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**Gulliver's Travels into several remote regions of the
world**

Swift, Jonathan

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Chapter XII

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CHAPTER XII.

The Author's veracity. His design in publishing this work. His censure of those travellers who swerve from the truth. The Author clears himself from any sinister end in writing. An objection answered. The method of planting colonies. His native country commended. The right of the crown to those countries described by the Author is justified. The difficulty of conquering them. The Author takes his last leave of the reader; proposeth his manner of living for the future; gives good advice; and concludeth.

THUS, gentle reader, I have given thee a faithful history of my travels for sixteen years and above seven months; wherein I have not been so studious of ornament as of truth. I could, perhaps, like others, have astonished thee with strange improbable tales; but I rather chose to relate plain *matter of fact* in the simplest manner and style, because my principal design was to inform, and not to amuse thee.

It is easy for us who travel into remote countries, which are seldom visited by Englishmen or other Europeans, to form descriptions of wonderful animals both at sea and land: whereas a traveller's chief aim should be to make men wiser and better, and to improve their minds by the bad, as well as good example, of what they deliver concerning foreign places.

I could heartily wish a law was enacted, that every traveller, before he were permitted to publish his voyages, should be obliged to make oath before the

Lord High Chancellor that all he intended to print was absolutely true to the best of his knowledge ; for then the world would no longer be deceived, as it usually is ; while some writers, to make their works pass the better upon the public, impose the grossest falsities on the unwary reader. I have perused several books of travels with great delight in my younger days ; but having since gone over most parts of the globe, and been able to contradict many fabulous accounts, from my own observation, it hath given me a great disgust against this part of reading, and some indignation to see the credulity of mankind so imprudently abused. Therefore, since my acquaintance were pleased to think my poor endeavours might not be unacceptable to my country, I imposed on myself, as a maxim never to be swerved from, that I would *strictly adhere to the truth* ; neither, indeed, can I be ever under the least temptation to vary from it while I retain in my mind the lectures and example of my noble master and the other illustrious Houyhnhnms of whom I had so long the honour to be an humble hearer.

—Nec si miserum fortuna Sinonem
Finxit, vanum etiam, mendacemque improba finget.

I know very well how little reputation is to be got by writings which require neither genius nor learning, nor indeed any other talent, except a good memory or an exact *journal*. I know likewise that writers of travels, like *dictionary-makers*, are sunk into oblivion

by the weight and bulk of those who come last, and therefore lie uppermost. And it is highly probable that such travellers who shall hereafter visit the countries described in this work of mine may, by detecting my errors (if there be any), and adding many new discoveries of their own, jostle me out of vogue, and stand in my place, making the world forget that I ever was an author. This, indeed, would be too great a mortification if I wrote for fame; but as my sole intention was the *public good*, I cannot be altogether disappointed. For who can read of the virtues I have mentioned in the glorious Houyhnhnms without being ashamed of his own vices, when he considers himself as the reasoning, governing animal of his country? I shall say nothing of those remote nations where *yahoos* preside; amongst which the least corrupted are the Brobdingnagians, whose wise maxims in morality and government it would be our happiness to observe. But I forbear descanting farther, and rather leave the judicious reader to his own remarks and applications.

I am not a little pleased that this work of mine can possibly meet with no censurers; for what objections can be made against a writer who relates only *plain facts*, that happened in such distant countries, where we have not the least interest with respect either to trade or negotiations? I have carefully avoided every fault with which common writers of travels are often too justly charged. Besides, I meddle not the least with any *party*, but write without passion, prejudice, or ill-will against

any man or number of men whatsoever. I write for the noblest end, to inform and instruct mankind, over whom I may, without breach of modesty, pretend to some superiority, from the advantages I received by conversing so long among the most accomplished Houyhnhnms. I write without any view towards profit or praise. I never suffer a word to pass that may look like reflection, or possibly give the least offence, even to those who are most ready to take it. So that I hope I may with justice pronounce myself an author perfectly blameless, against whom the tribes of answerers, considerers, observers, reflectors, detectors, remarkers, will never be able to find matter for exercising their talents.

I confess it was whispered to me that I was bound in duty, as a subject of England, to have given in a memorial to a secretary of state, at my first coming over, because whatever lands are discovered by a subject belong to the crown. But I doubt whether our conquests in the countries I treat of would be as easy as those of Ferdinando Cortez over the naked Americans. The Lilliputians, I think, are hardly worth the charge of a fleet and army to reduce them; and I question whether it might be prudent or safe to attempt the Brobdingnagians; or whether an English army would be much at their ease with the flying island over their heads. The Houyhnhnms, indeed, appear not to be so well prepared for war, a science to which they are perfect strangers, and especially against missive weapons. However, supposing myself to be a minister of state,

I could never give my advice for invading them. Their prudence, unanimity, unacquaintedness with fear, and their love of their country, would amply supply all defects in the military art. Imagine twenty thousand of them breaking into the midst of an European army, confounding the ranks, overturning the carriages, battering the warriors' faces into mummy, by terrible yerks from their hinder hoofs; for they would well deserve the character given to Augustus: *Recalcitrat undique tutus*. But instead of proposals for conquering that magnanimous nation, I rather wish they were in a capacity, or disposition, to send a sufficient number of their inhabitants for civilizing Europe, by teaching us the first principles of honour, justice, truth, temperance, public spirit, fortitude, chastity, friendship, benevolence, and fidelity: The *names* of all which virtues are still retained among us in most languages, and are to be met with in modern, as well as ancient authors; which I am able to assert from my own small reading.

But I had another reason, which made me less forward to enlarge his Majesty's dominions by my discoveries. To say the truth, I had conceived a few scruples with relation to the distributive justice of princes upon those occasions. For instance, a crew of pirates are driven by storm, they know not whither; at length a boy discovers land from the topmast; they go on shore to rob and plunder; they see a harmless people, are entertained with kindness; they give the country a new name; they take formal possession of it for their king; they set up a rotten plank or a stone

for a memorial ; they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more by force for a sample, return home, and get their pardon. Here commences a new dominion, acquired with a title by *divine right*. Ships are sent with the first opportunity ; the natives driven out or destroyed ; their princes tortured to discover their gold ; a free licence given to all acts of inhumanity and lust ; the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants. And this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition, is a *modern colony*, sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous people.

But this description, I confess, doth by no means affect the British nation, who may be an example to the whole world, for their wisdom, care, and justice in planting colonies ; their liberal endowments for the advancement of religion and learning ; their choice of devout and able pastors to propagate *Christianity* ; their caution in stocking their provinces with people of sober lives and conversations, from this the mother kingdom ; their strict regard to the distribution of justice, in supplying the civil administration through all their colonies with officers of the greatest abilities, utter strangers to corruption ; and, to crown all, by sending the most vigilant and virtuous governors, who have no other views than the happiness of the people over whom they preside, and the honour of the King their master.

But as those countries which I have described do not appear to have any desire of being conquered, and enslaved, murdered, or driven out by colonies ; nor

abound either in gold, silver, sugar, or tobacco ; I did humbly conceive they were by no means proper objects of our zeal, our valour, or our interest. However, if those whom it more concerns think fit to be of another opinion, I am ready to depose, when I shall be lawfully called, that no European did ever visit these countries before me (I mean if the inhabitants ought to be believed), unless a dispute may arise concerning the two *yahoos*, said to have been seen many ages ago upon a mountain in Houyhnhnm-land.

But as to the formality of taking possession in my sovereign's name, it never came once into my thoughts ; and if it had, yet, as my affairs then stood, I should perhaps, in point of prudence and self-preservation, have put it off to a better opportunity.

Having thus answered the only objection that can ever be raised against me as a traveller, I here take a final leave of all my courteous readers, and return to enjoy my own speculations in my little garden at Redriff ; to apply those excellent lessons of virtue which I learned among the Houyhnhnms ; to instruct the *yahoos* of my own family, as far as I shall find them docible animals ; to behold my figure often in a glass, and thus, if possible, habituate myself in time to tolerate the sight of a human creature ; to lament the brutality of Houyhnhnms in my own country, but always treat their persons with respect, for the sake of my noble master, his family, his friends, and the whole Houyhnhnm race, whom these of ours have the honour to resemble in all their lineaments, however their intellectuals came to degenerate.

I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me, at the farthest end of a long table, and to answer (but with the utmost brevity) the few questions I asked her. And although it be hard for a man late in life to remove old habits, I am not altogether out of hopes, in some time, to suffer a neighbour *yahoo* in my company, without the apprehensions I am yet under of his teeth or his claws.

My reconcilment to the *yahoo*-kind in general might not be so difficult if they would be content with those vices and follies only which Nature hath entituled them to. I am not in the least provoked at the sight of a lawyer, a pickpocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a physician, an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things. But when I behold a lump of deformity and diseases both in body and mind smitten with *pride*, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience; neither shall I be ever able to comprehend how such an animal and such a vice could tally together. The wise and virtuous Houyhnhnms, who abound in all excellencies that can adorn a rational creature, have no name for this vice in their language, which hath no terms to express anything that is evil, except those whereby they describe the detestable qualities of their *yahoos*, among which they were not able to distinguish this of pride, for want of thoroughly understanding human nature as it showeth itself in other countries where that animal presides; but I, who had more experience,

could plainly observe some rudiments of it among the wild *yahoos*.

But the Houyhnhnms, who live under the government of Reason, are no more proud of the good qualities they possess than I should be for not wanting a leg or an arm, which no man in his wits would boast of, although he must be miserable without them. I dwell the longer upon this subject, from the desire I have to make the society of an English *yahoo* by any means not insupportable; and therefore I here entreat those who have any tincture of this absurd vice of pride that they will not presume to come in my sight.

THE END.