

RB23 b. 958

THE  
AIR-BALLOON;  
OR,  
THE SAGES ADVENTURES  
IN A  
FLIGHT TO THE MOON.  
A TALE,  
IN SIX SHORT CANTOS.

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Nor on the Surges of the boundless Air,  
Tho' borne triumphant, are they safe.

THOMSON'S Autumn.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for G. BREMNER, Bookseller, N<sup>o</sup> 127, Strand,

MDCCLXXXIV.

## To the R E A D E R.

EVERY thing which comes abroad into the world in a public form, is supposed to come with an intention of claiming some public Notice, and therefore ought to bring some credentials with it, to shew whether it deserves it or not. The following little Tale does not pretend to any thing more, than just to extort a smile at the expence of philosophic pride, which often assumes to itself more wisdom than it has a right to claim; and arrogantly tramples under foot the modest pretensions of humbler claimants, perhaps of greater merit.—Things must be exactly so and so, as the *ipse dixit* of our teachers makes them; so that you are not always left to the free exercise of your own reason, to judge and determine for yourself; but you must receive for truth every thing which these dictatorial masters are pleased to call so.

The Writer of this little Tale was much hurt by an instance of this sort, which he begs leave to explain after the following manner.

At this time, when the public attention has been much roused by the wonderful tales propagated in Newspapers of the astonishing phenomena of that machine, called an *Ærostatic Ball* or *Air-Balloon*, every place of consequence in the kingdom glowed with impatient ardour to become eye witnesses of the facts, which surpassed their credibility. And therefore, to gratify this Impatience in the multitude, Mr. Bunn, master of the *Pantheon*, at Norwich, caused an *Ærostatic Ball*, of considerable dimensions, to be made, and exposed to public view: but before it was sent up, two great philosophers, master and scholar, differed, if not in the measure of the dimensions, at least in the calculation of the force by which it would be carried up into the air; and each published his different account in the *Norfolk Chronicle*; so that a sort of paper war was the consequence. At length the scholar, tired with the contest, gave it up in a manner by no means inconsistent with good breeding, or the respect due to his master. But his silence created an unfavourable suspicion of contemptuous neglect, and therefore

fore

fore, was the occasion of publishing the following angry letter.

To the Printer of the Norfolk Chronicle.

S I R,

My old friend, Billy Harwin, who lives at the sign of All-knowledge, in the Rose-lane, King-street, Norwich, having too far shackled his thoughts to his own favourite opinion in respect to the exact height of 4618 yards, even to an inch to which he is to ascend with Mr. Bunn's Balloon ; where,

Whacum like, or Sydrophel,

Who by the stars so much can tell,

he will measure the Balloon's height. But, lost to all sense of gratitude to me for the many favours I have done him, in instructing him from the Rule of Three to the full extent of his present knowledge in figures, has used me very ungentlely in your Paper of the 7th instant, which recalls to my mind the following lines of Mr. Pope :

So modern 'Pothecaries, taught the art  
By Doctors' Bills to play the Doctor's part,  
Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,  
Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools !

But



But his trusting too much to his favourite author, Tom Telescope, and having too great an implicit faith in the Newspaper accounts of Mr. Charles, who ascended so high as to lose sight of every thing below him, and could see nothing but the wide expanse in which he moved; so that I should be glad to know how, or by what rule, Mr. Charles measured his height above the earth; or where he could place his line of measures? I think it is like my friend Billy's attempting to measure the exact height of Salisbury spire without his ever seeing it; or his taking the dimensions of a house in the Moon; but the Balloon calculation of my friend Billy's is similar to a calculation he made about ten or eleven years ago, of the fall of Easter, wherein he made Easter Sunday to fall upon a Friday.—So that upon the whole my learned friend has really made me wonder,

What witch could move his wrath to write,  
 Or Muse in mask to shew her spite?  
 His Letter, if it was wrote in school,  
 Shews that he did not write by rule,  
 But has prov'd himself a blun——g f——.

and as such shall take no more notice of him  
 or

or his reverend auxiliary; but subscribe myself,

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

Norwich,  
Feb. 10, 1784.

BLYTH HANCOCK.

The sneer which is here thrown out by the master against the scholar, by comparing his attempt to measure the height to which the Balloon would arise, to an attempt to measure the exact height of Salisbury steeple without seeing it, or his taking the dimensions of an house in the moon, gave birth to this little *jeu d'esprit*, and the Tale opens with the former of these arduous undertakings, and is made to serve as an introduction to the other.

Should the Reader ask, who is the author of this little Tale; let the answer be, that he lives in too much obscurity to be known to many; and upon this occasion he chooses to be known only to himself; lest he should draw down upon him the indignation of the sons of the Muses for daring to invade their province; who will soon perceive that he has no  
right

right to claim any affinity with them. And he is ready enough to own, that though he has drank deeply of the waters of the *Wensom*, yet he never sipt one single spoonful of the waters of *Helicon*; and therefore let them who have tasted of both determine the difference; for they must certainly be the best judges; and that though he has slept away the greatest part of his life, he never took a single nap upon Mount *Piercus*, and nothing could have roused him from his accustomed lethargy, but a sudden fit, which he trusts will not last long, of the true *cacoethes scribendi*.

T H E

T H E

A I R - B A L L O O N .

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C A N T O I .

M O R T I F I C A T I O N .

O R ,

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SAGES.

Question proposed.

I.

**T**HE bold and daring flights of foolish man,  
His vain attempts to reach the skies,  
What mighty dangers and adventures ran,  
Sing, Muse! and teach us to be wise,

II.

Not far from that delightful charming spot,\*  
Which now the face of Paradise retains,  
Where belles and beaux in summer months are got  
To tell their loves and love-sick pains;

\* Mr. Bunn's Spring Gardens.

B

There



III.

There stand two rows of buildings, call'd King-street,  
Where lives a sage whose name is Harwin ;  
There philosophic men are wont to meet,  
Hard knotty problems to determine.

IV.

So thus of old did ancient sages meet†  
Beneath some porch, or vaulted roof,  
And us'd their heads together with their feet,  
To find out reasons and new proof.

V.

One question started did them much perplex,  
Whereof no *data* had been given ;  
'Twas difficult indeed ! enough to vex  
All but the faints themselves in heaven.

VI.

It was to know a steeple's height, *unseen*,  
Which stood upon a famous plain.  
What can, say they, this puzzling problem mean ?  
Let's try, and try, and try again.

VII.

To lines and figures then once more they went ;  
But still the question baffled art ;  
At last 'twas given up by joint consent,  
And much chagrin'd were forc'd to part.

† Alluding to the Stoics and Peripatetics, or walking philosophers.

VIII.

So lovers oft obdurate nymphs pursue,  
Whom nought can to compliance bend ;  
And when they find their arts cannot subdue,  
They with reluctance quit their end.

C A N T O II.

S A G A C I T Y :

O R,

THE SAGES SECOND MEETING:

Error corrected, and the Question solved.

I.

WHEN scientific men meet with a foil,  
Their restless minds can find no ease ;  
They'll hazard any danger, brave all toil,  
Till they have solv'd the knotty case.

II.

So sailors brave, when in fierce conflict join'd,  
Are forc'd to quit the foe at night,  
Their restless ardour makes the daring mind  
Impatient for a second fight.

III.

Our philosophic sages late much hurt,  
At being driven from the field,  
Wish'd they had sooner perish'd in the dirt,  
Than thus with ignominy yield.

To

IV.

To wipe off this disgrace each bosom burn'd;  
The throbbing ardour swell'd their veins;  
The books, the chairs, the tables were all spurn'd,  
The sad effects of troubled brains.

V.

A second meeting was proclaim'd with speed,  
And soon the sages took their place;  
And he whose dignity it was to lead,  
Thought they might justly change the case.

VI.

Some error doubtless had unnotic'd past,  
From slip of pen or slip of press;  
The syllab *Un* wherewith they were set fast  
Had there no right, *he* must confess.

VII.

O penetrating mind! and happy thought!  
The point grew clear: *unseen* for *seen*:  
Hah! now the question may to terms be brought,  
We know full well what it must mean.

VIII.

But still one difficulty will remain:  
How shall we bring the thing to sight?  
It stands remote, on a far distant plain;  
We'd need have wings to take a flight.

O that,

## IX.

O that, quoth brother sage, we'll have and soon;  
 Our neighbour Bunn lives here hard by;  
 We'll borrow his huge, wide, but light *Balloon*,  
 And thro' the air we'll quickly fly.

## X.

No sooner said than done—aloft they mount,  
 And wafted by a friendly gale,  
 But at what height,\* a faith! I could not count,  
 Yet what's sufficient to my tale,

## XI.

Soon on the distant plain they did alight,  
 Their stations took, and height of steeple,  
 And re-assum'd their aery flight,  
 Amidst a crowd of wondering people.

## XII.

How easy, & how easy may questions be resolv'd,  
 When put into their proper dress?  
 But blund'ring printers truths have oft involv'd  
 In darkness void of all access.

\* Alluding to the uncertainty of the height to which Mr. Charles ascended; for as he lost sight of every thing below, so every thing below must lose sight of him.

C A N T O



C A N T O III.

C A T A S T R O P H E S :

O R,

THE THIRD AND LAST MEETING OF THE SAGES.

The Subject now becoming more grave and interesting, the Muse must change her Strain, and sing in proper Character.

I.

SUCCESS, as reverend preachers often teach,  
Sometimes intoxicates the feeble mind ;  
And makes men grasp at things beyond their reach,  
Where disappointment they will often find.

II.

So martial bosoms, late with conquest flush'd,  
Push on their victories for greater fame ;  
And what by valour had been gain'd at first,  
Is lost by rashness, a less glorious name.

III.

For in the ardour of their warlike fire,  
Some hidden dangers, foresight might detect,  
Stop them in full career, with ruin dire,  
And prudence takes revenge for the neglect.

C

The

## IV.

The voyage which our Sages lately took,  
 As sung before, in no mean vulgar strain,  
 Thro' the wide concave of the starry book,  
 To reach the wish'd-for distant steeped plain,

## V.

Had with intoxication fill'd the mind ;  
 And now they meditated greater flight,  
 Resolving not to leave one point behind,  
 Which their well-pois'd machine could bring in sight.

## VI.

They'd seen with full blaz'd orb the rising moon  
 Assume the featur'd front of some great man ;  
 And, zealous, were determin'd very soon  
 To find his habitation if they can.

## VII.

An house which such huge tenant had contain'd,  
 Must surely be an object well worth seeing ;  
 Its spacious rooms, which its high walls restrain'd,  
 Must bear some just proportion to the being.

## VIII.

To measure these a Sage's pains is worth ;  
 Here's proper scope for genius to unfold,  
 To shew her mighty powers, and call forth  
 Such deeds of science, worthy to be told.

Let's

## IX.

Let's wing our airy flight to this proud dome,  
 Bespoke a Sage for wisdom high renown'd ;  
 His well known voice was echo'd thro' the room,  
 And one consenting shout his wishes crown'd.

## X.

With haste they rose ; with telescopes\* they run,  
 Determin'd on a voyage to the moon,  
 Another visit paid to neighbour Bunn,  
 And up again they rose in his Balloon.

## XI.

Eft soon they topt the clouds to thinner air,  
 Where all sustaining force was nearly lost,  
 And after hovering a whilome there, }  
 They dropt into the *Wensom* † to their cost.

## XII.

So *Icarus* dar'd, as my dear Poet sings,  
 From Crete's high walls to take a lofty flight,  
 When fervid rays dissolv'd his waxen wings,  
 And in the boiling deep he perish'd quite.

\* Alluding to Billy's old friend Tom Telescope.

† Wensom is the river which runs through Norwich, and passes by King-street.

XIII.

Proud mortals, then, be wise! no longer seek  
Such daring and imprudent flights to take,  
Lest you be drowned in some dirty creek,  
Or, what is much the same, your necks should brake.

C A N T O

CANTO IV. Elegiac.

URANIA inconsolable for the Loss of her Children.

Their Funeral and Epitaph.

I.

REASON, the noblest gift on man bestowed,  
To make him cautious how to live,  
By heedless passion is too often thrown  
From that security she meant to give.

II.

To aim at what is great is doubtless right;  
A lofty mind disdains all humble things;  
But cooler reason should direct the flight  
Whene'er we soar aloft on eagles' wings.

III.

Sol's heedless, forward, and ambitious son,  
In spite of wise parental cautions given,  
Must needs to great and untried dangers run,  
And rashly set on fire both earth and heaven.

Men



## IV.

Man should not be too prodigal of life,  
 His days are few when husband'd at the best,  
 And oft a tender mother, child or wife,  
 Are by untimely loss too high distressed.

## V.

*Urania* now o'erwhelm'd with sudden grief,  
 At that sad hap which late her sons besel,  
 Could to her anguish'd soul find no relief,  
 Her loss, too great indeed ! for words to tell.

## VI.

Her tender sisters, with compassion mov'd,  
 Did all they could to sooth a sister's pain,  
 But their soft kind endearments only prov'd,  
 That what they did was labour lost in vain.

## VII.

The compass and the telescope in hand  
 Dropt down ; the globe roll'd careless on the ground ;  
 All science mourn'd ; all arts were at a stand ;  
 They never felt before so deep a wound.

## VIII.

Weep then, ye sons of art ! your loss deplore ;  
 Let gushing tears fall down the pallid cheek ;  
 Your brother sages, now on earth no more,  
 Can only hence be search'd for in the deep.

**With**

## IX.

With reverend steps then seek the god's domain,  
 Invoke the nymphs, whose liquid urns supply  
 His swelling stream, which rolls into the main,  
 And bid them lead you to the deity.

## X.

And when due vows and homage you have paid  
 A kind permission from his godship crave,  
 To search with reverence his oozy bed,  
 For those dear pledges swallow'd by his wave.

## XI.

Then to some hallow'd fane their limbs convey,  
 In slow and solemn dirge their requiems sing,  
 And when in earth entomb'd their bodies lay,  
 Let these sad lines record the daring thing.

---

 E P I T A P H.

## I.

WITHIN these marble jaws, the sad remains,  
 Of those bold sages, who once wing'd their flight,  
 From *Wensom's* banks to *Salisbury's* plains,  
 Lay swallow'd up in darkness and cold night.

Advent'rous

II.

Advent'rous youths ! who once for safety found  
In one bold act, must next attempt the skies :  
In this they fell, and were untimely drown'd ;  
Sad fruits of aiming to be over wise.

III.

Then gentle readers, when their fate you read,  
Let drop one tear—your feeble strength explore :  
Know the just limits wisdom has decreed,  
Which you may touch—'tis wrong to aim at more.

C A N T O

C A N T O V.

C O N S O L A T I O N :

O R,

T H E S A G E S R E S U R R E C T I O N.

I.

**D**ESPAIR, the worst tormentor of th' afflicted mind,  
Oft number'd in the list of human woes ;  
No heaven-born maid, but some dark hellish fiend,  
Let loose on purpose to destroy repose.

II.

The horrid Gorgons and Chimæras dire,  
With clotted gore bestain'd ; with hissing snakes  
Freeze into marble or consume with fire,  
Whom Honour's call and Virtue's paths forsakes.

III.

They exercise their power, where best it fits,  
In guilty bosoms rack'd with guilty fear,  
But conscious virtue no such guests admits,  
She claims the privilege of higher care.

D

Grania

## IV.

*Urania* felt indeed the pangs of grief,  
 Her loss was great, and equal was her pain ;  
 But virtuous sorrow often finds relief,  
 Where guilty tears run down and plead in vain.

## V.

Behind the edge of some bright cloud  
*Apollo* stood to see th' amazing sight,  
 And knowing what must happen, cried aloud,  
*Iris*, go break the force of falling flight.

## VI.

Swift as a thought the missionary speeds ;  
 Calls all the *Naiads* to assist below :  
 Instant there rose a bed of silken weeds,  
 Where dash'd the Sages limbs, but broke the blow.

## VII.

Then on the sedge banks, where *Acorus*\* sweet  
 In sportive gambols frolics with the wind,  
 Where odoriferous breath the senses greet,  
 They soon recall'd the flitting, sinking mind.

'Twas

\* *Acorus calamus*, or, sweet scented flag, grows in great abundance upon the banks of the *Wensom*. It is an officinal plant, and is still retained in dispensatories, and ranged under the class of nervous simples.—The root only is in use, and is considered as a good carminative and stomachic medicine. Its smell is a very grateful sweet, and its taste pungent and aromatic ; which qualities are much improved by drying. Haller says, that its aromatic flavour is much superior



## VIII.

'Twas then *Urania* came with downcast eyes,  
 With heart-felt sorrow and obstructed sight;  
 Had she not heard her much-lov'd children's cries  
 She'd lost the sweetest sense of fond delight.

## IX.

The voice she knew, but scarce could trust the sound;  
 Maternal love yet wish'd it might be true;  
 With fear and hope she touch'd the hallow'd ground,  
 At whose approach the soft'ring nymphs withdrew.

## X.

With joyous transports did her bosom heave;  
 Children once dead, now found again alive;  
 Dead in the mother's thoughts in wat'ry grave;  
 For how could they such dreadful fall survive.

## XI.

'Twas not the wisdom which had form'd their scheme;  
 'Twas not a knowledge of much use to man;  
 'Twas no religious vow; no act, I deem,  
 Of pious homage rais'd their arduous plan.

superior to any other vegetable that these northern countries can produce. The best preparation of it is a preserve, made after the manner of candied eryngo roots: for it is in that form it is used abroad amongst the Turks as a preservative against the plague, or any other infectious distempers.

XII.

Why then to tempt th' awful Powers divine ?  
Whene'er they call to battle they give arms :  
Safety they promise not to rash design :  
Nor will they snatch you from your own alarms.

XIII.

The heedless sons the mother's virtues save ;  
'Twas she gave life, when dangers would destroy ;  
Wisdom sometimes o'erlooks how fools behave,  
To fill the virtuous breast with tides of joy.

XIV.

Ye fair ! who feel the mother's fond alarm ;  
Seek wisdom for your own and childrens sake ;  
Would you protect from danger, shield from harm,  
Your own bright virtues are the shields to take.

C A N T O

C A N T O VI.

R E S T O R A T I O N :

O R,

THE SAGES SAFE RETURN TO KING-STREET.

I.

J O Y, thou bright sunshine of th' afflicted soul,  
How grateful is thy mighty influence found !  
When the dark clouds of ills in tempest roll,  
With angry shafts, to strike a mortal wound.

II.

When thou break'st forth with ever-glowing light,  
Dispelling chilling darkness in the thought ;  
Thrice welcome do we hail the cheering fight,  
And soon to former peace the mind is brought.

III.

Fresh from the womb of time the wretched springs,  
Fill'd with new life and thrilling sense of love ;  
To bask in sunshine and unfold its wings,  
And fond endearments in fresh acts to prove.

The

## IV.

The sons once more to vital air recall'd,  
 A double warmth the mother's bosom fills ;  
 Former distress with which she was appall'd,  
 Was now no longer number'd with her ills.

## V.

She saw, or thought she saw, new bloom arise,  
 With sparkling joy she caught the fond embrace ;  
 With tender love she taught them to be wise ;  
 Shew how their folly had disturb'd her peace.

## VI.

Then led them to the scientific seat,  
 Where Wisdom set enshrin'd, with awful brow,  
 And in sound maxims teacheth what is great,  
 What's worthy and discreet for man to know.

## VII.

Her penetrating eye their ardour knew,  
 And mildly chid them for their forward flight ;  
 Then from her side a radiant shield she threw,  
 Which once descended from the realms of light.

## VIII.

Take that, advent'rous youths, make that your arms ;  
 There you will safety and protection find ;  
 That will defend you from th' alluring charms  
 Of aims ambitious, which distract the mind.

I hold

IX.

I hold it right to soar beyond that pack  
Which crawl upon the surface of the clod ;  
A base degenerate crew, who oft attack  
The realms below, where lucre is their god.

X.

Not so the sons of Wisdom \* should proceed ;  
Their nobler souls were cast in finer mould ;  
Their origin they owe to heavenly feed,  
And when their aims are right are ne'er controul'd.

XI.

The gracious gods above, this world endu'd  
With arts sublime to elevate the soul ;  
And oft with kindred pleasures have they view'd  
The spreading wings of science reach the pole.

XII.

The moon too in her full blaz'd orb of light,  
Her spots and all the wrinkles in her face,  
At distance have been seen by Sages sight,  
But none but fools † could ever reach her place.

\* The Goddess of Wisdom is supposed here to allude to that well known character of *Luna*, as being the wife of *Plutus*, the god of riches ; which, by their splendid appearance, are apt to dazzle the imagination of little dirty minds.

† A wretched pun upon lunatics, much unbecoming the Goddess of Wisdom.

The



XIII.

The Goddess spoke—and thunder shook the ground ;  
Swift in a golden cloud aloft she flew.  
Th' astonish'd Sages all alone were found ;  
And how they reach'd King-street they never knew.

F I N I S



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