her master.

The damsel then began, in doleful state,

The Frenchman's broken slumbers to relate:

And begg'd he'd call at proper time of day.

Hing told her she must fetch her master down,

A chaise was ready—he was leaving town,

But first had much of deep concern to say.

Thus urg'd, she went the snoring man to call;

And long indeed was she obliged to bawl,

Ere she could rouse the torpid lump of slay.

At last he wakes—he rises—and he swears;

But scarcely had he totter'd down the stairs,

When Hing attacks him in his usual way.

The Frenchman now perceiv'd 'twas all in vain

To this tormentor mildly to complain,

And straight in rage began his crest to rear.

Sare, vat the devil make you treat me so?

Sare, I inform you, Sare, tree nights ago;

Got tam, I swear, no Monsieur Tonson here!

True as the night, Hing went; and heard a strife

Between the harrass'd Frenchman and his wife,

Which should descend to chase the fiend away:

At length, to join their forces they agree,

And strait impetuously they turn the key,

Prepared with mutual fury for the fray:

Our hero, with the firmness of a rock,
Collected to receive the mighty shock,
Uttering the old enquiry, calmly stood.
The name of Thompson rais'd the storm so high,
He deem'd it then the safest plan to fly,
With - Well, I'll call when you're in gentler mood.

In short, our hero, with the same intent,
Full many a night to plague the Frenchman went.
So fond of mischief was this wicked wit!
They throw out water, for the watch they call;
But Hing expecting, still deceives them all -
Monsieur, at last, was forc'd his house to quit.

It happen'd that our wag, about this time,
On some fair prospect sought the eastern clime,
Six ling'ring years bore there his tedious lot;
At length content, amid his rip'ning store,
He treads again on Britain's happy shore,
And his long absence is at once forgot.

To London, with impatient hope, he flies;
And the same night, as former freaks arise,
He fain would stroll, his well-known haunts to trace.
Ah! here's the scene of frequent mirth, he said;
My poor old Frenchman, I suppose, is dead,
Egad! I'll knock, and see who holds his place.

With rapid strokes he makes the mansion roar;
And, while he eager eyes the opening door,
Lo! who obeys the knockers rattling peal?
Why, e'en our little Frenchman! strange to say,
He took his old abode that very day -
Capricious turn of Fortune's sportive wheel!

Without one thought of the relentless foe,
Who fiendlike, haunted him six years ago,
Just in his former trim he now appears.

The waistcoat and the night-cap seem'd the same;
With rush-light, as before, he creeping came,
And Gling's detested voice astonish'd hears.

As if some hideous spectre struck his sight,
His senses seem'd bewildered with affright;

His face indeed bespoke a heart full sore:
Then starting, he exclaim'd in rueful strain—
"Beggar! here's Monsieur Donson come again!"
Away he ran—and never was heard of more.

