

Rowlandson



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A collection of Drawings by Thomas Rowlandson 1757 - 1827

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY



Plate i *CHELSEA REACH* (1)

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INTRODUCTION

Excepting for Nos. 3 and 27, this group of drawings by Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) has been in the Permanent Collection since 1885, when it was part of the original gift of Mr. Mackelvie to the city.

The drawings have been well selected and have in most cases retained their freshness of colour.

Rowlandson was a prolific worker, so that in numbers this collection is a small one. However, it contains examples of some of his best work and covers reasonably the extent of his subject matter. The catalogue itself is arranged in rough chronological order, and little more can be done to make it more accurate for as other authorities have pointed out Rowlandson repeated certain drawings, traced off others, employed similar styles throughout his working life and dated his drawings in a highly arbitrary manner. The latter habit was perhaps due to sale reasons, of dating a drawing to gain a better price and apparently through plain eccentricity. It must be remembered that he worked constantly through printsellers preparing drawings for them. Versions of one drawing may exist because he was not prepared to let the printmaker have the original. In another way clients would perhaps prefer to have versions of already existing drawings. There are several references in the catalogue text to these practices. Apart from the artist's methods, later hands have attached forged signatures, titles and dates — some of these may be easily detected, others not. Thus any attempt to compile a chronology in the face of these factors is a hopeless task.

Rowlandson belonged very much to his time — he appears to have gone through a number of handsome legacies seeking the true life in the gaming houses, the routs and balls, on the racecourse, in the taverns, excursions into the country and on the Continent. Despite the heavy expenditure incurred in these pursuits he left at his death about £3,000 — a considerable sum in those days. Despite the apparent superficiality of this kind of existence, the artist shared with others of his time the growing sensibility towards humanity, which coloured the opinions of such men as Johnson and Goldsmith. Rowlandson is never vicious in his caricatures which are mostly of types and not individuals; he has a shrewd eye for inconsistencies in behaviour, a ready sympathy for the underprivileged, but none of these expressions is ever canalised into a crusade, social or political. He is one of the greatest reporters the English have produced, and one of the fairest. If he observes some inhumanity he records it but never judges it, rather allowing the repetitive nature of his drawings to sway opinion in the right direction. His attitude to the country side and its inhabitants is largely influenced by Morland who was his friend and in literary terms by Goldsmith rather than by Crabbe—that is to say he was a romantic and a devotee of the picturesque, the warm thatched cottage — the spreading oak — the jolly farmer and dimpled milkmaid made up for Rowlandson, the Londoner, a picturesque facade behind which no glimpse is seen of the deserted villages, the rising poverty and unemployment amongst the smallholders evicted by the Agrarian movements of the late 18th Century. Like most urban dwellers now, Rowlandson had only one view of rural England and that was an idyllic one — within his own environment, however, there was no facade to his commentary on manners and thereby—man.

As an artist, Rowlandson can on occasion rank with the best in drawing and water-colour. Very sensitive to tone — he used a restricted colour range and his command of wash is very strong. Although he can be accused of using the same composition over and over again he was always capable of adding some new element that prevented this practice becoming mechanical. In artistic stature he has been compared with Hogarth but lacks his positive approach — although his control of numerous figures within a composition is as good as Hogarth. In much the same way he does not rank on the same level in terms of political caricature as Gillray or Cruickshank for he lacked the dash of bitters and measure of vinegar which any political cartoonist has to have.

We can, however, truly admire Rowlandson, as a sensitive and sharp eyed observer — an artist of real gifts — and an unmalicious humorist.

P. A. TOMORY.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

- 1756 Rowlandson was born in Old Jewry, London.
At School in Soho Square and at the Academy Schools.
- 1771-2 Two years study at a drawing academy in Paris.
- 1772 Resumed study at the Royal Academy.
- 1775 First exhibited at the Royal Academy.
- 1778 The last year he exhibited any drawings at the Academy.
- 1783-9 Made a number of visits to the Continent.
- 1797 Visited North and South Wales.
- 1798-9 Visited the Continent with his patron Mr. Michell.
- 1800-17 Made further visits to the Continent.
- 1827 Rowlandson died in London.

Apart from the visits to the Continent he made numerous excursions to the South Coast, the Isle of Wight, and the West Country.

PRINCIPAL SOURCES

- GREGO: Rowlandson the Caricaturist, two Volumes, Chatto and Windus, London, 1880.
- OPPE: Thomas Rowlandson, His Watercolours and Drawings, The Studio, London, 1923
- FALK: Thomas Rowlandson, His Life and Art, Hutchinson, London, 1950.

NOTE: All measurements are in millimetres, height preceding width. All the drawings with the exception of Nos. 3 and 27 now belong to the Mackelvie Trust collection.

CATALOGUE

1 *CHELSEA REACH* plate i

Pen and watercolour 171 x 270

Inscribed (recto) *Chelsea Reach*

This is the drawing for the print, Designed and Published by T. Rowlandson, 1, St. James St., Adelphi September, 1789. The companion piece was *The Bay of Biscay*.
(M. 151A)

2 *A NAVAL VETERAN*

Pen and Watercolour 163 x 127

The veteran, who is blind, carries a notice on his chest, a stick in one hand and extends his hat with the other. Two women, one carries a child, stand on the right, the other puts a coin in the hat. Left background a military officer walks with a woman companion on his arm.

This drawing might be identified with *A British Tar and Charitable Feelings*, formerly in the Thos. Capron Collection (Grego, 11, 425)
(M. 158A)

3 *PERSECUTION TO THE GRAVE*

Pen and wash 162 x 231

A funeral party led by the widow and children, leaving the church are met by the disappointed creditors.

Presented by Mr. Wallace Alexander, 1940.

Inscribed (verso) in the artist's hand. *Persecution to the Grave or enraged Usurers outwitted by death. Debts cancelled by Death or Usurers outwitted.*

(594/40)

4 *A DICTATED LETTER*

Pen and Watercolour 110 x 72

A lawyer (?) whose nose almost meets his lower lip, clenches his fist over a young woman who writes at a table.

The drawing has been trimmed down so that the title is obscured.

(M. 128A)

5 *HUNT SUPPER*

Pen and Watercolour 102 x 146

A rollicking song is in progress and the leader stands with mouth wide open, and both

hands upraised. A boots stands on the right either singing or yawning prodigiously. One of many of like subjects by Rowlandson.

Verso: An exact pencilled tracing of the composition recto. The reasons for this tracing are various. Oppé (p. 25 ff.) refers to drawings being traced by the artist and Falk (p. 153 ff.) argues against a method of offsetting drawings, using damp paper, ascribed by a contributor W. P. to *Notes and Queries*, 1869, to Rowlandson. In the case of this drawing, it is conceivably possible for the pencilled tracing to have been pressed down on damp paper, to obtain an offset impression. Further by tracing on the back of the drawing the artist would probably avoid any inaccuracy that might occur doing a conventional tracing on another sheet. Another suggestion is that the tracing was made for the convenience of the engraver. The final suggestion is that another hand than the artist did the tracing for no particular reason at all. (See also note V. & A. Dept. of Engraving, etc. *Accessions*, 1948, II, 168.) (M. 137A)

6 REST ON THE JOURNEY

Pen and ink and grey Wash 66 x 106

A horse stands on the left, while a man and woman are seated under a rocky bluff. Reminiscent in style and medium of small sketches done by the artist on his Welsh tour (1797). (M. 157A)

7 SMUGGLERS

Pen and Watercolour 182 x 141

While one smuggler bends over a chest containing cloth the other bargains with an old man. The smugglers' boat is in the background. (M. 132A)

8 THE OYSTER GIRL

Pen and Watercolour 149 x 111

A jovial elderly gentleman divides his attention between the oysters and the oyster girl. In the background a portly man gazes out to sea through a telescope.

This drawing may perhaps be identified with one of two described by Grego *The Oyster Wench* (Grego, 11,417) or *A Man of Taste* (Grego 11, 383). (M. 131A)

9 THE GOSSIPS

Pen and Watercolour 121 x 95

A younger and an older woman in the background exchange remarks about the man in the foreground, who is more than aware of their attention. (M. 140A)

10 *A HELPING HAND* Plate vii
Pen and Watercolour 149 x 111 (M. 143A)

11 *ELOPEMENT*
Pen, watercolour and pencil 119 x 155

A huntsman stands in his stirrups to embrace a girl leaning over a high wall. A maid in the background calls the alarm.

This is a subject to which Rowlandson constantly returned. (M. 145A)

12 *CARTERS AT AN INN*
Pen and Watercolour 104 x 149

Three unharnessed horses are drinking at a trough outside an inn, while a farm labourer talks to two women.

This drawing might be identified with *Rustic Scene. Carter's Horses Watering* formerly in the W. R. Baker Collection (Grego 11, 416). (M. 152A)

13 *A VILLAGE STREET*
Pen and Watercolour 138 x 226

In the centre of the drawing there is a village inn. Right, a cart drawn by a single horse. Left background, a haywain drawn by two horses.

On the back of the drawing there are washes in several colours.

With reference to the washes (verso) see No. 15. It should be noted that the washes on the back of this drawing bear no relation to the colour in this drawing, which is in vermilion ink and vermilion and blue wash. (M. 138A)

14 *LABOURERS AT LUNCH UNDER A TREE* Plate ii
Pen and Watercolour 116 x 185

This is one of several drawings by Rowlandson in the style of George Morland, with whom he was friendly.

It might possibly be identified with a drawing in the Grego Collection (Grego, 11, 424) *The Meal in the Shade*. (M. 130A)

15 *THE TOLL GATE*
Pen and Watercolour 112 x 162

The seated gatekeeper watches a horseman pass through the gate, while another man and dog stand near to him.

Verso: Some washes in different colours and also three addition sums. Falk (p. 78) com-

ments on these washes, to which A. W. Heintzelman drew attention in his *The Water-Colour Drawings of Thomas Rowlandson*, New York, 1948. The inference being that Rowlandson tried out combinations of colours and tones before committing himself to the drawing. (See also No. 13.) (M. 153A)

16 *A COUNTRY RACE MEETING* Plate iii

Pen and Watercolour 118 x 179

Another of Rowlandson's favourite subjects.

(M. 146A)

17 *THE COUNTRY BRIDE*

Pen and Watercolour 121 x 76

A young woman knocks at a street door, while a man stands behind her carrying a small trunk under one arm and a basket in his other hand. (M. 148A)

18 *MAID OF ATHENS ERE WE PART*

Pen and Watercolour 135 x 107

A man, with his hat tilted on the back of his head, is in full bibulous song. By his side a woman, her hat cocked over one ear, totters beside him.

The inscription on No. 38 (verso) rightly belongs to this drawing and as it is in a later hand, the mistake probably arose when the drawings were remounted.

Byron wrote *Maid of Athens, ere we part* in Athens in 1810, the first verse of which runs:

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh give me back my heart
Or since that has left my breast,
Keep it now and take the rest
Hear my vows before I go

Ζωή μου σὰς ἀγάπω

The most popular setting for this ballad was composed by Henry Robinson Allen (1809-1876) which appeared first sometime after 1850. However, many of these settings were based on earlier popular melodies. (M. 150A)

19 *AT THE INN*

Pen and Watercolour 136 x 121

While a chambermaid, candle in hand stands at the open door of a room, an elderly gentleman labouring under the disadvantage of gout and an enormously distended white waistcoat, propels himself forward with the aid of crutches. His wife, whose bonnet completely obscures her face, follows behind him. (M. 161A)

20 DOCTORS AND PATIENT Plate iv

Pen and Watercolour 114 x 179

This is the drawing for Plate I in the *Comforts of Bath* published by S. W. Fores, January 6th, 1798. The Plate is illustrated in Grego, 1, 334.

The plates by Rowlandson illustrated *The New Bath Guide or Memoirs of the Blunderhead Family in a Series of Poetical Epistles* by Christopher Anstey.

The verses for Plate I are as follows:

We all are a wonderful distance from home
Two hundred and sixty long miles we have come
'Tis a plaguy long way but I ne'er can repine,
As my stomach is weak and my spirits decline:
For the people cry here, be whatever your case,
You are sure to get well if you come to this place.
As we all came for health (as a body may say),
I sent for the doctor the very next day;
And the doctor was pleased, though so short was the warning,
To come to our lodging betimes in the morning:

He looked very thoughtful and grave, to be sure,
And I said to myself, there's no hopes of a cure
But I thought I should faint when I saw him, dear Mother,
Feel my pulse with one hand, and a watch in another:
No token of death that is heard in the night
Could ever have put me so much in a fright:
Thinks I, 'tis all over, my sentence is past,
And now he is counting how long I may last.

And so, I grew every day worse and worse,
The doctor advised me to send for a nurse,
And the nurse was so willing my health to restore,
She begged me to send for a few doctors more;
For when any difficult work's to be done,
Many heads can despatch it much sooner than one;
And I find there are doctors enough at this place,
If you want to consult in a dangerous case.

21 AN EPICURE ORDERING HIS DINNER BEFORE HE HAS FINISHED HIS BREAKFAST (M. 141A)

Pen and Watercolour 110 x 186

A gouty gentleman, in a wheel chair, examines the lunch menu, while the cook stands at his side. In the left background, a young woman is seated at the breakfast table.

Inscribed (recto) *An epicure ordering his dinner before he has finished his breakfast.* This drawing was probably made in the 1790's, as it is close in style to the Bath series (see No. 20). (M. 129A)

22 *SOLDIERS CROSSING A RIVER*

Pen and Watercolour 42 x 69 (oval)

The leading soldier carries a drum on his back.

Probably a tailpiece or vignette for an unidentified book illustrated by the artist.

(M. 155Aa)

23 *A VIGNETTE*

Pen and Watercolour 44 diam. (circular)

A stout middle-aged woman carrying a crook precedes a man carrying a large book under one arm.

This vignette is based on the drawing in the Royal Collection at Windsor *Sunday Morning* dated 1798 (Oppé Pl. 49) in which two identical figures to those in this drawing appear. As this and the two below are on the same sheet, one may assume that they were produced for the same publication.

(M. 155Ab1)

24 *A VIGNETTE*

Pen and Watercolour 61 x 40 (upright oval)

A group of street musicians play to some figures leaning over a balcony, while a woman carrying a child looks on from the street.

See No. 23 above.

(M. 155Ab2)

25 *A VIGNETTE*

Pen and Watercolour 44 diam. (circular)

A person in a sedan chair has had the misfortune of breaking through the floor of the chair and is attempting to attract the leading chairman's attention.

See No. 23 above.

(M. 155Ab3)

26 *THE WEDDING BREAKFAST*

Pen and Watercolour 111 x 188

An inn dining room, with a large table surrounded by guests. On the left an irate man in a red coat has left the table and is reaching for his hat, while another guest attempts to detain him.

This drawing can certainly be identified with another entitled *Interior of an eating house* formerly in the William Bates Collection, Birmingham. See Grego, 11, 431.

(M. 142A)

27 *REFUGEES OUTSIDE A CITY GATE* Plate v

Pen and Watercolour 120 x 218

Presented by Mr. Wallace Alexander, 1940.

This drawing is very similar in composition to *Congregation: Providence Chapel* (Gilbert Davis Collection: rpr: Falk facing p. 61)

A more likely title would be Prisoners being taken from one prison to another, on the analogy of other drawings of similar title by Rowlandson.

(595/40)

28 *BEFORE THE BALL (?)* Plate vi

Pen and Watercolour 135 x 114

The title above is obviously not the true one and is much more likely to be either *Who's Mistress Now*, 1802. (Grego, 11, 41) or *Trying on her Mistress's Clothes*, or *A peep into the Kitchen* (Grego, 11, 422) 1801. (M. 144A)

29 *A MASTER OF ARTS AND A MISTRESS OF ARTS* or *THE DON CAUGHT NAPPING* Plate ix

Pen and Watercolour 132 x 208

(M. 168A)

30 *THE SUSPICIOUS FATHER*

Pen and Watercolour 114 x 70

An elderly man in nightcap, gown and night shirt, peers through a half open door at some figures going up a staircase. Left background, his wife looks at him from behind another door. (M. 160A)

31 *THE PORTRAIT PAINTER'S SHEW ROOM* Plate viii

Pen and Watercolour 151 x 239

Inscribed *PORTRAIT PAINTERS SHEW ROOM* and signed *Rowlandson 1802*.

This is a supposedly earlier reversed and larger version of the drawing (124 x 200) of the same title in the Ashmolean (Oppé Plate 79). There are several differences between the two drawings. The two figures on the extreme left of the Auckland version do not appear in the Ashmolean. Besides other variations in gestures, etc., the Auckland version is unfinished viz., the pictures on the left are blank, while the painter, the lady he is greeting and the studio interior are uncoloured or only partly coloured.

As no reliance can be put on Rowlandson's dates, it is difficult to conjecture the relationship between the two drawings, except the Ashmolean drawing being reversed, may have been prepared for the engraver. As Oppé points out (p. 25) this subject was used as one of the plates for *Johnny Quaegeus* (1822). (M. 162A)

32 *SKISH AND SPLAH*

(A Boarding School)

Pen and Watercolour 137 x 94

'Certain well-favoured young house painters are inciting the mischievous hoydens . . . A daring scamp is stealing a kiss from a buxom belle . . . and three terrible young flirts are exchanging pleasantries with a youth on a ladder, who is stopping the torrent of menace, poured forth by the mistress, by bedaubing his whitewash brush in the learned features of the infuriated old lady.' (Extract from Grego's description.)

Inscribed (verso): *Skish and Splah*.

Another version is illustrated in Grego 11, 54 (dated 1805). The Grego version is larger including the street door and the three girls on the balcony are in different positions. (M. 136A)

33 *VIEW OF THE HIGH STREET, BRUSSELS* Plate xi

Pen and Watercolour 350 x 533

Inscribed recto . . . *View of the High Street Brussels.*

Signed and dated *Rowlandson Dec. 1806.*

Done during one of Rowlandson's several visits to the Continent at this time and similar to many other views of similar subject and size. The apparent difference in tone between the foreground groups and the architectural background might suggest that the artist prepared the background first and later added the figures. There is no doubt at all about Rowlandson drawing the architecture. (M. 127A)

34 *DR. SYNTAX AND HIS COMPANION*

Pen and Watercolour 56 x 92

Dr. Syntax is seen riding in the foreground, with his umbrella tucked under his arm. His companion rides in the right background.

This drawing is probably a tailpiece for one of the earlier editions. Presumably it belongs to the second of the *Tours—Doctor Syntax's tour in Search of Consolation*, in which he set out with Patrick the Irish Pavior and Chelsea Out-Pensioner.

The series of *Tours* was commenced early in 1810. Akerman the printseller, having received from Rowlandson a number of drawings representing an old clergyman, approached William Combe to provide verses to go with them. The arrangement being that Combe should be sent one drawing a month. The first instalment appeared in *The Poetical Magazine*, May 1810. (M. 155Ac)

35 *GROUP OF COUNTRY PEOPLE*

Pen and Watercolour 144 x 100

While a man plays a flageolet a woman sings to an audience of two girls, a lounging young man and a patient dog.

As the group includes a female singer and a player, it is probably identifiable with *Itinerant Musicians* or *Ballad Singers* from *Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders, etc.* Samuel Leigh, 1820 (Grego, 11, 366/7)

(M. 135A)

36 *HOT SPICE GINGERBREAD HOT*

Pen and Watercolour 148 x 103

While the gingerbread seller yells his wares, two men look down at the cakes with ardent approval.

Inscribed: *Hot Spice Gingerbread Hot*

Possibly identifiable with *All Hot*, from *Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders, etc.*, Samuel Leigh, 1820 (Grego, 11, 366/7) (M. 134A)

37 *WHOEVER TALKS*

Pen and Watercolour 121 x 76

A coalheaver, with a basket of coals on his head, talks to two women outside an open doorway. Over the doorway there is inscribed: *WHOEVER TALKS ABOUT WHAT DOES NOT CONCERN HIM OFTEN HEARS WHAT DOES NOT PLEASE HIM*. It seems probable that this subject did service as well in the *Cries of London* series or even that in No. 36 above. (M. 147A)

38 *THE BIRD SELLER*

Pencil, Pen and Watercolour 129 x 76

The seller, hung about with caged birds, holds one of them out for the inspection of two women.

This drawing may be identified with *Singing Birds* from *Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders, etc.*, Samuel Leigh, 1820. (Grego, 11, 366/7).

The drawing is unfinished, as a lightly pencilled figure of a girl with a baby appears in the left background.

An inscription in much later hand (verso) applies not to this drawing but No. 18.

(M. 149A)

39 *THE DOG SELLER*

Pen and Watercolour 133 x 103

A somewhat disreputable character holds a dog under his left arm and a large pair of scissors in his right hand. Two other dogs are fastened to a post behind him. The dome of St. Pauls (?) appears in the left background.

This drawing can probably be identified with *Poodles* from *Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders, etc.* Samuel Leigh, 1820. (Grego, 11, 366)

(M. 159A)

40 *THE UNWILLING PUPIL*

Pen and Watercolour 104 x 72

An irate mother has her protesting son by the arm outside the door of the 'Grammar Free School.' The master, switch in hand leans out of an upper window.

(M. 133A)

41 *TO GREENWICH, DESCENT FROM CROOMBS (COOMBES) HILL BLACK-HEATH* Plate x

Pen and Watercolour 90 x 152

The title is owed entirely to the inscription, bottom right, in another hand.

Inscribed vertically on the left in the artist's hand: (recto)

Man being reasonable must get drunk,

The best of life is but intoxication — Lord Byron.

Inscribed (verso) in the artist's hand:

<i>George & Dragon</i>	<i>Sir Geo. Beaumont</i>
<i>King George 3rd</i>	<i>Mr. Canning</i>
<i>(indecipherable) George 4 (?)</i>	<i>Mr. Peel</i>
<i>Windsor</i>	<i>Lord Eldon Chancellor</i>
<i>Mr. O'Keefe</i>	<i>Mr. Hume Member for Aberdeen</i>
<i>Walter Scott the Scotch Novel Writer</i>	<i>Mr. Brougham Counsellor to the late Queen</i>
<i>Charles 2nd</i>	<i>of England</i>
<i>Sir Thomas Lawrence, Painter</i>	<i>Lord Bathurst</i>

The first three or four entries are probably related to cartoons on the Royal Family. Mr. O'Keefe was John O'Keefe (1747-1833) a prolific dramatist of the day, who received a gift from the Privy Purse in 1820. Walter Scott was knighted in 1820. He also finished *St. Ronan's Well* in 1824 in which the phrase 'From Shakespeare to O'Keefe' appears.

Sir Thomas Lawrence was elected President of the Royal Academy in 1820 and in 1823-24 was instrumental in persuading the Government to purchase the Angerstein Collection, one of the basic collections of the National Gallery (opened May, 1824).

Sir George Beaumont (1753-1827) patron, connoisseur and artist announced in 1823 that he would present his collection to the nation provided the Government housed it. His action initiated the founding of the National Gallery the following year. The last six names on the list were intimately concerned with the Bill (5th July, 1820) introduced by George IV to deprive his consort Queen Caroline of her Royal Titles and privileges. Caroline died in August, 1821. It would appear from the evidence above that the list was made either late in 1823 or in 1824.

The relevant volume of the Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires (British Museum) contains none of the subjects listed here by Rowlandson, so it must be presumed that this is a list of both work and projected work, never completed.

The quotation is from Byron's *Don Juan* Canto 2, Stanza 179.

Man being reasonable, must get drunk,
The best of life is but intoxication,
Glory, the Grape, Love, Gold in these are sunk
The hopes of all men, and of every nation;
Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
Of Life's strange Tree, so fruitfull on occasion!
But to return—Get very drunk, and when
You wake with headache—you shall see what then.

The quotation might have been a particularly apt one for Rowlandson in the final years of his life. Byron, who was one of Rowlandson's clients, appears also to have been the artist's favourite poet. (M. 130A)



Plate vi *BEFORE THE BALL* (28)

Plate vii *A HELPING HAND* (10)





Plate viii *THE PORTRAIT PAINTERS SHEW ROOM* (31)

Plate ix *A MASTER OF ARTS AND A MISTRESS OF ARTS or A DON CAUGHT NAPPING* (29)

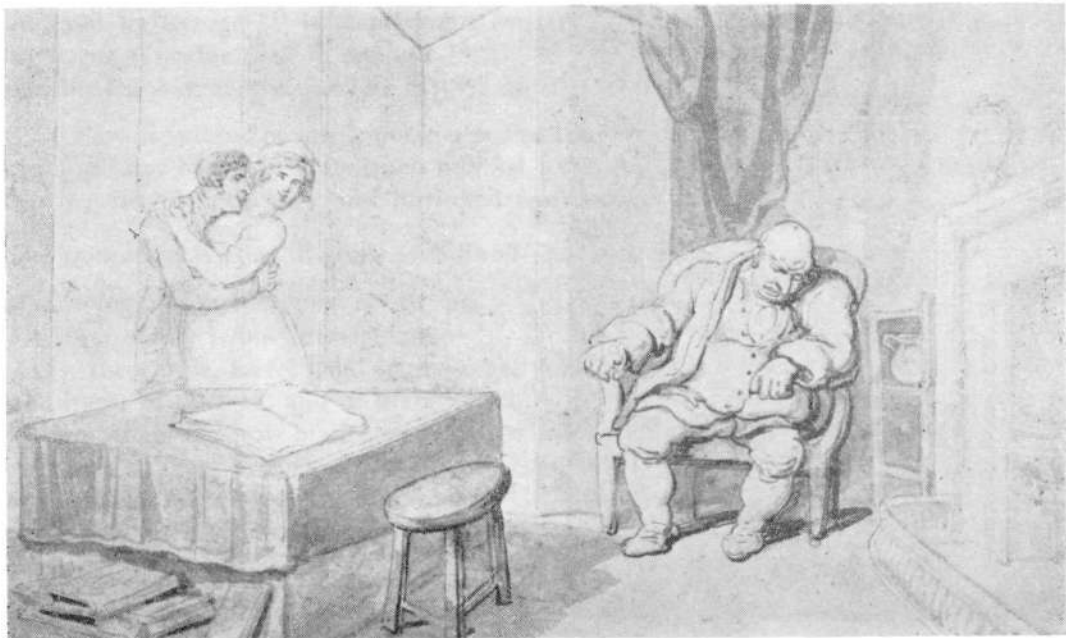




Plate x TO GREENWICH, DESCENT FROM CROOMS (COOMBES) HILL BLACKHEATH (41)

Plate xi VIEW OF HIGH STREET, BRUSSELS (33)

