â??Câ??-s.â?• â??In Ridicule of the Prevailing Rage for Air Balloonsâ?•

Description

â??Câ??-s.â?•

â??In Ridicule of the Prevailing Rage for Air Balloonsâ?•

Men have long built castles in the air: how to reach them
Montgolfier has now first the honour to teach them.

How odd this whim to mount on air-stuft pillions!
â??Twill ruin all our coachmen and postillions,
Who, if men travel in these strange sky-rockets,
Will quickly feel the loss in â?? empty pockets.
And most of them, I fear, must quite despair,
Like new philosophers, to live â?? on air.
The schemeâ??s not novel, â??faith, for by the bye
I long have thought our gentry meant to fly,
Thoâ?? hitherto content, instead of wings,
With four stout horses, and four easy springs;
But now the case is alterâ??d, for, depend onâ??t,
If flying once comes up â?? thereâ??ll be no end onâ??t.
Our grandfathers were pleasâ??d, poor tender souls!
â??To waft a sigh from Indus to the Poles;â?•
Whilst our enlightenâ??d age a way discovers,
Instead of sighs to waft â?? substantial lovers:
Montgolfierâ??s silk shall Cupidâ??s wings supply,
And swift as thought convey them throâ?? the sky.
Nor will their travels be to earth confinâ??d,
Theyâ??ll quickly leave this tardy globe behind.
Posting towards Gretna formerly youâ??ve seen us;
The *ton* will soon be to elope â?? to Venus:
Hot-headed rivals now shall steer their cars,
To fight their desperate duels â?? snug â?? in Mars,
Whilst gentler daemons, in the rhiming fit,
Shall fly to little Mercury for â?? wit.
â??John, fill the large balloon,â?• my lady cries,
â??I want to take an airing â?? in the skies.â?•
Nimbly she mounts her light machine, and in it
To Jupiterâ??s conveyâ??d in half a minute,
Views his broad belt, and steals a pattern from it â??
Then stops to warm her fingers â?? at a comet.
The concert of the spheres she next attends,
Hears half an overture â?? and then descends.

Trade too, as well as love and dissipation,
Shall profit by this airy navigation:
Herschell may now with telescopes provide us,
Just fresh imported from â?? his Georgium Sidus.
Smart milleners shall crowd the stage-balloon,
To bring new fashions weekly â?? from the moon:
Gardeners in shoals from Battersea will run,
To raise their kindlier hot-beds â?? in the sun:
And all our city fruitshops in a trice
From Saturn daily be supplied with ice.
Albion once more her drooping head shall rear,
And roll her thunders through each distant sphere;
Whilst, led by future Rodneys, British tars
Shall pluck bright honor â?? from the twinkling stars.

NOTES:

Subtitle *Montgolfier* One of the Montgolfier brothers; Joseph-Michel (1740-1810) and Jacques-Ã?tienne Montgolfier(1745-1799) were pioneer developers of the hot-air balloon and they conducted the first untethered flights (*Britannica*).

1 *pillions* â??A type of saddleâ?• (*OED*).

2 *postillions* â??A person who rides the (leading) nearside (left-hand side) horse drawing a coach or carriage, especially when one pair only is used and there is no coachmenâ?• (*OED*).

14 A slight variation of line 58 from Alexander Popeâ??s â??Eloisa to Abelard.â?•

21 *Gretna* Gretna Green, a Scottish town very close to the border with England, and famously the goal for young English couples seeking a quick marriage without their parentsâ?? permission, due to the difference in Scottish marriage laws (*Britannica*).

22 *ton* â??Fashion; the vogueâ?• (*OED*).

37 *Herschell* William Herschel (1738-1822), a German-British astronomer who, in 1781, discovered the planet Uranus (*Britannica*).

38 *Georgium Sidu*s Latin for â??Georgeâ??s Star,â?• Herschelâ??s initial name for planet Uranus, named for then King of England, George III (*Britannica*).

39 *milleners* â??A person who designs, makes, or sells womenâ??s hatsâ?• (*OED*).

41 *shoal* â??A place where the water is of little depth; a shallow; a sandbank or barâ?• (*OED*); *Battersea* A neighborhood in south London, much of which extends directly along the River Thames.

43 *in a trice* â??Instantly, forthwith; without delayâ?• (*OED*).

45 *Albion* â??The nation of Britain or England, often with references to past times, or to a romanticized concept of the nationâ?• (*OED*).

47 *Rodneys* George Bridges Rodney (1718-1792), a famous British naval officer (*Britannica)*; *tars* Sailors (*OED*).

SOURCE: ***The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine*** **(May 1784), p. 367. [J. Paul Leonard Library]**

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