

# The GROANS of the TANKARD.

*Dulci digne mero !*

HORAT.

**O**F strange events I sing, and portents dire ;  
The wond'rous themes a reverent ear require :

Tho' strange the tale, the faithful Muse believe,  
And what she says with pious awe receive.

'Twas at the solemn, silent, noon-tide hour,  
When hunger rages with despotic power,  
When the lean student quits his Hebrew roots  
For the gross nourishment of English fruits,  
And throws unfinish'd airy systems by  
For solid pudding and substantial pye,

When



26 GROANS OF THE TANKARD.

When hungry poets the glad summons own,  
 And leave spare fast to dine with Gods alone;  
 Our sober meal dispatch'd with silent haste,  
 The decent grace concludes the short repast:  
 Then, urg'd by thirst, we cast impatient eyes  
 Where deep, capacious, vast, of ample size,  
 The TANKARD stood, replenish'd to the brink  
 With the cool beverage blue-ey'd Naiads drink.  
 But lo! a sudden prodigy appears,  
 And our chill'd hearts recoil with startling fears;  
 Its yawning mouth disclos'd the deep profound,  
 And in low murmurs breath'd a sullen sound;  
 Cold drops of dew did on the sides appear;  
 No finger touch'd it, and no hand was near;  
 At length th' indignant vase its silence broke,  
 First heav'd deep hollow groans, and then distinctly spoke.

“How chang'd the scene! for what unpardon'd crimes

“Have I surviv'd to these degenerate times?

“I, who



" I, who was wont the festal board to grace,  
 " And 'midst the circle lift my honest face,  
 " White o'er with froth, like Etna crown'd with snow,  
 " Which mantled o'er the brown abyfs below,  
 " Where Ceres mingled with her golden store  
 " The richer spoils of either India's shore,  
 " The dulcet reed the Western islands boast,  
 " And spicy fruit from Banda's fragrant coast.  
 " At solemn feasts the nectar'd draught I pour'd,  
 " And often journey'd round the ample board ;  
 " The portly Alderman, the stately Mayor,  
 " And all the furry tribe my worth declare ;  
 " And the keen Sportsman oft, his labours done,  
 " To me retreating with the setting sun,  
 " Deep draughts imbib'd, and conquer'd land and sea,  
 " And overthrew the pride of France—by me.

" Let meaner clay contain the limpid wave,  
 " The clay for such an office nature gave ;



28 GROANS OF THE TANKARD.

“ Let China’s earth, enrich’d with colour’d stains,  
“ Pencil’d with gold, and streak’d with azure veins,  
“ The grateful flavour of the Indian leaf,  
“ Or Mocho’s sunburnt berry glad receive ;  
“ The nobler metal claims more generous use,  
“ And mine should flow with more exalted juice.  
“ Did I for this my native bed resign,  
“ In the dark bowels of Potosi’s mine ?  
“ Was I for this with violence torn away,  
“ And drag’d to regions of the upper day ?  
“ For this the rage of torturing furnace bore,  
“ From foreign dross to purge the bright’ning ore ?  
“ For this have I endur’d the fiery test,  
“ And was I stamp’d for this with Britain’s lofty crest ?  
“ Unblest the day, and luckless was the hour  
“ Which doom’d me to a Presbyterian’s power :  
“ Fated to serve the Puritanic race,  
“ Whose



- “ Whose slender meal is shorter than their grace ;  
“ Whose moping sons no jovial orgies keep ;  
“ Where evening brings no summons but to sleep ;  
“ No Carnival is even Christmas here,  
“ And one long Lent involves the meagre year.  
“ Bear me, ye pow'rs ! to some more genial scene,  
“ Where on soft cushions lolls the gouty Dean,  
“ Or rosy Prebend, with cherubic face,  
“ With double chin, and paunch of portly grace,  
“ Who lull'd in downy slumbers shall agree  
“ To own no inspiration but from me.  
“ Or to some spacious mansion, Gothic, old,  
“ Where Comus' sprightly train their vigils hold ;  
“ There oft exhausted, and replenish'd oft,  
“ Oh ! let me still supply th' eternal draught ;  
“ Till care within the deep abyss be drown'd,  
“ And thought grows giddy at the vast profound.”



30 GROANS OF THE TANKARD.

More had the goblet spoke, but lo! appears  
An ancient Sybil furrow'd o'er with years.  
Her aspect sour, and stern ungracious look  
With sudden damp the conscious vessel struck :  
Chill'd at her touch its mouth it slowly clos'd,  
And in long silence all its griefs repos'd :  
Yet still low murmurs creep along the ground,  
And the air vibrates with the silver sound.