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A Collection Of Poems In Six Volumes. By Several Hands

Dodsley, Robert

London, 1758

Kambromyomaxia: or the Mouse-Trap; Being a Translation of Mr.
Holdsworth's Muscipula, 1737.

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KAMBROMYOMAXIA:
OR THE
MOUSE - TRAP;

Being a Translation of

Mr. HOLDSWORTH'S * MUSCIPULA, 1737.

By * * * * *

THE *Mountain-Briton*, first of men who fram'd
Bonds for the *Mouſe*, first who the tiny thief
In prison clos'd vexatious—fatal wiles,
And death inextricate—sing, heav'nly Muse.
Thou PHOEBUS, (for to Mice thyself wast erst
A foe, in antique lore thence SMINTHEUS † call'd,)
Inspire the Song; and 'mongst the Cambrian Hills

* *Of this translation Mr. Holdsworth declar'd his entire approbation in a letter, by giving it this short character, that it was exceedingly well done. See preface to a dissertation upon eight verses in the second book of Virgil's Georgics. 1749.*

† *A title of APOLLO, given him for freeing Smintba, a colony of the Cretans near the Hellespont, from Mice, which much infested them, OVID. MET. xii. 585. Α σμίνθη, quæ Cretensium linguâ murem domesticum sign. AINSWORTH.*

Thy

Thy Pindus choofing, fmile upon the Mufe,
Whom lowly themes and humble verfe delight.

The Moufe, an hostile Animal, enur'd
To live by rapine, now long time had rov'd
Where'er his luft innate of fpoil led on ;
And unaveng'd his wicked craft purfu'd ;
Long fearlefs, unaveng'd — All things on earth
Felt his fell tooth, while fafe in nimble need
Evafive, he in ev'ry dainty difh
His revels held fecure. Nought was untouch'd,
But ev'ry feaft wail'd the domeftic foe,
A conftant gueft unbidden. Nor ftrong walls
His thefts obftrudt, nor mafly bars avail,
Nor doors robuft, to fave the lufcious cates :
Through walls, and bars, and doors he eats his way
Contemptuous, and regales with unbought fare.

Thus wail'd the helplefs world the general foe,
But Cambria moft ; for Cambria's od'rous ftore
Moft ftimulate the curious taft of Moufe :
Not with a taft content, or lambent kifs,
(The fate of common cheefe,) he undermines
And hollows with reiterated tooth
Eatable Palaces.

The Nation faw,
And rag'd—Revenge and grief diftract their minds—
What fhould they do ? They foam, they gnafh their teeth,
And o'er their pendent rocks in fury rove,
Reftlefs with rage—for Nature prone to rage



The Cambrians form'd, and bade their fiery breasts
 Burst into sudden flame—that men would deem
 Their souls were with their fingers sulphur-ting'd.

It is decreed—Rage prompts them to revenge
 Unfated but with blood—Yet by what means,
 What art the cautious felon to ensnare,
 They doubt: for, Cambria, thy Grimalkin race
 Nor to the house defence, nor in distress
 So imminent, cou'd aught of succour bring.
 Oft had the Cat plac'd at the cavern's mouth
 The various ambuscade; as oft with paw
 Soft-filent creeping, near the hollow cell
 Kept wary watch—In vain—The little Mouse
 In little bulk secure, (advantage great
 Over a Giant Foe!) if chance he spy
 Her watching at his door intent on prey,
 Inward he flies, his serpentine recess
 Pursues, and caves impervious to Cat:
 Nor dares again thrust out his head in air,
 Nor form new sallies, till the siege be rais'd,
 And danger with the watchful foe withdrawn.

The Cambrians thus, (if Cambrians with the Mouse
 We may compare,) when Roman JULIUS fought
 To join the Britons to the world subdu'd,
 Eluded his vain toil.—To their retreat
 At once a nation vanish'd; in their rocks,
 Rampires impregnable, lay safe obscur'd
 'Mid circling ruin; and of conquest though

Despairing,

Despairing, to be conquerable scorn'd.
 Their long, unbroken lineage hence they boast,
 Their country unsubdued, and ancient tongue.

Thus did the Mause, by custom tutor'd, oft
 Evade the hostile paw; nor Cambria's sons
 Had hope from their confederate of the war:
 When strait, on th' utmost frontiers of their Land,
 Where now Menevia the shrunk honours mourns
 Of her divided mitre, of whose walls
 Half-buried but an empty name remains,
 Behold a Council summons'd. From each side
 See Nobles, Fathers, and the vulgar throng
 Of stench sulphureous, mix.

An ancient Sage,

Whose length of beard oft from his native hills
 The goat with envy ey'd; his hands, his face
 With scurf of ancient growth encrust'd o'er;
 Broken with years, against a post reclin'd,
 (By Cambrian backs still shaken) in the midst
 Stood visible to all, and with deep tone
 These words precipitating, gutt'ral spake.

"Of open war we treat not, but sly theft——

"No foreign foe, but a too inmate guest

"(That heavier evil) summons us to meet.

"Still shall the bold insulter lord it thus,

"The tyrant Mause? Rouse, awful Fathers, rouse;

"Ye, to whose breasts your country's good is dear,

"By counsel end these horrors; and if aught

R 3

" Of



“ Of hope remain, now lend propitious aid :
 “ So shall your glory grow, your names be known
 “ Immortal as CADWALADER’s in fame.

He spake, and strait the fragments, mouldy scraps,
 Reliques of rapine, monuments of theft,
 High in their fight uprearing, rous’d their rage :
 Now thirst of dire revenge, now lust of fame
 Burns emulous, and fires each Patriot breast ;
 Each meditates to Mousse unheard-of fate,
 And ev’ry brain is hamm’ring on a TRAP.

But one ’bove all by th’ honour-added name
 Of TAFFY fam’d, far more for wit renown’d :
 Cambria ne’er bred his peer, whether at forge,
 Or council ; Senator and Blacksmith He.
 Thus ’gan the Sage—“ Should Cheefe, our Nation’s boast,
 “ In Cambria be extinct, I fear our hinds
 “ Wou’d mourn their whole meals sunk, and Nobles grieve
 “ The honours lost, that crown’d the second course.
 “ Since then nor Cambria’s courage, nor her cats
 “ Against the monsters can prevail, we’ll try
 “ If this mechanic hand, if craft, deceit,
 “ Can aught advantage : *in a foe none asks*
 “ *If force prevail, or fraud.*”

Strait at this boast,
 All fix on TAFFY their expecting eyes,
 All in glad murmurs speak their promis’d joy,
 Wait whence the blifs ; question, and burn to know.

Scratching his head, (as British heads demand,)
 He ghastly smil’d, and strait with freer air

Proceeded

Proceeded thus—"When wearied, at the close
 "Of yester sun I gave my limbs to rest,
 "And slumber deep my eyes had quenched; a mouse
 "Bold, and pursuing, as I guess, the trail,
 "Which unconcocted Cheese recent exhaled
 "From out my viscous jaws, stole down my mouth
 "Then discontinuous; and reaching now
 "My very entrails, strait their crude contents
 "'Gan gnaw, and through my throat ill-fortified
 "My yester's meal, alas! triumphant drags.
 "When sudden rous'd from sleep, in his retreat
 "I 'twixt my teeth the felon snap'd, and bound
 "Vainly rebellious in the biting chain.
 "Instructed thus that Mouse might be enthral'd,
 "New visionary prison-houses rise
 "In my revolving mind, and such restraints,
 "As the late captive of my jaws suggests.
 "By what mysterious laws the hand of Jove
 "Moves sublunary things! By what hid rules
 "The chain of causes acts! the Mouse himself
 "To us involuntary succour brings,
 "And for the wounds he gave himself prescribes.
 "Blush not by such a master to improve;
 "*From foes to learn, honour nor right forbids.*"
 These said, homeward he hies. Th' applauding throng
 Accompany his route, and to his toil
 Propitious omens beg. Each to his house
 Bends his swift course; each to his *Lares* flies,



Glad harbinger of this expected birth
 From TAFFY's brain : and whilst they tell the tale,
 Whilst to the Gods for glad event they bend
 Of the great enterprize, the Mousing Kind
 (Prophetic instinct !) shew unwonted joy
 Gamesome ; and (if we credit Fame) beneath
 The matron's hand dances the embryo cheefe.

TAFFY mean while with head, and hand, and heart,
 Plies his great work, with PALLAS' *aid divine*
The MOUSE-TRAP builds. A wonderful machine
 Now stood confess'd ; and form 'till then unknown
 The Tragi-comic edifice indu'd.

Now smile, sweet Muse, and to our sight disclose
 The infant fabric ; each particular
 Dilate, and join them in the finish'd pile.

Of oblong form twin planks of wood compose
 The base and roof ; a wiry palisade
 Fences each side, on whose small columns rais'd
 The fabric stands : th' insidious gate invites
 With friendly-seeming welcome ; but on high,
 Depending from a slender thread, the vast
 Portcullis threatens, to thoughtless Mice sure death.
 (Such is the thread of life, spun by the FATES
 To Mouse and Man—All on a thread depends.)
 Amidst the level roof shoots up a mast
 Erect, in whose cleft head a slender beam
 Transverse inserted plays, and on each side
 Extends its poised arms ; whose one extreme

Depress'd,

Depress'd, one equally the pendent door
 Exalts. Within, let through a slender bore,
 A wire depends that fluctuates with a touch;
 The lower part is cramp'd into a hook,
 Tenacious of the bait; while th' upper gripes
 Th' extremest handle of the treach'rous beam,
 But soon as e'er it feels the foe to 've touch'd
 The fatal food, the loosen'd portal strait
 Lets fall, and speaks the first attack reveng'd.

Things thus dispos'd, infant the pendent hook
 TAFFY with treason cloaths, and turns to death
 The very food of Mouse: but, that his cheese
 More fragrant may from far the Foe invite,
 Toasts the fell bait, and strengthens the perfume.

And now appear'd the memorable night,
 When on his bed TAFFY his limbs fatigu'd
 Reposing, near his pillow's downy side
 His Minion MOUSE-TRAP set, and all-secure
 In th' faithful centry, slumber sweet indulg'd.
 The frolic Mice, (a tribe audacious they)
 Safe in the covert of the silent night,
 Now sport abroad: when one, a leader Mouse,
 Of nose sagacious, born the Gods his foes,
 The hostile ambush seeks, led by the scent
 Of toasted cheese delicious. The Grate resists
 His swift career, and entrance first denies——
 But he, to suffer such severe repulse
 Indignant, round the wiry fortrefs scours,
 And crisps his nose, and with sagacious beard

A pass

A pass explores ; and enter'd now the lines,
 Impassable again, of all his wish
 At length possess'd, the deadly bait secures,
 Feasts on his ruin, and enjoys his fate.

TAFFY, whom strait the pendulous door, scarced rop'd,
 With sudden clap had wak'd, you might behold
 Now on his elbow prop'd, now from his bed
 Skipping triumphant, fir'd with thirst to know
 What new-come guest. *The Mouse ridiculous*
 Rages within, batters with front and foot,
 Proves with his head each wiry interval,
 And wears with raging tooth his iron hold.
 Driv'n to the toils so raves the Marsian boar
 Horrid, and shakes his waving bonds, the sport
 Of circling dogs ; he flings about his foam,
 And on his front erect the bristles stare.

The morrow came, and from her rocky heights,
 Precipitant, whole Cambria pours ; for strait
 In ev'ry ear the novel tale was rife—
 Nor wonder, for the Ass, his solemn wont
 Relax'd, nor mindful of his late slow pace,
 The mountain climbs more wanton than the kid :
 Thence with sonorous din from rusty throat,
 (The Cambrian Herald simulating,) thrice
 Thee, TAFFY, bray'd ; thrice told the public joy,
 Nor less the Owl ; (from that great Æra term'd
Cambria's Embassador :) for through her towns,
 And utmost limits wand'ring wild that night,
 She scratch'd the windows with her ominous beak,

Grating harsh dissonance, and sung in shrieks
 The infant fate of Mause. The lab'ring rocks
 Bring forth, and Pembroke's, and Mervinia's sons
 In swarms condens'd rush down; and whom the walls
 Of Bonium hold, and Maridunum fam'd
 For their prophetic bard, MERLIN; and whom
 Fruitful Glamorgan feeds, and he that drinks
 Of Vaga's stream, with the rough hardy clown
 Montgomery manures.—Then TAFFY, 'midst
 The crowded ring, his raging prey insults.

“ Vain are thy efforts—fix'd thy doom of death,
 “ On this my altar the first victim thou,
 “ To die with memorable blood the frame,
 “ No hope remains: thy flight these wiry posts
 “ Inexorable bar—Dread, wicked wight,
 “ The fate thy merits ask; for these thy bonds
 “ Thou quit'st not but with life.”

The fatal words

Scarce had he spoke, when from the sunny thatch,
 (Her wonted haunt, when with extended limbs
 She basks luxurious, winking in soft ease,)
 Down leap'd the playful Cat.—Her swift approach
 The captive eyes, and pricks his ears, and stiff
 Bristles his gibbous back, nor dares attempt
 The portal now up-drawn; but his sole hope
 Of freedom only in his prison fix'd,
 With hooked talons grasps his bonds, and hangs
 Tenacious by his feet—At length he drops
 Out-shaken: instant to her prey the Cat

Flics



Flies rapid, and with rude embrace enfolds,
 And savage kisses on her struggling foe
 (Vain efforts !) cruelly imprints. No pause
 Her rage admits ; her sinuous-twirling tail
 Denotes the Victor's joy ; her body moves
 Agil in wanton frolicks, watching now
 Prone on the earth intent the destin'd Mouse ;
 His neck now lightly pats with hurtless paw,
 Dissembling love ; but ruminates the while
 To tear him limb from limb. The Mouser thus,
 Witty in tyranny, with various art
 Wanton barbarity enjoys : but now,
 Tir'd with the sportive mockery, no more
 Conceals her rage, but o'er her trembling prey
 Like the starv'd lion hangs, and growling tears
 His gory entrails, and convulsive limbs.

The circling crowd, soon as his hated blood
 Sprinkled they spy, fill with glad shouts the air ;
 And Echo, tenant of the Cambrian hills,
 Their clam'rous joy repeats ; Plinlimmon's height,
 And Brechin with the loftier Snowdon join :
 To neighb'ring Stars the loud acclaim ascends,
 And OFFA's Ditch rebellows to the din.

TAFFY, for ever live—Ev'n to this day
 Thy gift the Cambrian celebrates ; and Thee
 Commemorates each circling year. The land
 Grateful, its native honours to maintain,
 Each joyful head crowns redolent with Leek.