



# Wit and Humour Selected from the English Poets; With an Illustrative Essay, and Critical Comments

*Leigh Hunt*

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This historic book may have numerous typos, missing text or index. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. 1846. Not illustrated. Excerpt: ... Wit and humour James Henry Leigh Hunt PEEFACE. This book was announced for publication last autumn; and it would have appeared at that time but for a severe illness which the editor underwent during the progress of his Stories from the Italian Poets, and the consequences of which conspired with other untoward circumstances to delay it till now. What additional amount of indulgence therefore may be required by his portion of the work, the good-natured reader will not withhold. Luckily, the far greater part of the volume cannot fail to amuse; and in order to make amends for that absence of prose-wit and humour which its limitation to verse rendered at once unavoidable and provoking (considering how much some of the best of the writers excelled in prose, often to the far greater advantage of their pleasantry), the Introductory Essay has been plentifully supplied with examples of both sorts. Comedy, indeed, has had comparatively little to say for itself in verse, even in Shakspeare. Wit and satire, and the observation of common life, want, of necessity, the enthusiasm of poetry, and are not impelled by their nature into musical utterance. They may write verse in order to concentrate their powers and sharpen their effect; but it will never be of any high or inspired order. It will be pipe and tabor music; not that of the organ or the orchestra. Juvenal sometimes gives us stately hexameters; but then he was a very serious satirist, and worked himself up into a lofty indignation. One of the perplexities that beset the Editor in his task was the superabundance of materials. They pressed upon him so much, and he overdid his selections to such an extent in the first instance, that he was obliged to retrench two-thirds ...

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