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13

Comical Adventures

OF THE LATE

Mr James Spiller Comedian

A T

EPSOM, in ENGLAND.

A TRUE HUMOROUS TALE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE PLEASANT STORY

O F

OBADIAH MOUSETRAP.

True humour is a thing so hard,
It merits wisest men's regard ;
And is so near ally'd to wit,
That many have mistook it for't,
For tho' wit's e'er so entertaining,
'Tis best with humour for it's lining.

ANONYM.

G L A S G O W,

PRINTED by J. & M. ROBERTSON, Saltmarket,
1800.



None so deaf as those who will not hear.

A true humorous Tale, and Proverb exemplified in the following merry Story of Mr. JAMES SPILLER, Comedian of facetious Memory.

AS the art of true humour is very difficult to attain, and very rarely met with, I shall present my readers with the following quotation of that subject from the Spectator.—‘ Among all kinds of writings, there are none in which authors are more apt to miscarry than in works of humour, as there is none in which they are more ambitious to excel. It is not an imagination that teems with monsters, an head that is filled with extravagant conceptions, which is capable of filling the world with diversions in this nature; and yet, if we look into the productions of several writers, who set up for men of humour, what wild irregular fancies, what unnatural dis-

tortions of thoughts do we meet with? If they speak nonsense, they believe they are talking humour, and when they have drawn together a scheme of inconsistent ideas, they are not able to read it over to themselves without laughing. These poor gentlemen endeavour to gain themselves the reputation of wits and humourists, by such monstrous conceptions as almost qualifies them for Bedlam: Not considering, that humour should always be under the check of reason, and that it requires the direction of the nicest judgement, by so much the more as it indulges itself in the most boundless freedoms. There is a kind of nature to be observed in this sort of composition, as well as in all others, and a certain regularity of thought within, must discover the writer to be a man of sense, at the same time that he appears altogether given up, to caprice. For my part, when I read the delirious mirth of an unskilful author, I cannot be so barbarous as to divert myself with it; but am rather apt to pity the man that laughs at any thing he writes.—It is indeed,

4 The comical Adventures of
much easier to describe what is not
humour, than what it is; and very dif-
ficult to define it any otherwise, than
as Cowly has done wit—by negatives.’
For a further definition of humour,
and a beautiful comparison between
true humour and false humour, I
would recommend my readers to the
remaining part of the above specula-
tion, and shall proceed to my story.

In the summer season, Mr. Spiller
was one day riding to Epsom, and in
the evening met with an intimate ac-
quaintance of his, who was return-
ing some three or four miles from
that town, where (but I know not
upon what occasion, except the races)
it was so prodigiously full of compa-
ny, that he could not get accommo-
dation for himself or his horse upon
any account. After some little cere-
mony had passed between them, the
gentleman asked Mr. Spiller where he
was bound for? Who answered him,
to Epsom.—What, says his friend, do
you intend to stay there all night?—
Yes Sir, replied Mr. Spiller, you may
be sure of that.—Why then, returned

the gentleman, if you do, you must take beds with you, both for yourself and horse too, except you are there provided for already, or else you will find that you must do as I have done, that is to say, come back again: I have tryed every place in the town, and there is not one bed to be got for love or money, as the saying is.

I'll lay a wager, replied Mr. Spiller, that I get a lodging both for myself and my horse too, let the town be ever so full; and that too, in one of the best inns in the town.—Perhaps, said the gentleman, you may have one already there bespoke.—No indeed Sir, replied Mr. Spiller, I have not, I can assure you, nor am I acquainted with any person that lives in the town, to the best of my knowledge.—Why then, said the gentleman, I'll lay you a gallon of claret, that you don't lie in the town to night, I mean in a bed; or get your horse put into a stable there.—Done Sir, said Mr. Spiller, I'll lay you a gallon of claret that I do; and that too, in one of the best inns in the town: And if you will favour

me with your company, and return back with me, you shall see yourself that I will.—No, no, replied the gentleman, I'll take your own word for it; and the first time we meet in London, if we have time, we'll have our wager, and a bird to make us merry over the history of this night's adventure;—with all my heart, replied Mr. Spiller: Which sign do you reckon is the best, for that shall be the place I mean to lodge at?—After the gentleman had satisfied him in that point, they confirmed their wager, and so they parted.

When Mr. Spiller came to the inn where he was directed by his friend, he rides directly into the yard, and calling aloud for the hostler, he found it quite taken up with other guests, and every body in such hurry and confusion, that no creature offered to attend him, or see for any body that would.

With that he alights from his Rosinante, and leads him directly into a stable, which was before so full of horses, that there was not room for

him possibly to lie down, but however, there he meets the hostler, with whom he begins his humour, in the manner following. Here, friend, take care of this horse, and do you hear, let him be well rubbed down.—Sir, answered the hostler, you see that the stables are already quite full; here is no room for him; nor have I any other place where there is more.—Well, well, said Spiller, you may do so then, if you please, rub him down well, and give him some hay now, and about half an hour hence, give him a quarter of corn and some beans. Sir, said the hostler again, I tell you, here is no room for him, nor will I take any charge of him.—Ay, do, do, replied Mr. Spiller, if thou thinkest so, put some bran amongst his corn with all my heart.—Sir, said the hostler, roaring as loud as ever he could, imagining that he was deaf) I tell you that I'll not take any charge of your horse; and if you don't take him away with you, I'll turn him out of the stable, and let him go to the devil if he will.—Why, thou art an honest, sensible, good natur'd young fellow,

8 The comical Adventures of
replied Mr. Spiller, and I'll leave
entirely to thee: But be sure do not
let my horse be changed.—Curse you
deaf head! quoth the hostler; you
may be d—'d, and your horse too,
wish you were both in hell together.
Here Mr. Spiller took not the least
notice of what the hostler had said to
him, but left the horse with him in
the stable, and goes himself directly
into the house to get something to
drink.

And the hostler reflecting, that if
the horse should be lost, he might
swear that he left him in his charge,
and might by that means, come upon
him for damages, he therefore tied
him up to the manger, gave him some
hay, and then ran into the house, to
acquaint his mistress (for she was
widow) what strange and deaf odd
sort of a fellow she had got to deal
with. By this time, Mr. Spiller was
come into the kitchen, and had just
called for a pint of red wine, but the
good hostess being in a hurry, answer-
ed him, that she was very sorry that
she had no place to ask him to sit down

in. When he, not willing to understand her, replied,—'tis all one to me, madam, if your red wine is not good, let me have a pint of white. Just as he had made this contrary answer, in comes the hostler, and as his mistress was endeavouring to make Mr. Spiller understand what she had to say to him, the hostler cried out to her,—Ay, d—n his deaf head, madam, you may spend as much of your breath as you please to talk to him, but he will never hear a word you say: I have been plagued with him this hour in the stable about his d—n'd horse, and though I roared out in his deaf ears as loud as ever I could, till I had almost split my throat, I could not make him understand me one word, and there's his horse still in the stable, I dare not turn him out, for fear he should be lost, and the deaf son of a b—h should swear that I took charge of him.—Lord! cried the hostess, I do not know how we shall get shut of him.—Troth, madam, answered the hostler, I fancy it will be best to let him alone, and give him nothing that he calls for to eat or drink, and perhaps

10 The comical adventures of
that may soon tire him of being here

The hostler's advice was thought very good, and therefore resolved on by his mistress to be put in execution. So there stood poor Spiller, for some time, staring about him, and could neither get a seat to sit down, nor anything to drink; but by and by, observing the servants to carry out of the kitchen a cover of smoking hot dishes, he immediately follows them into a room, where there was about twenty gentlemen going to supper. So, as soon as he came into the room he pulled off his hat, and after hanging it upon a peg, he stood there as mute as a fish. At length, one of the gentlemen observing him, and also that he was a stranger, demanded.—Who does this gentleman want?

But they all stared at him for some time, but nobody claiming any knowledge of him, one of them said to him, Sir, we are here a select company, do you want any body, pray?——No ceremony with me, replied Mr. Spiller, I beg gentlemen, that you will not disturb yourselves upon my ac-

Mr. James Spiller Comedian. 11

count, I can sit any where.—D—n the fellow! says another of them, what does he mean? Turn him out of the room!—The servants being all busy at his first coming into the room, placing the dishes on the table, and putting things to rights, had not observed his coming in before; but now hearing the gentlemen dispute, they soon found the cause of it, and thereupon said one of them,—Lord, gentlemen! you will get no satisfaction by swearing and quarreling with him; for he is so deaf, that you may fire a cannon at his ear, and he will not hear you. He has been in the kitchen this hour, but nobody can make him understand a word that any body says to him. They have been ready to knock out his brains several times, but he never understood them in the least; he is a poor simple honest fellow, I dare say, but what has brought him here, the Lord knows; or how you will get him down again, the Lord knows.—Well, well cried one of them, what does it signify! 'Tis better to let him stay here, now he is here; he looks like an inoffensive gentleman, and as

he is so deaf, we may be sure that he will not be offended at any thing that is said in company, nor should we get any great honour in throwing him down stairs.

This speech met with so general an approbation, that they all sat down to supper, and let their deaf visitant quietly partake with them, which we may say, was another point gained. So after they had supped, and had sat drinking wine and punch, and other liquors, for about the space of an hour, Spiller got up, and with great ceremony thanked them all round for their very good company, and then throws down his shilling upon the table, for his shot. At which one of them roared out, as loud as he could bellow.—Z——ds, Sir! What do you mean by a shilling! A shilling will not do, nor two neither! Six shillings a head will hardly pay the reckoning.

Why now, gentlemen, reply'd Mr. Spiller, it does not signify making a multitude of words, for upon my soul I will be my shilling, if you were to

alk till to-morrow; therefore no apologies; gentlemen; I scorn to sponge upon any body.—Here after some stir, they found it was but in vain to talk with him, so they were forced to take the shilling, and be contented.

Some little time after, when Mr. Spiller was returned to the kitchen, as his eyes were rolling about, he espied one of the maids with a pan of coals in her hand (at which he inwardly rejoiced) so watching his opportunity, he slinks easily after her, quite unperceived by the girl; till when she was warming the bed, he says to her,—What, is this the room that I am to lie in?—At this unexpected demand, the poor girl, in the utmost surprize to see him there, replied to him, as loud as she could roar,—No, Sir; this bed is for two gentlemen who are just coming into the room, and has been hired for them this month. Very well, my dear, said Mr. Spiller, I like it very well, and I hope the sheets are well aired; but where is my night-cap?—At Hell, quoth the girl, for ought I know, and I wish you were

14 The comical Adventures of
there too! for I am sure you are
worſe plague than the Devil: Bu
d—n your deaf head! I will have your
neck broke down ſtairs preſently.

With that away ſhe flies, with the
warming-pan in her hand, as faſt as
ſhe could, to inform her miſtreſs and
the two gentlemen, what beſel her.—
Madam, ſaid ſhe, yonder is that curſ
ed dunny man, that has plagued the
whole houſe ſo, has followed me ſlily
up ſtairs in ſuch a room, where I was
going to warm the bed for the two
gentlemen, and I cannot for my life
get him down again.

So away flies her Miſtreſs up ſtairs
full drive, and the two gentlemen,
who had beſpoke the room along with
her. But when they came to the door,
to their great diſappointment, they
found it both locked and bolted; and
he had alſo drawn a great cheſt of
drawers againſt it, and placed a great
wainſcot table againſt the drawers,
and ſeveral chairs upon them: So that
the gentlemen, at this baulk, were in
a terrible paſſion, and ſtrove to burſt

the door open : But it being a thick oak door, and so strongly stayed within, it was too much for them to accomplish. So, after they had bounced against it half a dozen of times to no purpose, they stood to listen whether they could learn what he was about ; and Spiller at the same time rightly guessing what their sudden silence was for, says to himself (but loud enough for them to hear him) the public inns are sometimes very dangerous places, and a man cannot be too secure in them ; but tho' I have the misfortune to have lost my hearing, I think they cannot easily make their way through that strong door, and that heavy chest of drawers, and all the other things which I have put against them ; and if they should, they can want nothing but to rob and murder me, I am sure.

When they all heard this, the hostess gravely said to the two gentlemen. —Gentlemen ! Do you hear this ! I am glad you did not force open the door, with all my heart ; for if you had, we might have been all ruined.

What could be done with such a man? One of the gentlemen, being a practitioner of the law, answered the hostess thus,—By G—d, madam, you are very much in the right of it; for although he has no right to the room he is in, yet, as this is a public inn, and he being in possession of it, to break open a door upon him, would be such an assault, as I should not care to be concerned in for an hundred pounds. This speech of the lawyer's soon determined the matter, for down they all went very quietly, and left Mr. Spiller secure enough in his lodgings.

In the morning when Mr. Spiller came down, he very complaisantly bid them all a good morrow, and they in return, all cursed him heartily for his good humour, and called him a thousand bad names; but he understanding never a word that they said, it was all given to the wind. Here, he desired half a pint of white wine made hot, with an egg beat up in it for his breakfast, and then giving the hostler a shilling for looking after his horse,

and a shilling to the maid for warming his bed, he mounted his nag. And being now settled in his saddle, he desired the good hostess to give him a glass of brandy, which she did: And he drank to her very good health, rendering her his hearty thanks for her great civility. But while she stood talking with him, for that little space, having an occasion to break wind, and not dreaming that he could be at all informed of the report, and recover his hearing so easily, she never stood upon ceremony, but let fly at once, with the report of a demi-cannon. At this vociferous salute, Spiller returned,—Well said, madam, By heaven that was a rouzer, I hope madam you are better, I never heard a more banging f—t in my life.

G—d curse you! cried the hostess, is this you that was deaf all night, and can hear a f—t in the morning? You scoundrel dog! you richly deserve your brains knocked out.—Here her passion was so great, that she could not contain herself; so while she was looking about for something to throw

at his head, he threw her down the sixpence for his brandy, turned his horse, and, after repeating these words, —“None, madam, so deaf, as those
“who will not hear,”—he rode out of the yard as fast as he well could, leaving the whole house in the greatest alarm imaginable.

And he fairly won his wager, and maintained himself undiscovered to the very last.

OBADIAH MOUSETRAP.

Quoth Hudibras, the cause is clear,—
As thou hast proved by their practice,
No argument like matter of fact is;
And we are best of all led to
Men's principles by what they do.

HUD.

IT is most certain that men's actions speak their principles the plainest, and it is not what we say, but what we do, that wise men judge by; and therefore the following story may be a proper lesson for the unwary to take

notice of. Ingratitude is certainly one of the worst sins that a man can be guilty of, and in a very special manner, when it is committed in a breach of trust, under the person who gives them bread for life. If then, I say, such an one should be found betraying his master's trust, and yielding up any right of his, for a sordid and squalid bribe; if the person who had seduced him, should then fight him with his own weapons, and trick him of his covenanted reward and unjust hire, as my reader will find was the case in the following story; Such a person, I say, if he should break articles with him, and bilk him of his unjust and criminal expectations, is rather to be commended than the other pitied. There is no creature upon the face of the earth so guilty of this crime, ingratitude, as mankind. Even the most furious of wild beasts, are civilized by gratitude, and will not hurt their benefactors and providers. But man is daily giving up his father, mother, wife, children, friend, nay, and his whole country, for a mere trifle. Let every man, thus

guilty, put the question to himself and then consider it well, whether he thinks, (though he be called to no account for it in this life) the cries and groans of succeeding generations that lie under the oppressions and distress which he before had caused, and brought upon them, will have no impression upon his final JUDGE, that may move him to reward and punish his treasons? That man who would sell his trust, I am persuaded, would not boggle at any thing for gain; that is, I mean, if he could conceive himself secure from the power of the law; and therefore, the following proceedings of our good friend Obadiah Mousetrap, will, in my opinion, be the easier justified, or at least excused.

Our friend Obadiah Mousetrap, who was a Quaker, and a commander of a trading vessel, was just returned from a voyage, into the river of London, when he had a couple of custom-house officers, as is usual, immediately clapt on board him: But it happened, that two or three days after, the sly old fox had a mind to found

the depth of those worthy gentlemen's honesty; whether with any view to serve his own interest, I shall leave my reader to judge of. So one day, as he was walking upon the deck with them, and talking of indifferent things, he says to one of them, (we'll suppose him whom he thought properest to begin with) friend, wilt thou go into my cabin, and drink a glass of rum? I have a cask of that which is quite neat, if thou wilt come and taste it, and give me thy opinion of it, I shall be obliged to thee. The officer complied, and they each of them drank a glass or two of it; and which the officer very much praised. The Quaker perceiving his spirits a little elevated, and believing him in a proper cue for his purpose, pulled out of his pocket a green purse, with about sixty guineas in it, says he, Friend, as far as I can perceive of thee, thou appearest to be a person of quick sight and good understanding; therefore I shall have no occasion to make a multitude of words, where I only wish to speak, and straight be understood. Thou hast this green purse, and what it

contains; if thee, and thy brother officer will give me thy company for one half hour, only to drink a bowl of this rum, made into what they call punch, this purse and all its contents shall be thine, as soon as the bowl is out; so consider as thou thinkest proper: If thou orderest me to fill the bowl, I shall know what thou meanest, and will not only immediately obey thee, but will also fully make good my word. The officer here gave him a nod of understanding, and immediately communicated this proposal to his trusty companion; and, after some private confabulation, they agreed to the captain's proposal; and the former of these two, gave him, as he had hinted, a signal for the bowl, which was compounded in a minute. As soon as this was ordered, the Quaker gave his instructions to his man accordingly, and a boat was presently hauled up close a-stern, and was put off again for shore, before the bowl was near consumed.

Now our honest friend, Obadiah Mousetrap, being informed by his

mate, and thoroughly satisfied with what in this interval had been transacted, produced the green purse, and delivered it to the person to whom he had promised: But, O dire disappointment and confusion! Behold the uncertainty of this world, instead of real gold, in honest weighty guineas, impostured brads filled up their room, in flashy counters all. At sight and proof of this, how did the invenomed tongues of the deceived begin to rave! Their eyes struck fire, and their whole disappointed frames began to shake with resentment. But our good friend Obadiah Mousetrap, being assisted by the spirit, soon found a way to cool their intemperate passions; I perceive, says he, my friends, that you have been deceived in me, as I have been in you, and have understood in earnest, what I meant in jest; is it reasonable to imagine, (I appeal to your own reflection) that I could be so weak as to give you a purse of real gold for the good services of drinking up my property? No, I think not, however, as you were both strangers to me, I had a mind to make a trial of your

honesty. I know that you would think I had some illicit business to transact, worthy of giving such a present, for an opportunity to do it in; but ye are both mistaken, I never wronged my king nor my country in my life, I look upon you both as persons that hath infamously forfeited the trust reposed in you, and are liable of being severely punished for it; which, if I was to be as cruel to you (by informing against you) as you have been to me, by suspecting that I would wrong the King of his due, that must unavoidably be the case; but I scorn such an action, though I despise your principles.—However my friends, I would admonish you to be more honest, and more upon your guard for the future, which will effectually compleat my good intention by this experiment.

F I N I S.

G L A S G O W,
 Printed by J. & M. ROBERTSON
 Saltmarket, 1800.