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

Swift, Jonathan

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Chapter VIII

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and hide, using many antic gestures and grimaces, and when any of the males advanced would slowly retire, looking often back, and, with a counterfeit show of fear, run off into some place, where she knew the male would follow her.

At other times, if a female stranger came among them, three or four of her own sex would get about her, and stare, and chatter, and grin, and then turn off with gestures that seemed to express contempt and disdain.

Perhaps my master might refine a little on these speculations, which he had drawn from what he had observed himself, or had been told him by others: however, I could not reflect without some amazement and much sorrow that the rudiments of *coquetry* should have place by instinct in womankind.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Author relates several particulars of the Yahoos. The great virtues of the Houyhnhnms. The education and exercise of their youth. Their general assembly.

As I ought to have understood human nature much better than I supposed it possible for my master to do, so it was easy to apply the character he gave of the *yahoos* to myself and my countrymen: and I believed I could yet make farther discoveries from my own observation. I therefore often begged

his honour to let me go among the herds of *yahoos* in the neighbourhood, to which he always very graciously consented, being perfectly convinced that the hatred I bore these brutes would never suffer me to be corrupted by them: and his honour ordered one of his servants, a strong sorrel nag, very honest and good-natured, to be my guard, without whose protection I durst not undertake such adventures. For I have already told the reader how much I was pestered by those odious animals upon my first arrival. And I afterwards failed very narrowly, three or four times, of falling into their clutches, when I happened to stray to any distance without my hanger. And I have reason to believe they had some imagination that I was of their own species, which I often assisted myself, by stripping up my sleeves and showing my naked arms and breast in their sight, when my protector was with me. At which times they would approach as near as they durst, and imitate my actions after the manner of monkeys, but ever with great signs of hatred; as a tame *jackdaw*, with cap and stockings, is always persecuted by the wild ones, when he happens to be got among them.

They are prodigiously nimble from their infancy; however, I once caught a young male of three years old, and endeavoured by all marks of tenderness to make it quiet; but the little imp fell a squalling, and scratching, and biting, with such violence, that I was forced to let it go; and it was high time, for a whole troop of old ones came about us at the noise; but finding the cub was safe (for away it ran), and

my sorrel nag being by, they durst not venture near us.

By what I could discover, the *yahoos* appear to be the most unteachable of all animals, their capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry burdens. Yet I am of opinion this defect ariseth chiefly from a perverse, restive disposition; for they are cunning, malicious, treacherous, and revengeful. They are strong and hardy, but of a cowardly spirit; and, by consequence, insolent, abject, and cruel. It is observed that the *red-haired* of both sexes are more mischievous than the rest, whom yet they much exceed in strength and activity.

The Houyhnhnms keep the *yahoos* for present use in huts not far from the house; but the rest are sent abroad to certain fields, where they dig up roots, eat several kinds of herbs, and search about for carrion, or sometimes catch *weasels* and *luhimuh* (a sort of *wild rat*), which they greedily devour. Nature hath taught them to dig deep holes with their nails on the side of a rising ground, wherein they lie by themselves; only the kennels of the females are larger, sufficient to hold two or three cubs.

They swim from their infancy like frogs, and are able to continue long under water, where they often take fish, which the females carry home to their young. And upon this occasion I hope the reader will pardon my relating an odd adventure.

Being one day abroad with my protector, the sorrel nag, and the weather exceeding hot, I entreated him to let me bathe in a river that was near. He con-

sented, and I immediately stripped myself stark naked, and went down softly into the stream. It happened that a young *yahoo*, standing behind a bank, saw the whole proceeding, and came ruuning with all speed and leaped into the water within five yards of the place where I bathed. I was never in my life so terribly frightened; the nag was grazing at some distance, not suspecting any harm. I roared as loud as I could, and the nag came galloping towards me: whereupon the *yahoo* leaped upon the opposite bank, and stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my clothes.

Having lived three years in this country, the reader, I suppose, will expect that I should, like other travellers, give him some account of the manners and customs of its inhabitants, which it was indeed my principal study to learn.

As these noble Houyhnhnms are endued by Nature with a general disposition to all virtues, and have no conception or ideas of what is evil in a rational creature; so their grand maxim is to cultivate *reason*, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is *reason* among them a point problematical as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of a question; but strikes you with immediate conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by passion and interest. I remember it was with extreme difficulty that I could bring my master to understand the meaning of the word *opinion*, or how a point could be disputable; because *reason* taught us to affirm or deny only where

we are certain ; and beyond our knowledge we cannot do either. So that controversies, wranglings, disputes, and positiveness, in false or dubious propositions, are evils unknown among the Houyhnhnms. In the like manner, when I used to explain to him our several systems of *natural philosophy*, he would laugh, that a creature pretending to *reason* should value itself upon the knowledge of other people's conjectures, and in things where that knowledge, if it were certain, could be of no use ; wherein he agreed entirely with the sentiments of Socrates, as Plato delivers them ; which I mention as the highest honour I can do that prince of philosophers. I have often since reflected what destruction such a doctrine would make in the libraries of Europe, and how many paths to fame would be then shut up in the learned world.

Friendship and *benevolence* are the two principal virtues among the Houyhnhnms ; and these not confined to particular objects, but universal to the whole race. For a stranger from the remotest parts is equally treated with the nearest neighbour ; and, wherever he goes, looks upon himself as at home. They preserve *decency* and *civility* in the highest degrees ; but are altogether ignorant of *ceremony*. They have no fondness for their colts or foals ; but the care they take in educating them proceedeth entirely from the dictates of *reason*. And I observed my master to show the same affection to his neighbour's issue that he had for his own. They will have it that *nature* teaches them to love the whole species, and it is

reason only that maketh a distinction of persons where there is a superior degree of virtue.

In their marriages they are exactly careful to choose such colours as will not make any disagreeable mixture. *Strength* is chiefly valued in the male, and *comeliness* in the female, to preserve the race from degenerating; for where a female happens to excel in *strength*, a consort is chosen with regard to *comeliness*.

Courtship, love, presents, jointures, settlements have no place in their thoughts, or terms whereby to express them in their language. The young couple meet merely because it is the determination of their parents and friends: it is what they see done every day, and they look upon it as one of the necessary actions of a reasonable being. And the married pair pass their lives with the same friendship and mutual benevolence that they bear to others of the same species who come in their way, without jealousy, fondness, quarrelling, or discontent.

In educating the youth of both sexes, their method is admirable, and highly deserveth our imitation. These are not suffered to taste a grain of *oats*, except upon certain days, till eighteen years old, nor *milk* but very rarely; and in summer they graze two hours in the morning, and as many in the evening, which their parents likewise observe; but the servants are not allowed above half that time, and a great part of their grass is brought home, which they eat at the most convenient hours, when they can be best spared from work.

Temperance, industry, exercise, and cleanliness are

the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes; and my master thought it monstrous in us to give the females a different kind of education from the males, except in some articles of domestic management; whereby, as he truly observed, one-half of our natives were good for nothing; and to trust the care of our children to such useless animals, he said, was yet a greater instance of brutality.

But the Houyhnhnms train up their youth to strength, speed, and hardiness, by exercising them in running races up and down steep hills, and over hard stony ground: and when they are all in a sweat they are ordered to leap over head and ears into a pond or river. Four times a year the youth of a certain district meet to show their proficiency in running and leaping, and other feats of strength and agility: where the victor is rewarded with a song in his or her praise. On this festival the servants drive a herd of *yahoos* into the field, laden with hay, and oats, and milk, for a repast to the Houyhnhnms; after which these brutes are immediately driven back again, for fear of being noisome to the assembly.

Every fourth year, at the *vernal equinox*, there is a representative council of the whole nation, which meets in a plain about twenty miles from our house, and continueth about five or six days. Here they inquire into the state and condition of the several districts: Whether they abound or be deficient in hay or oats, or cows, or *yahoos*? and wherever there is any want (which is but seldom) it is immediately supplied by unanimous consent and contribution.