

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)

9 *John Day*

A Pathetic Ballad

'A Day after the Fair.' — *Old Proverb.*

John Day he was the biggest man
Of all the coachman-kind,
With back too broad to be conceiv'd
By any narrow mind.

The very horses knew his weight 5
When he was in the rear,
And wish'd his box a Christmas-box
To come but once a year.

Alas! against the shafts of love
What armour can avail? 10
Soon Cupid sent an arrow through
His scarlet coat of mail.

The bar-maid of the Crown he lov'd,
From whom he never ranged,
For tho' he changed his horses there, 15
His love he never changed.

He thought her fairest of all fares,
So fondly love prefers;
And often, among twelve outsides,
Deemed no outside like hers. 20

One day as she was sitting down
Beside the porter-pump —
He came, and knelt with all his fat,
And made an offer plump.

Said she, my taste will never learn 25
To like so huge a man,
So I must beg you will come here

As little as you can.

But still he stoutly urged his suit,
With vows, and sighs, and tears, 30
Yet could not pierce her heart, altho'
He drove the Dart for years.

In vain he wooed, in vain he sued;
The maid was cold and proud,
And sent him off to Coventry, 35
While on his way to Stroud.

He fretted all the way to Stroud,
And thence all back to town,
The course of love was never smooth,
So his went up and down. 40

At last her coldness made him pine
To merely bones and skin;
But still he loved like one resolved
To love through thick and thin.

Oh Mary, view my wasted back, 45
And see my dwindled calf;
Tho' I have never had a wife,
I've lost my better half.

Alas, in vain he still assail'd,
Her heart withstood the dint; 50
Though he had carried sixteen stone
He could not move a flint.

Worn out, at last he made a vow
To break his being's link;
For he was so reduced in size 55
At nothing he could shrink.

Now some will talk in water's praise,
And waste a deal of breath,
But John, tho' he drank nothing else —
He drank himself to death. 60

The cruel maid that caused his love,
 Found out the fatal close,
For looking in the butt, she saw,
 The butt-end of his woes.

Some say his spirit haunts the Crown, 65
 But that is only talk —
For after riding all his life,
 His ghost objects to walk.

1839

(From *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood*.
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