Nov 25– From *The Shoemaker's Holiday* by Thomas Dekker (1600)

THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY; OR A PLEASANT COMEDY OF THE GENTLE CRAFT.

PROLOGUE
As it was pronounced before the Queen's Majesty.

As wretches in a storm (expecting day),
With trembling hands and eyes cast up to heaven,
Make prayers the anchor of their conquered hopes,
So we, dear goddess, wonder of all eyes,
Your meanest vassals, through mistrust and fear
To sink into the bottom of disgrace
By our imperfect pastimes, prostrate thus
On bended knees, our sails of hope do strike,
Dreading the bitter storms of your dislike.
Since then, unhappy men, our hap is such,
That to ourselves ourselves no help can bring,
But needs must perish, if your saint-like ears
(Locking the temple where all mercy sits)
Refuse the tribute of our begging tongues:
Oh grant, bright mirror of true chastity,
From those life-breathing stars, your sun-like eyes,
One gracious smile: for your celestial breath
Must send us life, or sentence us to death.
decoration

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.
The King.
The Earl of Cornwall.
Sir Hugh Lacy, Earl of Lincoln.
Rowland Lacy, otherwise Hans, } His Nephews.
Askew
Sir Roger Oateley, Lord Mayor of London.
Master Hammon } Citizens of London.
Master Warner
Master Scott
Simon Eyre, the Shoemaker.
Roger, commonly called Hodge } Eyre's Journeymen.
Firk

Ralph
Lovell, a Courtier.
Dodger, Servant to the Earl of Lincoln.
A Dutch Skipper.
A Boy.

Courtiers, Attendants, Officers, Soldiers, Hunters, Shoemakers, Apprentices, Servants.
Rose, Daughter of Sir Roger.
Sybil, her Maid.
Margery, Wife of Simon Eyre.
Jane, Wife of Ralph.
SCENE—London and Old Ford.

THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY

ACT THE FIRST.
SCENE I.—A Street in London.
Enter the Lord Mayor and the Earl of Lincoln.

Lincoln. My lord mayor, you have sundry times
Feasted myself and many courtiers more:
Seldom or never can we be so kind
To make requital of your courtesy.
But leaving this, I hear my cousin Lacy
Is much affected to your daughter Rose.
L. Mayor. True, my good lord, and she loves him so well
That I mislike her boldness in the chase.
Lincoln. Why, my lord mayor, think you it then a shame,
To join a Lacy with an Oateley's name?
L. Mayor. Too mean is my poor girl for his high birth;
Poor citizens must not with courtiers wed,
Who will in silks and gay apparel spend
More in one year than I am worth, by far:
Therefore your honour need not doubt my girl.
Lincoln. Take heed, my lord, advise you what you do!
A verier unthrift lives not in the world,
Than is my cousin; for I'll tell you what:
'Tis now almost a year since he requested
To travel countries for experience;
I furnished him with coin, bills of exchange,
Letters of credit, men to wait on him,
Solicited my friends in Italy
Well to respect him. But to see the end:

Scant had he journeyed through half Germany,
But all his coin was spent, his men cast off,
His bills embezzled,[5] and my jolly coz,
Ashamed to show his bankrupt presence here,
Became a shoemaker in Wittenberg,
A goodly science for a gentleman
Of such descent! Now judge the rest by this:
Suppose your daughter have a thousand pound,
He did consume me more in one half year;
And make him heir to all the wealth you have,
One twelvemonth's rioting will waste it all.
Then seek, my lord, some honest citizen
To wed your daughter to.
L. Mayor. I thank your lordship.
(Aside) Well, fox, I understand your subtilty.
As for your nephew, let your lordship's eye
But watch his actions, and you need not fear,
For I have sent my daughter far enough.
And yet your cousin Rowland might do well,
Now he hath learned an occupation;
And yet I scorn to call him son-in-law.
Lincoln. Ay, but I have a better trade for him:
I thank his grace, he hath appointed him
Chief colonel of all those companies
Mustered in London and the shires about,
To serve his highness in those wars of France.
See where he comes!—
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Enter Lovell, Lacy, and Askew.

Lovell, what news with you?
Lovell. My Lord of Lincoln, 'tis his highness' will,
That presently your cousin ship for France
With all his powers; he would not for a million,
But they should land at Dieppe within four days.
Lincoln. Go certify his grace, it shall be done. [Exit Lovell.
Now, cousin Lacy, in what forwardness
Are all your companies?
Lacy. All well prepared.
The men of Hertfordshire lie at Mile-end,
Suffolk and Essex train in Tothill-fields,
The Londoners and those of Middlesex,
All gallantly prepared in Finsbury,

With frolic spirits long for their parting hour.
L. Mayor. They have their imprest,[6] coats, and furniture;[7]
And, if it please your cousin Lacy come
To the Guildhall, he shall receive his pay;
And twenty pounds besides my brethren
Will freely give him, to approve our loves
We bear unto my lord, your uncle here.
Lacy. I thank your honour.
Lincoln. Thanks, my good lord mayor.
L. Mayor. At the Guildhall we will expect your coming. [Exit.
Lincoln. To approve your loves to me? No subtilty!
Nephew, that twenty pound he doth bestow
For joy to rid you from his daughter Rose.
But, cousins both, now here are none but friends,
I would not have you cast an amorous eye
Upon so mean a project as the love
Of a gay, wanton, painted citizen.
[Pg 10]I know, this churl even in the height of scorn
Doth hate the mixture of his blood with thine.
I pray thee, do thou so! Remember, coz,
What honourable fortunes wait on thee:
Increase the king's love, which so brightly shines,
And gilds thy hopes. I have no heir but thee,—
And yet not thee, if with a wayward spirit
Thou start from the true bias of my love.
Lacy. My lord, I will for honour, not desire
Of land or livings, or to be your heir,
So guide my actions in pursuit of France,
As shall add glory to the Lacys' name.
Lincoln. Coz, for those words here's thirty Portuguese[8]
And, nephew Askew, there's a few for you.
Fair Honour, in her loftiest eminence,
Stays in France for you, till you fetch her thence.
Then, nephews, clap swift wings on your designs:
Begone, begone, make haste to the Guildhall;
There presently I'll meet you. Do not stay:
Where honour beckons, shame attends delay. [Exit.
Askew. How gladly would your uncle have you gone!
Lacy. True, coz, but I'll o'erreach his policies.
I have some serious business for three days,
Which nothing but my presence can dispatch.
You, therefore, cousin, with the companies,
Shall haste to Dover; there I'll meet with you:
Or, if I stay past my prefixèd time,

Away for France; we'll meet in Normandy.
The twenty pounds my lord mayor gives to me
You shall receive, and these ten Portuguese,
Part of mine uncle's thirty. Gentle coz,
Have care to our great charge; I know, your wisdom
Hath tried itself in higher consequence.
Askew. Coz, all myself am yours: yet have this care,
To lodge in London with all secrecy;
[Pg 11]Our uncle Lincoln hath, besides his own,
Many a jealous eye, that in your face
Stares only to watch means for your disgrace.
Lacy. Stay, cousin, who be these?
Enter Simon Eyre, Margery his wife, Hodge, Firk, Jane, and Ralph with a pair of shoes.[9]

Eyre. Leave whining, leave whining! Away with this whimpering, this puling, these blubbering tears, and these wet eyes! I'll get thy husband discharged, I warrant thee, sweet Jane; go to!

Hodge. Master, here be the captains.

Eyre. Peace, Hodge; hush, ye knave, hush!

Firk. Here be the cavaliers and the colonels, master.

Eyre. Peace, Firk; peace, my fine Firk! Stand by with your pishery-pashery,[10] away! I am a man of the best presence; I'll speak to them, an they were Popes.—Gentlemen, captains, colonels, commanders! Brave men, brave leaders, may it please you to give me audience. I am Simon Eyre, the mad shoemaker of Tower Street; this wench with the mealy mouth that will never tire, is my wife, I can tell you; here's Hodge, my man and my foreman; here's Firk, my fine firking journeyman, and this is blubbered Jane. All we come to be suitors for this honest Ralph. Keep him at home, and as I am a true shoemaker and a gentleman of the gentle craft, buy spurs yourselves, and I'll find ye boots these seven years.

Marg. Seven years, husband?

Eyre. Peace, midriff, peace! I know what I do. Peace!

Firk. Truly, master cormorant, you shall do God good service to let Ralph and his wife stay together. She's a young new-married woman; if you take her husband away[Pg 12] from her a night, you undo her; she may beg in the day-time; for he's as good a workman at a prick and an awl, as any is in our trade.

Jane. O let him stay, else I shall be undone.

Firk. Ay, truly, she shall be laid at one side like a pair of old shoes else, and be occupied for no use.

Lacy. Truly, my friends, it lies not in my power:
The Londoners are pressed, paid, and set forth
By the lord mayor; I cannot change a man.
Hodge. Why, then you were as good be a corporal as a colonel, if you cannot discharge one good fellow; and I tell you true, I think you do more than you can answer, to press a man within a year and a day of his marriage.

Eyre. Well said, melancholy Hodge; gramercy, my fine foreman.

Marg. Truly, gentlemen, it were ill done for such as you, to stand so stiffly against a poor young wife, considering her case, she is new-married, but let that pass: I pray, deal not roughly with her; her husband is a young man, and but newly entered, but let that pass.

Eyre. Away with your pishery-pashery, your pols and your edipols![11] Peace, midriff; silence, Cicely Bumtrinket! Let your head speak.

Firk. Yea, and the horns too, master.

Eyre. Too soon, my fine Firk, too soon! Peace, scoundrels! See you this man? Captains, you will not release him? Well, let him go; he's a proper shot; let him vanish! Peace, Jane, dry up thy tears, they'll make his powder dankish. Take him, brave men; Hector of Troy was an hackney to him, Hercules and Termagant[12] scoundrels, Prince Arthur's Round-table—by the Lord of Ludgate[13]—ne'er fed such a tall, such a dapper swordsman;[Pg 13] by the life of Pharaoh, a brave, resolute swordsman! Peace, Jane! I say no more, mad knaves.

Firk. See, see, Hodge, how my master raves in commendation of Ralph!

Hodge. Ralph, th'art a gull, by this hand, an thou goest not.

Askew. I am glad, good Master Eyre, it is my hap
To meet so resolute a soldier.
Trust me, for your report and love to him,
A common slight regard shall not respect him.
Lacy. Is thy name Ralph?
Ralph. Yes, sir.
Lacy. Give me thy hand;
Thou shalt not want, as I am a gentleman.
Woman, be patient; God, no doubt, will send
Thy husband safe again; but he must go,
His country's quarrel says it shall be so.

Hodge. Th'art a gull, by my stirrup, if thou dost not go. I will not have thee strike thy gimlet into these weak vessels; prick thine enemies, Ralph.

Enter Dodger.

Dodger. My lord, your uncle on the Tower-hill
Stays with the lord mayor and the aldermen,
And doth request you with all speed you may,
To hasten thither.
Askew. Cousin, let's go.
Lacy. Dodger, run you before, tell them we come.—
This Dodger is mine uncle's parasite, [Exit Dodger.
The arrant'st varlet that e'er breathed on earth;
He sets more discord in a noble house
By one day's broaching of his pickthank tales,[14]
Than can be salved again in twenty years,
And he, I fear, shall go with us to France,
To pry into our actions.
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Askew. Therefore, coz,
It shall behove you to be circumspect.
Lacy. Fear not, good cousin.—Ralph, hie to your colours.
Ralph. I must, because there's no remedy;
But, gentle master and my loving dame,
As you have always been a friend to me,
So in mine absence think upon my wife.
Jane. Alas, my Ralph.
Marg. She cannot speak for weeping.
Eyre. Peace, you cracked groats,[15] you mustard tokens,[16] disquiet not the brave soldier. Go thy ways, Ralph!

Jane. Ay, ay, you bid him go; what shall I do
When he is gone?
Firk. Why, be doing with me or my fellow Hodge; be not idle.

Eyre. Let me see thy hand, Jane. This fine hand, this white hand, these pretty fingers must spin, must card, must work; work, you bombast-cotton-candle-quean;[17] work for your living, with a pox to you.—Hold thee, Ralph, here's five sixpences for thee; fight for the honour of the gentle craft, for the gentlemen shoemakers, the courageous cordwainers, the flower of St. Martin's, the mad knaves of Bedlam, Fleet Street, Tower Street and Whitechapel; crack me the crowns of the French knaves; a pox on them, crack them; fight, by the Lord of Ludgate; fight, my fine boy!

Firk. Here, Ralph, here's three twopences: two carry into France, the third shall wash our souls at parting, for sorrow is dry. For my sake, firk the Basa mon cues.

Hodge. Ralph, I am heavy at parting; but here's a[Pg 15] shilling for thee. God send thee to cram thy slops with French crowns, and thy enemies' bellies with bullets.

Ralph. I thank you, master, and I thank you all.
Now, gentle wife, my loving lovely Jane,
Rich men, at parting, give their wives rich gifts,
Jewels and rings, to grace their lily hands.
Thou know'st our trade makes rings for women's heels:
Here take this pair of shoes, cut out by Hodge,
Stitched by my fellow Firk, seamed by myself,
Made up and pinked with letters for thy name.
Wear them, my dear Jane, for thy husband's sake;
And every morning, when thou pull'st them on,
Remember me, and pray for my return.
Make much of them; for I have made them so,
That I can know them from a thousand mo.
Drum sounds. Enter the Lord Mayor, the Earl of Lincoln, Lacy, Askew, Dodger, and Soldiers. They pass over the stage; Ralph falls in amongst them; Firk and the rest cry "Farewell," etc., and so exeunt.

decoration
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decoration
ACT THE SECOND.
SCENE I.—A Garden at Old Ford.
Enter Rose, alone, making a garland.

Rose. Here sit thou down upon this flow'ry bank,
And make a garland for thy Lacy's head.
These pinks, these roses, and these violets,
These blushing gilliflowers, these marigolds,
The fair embroidery of his coronet,
Carry not half such beauty in their cheeks,
As the sweet countenance of my Lacy doth.
O my most unkind father! O my stars,
Why lowered you so at my nativity,
To make me love, yet live robbed of my love?
Here as a thief am I imprisonëd
For my dear Lacy's sake within those walls,

Which by my father's cost were builded up
For better purposes; here must I languish
For him that doth as much lament, I know,
Mine absence, as for him I pine in woe.
Enter Sybil.

Sybil. Good morrow, young mistress. I am sure you make that garland for me; against I shall be Lady of the Harvest.

Rose. Sybil, what news at London?

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Sybil. None but good; my lord mayor, your father, and master Philpot, your uncle, and Master Scot, your cousin, and Mistress Frigbottom by Doctors' Commons, do all, by my troth, send you most hearty commendations.

Rose. Did Lacy send kind greetings to his love?

Sybil. O yes, out of cry, by my troth. I scant knew him; here 'a wore a scarf; and here a scarf, here a bunch of feathers, and here precious stones and jewels, and a pair of garters,—O, monstrous! like one of our yellow silk curtains at home here in Old Ford house, here in Master Belly-mount's chamber. I stood at our door in Cornhill, looked at him, he at me indeed, spake to him, but he not to me, not a word; marry go-up, thought I, with a wanion![18] He passed by me as proud—Marry foh! are you grown humorous, thought I; and so shut the door, and in I came.

Rose. O Sybil, how dost thou my Lacy wrong!
My Rowland is as gentle as a lamb,
No dove was ever half so mild as he.
Sybil. Mild? yea, as a bushel of stamped crabs.[19] He looked upon me as sour as verjuice. Go thy ways, thought I; thou may'st be much in my gaskins,[20] but nothing in my nether-stocks. This is your fault, mistress, to love him that loves not you; he thinks scorn to do as he's done to; but if I were as you, I'd cry: Go by, Jeronimo, go by![21]

I'd set mine old debts against my new driblets,
And the hare's foot against the goose giblets,
For if ever I sigh, when sleep I should take,
Pray God I may lose my maidenhead when I wake.
Rose. Will my love leave me then, and go to France?

Sybil. I know not that, but I am sure I see him stalk before the soldiers. By my troth, he is a proper man;[Pg 18] but he is proper that proper doth. Let him go snick-up,[22] young mistress.

Rose. Get thee to London, and learn perfectly,

Whether my Lacy go to France, or no.
Do this, and I will give thee for thy pains
My cambric apron and my Romish gloves,
My purple stockings and a stomacher.
Say, wilt thou do this, Sybil, for my sake?
Sybil. Will I, quoth a? At whose suit? By my troth, yes I'll go. A cambric apron, gloves, a pair of purple stockings, and a stomacher! I'll sweat in purple, mistress, for you; I'll take anything that comes a God's name. O rich! a cambric apron! Faith, then have at 'up tails all.' I'll go jiggy-joggy to London, and be here in a trice, young mistress. [Exit.

Rose. Do so, good Sybil. Meantime wretched I
Will sit and sigh for his lost company. [Exit.
decoration
SCENE II.—A Street in London.
Enter Lacy, disguised as a Dutch Shoemaker.

Lacy. How many shapes have gods and kings devised,
Thereby to compass their desired loves!
It is no shame for Rowland Lacy, then,
To clothe his cunning with the gentle craft,
That, thus disguised, I may unknown possess
The only happy presence of my Rose.
For her have I forsook my charge in France,
Incurred the king's displeasure, and stirred up
Rough hatred in mine uncle Lincoln's breast.
O love, how powerful art thou, that canst change
High birth to baseness, and a noble mind
[Pg 19]To the mean semblance of a shoemaker!
But thus it must be. For her cruel father,
Hating the single union of our souls,
Has secretly conveyed my Rose from London,
To bar me of her presence; but I trust,
Fortune and this disguise will further me
Once more to view her beauty, gain her sight.
Here in Tower Street with Eyre the shoemaker
Mean I a while to work; I know the trade,
I learnt it when I was in Wittenberg.
Then cheer thy hoping spirits, be not dismayed,
Thou canst not want: do Fortune what she can,
The gentle craft is living for a man. [Exit.
decoration
SCENE III.—An open Yard before Eyre's House.
Enter Eyre, making himself ready.[23]

Eyre. Where be these boys, these girls, these drabs, these scoundrels? They wallow in the fat brewiss[24] of my bounty, and lick up the crumbs of my table, yet will not rise to see my walks cleansed. Come out, you powder-beef[25] queans! What, Nan! what, Madge Mumble-crust. Come out, you fat midriff-swag-belly-whores, and sweep me these kennels that the noisome stench offend not the noses of my neighbours. What, Firk, I say; what, Hodge! Open my shop-windows! What, Firk, I say!

Enter Firk.

Firk. O master, is't you that speak bandog[26] and Bed[Pg 20]lam this morning? I was in a dream, and mused what madman was got into the street so early; have you drunk this morning that your throat is so clear?

Eyre. Ah, well said, Firk; well said, Firk. To work, my fine knave, to work! Wash thy face, and thou'lt be more blest.

Firk. Let them wash my face that will eat it. Good master, send for a souse-wife,[27] if you'll have my face cleaner.

Enter Hodge.

Eyre. Away, sloven! avaunt, scoundrel!—Good-morrow, Hodge; good-morrow, my fine foreman.

Hodge. O master, good-morrow; y'are an early stirrer. Here's a fair morning.—Good-morrow, Firk, I could have slept this hour. Here's a brave day towards.

Eyre. Oh, haste to work, my fine foreman, haste to work.
Firk. Master, I am dry as dust to hear my fellow Roger talk of fair weather; let us pray for good leather, and let clowns and ploughboys and those that work in the fields pray for brave days. We work in a dry shop; what care I if it rain?

Enter Margery.

Eyre. How now, Dame Margery, can you see to rise? Trip and go, call up the drabs, your maids.

Marg. See to rise? I hope 'tis time enough, 'tis early enough for any woman to be seen abroad. I marvel how many wives in Tower Street are up so soon. Gods me, 'tis not noon,—here's a yawling![28]

Eyre. Peace, Margery, peace! Where's Cicely Bumtrinket, your maid? She has a privy fault, she farts in her sleep. Call the quean up; if my men want shoe-thread, I'll swinge her in a stirrup.

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Firk. Yet, that's but a dry beating; here's still a sign of drought.

Enter Lacy disguised, singing.

Lacy. Der was een bore van Gelderland
Frolick sie byen;
He was als dronck he cold nyet stand,
Upsolce sie byen.
Tap eens de canneken,
Drincke, schone mannekin.[29]
Firk. Master, for my life, yonder's a brother of the gentle craft; if he bear not Saint Hugh's bones,[30] I'll forfeit my bones; he's some uplandish workman: hire him, good master, that I may learn some gibble-gabble; 'twill make us work the faster.

Eyre. Peace, Firk! A hard world! Let him pass, let him vanish; we have journeymen enow. Peace, my fine Firk!

Marg. Nay, nay, y'are best follow your man's counsel; you shall see what will come on't: we have not men enow, but we must entertain every butter-box; but let that pass.

Hodge. Dame, 'fore God, if my master follow your counsel, he'll consume little beef. He shall be glad of men, and he can catch them.

Firk. Ay, that he shall.

Hodge. 'Fore God, a proper man, and I warrant, a fine workman. Master, farewell; dame, adieu; if such a man as he cannot find work, Hodge is not for you. [Offers to go.

Eyre. Stay, my fine Hodge.

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Firk. Faith, an your foreman go, dame, you must take a journey to seek a new journeyman; if Roger remove, Firk follows. If Saint Hugh's bones shall not be set a-work, I may prick mine awl in the walls, and go play. Fare ye well, master; good-bye, dame.

Eyre. Tarry, my fine Hodge, my brisk foreman! Stay, Firk! Peace, pudding-broth! By the Lord of Ludgate, I love my men as my life. Peace, you gallimafry[31] Hodge, if he want work, I'll hire him. One of you to him; stay,—he comes to us.

Lacy. Goeden dach, meester, ende u vro oak.[32]

Firk. Nails, if I should speak after him without drinking, I should choke. And you, friend Oake, are you of the gentle craft?

Lacy. Yaw, yaw, ik bin den skomawker.[33]

Firk. Den skomaker, quoth a! And hark you, skomaker, have you all your tools, a good rubbing-pin, a good stopper, a good dresser, your four sorts of awls, and your two balls of wax, your paring knife, your hand- and thumb-leathers, and good St. Hugh's bones to smooth up your work?

Lacy. Yaw, yaw; be niet vorveard. Ik hab all de dingen voour mack skooes groot and cleane.[34]

Firk. Ha, ha! Good master, hire him; he'll make me laugh so that I shall work more in mirth than I can in earnest.

Eyre. Hear ye, friend, have ye any skill in the mystery of cordwainers?

Lacy. Ik weet niet wat yow seg; ich verstaw you niet.[35]

Firk. Why, thus, man: (Imitating by gesture a shoemaker at work) Ick verste u niet, quoth a.

Lacy. Yaw, yaw, yaw; ick can dat wel doen.[36]

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Firk. Yaw, yaw! He speaks yawing like a jackdaw that gapes to be fed with cheese-curds. Oh, he'll give a villanous pull at a can of double-beer; but Hodge and I have the vantage, we must drink first, because we are the eldest journeymen.

Eyre. What is thy name?

Lacy. Hans—Hans Meulter.

Eyre. Give me thy hand; th'art welcome.—Hodge, entertain him; Firk, bid him welcome; come, Hans. Run, wife, bid your maids, your trullibubs,[37] make ready my fine men's breakfasts. To him, Hodge!

Hodge. Hans, th'art welcome; use thyself friendly, for we are good fellows; if not, thou shalt be fought with, wert thou bigger than a giant.

Firk. Yea, and drunk with, wert thou Gargantua. My master keeps no cowards, I tell thee.—Ho, boy, bring him an heel-block, here's a new journeyman.

Enter Boy.

Lacy. O, ich wersto you; ich moet een halve dossen cans betaelen; here, boy, nempt dis skilling, tap eens freelicke.[38] [Exit Boy.

Eyre. Quick, snipper-snapper, away! Firk, scour thy throat, thou shalt wash it with Castilian liquor.

Enter Boy.

Come, my last of the fives, give me a can. Have to thee, Hans; here, Hodge; here, Firk; drink, you mad Greeks, and work like true Trojans, and pray for Simon Eyre, the shoemaker.—Here, Hans, and th'art welcome.

Firk. Lo, dame, you would have lost a good fellow that will teach us to laugh. This beer came hopping in well.

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Marg. Simon, it is almost seven.

Eyre. Is't so, Dame Clapper-dudgeon?[39] Is't seven a clock, and my men's breakfast not ready? Trip and go, you soused conger,[40] away! Come, you mad hyperboreans; follow me, Hodge; follow me, Hans; come after, my fine Firk; to work, to work a while, and then to breakfast! [Exit.

Firk. Soft! Yaw, yaw, good Hans, though my master have no more wit but to call you afore me, I am not so foolish to go behind you, I being the elder journeyman. [Exeunt

Nov 26– From “On the Tragedies of Shakespeare” by Charles Lamb (1811)

TAKING a turn the other day in the Abbey, I was struck with the affected attitude of a figure, which I do not remember to have seen before, and which upon examination proved to be a whole-length of the celebrated Mr. Garrick. Though I would not go so far with some good Catholics abroad as to shut players altogether out of consecrated ground, yet I own I was not a little scandalized at the introduction of theatrical airs and gestures into a place set apart to remind us of the saddest realities. Going nearer, I found inscribed under this harlequin figure the following lines:—

To paint fair Nature, by divine command,
Her magic pencil in his glowing hand,
A Shakespeare rose: then, to expand his fame
Wide o’er this breathing world, a Garrick came.
Though sunk in death the forms the Poet drew,
The Actor’s genius made them breathe anew;
Though, like the bard himself, in night they lay,
Immortal Garrick call’d them back to day:
And till Eternity with power sublime
Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary Time,
Shakespeare and Garrick like twin-stars shall shine,
And earth irradiate with a beam divine.

It would be an insult to my readers’ understandings to attempt anything like a criticism on this farrago of false thoughts and nonsense. But the reflection it led me into was a kind of wonder, how, from the days of the actor here celebrated to our own, it should have been the fashion to compliment every performer in his turn, that has had the luck to please the town in any of the great characters of Shakespeare, with a notion of possessing a mind congenial to the poet’s; how people should come thus unaccountably to confound the power of originating poetical images and conceptions with the faculty of being able to read or recite the same when put into words; or what connection that absolute mastery over the heart and soul of man, which a great dramatic poet possesses, has with those low tricks upon the eye and ear, which a player by observing a few general effects, which some common passion, as grief, anger, etc., usually has upon the gestures and exterior, can easily compass. To know the internal workings and movements of a great mind, of an Othello or a Hamlet, for instance, the when and the why and the how far they should be moved; to what pitch a passion is becoming; to give the reins and to pull in the curb exactly at the moment when the drawing in or the slacking is most graceful; seems to demand a reach of intellect of a vastly different extent from that which is employed upon the bare imitation of the signs of these passions in the countenance or gesture, which signs are usually observed to be most lively and emphatic in the weaker sort of minds, and which signs can after all but indicate some passion, as I said before, anger, or grief, generally; but of the motives and grounds of the passion, wherein it differs from the same passion in low

and vulgar natures, of these the actor can give no more idea by his face or gesture than the eye (without a metaphor) can speak, or the muscles utter intelligible sounds. But such is the instantaneous nature of the impressions which we take in at the eye and ear at a playhouse, compared with the slow apprehension oftentimes of the understanding in reading, that we are apt not only to sink the play-writer in the consideration which we pay to the actor, but even to identify in our minds in a perverse manner, the actor with the character which he represents. It is difficult for a frequent play-goer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr. K. We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. S. Nor is this confusion incidental alone to unlettered persons, who, not possessing the advantage of reading, are necessarily dependent upon the stage-player for all the pleasure which they can receive from the drama, and to whom the very idea of what an author is cannot be made comprehensible without some pain and perplexity of mind: the error is one from which persons otherwise not meanly lettered find it almost impossible to extricate themselves.

Never let me be so ungrateful as to forget the very high degree of satisfaction which I received some years back from seeing for the first time a tragedy of Shakespeare performed, in which these two great performers sustained the principal parts. It seemed to embody and realize conceptions which had hitherto assumed no distinct shape. But dearly do we pay all our life afterwards for this juvenile pleasure, this sense of distinctness. When the novelty is past, we find to our cost that, instead of realising an idea, we have only materialised and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood. We have let go a dream, in quest of an unattainable substance.

How cruelly this operates upon the mind, to have its free conceptions thus cramped and pressed down to the measure of a strait-lacing actuality, may be judged from that delightful sensation of freshness, with which we turn to those plays of Shakespeare which have escaped being performed, and to those passages in the acting plays of the same writer which have happily been left out of the performance. How far the very custom of hearing anything spouted, withers and blows upon a fine passage, may be seen in those speeches from Henry the Fifth, etc., which are current in the mouths of school-boys from their being to be found in Enfield Speakers, and such kind of books. I confess myself utterly unable to appreciate that celebrated soliloquy in Hamlet, beginning “To be, or not to be,” or to tell whether it be good, bad, or indifferent, it has been so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it is become to me a perfect dead member.

It may seem a paradox, but I cannot help being of opinion that the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance on a stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever. Their distinguished excellence is a reason that they should be so. There is so much in them, which comes not under the province of acting, with which eye, and tone, and gesture, have nothing to do.

The glory of the scenic art is to personate passion, and the turns of passion; and the more coarse and palpable the passion is, the more hold upon the eyes and ears of the

spectators the performer obviously possesses. For this reason, scolding scenes, scenes where two persons talk themselves into a fit of fury, and then in a surprising manner talk themselves out of it again, have always been the most popular upon our stage. And the reason is plain, because the spectators are here most palpably appealed to, they are the proper judges in this war of words, they are the legitimate ring that should be formed round such “intellectual prize-fighters.” Talking is the direct object of the imitation here. But in the best dramas, and in Shakespeare above all, how obvious it is, that the form of speaking, whether it be in soliloquy or dialogue, is only a medium, and often a highly artificial one, for putting the reader or spectator into possession of that knowledge of the inner structure and workings of mind in a character, which he could otherwise never have arrived at in that form of composition by any gift short of intuition. We do here as we do with novels written in the epistolary form. How many improprieties, perfect solecisms in letter-writing, do we put up with in “Clarissa” and other books, for the sake of the delight which that form upon the whole gives us.

But the practice of stage representation reduces everything to a controversy of elocution. Every character, from the boisterous blasphemings of Bajazet to the shrinking timidity of womanhood, must play the orator. The love-dialogues of Romeo and Juliet, those silver-sweet sounds of lovers’ tongues by night; the more intimate and sacred sweetness of nuptial colloquy between an Othello or a Posthumus with their married wives, all those delicacies which are so delightful in the reading, as when we read of those youthful dalliances in Paradise—

As beseem’d
Fair couple link’d in happy nuptial league,
Alone:

by the inherent fault of stage representation, how are these things sullied and turned from their very nature by being exposed to a large assembly; when such speeches as Imogen addresses to her lord, come drawling out of the mouth of a hired actress, whose courtship, though nominally addressed to the personated Posthumus, is manifestly aimed at the spectators, who are to judge of her endearments and her returns of love.

The character of Hamlet is perhaps that by which, since the days of Betterton, a succession of popular performers have had the greatest ambition to distinguish themselves. The length of the part may be one of their reasons. But for the character itself, we find it in a play, and therefore we judge it a fit subject of dramatic representation. The play itself abounds in maxims and reflections beyond any other, and therefore we consider it as a proper vehicle or conveying moral instruction. But Hamlet himself—what does he suffer meanwhile by being dragged forth as a public schoolmaster, to give lectures to the crowd! Why, nine parts in ten of what Hamlet does, are transactions between himself and his moral sense, they are the effusions of his solitary musings, which he retires to holes and corners and the most sequestered parts of the palace to pour forth; or rather, they are the silent meditations with which his bosom is bursting, reduced to words for the sake of the reader, who must else remain ignorant of what is passing there. These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise-abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scare dares utter to deaf walls and chambers, how can they be represented by a

gesticulating actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred people his confidants at once? I say not that it is the fault of the actor so to do; he must pronounce them ore rotundo, he must accompany them with his eye, he must insinuate them into his auditory by some trick of eye, tone, or gesture, or he fails. He must be thinking all the while of his appearance, because he knows that all the while the spectators are judging of it. And this is the way to represent the shy, negligent, retiring Hamlet.

It is true that there is no other mode of conveying a vast quantity of thought and feeling to a great portion of the audience, who otherwise would never learn it for themselves by reading, and the intellectual acquisition gained this way may, for aught I know, be inestimable; but I am not arguing that Hamlet should not be acted, but how much Hamlet is made another thing by being acted. I have heard much of the wonders which Garrick performed in this part; but as I never saw him, I must have leave to doubt whether the representation of such a character came within the province of his art. Those who tell me of him, speak of his eye, of the magic of his eye, and of his commanding voice: physical properties, vastly desirable in an actor, and without which he can never insinuate meaning into an auditory,—but what have they to do with Hamlet? what have they to do with intellect? In fact, the things aimed at in theatrical representation, are to arrest the spectator's eye upon the form and the gesture, and so to gain a more favourable hearing to what is spoken: it is not what the character is, but how he looks; not what he says, but how he speaks it. I see no reason to think that if the play of Hamlet were written over again by some such writer as Banks or Lillo, retaining the process of the story, but totally omitting all the poetry of it, all the divine features of Shakespeare, his stupendous intellect; and only taking care to give us enough of passionate dialogue, which Banks or Lillo were never at a loss to furnish; I see not how the effect could be much different upon an audience, nor how the actor has it in his power to represent Shakespeare to us differently from his representation of Banks or Lillo. Hamlet would still be a youthful accomplished prince, and must be gracefully personated; he might be puzzled in his mind, wavering in his conduct, seemingly cruel to Ophelia, he might see a ghost, and start at it, and address it kindly when he found it to be his father; all this in the poorest and most homely language of the servilest creeper after nature that ever consulted the palate of an audience; without troubling Shakespeare for the matter; and I see not but there would be room for all the power which an actor has, to display itself. All the passions and changes of passion might remain; for those are much less difficult to write or act than is thought; it is a trick easy to be attained, it is but rising or falling a note or two in the voice, a whisper with a significant foreboding look to announce its approach, and so contagious the counterfeit appearance of any emotion is, that let the words be what they will, the look and tone shall carry it off and make it pass for deep skill in the passions.

It is common for people to talk of Shakespeare's plays being so natural, that everybody can understand him. They are natural indeed, they are grounded deep in nature, so deep that the depth of them lies out of the reach of most of us. You shall hear the same persons say that George Barnwell is very natural, and Othello is very natural, that they are both very deep; and to them they are the same kind of thing. At the one they sit and shed tears, because a good sort of young man is tempted by a naughty woman to commit a trifling peccadillo, the murder of an uncle or so, that is all, and so comes to an untimely end, which is so moving; and at the other,

because a blackamoor in a fit of jealousy kills his innocent white wife: and the odds are that ninety-nine out of a hundred would willingly behold the same catastrophe happen to both the heroes, and have thought the rope more due to Othello than to Barnwell. For of the texture of Othello's mind, the inward construction marvelously laid open with all its strengths and weaknesses, its heroic confidences and its human misgivings, its agonies of hate springing from the depths of love, they see no more than the spectators at a cheaper rate, who pay their pennies apiece to look through the man's telescope in Leicester Fields, see into the inward plot and topography of the moon. Some dim thing or other they see, they see an actor personating a passion, of grief, or anger, for instance, and they recognize it as a copy of the usual external effects of such passions; or at least as being true to that symbol of the emotion which passes current at the theatre for it, for it is often no more than that: but of the grounds of the passion, its correspondence to a great or heroic nature, which is the only worthy object of tragedy,—that common auditors know anything of this, or can have any such notions dinned into them by the mere strength of an actor's lungs,—that apprehensions foreign to them should be thus infused into them by storm, I can neither believe, nor understand how it can be possible.

We talk of Shakespeare's admirable observation of life, when we should feel that not from a petty inquisition into those cheap and every-day characters which surrounded him, as they surround us, but from his own mind, which was, to borrow a phrase of Ben Jonson's, the very "sphere of humanity," he fetched those images of virtue and of knowledge, of which every one of us recognizing a part, think we comprehend in our natures the whole; and oftentimes mistake the powers which he positively creates in us for nothing more than indigenous faculties of our own minds, which only waited the application of corresponding virtues in him to return a full and clear echo of the same.

To return to Hamlet.—Among the distinguishing features of that wonderful character, one of the most interesting (yet painful) is that soreness of mind which makes him treat the intrusions of Polonius with harshness, and that asperity which he puts on in his interviews with Ophelia. These tokens of an unhinged mind (if they be not mixed in the latter case with a profound artifice of love, to alienate Ophelia by affected discourtesies, so to prepare her mind for the breaking off of that loving intercourse, which can no longer find a place amidst business so serious as that which he has to do) are parts of his character, which to reconcile with our admiration of Hamlet, the most patient consideration of his situation is no more than necessary; they are what we forgive afterwards, and explain by the whole of his character, but at the time they are harsh and unpleasant. Yet such is the actor's necessity of giving strong blows to the audience, that I have never seen a player in this character, who did not exaggerate and strain to the utmost these ambiguous features,—these temporary deformities in the character. They make him express a vulgar scorn at Polonius which utterly degrades his gentility, and which no explanation can render palatable; they make him show contempt, and curl up the nose at Ophelia's father,—contempt in its very grossest and most hateful form; but they get applause by it: it is natural, people say; that is, the words are scornful, and the actor expresses scorn, and that they can judge of: but why so much scorn, and of that sort, they never think of asking.

So to Ophelia.—All the Hamlets that I have ever seen, rant and rave at her as if she had committed some great crime, and the audience are highly pleased, because the words of the part are satirical, and they are enforced by the strongest expression of satirical indignation of which the face and voice are capable. But then, whether Hamlet is likely to have put on such brutal appearances to a lady whom he loved so dearly, is never thought on. The truth is, that in all such deep affections as had subsisted between Hamlet and Ophelia, there is a stock of supererogatory love (if I may venture to use the expression), which in any great grief of heart, especially where that which preys upon the mind cannot be communicated, confers a kind of indulgence upon the grieved party to express itself, even to its heart's dearest object, in the language of a temporary alienation; but it is not alienation, it is a distraction purely, and so it always makes itself to be felt by that object: it is not anger, but grief assuming the appearance of anger,—love awkwardly counterfeiting hate, as sweet countenances when they try to frown: but such sternness and fierce disgust as Hamlet is made to show, is no counterfeit, but the real face of absolute aversion,—of irreconcilable alienation. It may be said he puts on the madman; but then he should only so far put on this counterfeit lunacy as his own real distraction will give him leave; that is, incompletely, imperfectly; not in that confirmed, practised way, like a master of his art, or a Dame Quickly would say, "like one of those harlotry players."

I mean no disrespect to any actor, but the sort of pleasure which Shakespeare's plays give in the acting seems to me not at all to differ from that which the audience receive from those of other writers; and, they being in themselves essentially so different from all others, I must conclude that there is something in the nature of acting which levels all distinctions. And in fact, who does not speak indifferently of the Gamester and of Macbeth as fine stage performances, and praise the Mrs. Beverley in the same way as the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. S.? Belvidera, and Calista, and Isabella, and Euphrasia, are they less liked than Imogen, or than Juliet, or than Desdemona? Are they not spoken of and remembered in the same way? Is not the female performer as great (as they call it) in one as in the other? Did not Garrick shine, and was he not ambitious of shining in every drawling tragedy that his wretched day produced,—the productions of the Hills and the Murphys and the Browns,—and shall he have that honour to dwell in our minds for ever as an inseparable concomitant with Shakespeare? A kindred mind! O who can read that affecting sonnet of Shakespeare which alludes to his profession as a player:—

Oh for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds—
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand——
Or that other confession;—

Alas! 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,

Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear—

Who can read these instances of jealous self-watchfulness in our sweet Shakespeare, and dream of any congeniality between him and one that, by every tradition of him, appears to have been as mere a player as ever existed; to have had his mind tainted with the lowest player's vices,—envy and jealousy, and miserable cravings after applause; one who in the exercise of his profession was jealous even of the women-performers that stood in his way; a manager full of managerial tricks and stratagems and finesse: that any resemblance should be dreamed of between him and Shakespeare,—Shakespeare who, in the plenitude and consciousness of his own powers, could with that noble modesty, which we can neither imitate nor appreciate, express himself thus of his own sense of his own defects:—

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd:
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope.

I am almost disposed to deny to Garrick the merits of being an admirer of Shakespeare. A true lover of his excellences he certainly was not; for would any true lover of them have admitted into his matchless scenes such ribald trash as Tate and Cibber, and the rest of them, that With their darkness durst affront his light, have foisted into the acting plays of Shakespeare? I believe it impossible that he could have had a proper reverence for Shakespeare, and have condescended to go through that interpolated scene in Richard the Third, in which Richard tries to break his wife's heart by telling her he loves another woman, and says, "if she survives this she is immortal." Yet I doubt not he delivered this vulgar stuff with as much anxiety of emphasis as any of the genuine parts: and for acting, it is as well calculated as any. But we have seen the part of Richard lately produce great fame to an actor by his manner of playing it, and it lets us into the secret of acting, and of popular judgments of Shakespeare derived from acting. Not one of the spectators who have witnessed Mr. C.'s exertions in that part, but has come away with a proper conviction that Richard is a very wicked man, and kills little children in their beds, with something like the pleasure which the giants and ogres in children's books are represented to have taken in that practice; moreover, that he is very close and shrewd, and devilish cunning, for you could see that by his eye.

But is in fact this the impression we have in reading the Richard of Shakespeare? Do we feel anything like disgust, as we do at that butcher-like representation of him that passes for him on the stage? A horror at his crimes blends with the effect which we feel, but how is it qualified, how is it carried off, by the rich intellect which he displays, his resources, his wit, his buoyant spirits, his vast knowledge and insight into characters, the poetry of his part—not an atom of all which is made perceivable in Mr. C.'s way of acting it. Nothing but his crimes, his actions, is visible; they are prominent and staring; the murderer stands out, but where is the lofty genius, the man of vast capacity,—the profound, the witty, accomplished Richard?

The truth is, the characters of Shakespeare are so much the objects of meditation rather than of interest of curiosity as to their actions, that while we are reading any of his great criminal

characters,—Macbeth, Richard, even Iago,—we think not so much of the crimes which they commit, as of the ambition, the aspiring spirit, the intellectual activity which prompts them to overleap those moral fences. Barnwell is a wretched murderer; there is a certain fitness between his neck and the rope; he is the legitimate heir to the gallows; nobody who thinks at all can think of any alleviating circumstances in his case to make him a fit object of mercy. Or to take an instance from the higher tragedy, what else but a mere assassin in Glenalvon! Do we think of anything but of the crime which he commits, and the rack which he deserves? That is all which we really think about him. Whereas in corresponding characters in Shakespeare so little do the actions comparatively affect us, that while the impulses, the inner mind in all its perverted greatness, solely seems real and is exclusively attended to, the crime is comparatively nothing. But when we see these things represented, the acts which they do are comparatively everything, their impulses nothing. The state of sublime emotion into which we are elevated by those images of night and horror which Macbeth is made to utter, that solemn prelude with which he entertains the time till the bell shall strike which is to call him to murder Duncan,—when we no longer read it in a book, when we have given up that vantage-ground of abstraction which reading possesses over seeing, and come to see a man in his bodily shape before our eyes actually preparing to commit a murder, if the acting be true and impressive, as I have witnessed it in Mr. K.'s performance of that part, the painful anxiety about the act, the natural longing to prevent it while it yet seems unperpetrated, the too close pressing semblance of reality, give a pain and an uneasiness which totally destroy all the delight which the words in the book convey, where the deed doing never presses upon us with the painful sense of presence: it rather seems to belong to history,—to something past and inevitable, if it has anything to do with time at all. The sublime images, the poetry alone, is that which is present to our minds in the reading.

Nov 27– From *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More (1516) translated by Ralph Robinson

For it must needs be, that how far a thing is dissonant and disagreeing from the guise and trade of the hearers, so far shall it be out of their belief. Howbeit, a wise and indifferent esteemer of things will not greatly marvel perchance, seeing all their other laws and customs do so much differ from ours, if the use also of gold and silver among them be applied, rather to their own fashions than to ours. I mean in that they occupy not money themselves, but keep it for that chance, which as it may happen, so it may be that it shall never come to pass. In the meantime gold and silver, whereof money is made, they do so use, as none of them doth more esteem it, than the very nature of the thing deserveth. And then who doth not plainly see how far it is under iron: as without the which men can no better live than without fire and water. Whereas to gold and silver nature hath given no use, that we may not well lack: if that the folly of men had not set it in higher estimation for the rareness sake. But of the contrary part, nature as a most tender and loving mother, hath placed the best and most necessary things open abroad: as the air, the water and the earth itself. And hath removed and hid farthest from us vain and unprofitable things. Therefore if these metals among them should be fast locked up in some tower, it might be suspected, that the prince and the council (as the people is ever foolishly imagining) intended by some subtilty to deceive the commons, and to take same profit of it to themselves. Furthermore if they should make thereof plate and such other finely and cunningly wrought stuff: if at any time they should have occasion to break it, and melt it again, and therewith to pay their soldiers' wages they see and perceive very well, that men would be loath to part from those things, that they once began to have pleasure and delight in. To remedy all this they have found out a means, which, as it is agreeable to all their other laws and customs, so it is from ours, where gold is so much set by and so diligently kept, very far discrepant and repugnant: and therefore incredible, but only to them that be wise. For whereas they eat and drink in earthen and glass vessels, which indeed be curiously and properly made, and yet be of very small value: of gold and silver they make commonly chamber pots, and other like vessels, that serve for most vile uses, not only in their common halls, but in every man's private house. Furthermore of the same metals they make great chains, with fetters, and gyves wherein they tie their bondmen. Finally whosoever for any offence be infamed, by their ears hang rings of gold, upon their fingers they wear rings of gold, and about their necks chains of gold, and in conclusion their heads be tied about with gold. Thus by all means that may be they procure to have gold and silver among them in reproach and infamy. And therefore these metals, which other nations do as grievously and sorrowfully forgo, as in a manner from their own lives: if they should altogether at once be taken from the Utopians, no man there would think that he had lost the worth of one farthing. They gather also pearls by the sea-side, and diamonds and carbuncles upon certain rocks, and yet they seek not for them: but by chance finding them, they cut and polish them. And therewith they deck their young infants. Which like as in the first years of their childhood, they make much and be fond and proud of such ornaments, so when they be a little more grown in years and discretion, perceiving that none but children do wear such toys and trifles: they lay them away even of their own shamefacedness, without any bidding of their parents: even as our children, when they wax big, do cast away nuts, brooches, and puppets.

Therefore these laws and customs, which be so far different from all other nations, how divers fantasies also and minds they do cause, did I never so plainly perceive, as in the ambassadors of the Anemolians.

These ambassadors came to Amaurote whilest I was there. And because they came to entreat of great and weighty matters, those three citizens apiece out of every city were come thither before them. But all the ambassadors of the next countries, which had been there before, and knew the fashions and manners of the Utopians, among whom they perceived no honour given to sumptuous and costly apparel, silks to be contemned, gold also to be infamed and reproachful, were wont to come thither in very homely and simple apparel. But the Anemolians, because they dwell far thence and had very little acquaintance with them, hearing that they were all apparelled alike, and that very rudely and homely: thinking them not to have the things which they did not wear: being therefore more proud, than wise: determined in the gorgeousness of their apparel to represent very gods, and with the bright shining and glistering of their gay clothing to dazzle the eyes of the silly poor Utopians. So there came in three ambassadors with one hundred servants all apparelled in changeable colours: the most of them in silks: the ambassadors themselves (for at home in their own country they were noblemen) in cloth of gold, with great chains of gold, with gold hanging at their ears, with gold rings upon their fingers, with brooches and aglets of gold upon their caps, which glistered full of pearls and precious stones: to be short, trimmed and adorned with all those things, which among the Utopians were either the punishment of bondmen, or the reproach of infamed persons, or else trifles for young children to play withal. Therefore it would have done a man good at his heart to have seen how proudly they displayed their peacock's feathers, how much they made of their painted sheaths, and how loftily they set forth and advanced themselves, when they compared their gallant apparel with the poor raiment of the Utopians. For all the people were swarmed forth into the streets. And on the other side it was no less pleasure to consider how much they were deceived, and how far they missed of their purpose, being contrariwise taken than they thought they should have been. For to the eyes of all the Utopians, except very few, which had been in other countries for some reasonable cause, all that gorgeousness of apparel seemed shameful and reproachful. Insomuch that they most reverently saluted the vilest and most abject of them for lords: passing over the ambassadors themselves without any honour: judging them by their wearing of golden chains to be bondmen. Yea you should have seen children also, that had cast away their pearls and precious stones, when they saw the like sticking upon the ambassadors' caps, dig and push their mothers under the sides, saying thus to them. Look, mother, how great a lubber doth yet wear pearls and precious stones, as though he were a little child still. But the mother, yea, and that also in good earnest: peace, son, saith she: I think he be some of the ambassadors' fools. Some found fault at their golden chains, as to no use nor purpose, being so small and weak, that a bondman might easily break them, and again so wide and large, that when it pleased him, he might cast them off, and run away at liberty whither he would. But when the ambassadors had been there a day or two and saw so great abundance of gold so lightly esteemed, yea in no less reproach, than it was with them in honour: and besides that more gold in the chains and gyves of one fugitive bondman, than all the costly ornaments of them three was worth: they began to abate their courage, and for very shame laid away all that

gorgeous array, whereof they were so proud. And specially when they had talked familiarly with the Utopians, and had learned all their fashions and opinions.

For they marvel that any men be so foolish, as to have delight and pleasure in the glistering of a little trifling stone, which may behold any of the stars, or else the sun itself. Or that any man is so mad, as to count himself the nobler for the smaller or finer thread of wool, which selfsame wool (be it now in never so fine a spun thread) did once a sheep wear: and yet was she all that time no other thing than a sheep. They marvel also that gold, which of the own nature is a thing so unprofitable, is now among all people in so high estimation, that man himself, by whom, yea and for the use of whom it is so much set by, is in much less estimation than the gold itself. Insomuch that a lumpish blockheaded churl, and which hath no more wit than an ass, yea and as full of worthlessness and foolishness, shall have nevertheless many wise and good men in subjection and bondage, only for this, because he hath a great heap of gold. Which if it should be taken from him by any fortune, or by some subtle wile of the law (which no less than fortune doth raise up the low and pluck down the high), and be given to the most vile slave and abject drudge of all his household, then shortly after he shall go into the service of his servant, as an augmentation or an overplus beside his money. But they much more marvel at and detest the madness of them which to those rich men, in whose debt and danger they be not, do give almost divine honours, for none other consideration, but because they be rich: and yet knowing them to be such niggardly penny-fathers, that they be sure as long as they live, not the worth of one farthing of that heap of gold shall come to them.

These and such like opinions have they conceived, partly by education, being brought up in that commonwealth, whose laws and customs be far different from these kinds of folly, and partly by good literature and learning. For though there be not many in every city, which be exempt and discharged of all other labours, and appointed only to learning; that is to say, such in whom even from their very childhood they have perceived a singular towardness, a fine wit, and a mind apt to good learning: yet all in their childhood be instruct in learning. And the better part of the people, both men and women throughout all their whole life do bestow in learning those spare hours, which we said they have vacant from bodily labours. They be taught learning in their own native tongue. For it is both copious in words, and also pleasant to the ear, and for the utterance of a man's mind very perfect and sure. The most part of all that side of the world useth the same language, saving that among the Utopians it is finest and purest, and according to the diversity of the countries it is diversely altered. Of all these philosophers, whose names be here famous in this part of the world to us known, before our coming thither not as much as the fame of any of them was come among them. And yet in music, logic, arithmetic, and geometry they have found out in a manner all that our ancient philosophers have taught. But as they in all things be almost equal to our old ancient clerks, so our new logicians in subtle inventions have far passed and gone beyond them. For they have not devised one of all those rules of restrictions, amplifications and suppositions, very wittily invented in the small logicals, which here our children in every place do learn. Furthermore, they were never yet able to find out the second intentions: insomuch that none of them all could ever see man himself in common, as they call him, though he be (as you know) bigger than ever was any giant, yea and pointed to of us even with our finger. But they be in the course of the stars, and the movings of

the heavenly spheres very expert and cunning. They have also wittily excogitated and devised instruments of divers fashions: wherein is exactly comprehended and contained the movings and situations of the sun, the moon, and of all the other stars, which appear in their horizon. But as for the amities and dissensions of the planets, and all that deceitful divination by the stars, they never as much as dreamed thereof. Rains, winds, and other courses of tempests they know before by certain tokens, which they have learned by long use and observation. But of the causes of all these things and of the ebbing, flowing and saltness of the sea, and finally of the original beginning and nature of heaven and of the world, they hold partly the same opinions that our old philosophers hold, and partly, as our philosophers vary among themselves, so they also, whiles they bring new reasons of things, do disagree from all them, and yet among themselves in all points they do not accord. In that part of philosophy, which treateth of manners and virtue, their reasons and opinions agree with ours. They dispute of the good qualities of the soul, of the body and of fortune. And whether the name of goodness may be applied to all these, or only to the endowments and gifts of the soul.

They reason of virtue and pleasure. But the chief and principal question is in what thing, be it one or more, the felicity of man consisteth. But in this point they seem almost too much given and inclined to the opinion of them which defend pleasure, wherein they determine either all or the chiefest part of man's felicity to rest. And (which is more to be marvelled at) the defence of this so dainty and delicate an opinion they fetch even from their grave, sharp, bitter, and rigorous religion. For they never dispute of felicity or blessedness, but they join to the reasons of philosophy certain principles taken out of religion: without the which to the investigation of true felicity they think reason of itself weak and imperfect. Those principles be these and such like: That the soul is immortal, and by the bountiful goodness of God ordained to felicity. That to our virtues and good deeds rewards be appointed after this life, and to our evil deeds, punishments. Though these be pertaining to religion, yet they think it meet that they should be believed and granted by proofs of reason. But if these principles were condemned and disannulled, then without any delay they pronounce no man to be so foolish, which would not do all his diligence and endeavour to obtain pleasure by right or wrong, only avoiding this inconvenience, that the less pleasure should not be a let or hindrance to the bigger: or that he laboured not for that pleasure, which would bring after it displeasure, grief, and sorrow. For they judge it extreme madness to follow sharp and painful virtue, and not only to banish the pleasure of life, but also willingly to suffer grief without any hope of profit thereof. For what profit can there be, if a man, when he hath passed over all his life unpleasantly, that is to say, wretchedly, shall have no reward after his death? But now, sir, they think not felicity to rest in all pleasure, but only in that pleasure that is good and honest, and that hereto, as to perfect blessedness our nature is allured and drawn even of virtue, whereto only they that be of the contrary opinion do attribute felicity. For they define virtue to be a life ordered according to nature, and that we be hereunto ordained of God. And that he doth follow the course of nature, which in desiring and refusing things is ruled by reason. Furthermore, that reason doth chiefly and principally kindle in men the love and veneration of the divine majesty. Of whose goodness it is that we be, and that we be in possibility to attain felicity. And that secondly, it moveth and provoketh us to lead our life out of care in joy and mirth, and to help all other in respect of the society of nature to obtain the same. For there was never man so earnest and painful a follower of virtue and hater of

pleasure, that would so enjoin you labours, watchings and fastings, but he would also exhort you to ease and lighten, to your power, the lack and misery of others, praising the same as a deed of humanity and pity. Then if it be a point of humanity for man to bring health and comfort to man, and specially (which is a virtue most peculiarly belonging to man) to mitigate and assuage the grief of others, and by taking from them the sorrow and heaviness of life, to restore them to joy, that is to say, to pleasure: why may it not then be said, that nature doth provoke every man to do the same to himself? For a joyful life, that is to say, a pleasant life, is either evil, and if it be so, then thou shouldest not only help no man thereto, but rather, as much as in thee lieth, help all men from it, as noisome and hurtful, or else if thou not only mayst, but also of duty art bound to procure it to others, why not chiefly to thyself, to whom thou art bound to show as much favour as to other? For when nature biddeth thee to be good and gentle to other she commandeth thee not to be cruel and ungentle to thyself. Therefore even very nature (say they) prescribeth to us a joyful life, that is to say, pleasure as the end of all our operations. And they define virtue to be life ordered according to the prescript of nature. But in that, that nature doth allure and provoke men one to help another to live merrily (which surely she doth not without a good cause, for no man is so far above the lot of man's state or condition, that nature doth cark and care for him only, which equally favoureth all that be comprehended under the communion of one shape, form and fashion) verily she commandeth thee to use diligent circumspection, that thou do not so seek for thine own commodities, that thou procure others incommodities. Wherefore their opinion is, that not only covenants and bargains made among private men ought to be well and faithfully fulfilled, observed, and kept, but also common laws, which either a good prince hath justly published, or else the people neither oppressed with tyranny, neither deceived by fraud and guile, hath by their common consent constituted and ratified, concerning the partition of the commodities of life, that is to say, the matter of pleasure. These laws not offended, it is wisdom, that thou look to thine own wealth. And to do the same for the commonwealth is no less than thy duty, if thou bearest any reverent love or any natural zeal and affection to thy native country. But to go about to let another man of his pleasure, whilst thou procurest thine own, that is open wrong. Contrariwise to withdraw something from thyself to give to other, that is a point of humanity and gentleness; which never taketh away so much commodity, as it bringeth again. For it is recompensed with the return of benefits; and the conscience of the good deed, with the remembrance of the thankful love and benevolence of them to whom thou hast done it, doth bring more pleasure to thy mind, than that which thou hast withholden from thyself could have brought to thy body. Finally (which to a godly disposed and a religious mind is easy to be persuaded) God recompenseth the gift of a short and small pleasure with great and everlasting joy. Therefore the matter diligently weighed and considered, thus they think, that all our actions, and in them the virtues themselves, be referred at the last to pleasure, as their end and felicity. Pleasure they call every motion and state of the body or mind wherein man hath naturally delectation. Appetite they join to nature, and that not without a good cause. For like as, not only the senses, but also right reason coveteth whatsoever is naturally pleasant, so that it may be gotten without wrong or injury, not letting or debarring a greater pleasure, nor causing painful labour, even so those things that men by vain imagination do feign against nature to be pleasant (as though it lay in their power to change the things, as they do the names of things) all such pleasures they believe to be of so small help and furtherance to felicity, that they count them great let and hindrance. Because that in whom they have once

taken place, all his mind they possess with a false opinion of pleasure. So that there is no place left for true and natural delectations. For there be many things, which of their own nature contain no pleasantness: yea the most part of them much grief and sorrow. And yet through the perverse and malicious flickering enticement of lewd and unhonest desires, be taken not only for special and sovereign pleasures, but also be counted amoung the chief causes of life. In this counterfeit kind of pleasure they put them that I spake of before; which the better gown they have on, the better men they think themselves. In the which thing they do twice err. For they be no less deceived in that they think their gown the better, than they be, in that they think themselves the better. For if you consider the profitable use of the garment, why should wool of a finer spun thread be thought better, than the wool of a coarse spun thread? Yet they, as though the one did pass the other by nature, and not by their mistaking, advance themselves, and think the price of their own persons thereby greatly increased. And therefore the honour, which in a coarse gown they durst not have looked for, they require, as it were of duty, for their finer gown's sake. And if they be passed by without reverence, they take it angrily and disdainfully. And again is it not a like madness to take a pride in vain and unprofitable honours? For what natural or true pleasure dost thou take of another man's bare head, or bowed knees? Will this ease the pain of thy knees, or remedy the frenzy of thy head? In this image of counterfeit pleasure, they be of a marvellous madness, which for the opinion of nobility, rejoice much in their own conceit. Because it was their fortune to come of such ancestors, whose stock of long time hath been counted rich (for now nobility is nothing else) specially rich in lands. And though their ancestors left them not one foot of land, yet they think themselves not the less noble therefore of one hair. In this number also they count them that take pleasure and delight (as I said) in gems and precious stones, and think themselves almost gods, if they chance to get an excellent one, specially of that kind, which in that time of their own countrymen is had in highest estimation. For one kind of stone keepeth not his price still in all countries and at all times. Nor they buy them not, but taken out of the gold and bare: no, nor so neither, before they have made the seller to swear, that he will warrant and assure it to be a true stone, and no counterfeit gem. Such care they take lest a counterfeit stone should deceive their eyes instead of a right stone. But why shouldst thou not take even as much pleasure in beholding a counterfeit stone, which thine eye cannot discern from a right stone? They should both be of like value to thee, even as to a blind man. What shall I say of them, that keep superfluous riches, to take delectation only in the beholding, and not in the use or occupying thereof? Do they take true pleasure, or else be they deceived with false pleasure? Or of them that be in a contrary vice, hiding the gold which they shall never occupy, nor peradventure never see more; and whiles they take care lest they shall lose it, do lose it indeed? For what is it else, when they hide it in the ground, taking it both from their own use, and perchance from all other men's also? And yet thou, when thou hast hid thy treasure, as one out of all care, hoppest for joy. The which treasure, if it should chance to be stolen, and thou ignorant of the theft shouldst die ten years after: all that ten years' space that thou livedst after thy money was stolen, what matter was it to thee, whether it had been taken away or else safe as thou leftest it? Truly both ways like profit came to thee. To these so foolish pleasures they join dicers, whose madness they know by hearsay and not by use. Hunters also, and hawkers, For what pleasure is there (say they) in casting the dice upon a table; which thou hast done so often, that if there were any pleasure in it, yet the oft use might make thee weary thereof? Or what delight can there be, and not rather

displeasure in hearing the barking and howling of dogs? Or what greater pleasure is there to be felt when a dog followeth an hare, than when a dog followeth a dog? for one thing is done in both, that is to say, running, if thou hast pleasure therein. But if the hope of slaughter and the expectation of tearing in pieces the beast doth please thee: thou shouldest rather be moved with pity to see a silly innocent hare murdered of a dog, the weak of the stronger, the fearful of the fierce, the innocent of the cruel and unmerciful. Therefore all this exercise of hunting, as a thing unworthy to be used of free men, the Utopians have rejected to their butchers, to the which craft (as we said before) they appoint their bondmen. For they count hunting the lowest, the vilest, and most abject part of butchery, and the other parts of it more profitable and more honest, as which do bring much more commodity, and do kill beasts only for necessity. Whereas the hunter seeketh nothing but pleasure of the silly and woful beasts' slaughter and murder. The which pleasure, in beholding death, they think doth rise in the very beasts, either of a cruel affection of mind, or else to be changed in continuance of time into cruelty, by long use of so cruel a pleasure. These therefore and all such like, which be innumerable, though the common sort of people doth take them for pleasures, yet they, seeing there is no natural pleasantness in them, do plainly determine them to have no affinity with true and right pleasure. For as touching that they do commonly move the sense with delectation (which seemeth to be a work of pleasure) this doth nothing diminish their opinion. For not the nature of the thing, but their perverse and lewd custom is the cause hereof, which causeth them to accept bitter or sour things for sweet things. Even as women with child in their viciated and corrupt taste, think pitch and tallow sweeter than any honey. Howbeit no man's judgment depraved and corrupt, either by sickness, or by custom, can change the nature of pleasure, more than it can do the nature of other things.

They make divers kinds of true pleasures. For some they attribute to the soul, and some to the body. To the soul they give intelligence and that delectation that cometh of the contemplation of truth. Hereunto is joined the pleasant remembrance of the good life past. The pleasure of the body they divide into two parts. The first is when delectation is sensibly felt and perceived. The second part of bodily pleasure, they say, is that which consisteth and resteth in the quiet and upright state of the body. And that truly is every man's own proper health, intermingled and disturbed with no grief. For this, if it be not let nor assaulted with no grief, is delectable of itself, though it be moved with no external or outward pleasure. For though it be not so plain and manifest to the sense, as the greedy lust of eating and drinking, yet nevertheless many take it for the chiefest pleasure. All the Utopians grant it to be a right great pleasure, and as you would say, the foundation and ground of all pleasures, as which even alone is able to make the state and condition of life delectable and pleasant. And it being once taken away, there is no place left for any pleasure. For to be without grief having health, that they call insensibility, and not pleasure. The Utopians have long ago rejected and condemned the opinion of them which said that steadfast and quiet health (for this question also hath been diligently debated among them) ought not therefore to be counted a pleasure, because they say it cannot be presently and sensibly perceived and felt by some outward motion. But of the contrary part now they agree almost all in this, that health is a most sovereign pleasure. For seeing that in sickness (say they) is grief, which is a mortal enemy to pleasure, even as sickness is to health, why should not then pleasure be in the quietness of health? For they say it maketh nothing to this matter, whether you say that sickness is a grief, or that in sickness is

grief, for all cometh to one purpose. For whether health be a pleasure itself, or a necessary cause of pleasure, as fire is of heat, truly both ways it followeth that they cannot be without pleasure that be in perfect health. Furthermore whilest we eat (say they) then health, which began to be impaired, fighteth by the help of food against hunger. In the which fight, whilest health by little and little getteth the upper hand, that same proceeding, and (as ye would say) that onwardness to the wonted strength, ministreth that pleasure, whereby we be so refreshed. Health therefore, which in the conflict is joyful, shall it not be merry, when it hath gotten the victory? But as soon as it hath recovered the pristinate strength, which thing only in all the fight it coveted, shall it incontinent be astonished? Nor shall it not know nor embrace the own wealth and goodness? For that it is said, health cannot be felt: this, they think, is nothing true. For what man waking, say they, feeleth not himself in health, but he that is not? Is there any man so possessed with stonish insensibility, or with the sleeping sickness, that he will not grant health to be acceptable to him, and delectable? But what other thing is delectation, than that which by another name is called pleasure? They embrace chiefly the pleasures of the mind. For them they count the chiefest and most principal of all. The chief part of them they think doth come of the exercise of virtue, and conscience of good life. Of these pleasures that the body ministreth, they give the pre-eminence to health. For the delight of eating and drinking, and whatsoever hath any like pleasantness, they determine to be pleasures much to be desired, but no other ways than for health's sake. For such things of their own proper nature be not pleasant, but in that they resist sickness privily stealing on. Therefore like as it is a wise man's part, rather to avoid sickness, than to wish for medicines, and rather to drive away and put to flight careful griefs, than to call for comfort: so it is much better not to need this kind of pleasure, than in curing the contrary grief to be eased of the same. The which kind of pleasure, if any man take for his felicity, that man must needs grant, that then he shall be in most felicity, if he live that life, which is led in continual hunger, thirst, itching, eating, drinking, scratching and rubbing. The which life how not only foul it is, but also miserable and wretched who perceiveth not? These doubtless be the basest pleasures of all, as impure and imperfect. For they never come, but accompanied with their contrary griefs. As with the pleasure of eating is joined hunger, and that after no very equal sort. For of these two the grief is both the more vehement, and also of longer continuance. For it riseth before the pleasure, and endeth not until the pleasure die with it. Wherefore such pleasures they think not greatly to be set by, but in that they be necessary. Howbeit they have delight also in these, and thankfully acknowledge the tender love of mother nature, which with most pleasant delectation allureth her children to that, which of necessity they be driven often to use. For how wretched and miserable should our life be, if these daily griefs of hunger and thirst could not be driven away, but with bitter potions and sour medicines, as the other diseases be, wherewith we be seldomer troubled? But beauty, strength, nimbleness, these as peculiar and pleasant gifts of nature they make much of. But those pleasures which be received by the ears, the eyes and the nose, which nature willeth to be proper and peculiar to man (for no other kind of living beasts doth behold the fairness and the beauty of the world, or is moved with any respect of savours, but only for the diversity of meats, neither perceiveth the concordant and discordant distances of sounds and tunes) these pleasures, I say, they accept and allow as certain pleasant rejoicings of life. But in all things this precaution they use, that a less pleasure hinder not a bigger, and that the pleasure be no cause of displeasure, which they think to follow of necessity, if the pleasure be unhonest. But yet to

despise the comeliness of beauty, to waste the bodily strength, to turn nimbleness into sluggishness, to consume and make feeble the body with fasting, to do injury to health, and to reject the other pleasant motions of nature unless a man neglect these his commodities, whilest he doth with a fervent zeal procure the wealth of others, or the common profit, for the which pleasure forborn, he is in hope of a greater pleasure at God's hand; else for a vain shadow of virtue, for the wealth and profit of no man, to punish himself, or to the intent he may be able courageously to suffer adversities, which perchance shall never come to him; this to do they think it a point of extreme madness, and a token of a man cruelly minded towards himself, and unkind toward nature, as one so disdaining to be in her danger, that he renounceth and refuseth all her benefits

Nov 28– Poems by Sir William Blake

351. The Tiger

TIGER, tiger, burning bright

In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art

Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

And, when thy heart began to beat,

What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? What dread grasp

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,

And water'd heaven with their tears,

Did He smile His work to see?

Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright

In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

352. Ah! Sun-Flower

AH, sun-flower! weary of time,

Who countest the steps of the Sun;

Seeking after that sweet golden clime,

Where the traveller’s journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,

And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow,

Arise from their graves, and aspire

Where my sun-flower wishes to go.

353. To Spring

O THOU with dewy locks, who lookest down

Through the clear windows of the morning, turn

Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,

Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!

The hills tell one another, and the listening

Valleys hear; all our longing eyes are turn’d

Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth

And let thy holy feet visit our clime!

Come o’er the eastern hills, and let our winds

Kiss thy perfumèd garments; let us taste

Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls

Upon our lovesick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour

Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put

Thy golden crown upon her languish’d head,

Whose modest tresses are bound up for thee.

354. Reeds of Innocence

PIPING down the valleys wild,

Piping songs of pleasant glee,

On a cloud I saw a child,

And he laughing said to me:

‘Pipe a song about a Lamb!’

So I piped with merry cheer.

‘Piper, pipe that song again;’

So I piped: he wept to hear.

‘Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;

Sing thy songs of happy cheer!’

So I sung the same again,

While he wept with joy to hear.

‘Piper, sit thee down and write

In a book that all may read.’

So he vanish’d from my sight;

And I pluck’d a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,

And I stain’d the water clear,

And I wrote my happy songs

Every child may joy to hear.

355. Night

THE SUN descending in the west,

The evening star does shine;

The birds are silent in their nest,

And I must seek for mine.

The moon, like a flower

In heaven’s high bower,

With silent delight

Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,

Where flocks have took delight:

Where lambs have nibbled, silent move

The feet of angels bright;

Unseen they pour blessing

And joy without ceasing

On each bud and blossom,

On each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest

Where birds are cover’d warm;

They visit caves of every beast,

To keep them all from harm:

If they see any weeping

That should have been sleeping,

They pour sleep on their head,

And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,

They pitying stand and weep,

Seeking to drive their thirst away

And keep them from the sheep.

But, if they rush dreadful,

The angels, most heedful,

Receive each mild spirit,

New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion’s ruddy eyes

Shall flow with tears of gold:

And pitying the tender cries,

And walking round the fold:

Saying, ‘Wrath by His meekness,

And, by His health, sickness,

Are driven away

From our immortal day.

‘And now beside thee, bleating lamb,

I can lie down and sleep,

Or think on Him who bore thy name,

Graze after thee, and weep.

For, wash’d in life’s river,

My bright mane for ever

Shall shine like the gold

As I guard o’er the fold.’

356. Auguries of Innocence

TO see a world in a grain of sand,

And a heaven in a wild flower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,

And eternity in an hour.

A robin redbreast in a cage

Puts all heaven in a rage.

A dove-house fill’d with doves and pigeons

Shudders hell thro’ all its regions.

A dog starv’d at his master’s gate

Predicts the ruin of the state.

A horse misused upon the road

Calls to heaven for human blood.

Each outcry of the hunted hare

A fibre from the brain does tear.

A skylark wounded in the wing,

A cherubim does cease to sing.

The game-cock clipt and arm'd for fight

Does the rising sun affright.

Every wolf's and lion's howl

Raises from hell a human soul.

The wild deer, wand'ring here and there,

Keeps the human soul from care.

The lamb misus'd breeds public strife,

And yet forgives the butcher's knife.

The bat that flits at close of eve

Has left the brain that won't believe.

The owl that calls upon the night

Speaks the unbeliever's fright.

He who shall hurt the little wren

Shall never be belov'd by men.

He who the ox to wrath has mov'd

Shall never be by woman lov’d.

The wanton boy that kills the fly

Shall feel the spider’s enmity.

He who torments the chafer’s sprite

Weaves a bower in endless night.

The caterpillar on the leaf

Repeats to thee thy mother’s grief.

Kill not the moth nor butterfly,

For the last judgment draweth nigh.

He who shall train the horse to war

Shall never pass the polar bar.

The beggar’s dog and widow’s cat,

Feed them and thou wilt grow fat.

The gnat that sings his summer’s song

Poison gets from slander’s tongue.

The poison of the snake and newt

Is the sweat of envy’s foot.

The poison of the honey bee

Is the artist’s jealousy.

The prince’s robes and beggar’s rags

Are toadstools on the miser’s bags.

A truth that’s told with bad intent

Beats all the lies you can invent.

It is right it should be so;

Man was made for joy and woe;

And when this we rightly know,

Thro’ the world we safely go.

Joy and woe are woven fine,

A clothing for the soul divine.

Under every grief and pine

Runs a joy with silken twine.

The babe is more than swaddling bands;

Throughout all these human lands

Tools were made, and born were hands,

Every farmer understands.

Every tear from every eye

Becomes a babe in eternity;

This is caught by females bright,

And return’d to its own delight.

The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar,

Are waves that beat on heaven’s shore.

The babe that weeps the rod beneath

Writes revenge in realms of death.

The beggar’s rags, fluttering in air,

Does to rags the heavens tear.

The soldier, arm'd with sword and gun,

Palsied strikes the summer's sun.

The poor man's farthing is worth more

Than all the gold on Afric's shore.

One mite wrung from the lab'rer's hands

Shall buy and sell the miser's lands;

Or, if protected from on high,

Does that whole nation sell and buy.

He who mocks the infant's faith

Shall be mock'd in age and death.

He who shall teach the child to doubt

The rotting grave shall ne'er get out.

He who respects the infant's faith

Triumphs over hell and death.

The child's toys and the old man's reasons

Are the fruits of the two seasons.

The questioner, who sits so sly,

Shall never know how to reply.

He who replies to words of doubt

Doth put the light of knowledge out.

The strongest poison ever known

Came from Caesar’s laurel crown.

Nought can deform the human race

Like to the armour’s iron brace.

When gold and gems adorn the plow,

To peaceful arts shall envy bow.

A riddle, or the cricket’s cry,

Is to doubt a fit reply.

The emmet’s inch and eagle’s mile

Make lame philosophy to smile.

He who doubts from what he sees

Will ne’er believe, do what you please.

If the sun and moon should doubt,

They’d immediately go out.

To be in a passion you good may do,

But no good if a passion is in you.

The whore and gambler, by the state

Licensed, build that nation’s fate.

The harlot’s cry from street to street

Shall weave old England’s winding-sheet.

The winner’s shout, the loser’s curse,

Dance before dead England’s hearse.

Every night and every morn

Some to misery are born,

Every morn and every night

Some are born to sweet delight.

Some are born to sweet delight,

Some are born to endless night.

We are led to believe a lie

When we see not thro' the eye,

Which was born in a night to perish in a night,

When the soul slept in beams of light.

God appears, and God is light,

To those poor souls who dwell in night;

But does a human form display

To those who dwell in realms of day.

357. Nurse's Song

WHEN the voices of children are heard on the green,

And laughing is heard on the hill,

My heart is at rest within my breast,

And everything else is still.

'Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,

And the dews of night arise;

Come, come, leave off play, and let us away

Till the morning appears in the skies.'

‘No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,

And we cannot go to sleep;

Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,

And the hills are all cover’d with sheep.’

‘Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,

And then go home to bed.’

The little ones leapèd and shoutèd and laugh’d

And all the hills echoèd.

358. Holy Thursday

’TWAS on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,

The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,

Grey headed beadles walk’d before, with wands as white as snow,

Till unto the high dome of Paul’s they like Thames’ waters flow.

O what a multitude they seem’d, these flowers of London town!

Seated in companies, they sit with radiance all their own.

The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,

Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,

Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among.

Beneath them sit the agèd men, wise guardians of the poor;

Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

359. The Divine Image

TO Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love

All pray in their distress;

And to these virtues of delight

Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love

Is God, our father dear,

And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love

Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,

Pity a human face,

And Love, the human form divine,

And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,

That prays in his distress,

Prays to the human form divine,

Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,

In heathen, Turk, or Jew;

Where Mercy, Love and Pity dwell,

There God is dwelling too.

360. Song

FRESH from the dewy hill, the merry year

Smiles on my head and mounts his flaming car;

Round my young brows the laurel wreathes a shade,

And rising glories beam around my head.

My feet are wing’d, while o’er the dewy lawn,

I meet my maiden risen like the morn:

Oh bless those holy feet, like angel’s feet;

Oh bless those limbs, beaming with heav’nly light.

Like as an angel glitt’ring in the sky

In times of innocence and holy joy;

The joyful shepherd stops his grateful song

To hear the music of an angel’s tongue.

So when she speaks, the voice of heaven I hear;

So when we walk, nothing impure comes near;

Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat,

Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.

But that sweet village where my black-ey’d maid

Closes her eyes in sleep beneath night’s shade,

Whene’er I enter, more than mortal fire

Burns in my soul, and does my song inspire.

Nov 29– From *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume (1748)

SECTION II
OF THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS.

11.Every one will readily allow, that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind, when a man feels the pain of excessive heat, or the pleasure of moderate warmth, and when he afterwards recalls to his memory this sensation, or anticipates it by his imagination. These faculties may mimic or copy the perceptions of the senses; but they never can entirely reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment. The utmost we say of them, even when they operate with greatest vigour, is, that they represent their object in so lively a manner, that we could almost say we feel or see it: But, except the mind be disordered by disease or madness, they never can arrive at such a pitch of vivacity, as to render these perceptions altogether undistinguishable. All the colours of poetry, however splendid, can never paint natural objects in such a manner as to make the description be taken for a real landskip. The most lively thought is still inferior to the dullest sensation.

We may observe a like distinction to run through all the other perceptions of the mind. A man in a fit of anger, is actuated in a very different manner from one who only thinks of that emotion. If you tell me, that any person is in love, I easily understand your meaning, and form a just conception of his situation; but never can mistake that conception for the real disorders and agitations of the passion. When we reflect on our past sentiments and affections, our thought is a faithful mirror, and copies its objects truly; but the colours which it employs are faint and dull, in comparison of those in which our original perceptions were clothed. It requires no nice discernment or metaphysical head to mark the distinction between them.

12.Here therefore we may divide all the perceptions of the mind into two classes or species, which are distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity. The less forcible and lively are commonly denominated Thoughts or Ideas. The other species want a name in our language, and in most others; I suppose, because it was not requisite for any, but philosophical purposes, to rank them under a general term or appellation. Let us, therefore, use a little freedom, and call them Impressions; employing that word in a sense somewhat different from the usual. By the term impression, then, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from ideas, which are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned.

13.Nothing, at first view, may seem more unbounded than the thought of man, which not only escapes all human power and authority, but is not even restrained within the limits of nature and reality. To form monsters, and join incongruous shapes and appearances, costs the imagination no more trouble than to conceive the most natural and familiar objects. And while the body is confined to one planet, along which it creeps with pain and difficulty; the thought can

in an instant transport us into the most distant regions of the universe; or even beyond the universe, into the unbounded chaos, where nature is supposed to lie in total confusion. What never was seen, or heard of, may yet be conceived; nor is any thing beyond the power of thought, except what implies an absolute contradiction.

But though our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience. When we think of a golden mountain, we only join two consistent ideas, gold, and mountain, with which we were formerly acquainted. A virtuous horse we can conceive; because, from our own feeling, we can conceive virtue; and this we may unite to the figure and shape of a horse, which is an animal familiar to us. In short, all the materials of thinking are derived either from our outward or inward sentiment: the mixture and composition of these belongs alone to the mind and will. Or, to express myself in philosophical language, all our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively ones.

14.To prove this, the two following arguments will, I hope, be sufficient. First, when we analyze our thoughts or ideas, however compounded or sublime, we always find that they resolve themselves into such simple ideas as were copied from a precedent feeling or sentiment. Even those ideas, which, at first view, seem the most wide of this origin, are found, upon a nearer scrutiny, to be derived from it. The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom. We may prosecute this enquiry to what length we please; where we shall always find, that every idea which we examine is copied from a similar impression. Those who would assert that this position is not universally true nor without exception, have only one, and that an easy method of refuting it; by producing that idea, which, in their opinion, is not derived from this source. It will then be incumbent on us, if we would maintain our doctrine, to produce the impression, or lively perception, which corresponds to it.

15.Secondly. If it happen, from a defect of the organ, that a man is not susceptible of any species of sensation, we always find that he is as little susceptible of the correspondent ideas. A blind man can form no notion of colours; a deaf man of sounds. Restore either of them that sense in which he is deficient; by opening this new inlet for his sensations, you also open an inlet for the ideas; and he finds no difficulty in conceiving these objects. The case is the same, if the object, proper for exciting any sensation, has never been applied to the organ. A Laplander or Negro has no notion of the relish of wine. And though there are few or no instances of a like deficiency in the mind, where a person has never felt or is wholly incapable of a sentiment or passion that belongs to his species; yet we find the same observation to take place in a less degree. A man of mild manners can form no idea of inveterate revenge or cruelty; nor can a selfish heart easily conceive the heights of friendship and generosity. It is readily allowed, that other beings may possess many senses of which we can have no conception; because the

ideas of them have never been introduced to us in the only manner by which an idea can have access to the mind, to wit, by the actual feeling and sensation.

16.There is, however, one contradictory phenomenon, which may prove that it is not absolutely impossible for ideas to arise, independent of their correspondent impressions. I believe it will readily be allowed, that the several distinct ideas of colour, which enter by the eye, or those of sound, which are conveyed by the ear, are really different from each other; though, at the same time, resembling. Now if this be true of different colours, it must be no less so of the different shades of the same colour; and each shade produces a distinct idea, independent of the rest. For if this should be denied, it is possible, by the continual gradation of shades, to run a colour insensibly into what is most remote from it; and if you will not allow any of the means to be different, you cannot, without absurdity, deny the extremes to be the same. Suppose, therefore, a person to have enjoyed his sight for thirty years, and to have become perfectly acquainted with colours of all kinds except one particular shade of blue, for instance, which it never has been his fortune to meet with. Let all the different shades of that colour, except that single one, be placed before him, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest; it is plain that he will perceive a blank, where that shade is wanting, and will be sensible that there is a greater distance in that place between the contiguous colours than in any other. Now I ask, whether it be possible for him, from his own imagination, to supply this deficiency, and raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade, though it had never been conveyed to him by his senses? I believe there are few but will be of opinion that he can: and this may serve as a proof that the simple ideas are not always, in every instance, derived from the correspondent impressions; though this instance is so singular, that it is scarcely worth our observing, and does not merit that for it alone we should alter our general maxim.

17.Here, therefore, is a proposition, which not only seems, in itself, simple and intelligible; but, if a proper use were made of it, might render every dispute equally intelligible, and banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn disgrace upon them. All ideas, especially abstract ones, are naturally faint and obscure: the mind has but a slender hold of them: they are apt to be confounded with other resembling ideas; and when we have often employed any term, though without a distinct meaning, we are apt to imagine it has a determinate idea annexed to it. On the contrary, all impressions, that is, all sensations, either outward or inward, are strong and vivid: the limits between them are more exactly determined: nor is it easy to fall into any error or mistake with regard to them. When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion. By bringing ideas into so clear a light we may reasonably hope to remove all dispute, which may arise, concerning their nature and reality.

It is probable that no more was meant by those, who denied innate ideas, than that all ideas were copies of our impressions; though it must be confessed, that the terms, which they employed, were not chosen with such caution, nor so exactly defined, as to prevent all mistakes about their doctrine. For what is meant by innate? If innate be equivalent to natural, then all the

perceptions and ideas of the mind must be allowed to be innate or natural, in whatever sense we take the latter word, whether in opposition to what is uncommon, artificial, or miraculous. If by innate be meant, contemporary to our birth, the dispute seems to be frivolous; nor is it worth while to enquire at what time thinking begins, whether before, at, or after our birth. Again, the word idea, seems to be commonly taken in a very loose sense, by LOCKE and others; as standing for any of our perceptions, our sensations and passions, as well as thoughts. Now in this sense, I should desire to know, what can be meant by asserting, that self-love, or resentment of injuries, or the passion between the sexes is not innate?

But admitting these terms, impressions and ideas, in the sense above explained, and understanding by innate, what is original or copied from no precedent perception, then may we assert that all our impressions are innate, and our ideas not innate.

To be ingenuous, I must own it to be my opinion, that LOCKE was betrayed into this question by the schoolmen, who, making use of undefined terms, draw out their disputes to a tedious length, without ever touching the point in question. A like ambiguity and circumlocution seem to run through that philosopher's reasonings on this as well as most other subjects.

Nov 30– From “Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation” by Jonathon Swift (1713)

I HAVE observed few obvious subjects to have been so seldom, or, at least, so slightly handled as this; and, indeed, I know few so difficult to be treated as it ought, nor yet upon which there seemeth so much to be said.

Most things, pursued by men for the happiness of public or private life, our wit or folly have so refined, that they seldom subsist but in idea; a true friend, a good marriage, a perfect form of government, with some others, require so many ingredients, so good in their several kinds, and so much niceness in mixing them, that for some thousands of years men have despaired of reducing their schemes to perfection. But, in conversation, it is, or might be otherwise; for here we are only to avoid a multitude of errors, which, although a matter of some difficulty, may be in every man’s power, for want of which it remaineth as mere an idea as the other. Therefore it seemeth to me, that the truest way to understand conversation, is to know the faults and errors to which it is subject, and from thence every man to form maxims to himself whereby it may be regulated, because it requireth few talents to which most men are not born, or at least may not acquire without any great genius or study. For nature hath left every man a capacity of being agreeable, though not of shining in company; and there are an hundred men sufficiently qualified for both, who, by a very few faults, that they might correct in half an hour, are not so much as tolerable.

I was prompted to write my thoughts upon this subject by mere indignation, to reflect that so useful and innocent a pleasure, so fitted for every period and condition of life, and so much in all men’s power, should be so much neglected and abused.

And in this discourse it will be necessary to note those errors that are obvious, as well as others which are seldomer observed, since there are few so obvious, or acknowledged, into which most men, some time or other, are not apt to run.

For instance: Nothing is more generally exploded than the folly of talking too much; yet I rarely remember to have seen five people together, where some one among them hath not been predominant in that kind, to the great constraint and disgust of all the rest. But among such as deal in multitudes of words, none are comparable to the sober deliberate talker, who proceedeth with much thought and caution, maketh his preface, brancheth out into several digressions, findeth a hint that putteth him in mind of another story, which he promiseth to tell you when this is done; cometh back regularly to his subject, cannot readily call to mind some person’s name, holding his head, complaineth of his memory; the whole company all this while in suspense; at length says, it is no matter, and so goes on. And, to crown the business, it perhaps proveth at last a story the company hath heard fifty times before; or, at best, some insipid adventure of the relater.

Another general fault in conversation is, that of those who affect to talk of themselves: Some, without any ceremony, will run over the history of their lives; will relate the annals of their diseases, with the several symptoms and circumstances of them; will enumerate the hardships and injustice they have suffered in court, in parliament, in love, or in law. Others are more dexterous, and with great art will lie on the watch to hook in their own praise: They will call a witness to remember they always foretold what would happen in such a case, but none would believe them; they advised such a man from the beginning, and told him the consequences, just as they happened; but he would have his own way. Others make a vanity of telling their faults; they are the strangest men in the world; they cannot dissemble; they own it is a folly; they have lost abundance of advantages by it; but, if you would give them the world, they cannot help it; there is something in their nature that abhors insincerity and constraint; with many other insufferable topics of the same altitude.

Of such mighty importance every man is to himself, and ready to think he is so to others; without once making this easy and obvious reflection, that his affairs can have no more weight with other men, than theirs have with him; and how little that is, he is sensible enough.

Where company hath met, I often have observed two persons discover, by some accident, that they were bred together at the same school or university, after which the rest are condemned to silence, and to listen while these two are refreshing each other's memory with the arch tricks and passages of themselves and their comrades.

I know a great officer of the army, who will sit for some time with a supercilious and impatient silence, full of anger and contempt for those who are talking; at length of a sudden demand audience, decide the matter in a short dogmatical way; then withdraw within himself again, and vouchsafe to talk no more, until his spirits circulate again to the same point.

There are some faults in conversation, which none are so subject to as the men of wit, nor ever so much as when they are with each other. If they have opened their mouths, without endeavouring to say a witty thing, they think it is so many words lost: It is a torment to the hearers, as much as to themselves, to see them upon the rack for invention, and in perpetual constraint, with so little success. They must do something extraordinary, in order to acquit themselves, and answer their character, else the standers-by may be disappointed and be apt to think them only like the rest of mortals. I have known two men of wit industriously brought together, in order to entertain the company, where they have made a very ridiculous figure, and provided all the mirth at their own expense.

I know a man of wit, who is never easy but where he can be allowed to dictate and preside: he neither expecteth to be informed or entertained, but to display his own talents. His business is to be good company, and not good conversation; and therefore, he chooseth to frequent those who are content to listen, and profess themselves his admirers. And, indeed, the worst conversation I ever remember to have heard in my life, was that at Will's coffeehouse, where the wits (as they were called) used formerly to assemble; that is to say, five or six men, who had writ plays, or at least prologues, or had share in a miscellany, came thither, and

entertained one another with their trifling composures, in so important an air, as if they had been the noblest efforts of human nature, or that the fate of kingdoms depended on them; and they were usually attended with an humble audience of young students from the inns of court, or the universities, who at due distance, listened to these oracles, and returned home with great contempt for their law and philosophy, their heads filled with trash, under the name of politeness, criticism and belles lettres.

By these means the poets, for many years past, were all overrun with pedantry. For, as I take it, the word is not properly used; because pedantry is the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our own knowledge in common discourse, and placing too great a value upon it; by which definition, men of the court or the army may be as guilty of pedantry as a philosopher or a divine; and, it is the same vice in women, when they are over copious upon the subject of their petticoats, or their fans, or their china. For which reason, although it be a piece of prudence, as well as good manners, to put men upon talking on subjects they are best versed in, yet that is a liberty a wise man could hardly take; because, beside the imputation for pedantary, it is what he would never improve by.

The great town is usually provided with some player, mimic or buffoon, who hath a general reception at the good tables; familiar and domestic with persons of the first quality, and usually sent for at every meeting to divert the company; against which I have no objection. You go there as to a farce or a puppetshow; your business is only to laugh in season, either out of inclination or civility, while this merry companion is acting his part. It is a business he hath undertaken, and we are to suppose he is paid for his day's work. I only quarrel, when in select and private meetings, where men of wit and learning are invited to pass an evening, this jester should be admitted to run over his circle of tricks, and make the whole company unfit for any other conversation, besides the indignity of confounding men's talents at so shameful a rate.

Raillery is the finest part of conversation; but, as it is our usual custom to counterfeit and adulterate whatever is too dear for us, so we have done with this, and turned it all into what is generally called repartee, or being smart; just as when an expensive fashion cometh up, those who are not able to reach it, content themselves with some paltry imitation. It now passeth for raillery to run a man down in discourse, to put him out of countenance, and make him ridiculous, sometimes to expose the defects of his person or understanding; on all which occasions he is obliged not to be angry, to avoid the imputation of not being able to take a jest. It is admirable to observe one who is dexterous at this art, singling out a weak adversary, getting the laugh on his side, and then carrying all before him. The French, from whence we borrow the word, have a quite different idea of the thing, and so had we in the politer age of our fathers. Raillery was to say something that at first appeared a reproach or reflection; but, by some turn of wit unexpected and surprising, ended always in a compliment, and to the advantage of the person it was addressed to. And surely one of the best rules in conversation is, never to say a thing which any of the company can reasonably wish we had rather left unsaid; nor can there anything be well more contrary to the ends for which people meet together, than to part unsatisfied with each other or themselves.

There are two faults in conversation, which appear very different, yet arise from the same root, and are equally blamable; I mean, an impatience to interrupt others, and the uneasiness of being interrupted ourselves. The two chief ends of conversation are to entertain and improve those we are among, or to receive those benefits ourselves; which whoever will consider, cannot easily run into either of those two errors; because when any man speaketh in company, it is to be supposed he doth it for his hearers' sake, and not his own; so that common discretion will teach us not to force their attention, if they are not willing to lend it; nor on the other side, to interrupt him who is in possession, because that is in the grossest manner to give the preference to our own good sense.

There are some people, whose good manners will not suffer them to interrupt you; but, what is almost as bad, will discover abundance of impatience, and lie upon the watch until you have done, because they have started something in their own thoughts which they long to be delivered of. Meantime, they are so far from regarding what passes, that their imaginations are wholly turned upon what they have in reserve, for fear it should slip out of their memory; and thus they confine their invention, which might otherwise range over a hundred things full as good, and that might be much more naturally introduced.

There is a sort of rude familiarity, which some people, by practising among their intimates, have introduced into their general conversation, and would have it pass for innocent freedom or humour, which is a dangerous experiment in our northern climate, where all the little decorum and politeness we have are purely forced by art, and are so ready to lapse into barbarity. This, among the Romans, was the raillery of slaves, of which we have many instances in Plautus. It seemeth to have been introduced among us by Cromwell, who, by preferring the scum of the people, made it a court entertainment, of which I have heard many particulars; and, considering all things were turned upside down, it was reasonable and judicious: Although it was a piece of policy found out to ridicule a point of honour in the other extreme, when the smallest word misplaced among gentlemen ended in a duel.

There are some men excellent at telling a story, and provided with a plentiful stock of them, which they can draw out upon occasion in all companies; and, considering how low conversation runs now among us, it is not altogether a contemptible talent; however, it is subject to two unavoidable defects; frequent repetition, and being soon exhausted; so that whoever valueth this gift in himself, hath need of a good memory, and ought frequently to shift his company, that he may not discover the weakness of his fund; for those who are thus endowed, have seldom any other revenue, but live upon the main stock.

Great speakers in public, are seldom agreeable in private conversation, whether their faculty be natural, or acquired by practice, and often venturing. Natural elocution, although it may seem a paradox, usually springeth from a barrenness of invention and of words, by which men who have only one stock of notions upon every subject, and one set of phrases to express them in, they swim upon the superficies, and offer themselves on every occasion; therefore, men of much learning, and who know the compass of a language, are generally the worst talkers on a sudden, until much practice hath inured and emboldened them, because they are

confounded with plenty of matter, variety of notions, and of words, which they cannot readily choose, but are perplexed and entangled by too great a choice; which is no disadvantage in private conversation; where, on the other side, the talent of haranguing is, of all others, most insupportable.

Nothing hath spoiled men more for conversation, than the character of being wits, to support which, they never fail of encouraging a number of followers and admirers, who list themselves in their service, wherein they find their accounts on both sides, by pleasing their mutual vanity. This hath given the former such an air of superiority, and made the latter so pragmatical, that neither of them are well to be endured. I say nothing here of the itch of dispute and contradiction, telling of lies, or of those who are troubled with the disease called the wandering of the thoughts, that they are never present in mind at what passeth in discourse; for whoever labours under any of these possessions, is as unfit for conversation as a madman in Bedlam.

I think I have gone over most of the errors in conversation, that have fallen under my notice or memory, except some that are merely personal, and others too gross to need exploding; such as lewd or profane talk; but I pretend only to treat the errors of conversation in general, and not the several subjects of discourse, which would be infinite. Thus we see how human nature is most debased, by the abuse of that faculty, which is held the great distinction between men and brutes; and how little advantage we make of that which might be the greatest, the most lasting, and the most innocent, as well as useful pleasure of life. In default of which, we are forced to take up with those poor amusements of dress and visiting, or the more pernicious ones of play, drink, and vicious amours, whereby the nobility and gentry of both sexes are entirely corrupted both in body and mind, and have lost all notions of love, honour, friendship, generosity; which, under the name of fopperies, have been for some time laughed out of doors.

This degeneracy of conversation, with the pernicious consequences thereof upon our humours and dispositions, hath been owing, among other causes, to the custom arisen, for sometime past, of excluding women from any share in our society, further than in parties at play, or dancing, or in the pursuit of an amour. I take the highest period of politeness in England (and it is of the same date in France) to have been the peaceable part of King Charles the First's reign; and from what we read of those times, as well as from the accounts I have formerly met with from some who lived in that court, the methods then used for raising and cultivating conversation, were altogether different from ours. Several ladies, whom, we find celebrated by the poets of that age, had assemblies at their houses, where persons of the best understanding, and of both sexes, met to pass the evenings in discoursing upon whatever agreeable subjects were occasionally started; and although we are apt to ridicule the sublime platonic notions they had, or personated in love and friendship, I conceive their refinements were grounded upon reason, and that a little grain of the romance is no ill ingredient to preserve and exalt the dignity of human nature, without which it is apt to degenerate into everything that is sordid, vicious and low. If there were no other use in the conversation of ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a restraint upon those odious topics of immodesty and indecencies, into which the rudeness of our northern genius is so apt to fall. And, therefore, it is observable in those sprightly gentlemen

about the town, who are so very dexterous at entertaining a vizard mask in the park or the playhouse, that, in the company of ladies of virtue and honour, they are silent and disconcerted, and out of their element.

There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves and entertain their company with relating of facts of no consequence, nor at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture, peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable. It is not a fault in company to talk much; but to continue it long is certainly one; for, if the majority of those who are got together be naturally silent or cautious, the conversation will flag, unless it be often renewed by one among them, who can start new subjects, provided he doth not dwell upon them, but leaveth room for answers and replies.

Dec 1– From Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous by David Hume (1734)

THE FIRST DIALOGUE.
Philonous. Good Morrow, Hylas: I did not expect to find you abroad so early.

Hylas. It is indeed something unusual; but my Thoughts were so taken up with a Subject I was discoursing of last Night, that finding I could not sleep, I resolved to rise and take a turn in the Garden.

Phil. It happened well, to let you see what innocent and agreeable Pleasures you lose every Morning. Can there be a pleasanter time of the Day, or a more delightful Season of the Year? That purple Sky, these wild but sweet Notes of Birds, the fragrant Bloom upon the Trees and Flowers, the gentle Influence of the rising Sun, these and a thousand nameless Beauties of Nature inspire the Soul with secret Transports; its Faculties too being at this time fresh and lively, are fit for those Meditations, which the Solitude of a Garden and Tranquillity of the Morning naturally dispose us to. But I am afraid I interrupt your Thoughts: for you seemed very intent on something.

Hyl. It is true, I was, and shall be obliged to you if you will permit me to go on in the same Vein; not that I would by any means deprive my self of your Company, for my Thoughts always flow more easily in Conversation with a Friend, than when I am alone: But my Request is, that you would suffer me to impart my Reflexions to you.

Phil. With all my heart, it is what I should have requested my self, if you had not prevented me.

Hyl. I was considering the odd Fate of those Men who have in all Ages, through an Affectation of being distinguished from the Vulgar, or some unaccountable Turn of Thought, pretended either to believe nothing at all, or to believe the most extravagant Things in the World. This however might be born, if their Paradoxes and Scepticism did not draw after them some Consequences of general Disadvantage to Mankind. But the Mischief lieth here; that when Men of less Leisure see them who are supposed to have spent their whole time in the Pursuits of Knowledge, professing an intire Ignorance of all Things, or advancing such Notions as are repugnant to plain and commonly received Principles, they will be tempted to entertain Suspicions concerning the most important Truths, which they had hitherto held sacred and unquestionable.

Phil. I intirely agree with you, as to the ill Tendency of the affected Doubts of some Philosophers, and fantastical Conceits of others. I am even so far gone of late in this way of Thinking, that I have quitted several of the sublime Notions I had got in their Schools for vulgar Opinions. And I give it you on my Word, since this Revolt from Metaphysical Notions to the plain Dictates of Nature and common Sense, I find my Understanding strangely enlightened, so that I can now easily comprehend a great many Things which before were all Mystery and Riddle.

Hyl. I am glad to find there was nothing in the Accounts I heard of you.

Phil. Pray, what were those?

Hyl. You were represented in last Night's Conversation, as one who maintained the most extravagant Opinion that ever entered into the Mind of Man, to wit, That there is no such Thing as material Substance in the World.

Phil. That there is no such Thing as what Philosophers call Material Substance, I am seriously persuaded: But if I were made to see any thing absurd or sceptical in this, I should then have the same Reason to renounce this, that I imagine I have now to reject the contrary Opinion.

Hyl. What! can any Thing be more fantastical, more repugnant to common Sense, or a more manifest Piece of Scepticism, than to believe there is no such Thing as Matter?

Phil. Softly, good Hylas. What if it should prove, that you, who hold there is, are by virtue of that Opinion a greater Sceptic, and maintain more Paradoxes and Repugnances to common Sense, than I who believe no such Thing?

Hyl. You may as soon persuade me, The Part is greater than the Whole, as that, in order to avoid Absurdity and Scepticism, I should ever be obliged to give up my Opinion in this Point.

Phil. Well then, are you content to admit that Opinion for true, which upon Examination shall appear most agreeable to common Sense, and remote from Scepticism?

Hyl. With all my Heart. Since you are for raising Disputes about the plainest Things in Nature, I am content for once to hear what you have to say.

Phil. Pray, Hylas, what do you mean by a Sceptic?

Hyl. I mean what all Men mean, one that doubts of every Thing.

Phil. He then who entertains no Doubt concerning some particular Point, with regard to that Point cannot be thought a Sceptic.

Hyl. I agree with you.

Phil. Whether doth Doubting consist in embracing the Affirmative or Negative Side of a Question?

Hyl. In neither; for whoever understands English, cannot but know that Doubting signifies a Suspense between both.

Phil. He then that denieth any Point, can no more be said to doubt of it, than he who affirmeth it with the same Degree of Assurance.

Hyl. True.

Phil. And consequently, for such his Denial is no more to be esteemed a Sceptic than the other.

Hyl. I acknowledge it.

Phil. How cometh it to pass then, Hylas, that you pronounce me a Sceptic, because I deny what you affirm, to wit, the Existence of Matter? Since, for aught you can tell, I am as peremptory in my Denial, as you in your Affirmation.

Hyl. Hold, Philonous, I have been a little out in my Definition; but every false Step a Man makes in Discourse is not to be insisted on. I said indeed, that a Sceptic was one who doubted of every Thing; but I should have added, or who denies the Reality and Truth of Things.

Phil. What Things? Do you mean the Principles and Theoremes of Sciences? But these you know are universal intellectual Notions, and consequently independent of Matter; the Denial therefore of this doth not imply the denying them.

Hyl. I grant it. But are there no other Things? What think you of distrusting the Senses, of denying the real Existence of sensible Things, or pretending to know nothing of them. Is not this sufficient to denominate a Man a Sceptic?

Phil. Shall we therefore examine which of us it is that denies the Reality of Sensible Things, or professes the greatest Ignorance of them; since, if I take you rightly, he is to be esteemed the greatest Sceptic?

Hyl. That is what I desire.

Phil. What mean you by Sensible Things?

Hyl. Those Things which are perceived by the Senses. Can you imagine that I mean any thing else?

Phil. Pardon me, Hylas, if I am desirous clearly to apprehend your Notions, since this may much shorten our Inquiry. Suffer me then to ask you this farther Question. Are those Things only perceived by the Senses which are perceived immediately? Or may those Things properly be said to be Sensible, which are perceived mediately, or not without the Intervention of others?

Hyl. I do not sufficiently understand you.

Phil. In reading a Book, what I immediately perceive are the Letters, but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my Mind the notions of God, Virtue, Truth, &c. Now, that the Letters are truly Sensible Things, or perceived by Sense, there is no doubt: But I would know whether you take the Things suggested by them to be so too.

Hyl. No certainly, it were absurd to think God or Virtue Sensible Things, though they may be signified and suggested to the Mind by Sensible Marks, with which they have an arbitrary Connexion.

Phil. It seems then, that by Sensible Things you mean those only which can be perceived immediately by Sense.

Hyl. Right.

Phil. Doth it not follow from this, that though I see one part of the Sky Red, and another Blue, and that my Reason doth thence evidently conclude there must be some Cause of that Diversity of Colours, yet that Cause cannot be said to be a Sensible Thing, or perceived by the Sense of Seeing?

Hyl. It doth.

Phil. In like manner, though I hear Variety of Sounds, yet I cannot be said to hear the Causes of those Sounds.

Hyl. You cannot.

Phil. And when by my Touch I perceive a Thing to be hot and heavy, I cannot say with any Truth or Propriety, that I feel the Cause of its Heat or Weight.

Hyl. To prevent any more Questions of this kind, I tell you once for all, that by Sensible Things I mean those only which are perceived by Sense, and that in truth the Senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately: for they make no Inferences. The deducing therefore of Causes or Occasions from Effects and Appearances, which alone are perceived by Sense, intirely relates to Reason.

Phil. This Point then is agreed between us, That Sensible Things are those only which are immediately perceived by Sense. You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by Sight any thing beside Light, and Colours, and Figures: or by Hearing, any thing but Sounds: by the Palate, any thing beside Tastes: by the Smell, beside Odors: or by the Touch, more than tangible Qualities.

Hyl. We do not.

Phil. It seems therefore, that if you take away all sensible Qualities, there remains nothing sensible.

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. Sensible Things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible Qualities, or Combinations of sensible Qualities.

Hyl. Nothing else.

Phil. Heat then is a sensible Thing.

Hyl. Certainly.

Phil. Doth the Reality of sensible Things consist in being perceived? or, is it something distinct from their being perceived, and that bears no relation to the Mind?

Hyl. To exist is one thing, and to be perceived is another.

Phil. I speak with regard to sensible Things only: And of these I ask, Whether by their real Existence you mean a Subsistence exterior to the Mind, and distinct from their being perceived?

Hyl. I mean a real absolute Being, distinct from, and without any relation to their being perceived.

Phil. Heat therefore, if it be allowed a real Being, must exist without the Mind.

Hyl. It must.

Phil. Tell me, Hylas, is this real Existence equally compatible to all Degrees of Heat, which we perceive: or is there any Reason why we should attribute it to some, and deny it others? And if there be, pray let me know that Reason.

Hyl. Whatever Degree of Heat we perceive by Sense, we may be sure the same exists in the Object that occasions it.

Phil. What, the greatest as well as the least?

Hyl. I tell you, the Reason is plainly the same in respect of both: They are both perceived by Sense; nay, the greater Degree of Heat is more sensibly perceived; and consequently, if there is any Difference, we are more certain of its real Existence than we can be of the Reality of a lesser Degree.

Phil. But is not the most vehement and intense Degree of Heat a very great Pain?

Hyl. No one can deny it.

Phil. And is any unperceiving Thing capable of Pain or Pleasure?

Hyl. No certainly.

Phil. Is your material Substance a senseless Being, or a Being endowed with Sense and Perception?

Hyl. It is senseless, without doubt.

Phil. It cannot therefore be the Subject of Pain.

Hyl. By no means.

Phil. Nor consequently of the greatest Heat perceived by Sense, since you acknowledge this to be no small Pain.

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. What shall we say then of your external Object; is it a material Substance, or no?

Hyl. It is a material Substance with the sensible Qualities inhering in it.

Phil. How then can a great Heat exist in it, since you own it cannot in a material Substance? I desire you would clear this Point.

Hyl. Hold, Philonous. I fear I was out in yielding intense Heat to be a Pain. It should seem rather, that Pain is something distinct from Heat, and the Consequence or Effect of it.

Phil. Upon putting your Hand near the Fire, do you perceive one simple uniform Sensation, or two distinct Sensations?

Hyl. But one simple Sensation.

Phil. Is not the Heat immediately perceived?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And the Pain?

Hyl. True.

Phil. Seeing therefore they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the Fire affects you only with one simple, or uncompounded Idea, it follows that this same simple Idea is both the intense Heat immediately perceived, and the Pain; and consequently, that the intense Heat immediately perceived, is nothing distinct from a particular sort of Pain.

Hyl. It seems so.

Phil. Again, try in your Thoughts, Hylas, if you can conceive a vehement Sensation to be without Pain, or Pleasure.

Hyl. I cannot.

Phil. Or can you frame to yourself an Idea of sensible Pain or Pleasure in general, abstracted from every particular Idea of Heat, Cold, Tastes, Smells? &c.

Hyl. I do not find that I can.

Phil. Doth it not therefore follow, that sensible Pain is nothing distinct from those Sensations or Ideas, in an intense Degree?

Hyl. It is undeniable; and to speak the Truth, I begin to suspect a very great Heat cannot exist but in a Mind perceiving it.

Phil. What! are you then in that Sceptical State of Suspense, between Affirming and Denying?

Hyl. I think I may be positive in the Point. A very violent and painful Heat cannot exist without the Mind.

Phil. It hath not therefore, according to you, any real Being.

Hyl. I own it.

Phil. Is it therefore certain, that there is no body in Nature really hot?

Hyl. I have not denied there is any real Heat in Bodies. I only say, there is no such thing as an intense real Heat.

Phil. But did you not say before, that all Degrees of Heat were equally real: or if there was any difference, that the Greater were more undoubtedly real than the Lesser?

Hyl. True: But it was, because I did not then consider the Ground there is for distinguishing between them, which I now plainly see. And it is this: Because intense Heat is nothing else but a particular kind of painful Sensation; and Pain cannot exist but in a perceiving Being; it follows

that no intense Heat can really exist in an unperceiving corporeal Substance. But this is no Reason why we should deny Heat in an inferior Degree to exist in such a Substance.

Phil. But how shall we be able to discern those Degrees of Heat which exist only in the Mind, from those which exist without it?

Hyl. That is no difficult matter. You know, the least Pain cannot exist unperceived; whatever therefore Degree of Heat is a Pain, exists only in the Mind. But as for all other Degrees of Heat, nothing obliges us to think the same of them.

Phil. I think you granted before, that no unperceiving Being was capable of Pleasure, any more than of Pain.

Hyl. I did.

Phil. And is not Warmth, or a more gentle Degree of Heat than what causes Uneasiness, a Pleasure?

Hyl. What then?

Phil. Consequently it cannot exist without the Mind in any unperceiving Substance, or Body.

Hyl. So it seems.

Phil. Since therefore, as well as those Degrees of Heat that are not painful, as those that are, can exist only in a Thinking Substance; may we not conclude that external Bodies are absolutely incapable of any Degree of Heat whatsoever?

Hyl. On second Thoughts, I do not think it so evident that Warmth is a Pleasure, as that a great Degree of Heat is a Pain.

Phil. I do not pretend that Warmth is as great a Pleasure as Heat is a Pain. But if you grant it to be even a small Pleasure, it serves to make good my Conclusion.

Hyl. I could rather call it an Indolence. It seems to be nothing more than a Privation of both Pain and Pleasure. And that such a Quality or State as this may agree to an unthinking Substance, I hope you will not deny.

Phil. If you are resolved to maintain that Warmth, or a gentle Degree of Heat, is no Pleasure, I know not how to convince you otherwise, than by appealing to your own Sense. But what think you of Cold?

Hyl. The same that I do of Heat. An intense Degree of Cold is a Pain; for to feel a very great Cold, is to perceive a great Uneasiness: It cannot therefore exist without the Mind; but a lesser Degree of Cold may, as well as a lesser Degree of Heat.

Phil. Those Bodies therefore, upon whose Application to our own, we perceive a moderate Degree of Heat, must be concluded to have a moderate Degree of Heat or Warmth in them: And those, upon whose Application we feel a like Degree of Cold, must be thought to have Cold in them.

Hyl. They must.

Phil. Can any Doctrine be true that necessarily leads a Man into an Absurdity?

Hyl. Without doubt it cannot.

Phil. Is it not an Absurdity to think that the same thing should be at the same time both cold and warm?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Suppose now one of your Hands hot, and the other cold, and that they are both at once put into the same Vessel of Water, in an intermediate State; will not the Water seem cold to one Hand, and warm to the other?

Hyl. It will.

Phil. Ought we not therefore by your Principles to conclude, it is really both cold and warm at the same time, that is, according to your own Concession, to believe an Absurdity.

Hyl. I confess it seems so.

Phil. Consequently, the Principles themselves are false, since you have granted that no true Principle leads to an Absurdity.

Hyl. But after all, can any thing be more absurd than to say, there is no Heat in the Fire?

Phil. To make the Point still clearer; tell me, whether in two Cases exactly alike, we ought not to make the same Judgment?

Hyl. We ought.

Phil. When a Pin pricks your Finger, doth it not rend and divide the Fibres of your Flesh?

Hyl. It doth.

Phil. And when a Coal burns your Finger, doth it any more?

Hyl. It doth not.

Phil. Since therefore you neither judge the Sensation itself occasioned by the Pin, nor any thing like it to be in the Pin; you should not, conformably to what you have now granted, judge the Sensation occasioned by the Fire, or any thing like it, to be in the Fire.

Hyl. Well, since it must be so, I am content to yield this Point, and acknowledge, that Heat and Cold are only Sensations existing in our Minds: But there still remain Qualities enough to secure the Reality of external Things.

Phil. But what will you say, Hylas, if it shall appear that the Case is the same with regard to all other sensible Qualities, and that they can no more be supposed to exist without the Mind, than Heat or Cold?

Hyl. Then indeed you will have done something to the purpose; but that is what I despair of seeing proved.

Phil. Let us examine them in order. What think you of Tastes, do they exist without the Mind, or no?

Hyl. Can any Man in his Senses doubt whether Sugar is sweet, or Wormwood bitter?

Phil. Inform me, Hylas. Is a sweet Taste a particular kind of Pleasure or pleasant Sensation, or is it not?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And is not Bitterness some kind of Uneasiness or Pain?

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. If therefore Sugar and Wormwood are unthinking corporeal Substances existing without the Mind, how can Sweetness and Bitterness, that is, Pleasure and Pain, agree to them?

Hyl. Hold, Philonous, I now see what it was deluded me all this time. You asked whether Heat and Cold, Sweetness and Bitterness, were not particular Sorts of Pleasure and Pain; to which I answered simply, that they were. Whereas I should have thus distinguished: Those Qualities, as perceived by us, are Pleasures or Pains, but not as existing in the external Objects. We must not therefore conclude absolutely, that there is no Heat in the Fire, or Sweetness in the Sugar, but only that Heat or Sweetness, as perceived by us, are not in the Fire or Sugar. What say you to this?

Phil. I say it is nothing to the Purpose. Our Discourse proceeded altogether concerning Sensible Things, which you defined to be the Things we immediately perceive by our Senses. Whatever other Qualities therefore you speak of, as distinct from these, I know nothing of them, neither do they at all belong to the Point in Dispute. You may indeed pretend to have discovered certain Qualities which you do not perceive, and assert those insensible Qualities exist in Fire and Sugar. But what Use can be made of this to your present Purpose, I am at a loss to conceive. Tell me then once more, do you acknowledge that Heat and Cold, Sweetness and Bitterness, (meaning those Qualities which are perceived by the Senses) do not exist without the Mind?

Hyl. I see it is to no purpose to hold out, so I give up the Cause as to those mentioned Qualities. Though I profess it sounds odly, to say that Sugar is not sweet.

Phil. But for your farther Satisfaction, take this along with you: That which at other times seems sweet, shall to a distempered Palate appear bitter. And nothing can be plainer, than that divers Persons perceive different Tastes in the same Food, since that which one Man delights in, another abhors. And how could this be, if the Taste was something really inherent in the Food?

Hyl. I acknowledge I know not how.

Phil. In the next place, Odours are to be considered. And with regard to these, I would fain know, whether what hath been said of Tastes doth not exactly agree to them? Are they not so many pleasing or displeasing Sensations?

Hyl. They are.

Phil. Can you then conceive it possible that they should exist in an unperceiving Thing?

Hyl. I cannot.

Phil. Or can you imagine, that Filth and Ordure affect those brute Animals that feed on them out of Choice, with the same Smells which we perceive in them?