

THE STORY OF THE LEARNED PIG

As related by himself to the Author
of the following letter.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to be very intimate with the man who shews the learned pig at Sadler's Wells. As I was one day sitting in his parlour, and no person in the house but myself, I was alarmed by a gentle rap at the door, which I immediately opened, and discovered the learned pig erect on his hinder legs, and bowing very gracefully with his head and body. He then entered the room with a majestic stride, apologizing for his intrusion.

As I believe in the Pythagorean stem, I felt no uncommon emotions at hearing a brute speak; and having desired him to be seated, sat down by him, and begged him to explain the motive of his visit; when he gave me the following account of himself.

“Why I have singled you out to tell my story to, which is no less astonishing than true, shall in the sequel be declared: and as I promise on my part in no instance to depart from the truth, neither suppressing my crimes, not attempting to palliate them, by dividing the guilt with others; so I shall hope (whenever that shall happen) for a candid relation of it from you; that, when I am gone, the world may not be imposed on by fallacy and misrepresentation.

“I will not take upon me to give you any account of the origin of spirits. All I have conversed with on this subject, for two thousand years past, are, as to this point, equally in the dark with myself. Suffice it then to say, that the first sense I had of existence was in the founder of Rome.

“Before I proceed, however, it may not be improper to inform you, that about six hundred years ago, I fell in with Achilles on the Alpine mountains in the character of a wolf, myself being then no more than a filly grasshopper. He accosted me as I was skipping by him, and swore he had known me a soldier in the Grecian army, at the siege of Troy, and that I had often distinguished myself by his side, although he could not, at so great a distance of time, recollect the name I went by. Three hours after this, I was accosted by Hector, in an animal of the same species, who affirmed he had known me a soldier in the Trojan army; and that I was within the walls during the whole siege. I did not, indeed, contradict either of them, for very good reasons; though nothing can be more clear than that *one* of them lied at *least*. But, to proceed-----

“In Romulus, as I before observed, I was first sensible of existence. I shall pass over the robberies, murders, rapes, and conquests, I achieved in *that* mortality, as my story has been told by so many great men of all ages but as the world has been left in the dark as to the manner of my death, it will not, I presume, be unacceptable to you, to hear it from myself.

“Know, then, Sir, that Numa Pompilius was the author of it! His great reputation, indeed, for virtue and fear of the gods, made him the *last* to be suspected of so foul a deed: but these are but *too often* disguises under which designing men perpetuate the blackest crimes.

“My victories over the neighbouring nations, and the disposal I made of their conquered territory, filling the senate with suspicions that I entertained designs against their power; it was secretly agreed to get rid of me with all dispatch, and then give out, that I had flown into the skies, and taken my seat amongst the gods. You are not ignorant that they afterwards canonized me.

Numa, who was pointed out as the fittest person to execute this business, was privately sent from Cures, where he then resided, and undertook to be my executioner upon conditions that afterwards raised him to the royalty. He found means to introduce himself into my chamber, at the dead hour of night, and, whilst I was sleeping, stabbed me with a dagger to the heart. My body was then secretly conveyed away, and buried in that spot on which the Capitol was afterwards erected by Tarquin the proud; and in digging the foundations of which, my head was found, near two hundred years after my interment, *whole and incorrupt*. Thus was it ordained, that from the same head that planned Rome’s foundation should be predicted her future glory and dominion over the whole world.

“No sooner was I released from this first incumbrance of flesh and blood, than I began to wander in search of a new habitation; and till the time I informed the horse, that so often carried Numa’s successor to battle, had successively passed through, a jack-ass, a monkey, a bear, and a boar-cat. In the beforementioned horse, I was witness to the famous combat between the Horatii and the Curiatii, and the fatal tragedy that succeeded it; and afterwards distinguished myself in many great and bloody battles, where I oftener deserved the triumph than my rider. ‘Tis true, no historian has thought proper to give my achievements to the world; yet I believe I can say without vanity, that they fall nothing short of *those* which have been so *pompously* recorded. I was at length killed in a battle with the Sabines, and from that period till the world saw the Infant Brutus, lived purely *intelligent* and unencumbered with flesh and blood, exploring with the spirits of the slain into every part of the vast universe—a privilege only allowed those who have bravely died fighting for their country.

“My second union with the human body brings me to a period of my story where I shall be fully able to elucidate a point, about which the learned world have hitherto been much puzzled and divided. It is touching the exact time the spirit is infused into the body. By some it is imagined to be at the very moment of conception. By others when the mater quickens, and that it is the foul itself that gives vital motion: but both are equally mistaken with those who believe there are no fouls at all. This junction, Sir, never happens till the child is fairly born into the world; and the spirit designed for its information is for some minutes before anxiously waiting its forth coming. It would be offering an indignity to a supernatural essence to suppose that such an union *could* take place before. Further it is certain that all intelligence ceases from the moment of this union (except in case of death) till what is called reason begins to dawn, which, in fact, is

no more than the exertions of the spirit emerging out of long inaction. With regard to brutes, indeed, it is widely different, the fowls entry into them not being confined to any determinate time.

“There are also various degrees of spirits, some possessing a much greater share of subtilty and intelligence than others. The *first* order have their residence in the brain, whither they are darted like a ray shot from the supreme light. The next order have their seat in the gall: others, according to their subtilty, in the various parts of the intestines, and then downwards even to the very heels. Hence arises that vast disparity to visible in the intellects and passions of men. I forbear to mention women, because they have no fowls; the Supreme having ordained them *merely* as engines or tools for men to work with in the generation of their species. And if at any time it has appeared that they have discovered symptoms of rationality (which, not to wrong them, is but seldom), they are in fact no more than reflected or borrowed of the nobler than sex, in the same manner that the moon, which is an opaque body, borrows the light he give from the grand luminary, the sun. It can, therefore, with no more propriety be said, that reason is *inherent* in a woman, than that light is inherent in the moon.

There still remains another point to be cleared up, no less a *puzzle* to the learned than the former, and which I forgot to mention in the proper place. That is, the precise time foul quits the body after death, or, to speak more properly, after the apparent cessation of vital motion. I shall solve it in two words. This separation, Sir, never happens till the spirit is absolutely driven out by putrefaction; and then is frequently compelled to take up her residence in one of those very maggots that have been engendered by the body’s corruption. Sometimes, too, it happens that immediately after death the powers of the soul are wholly suspended, even for many years; and, when restored, she can give no account of what is become of her during the long interval. I have often heard this point discussed by many, who in their life-times had been reckoned great Theologians; but all their enquiries only served to involve the question (if possible) in greater obscurity.

“You will recollect, Sir, that I am now at that period of my story in which I informed the renowned Brutus. To relate the acts of my youth were endless; and I will confess, that from my starting in public life till the article of my death, history has dealt pretty fairly with me. The shades, however, that some painters have given my picture, have so disguised it, that I have not been able to trace the least resemblance between it and the original. And here I cannot help indulging some reflections on the weakness and folly of mankind in their judgements of *that* act which stamp me with the name of patriot, and handed down my fame to succeeding ages with increasing luster. Believe me, Sir, that *not* Rome’s liberty, not love of my country, but *towering ambition* pointed the dagger to Caesar’s heart! and the dread and shame of falling a captive to those I would have enslaved, and *not* greatness of soul, afterwards plunged me on my own sword! Patriotism is defined, a love of our own country, independent of all private considerations. I shall not dispute the definition; but I greatly question whether in reality such a thing exists. Great men are pleased with the whistling of a name, and, without taking the trouble to examine, fancy themselves in effect what the phantom, popular applause, says they are.

But, let them seriously consult their interior, and they will not fail to discover the *grand* spring that moves all their actions. Think you, Sir, was Catiline a less honest man than C-----m? He that built the dome of Ephesus, and he that set it in flames, were both but driving at the same end, though by different ways; and few there are, I believe, amongst those called patriots, could they raise their fortunes or fame on the ruins of an empire, but would view the general wreck without a pang. In short, Sir, mankind err in nothing more grossly than in judging of the motives of extraordinary actions, however laudable and praise-worthy in themselves in relation to the good they bring to society.

“From the illustrious body of Brutus I was quickly impelled into that of a dog belonging to a Roman citizen; and so I became the fawning attendant of the man I had vainly hoped to have made my abject slave. I endeavoured, however, to make a virtue of necessity, and reconcile myself to my fate: but one day having unfortunately bit his only son; who had pulled me a little roughly by the tail, I was sentenced to hanged; and so received that death as a dog, I had most richly deserved as a man.

“I was now doomed to inhabit the bodies of small, short-lived animals, ‘till a certain period at the beginning of the 16th century; and, during that long interval, may be truly said to have lived and dies the prey of anxiety, disappointment grief, pain, despair, and whatever can contribute to fill up the measure of perfect misery. In short, I had passed through scorpions, lizards, ants, worms, and almost every species of insect and small reptile in all parts of the terraqueous globe. Were I to give you a circumstantial account of my connexions, deaths, fatigues, escapes, and the various incidents of so many ages passed in that minute part of the creation, I could, no doubt, find matter for the entertainment of many days: but I should only consider this as an abuse of your patience, though I might be warranted by many great examples.

“My last state of existence amongst these little creatures was a buzzing fly: but that was of short duration; for in less than a week I got entangled in a spider’s web, from whence I was taken by a boy, who thrust a pin through my body, and I soon after expired in the greatest agonies.

“Hence may be inferred the expediency of carefully inculcating in the minds of children a tenderness and compassion for the most minute animals, since, in exercising cruelties on them so very common, they may be giving the torture to a Socrates or a Plato.

“I am now come to the aera mentioned above, when I passed into the body of a black cat, and was esteemed the greatest beauty of that kind. I was the property of an old lady who resided at a small village near Preston in Lancashire, and by her was treated with so much kindness, that, could I have forgot what I was, I might have been happy.

“As there is something singular in the fate of this best of women, I will briefly relate her history; though indeed the latter part of it is so interwoven with my own, that I could not with propriety pass it over.

“this lady, Sir, was the widow of an officer who fled to France in the reign of Richard the Third, and returned with Henry Earl of Richmond when he came back to dispute his right to the crown with the sword, but was unfortunately killed at the decisive battle of Bosworth. A very uncommon affection had subsisted between this couple; insomuch that my mistress after his decease resolved to seclude herself from every fence that could revive the tenderness of her dead husband. To this end she retired, with what she had saved from the wreck of his fortune in the tyranny of Richard, to the little village where we now resided. Here she lived a great number of years a lonely, solitary life, having never formed any connection whatever, except with one woman, who died some time after I knew her. Her body was worn with age and an abstemious life, and her whole countenance expressed something that conveyed the idea of unutterable grief. Indeed, Sir, I will confess to you, that I have been often tempted to believe this woman differed from the rest of her sex, and possessed a soul in its nature as far above the generality of spirits, as she certainly excelled the generality of the human kind.

“Returning one evening from an excursion I had made in the fields, I found my mistress with her friend in great distress of mind and drowned in tears. From what passed as I entered the room, I perceived she had been relating the history of her life; and I could not but lament my absence at the recital of what I had so long ardently wished to know. She had got as far as where she took leave of her husband previous to the battle in which he fell. After pausing some minutes, to give vent to her tears, she went on: ---- ‘When the fight was over, said she, I instantly flew to the fence of action, and amongst the dead and dying wildly fought for my dear husband. One of the soldiers who was attending a wounded man, observing my phrensy and compassionating my sufferings, humanely offered to conduct me where he thought I might learn his fate. I was just turning to follow him, when casting my eyes amidst a heap of slain, I there beheld the dear object of my wishes weltering in his gore! Oh, my dear friend, my feelings in that moment bid defiance to all description! Grown frantic with horror, I eagerly prest through blood and slaughter to where he lay, and my trembling limbs refusing longer to support me, I sunk down upon his mangled body. The principles of life were not yet extinct; but the cold hand of death was strong upon him. He wishfully cast his languid eyes upon me, and these last words fell in dying accents from his faltering tongue: “O, my dear, my much-loved Louisa!----but yesterday I fondly reckoned on many, many promised years of bliss: and this hour, which I vainly hoped had ended all my toils, and given me the quiet possession of you, must be the last my longing eyes shall ever behold you! How empty and fleeting is all human happiness, since we cannot insure ourselves one hour’s continuance of it?” Here his speech failed him.----He fixed his eyes upon me, and his pallid lips still continued to move as if they would utter some words of comfort to me. I fondly pressed him to my heaving breast; but, alas! I found no return of the warm embrace. My heart was rent with unspeakable anguish; I swooned away upon his bleeding bosom. The spectators of this scene of woe conveyed me to the nearest house, where every attention was shewn me that my unhappy condition required. I remained till the following day in a state of almost total insensibility; and when my reason was restored, it was but to shew me the depth of my misery. In the afternoon of that same day, I received a visit of condolence from several of the king’s officers, who remained on the spot to assist at the obsequies of those who had fallen. My husband was interred in the

evening, with many others, near the spot on which he fell; and at my own request I was supported to his grave, to pay the last duties to his dear remains. Before I left Leicester I had a monument erected to his memory, with a suitable inscription----a tribute most justly due to his great virtues and exalted love.

“Judge now, my dear friend, what allurements this world could longer have for me, who had lost all I loved and valued in it! No; from that moment I resolved to withdraw myself from its converse and society, and to wear out the remainder of a wretched existence in solitude and retirement, where I might be fully at liberty to indulge my sorrow. No length of time can, I am convinced, obliterate the sad impressions of that fatal day; for though more than forty years have since elapsed, my wounds bleed all afresh, and my grief remains in its first force.

“Here she ended; and so forcibly did I sympathize with her in her affliction, that I was obliged to retire, to prevent discovery.

“After the death of her friend, she never went abroad, except to visit poor distressed people, and administer to their wants; upon which occasions she always took me on her arm. She was constantly habited in mourning, and had her face so much concealed, that very little of it could be discovered. This singular appearance, joined to her recluse life and wonderful taciturnity (for she seldom spoke), at length drew on *her* the imputation of *witch*, and *me* her *familiar*. Councils were now held on us throughout the parish; and whenever we appeared, every tongue was silent, and suspicion glared in every look. Even the dwellings of miserable were become inaccessible to us, and not a house in the whole village but had its doors barricaded with horse-shoes. At length an unfortunate, but common accident blew up the flame that had been so long kindling, and at once deprived *me* of my mistress, and *her* of her life!

Our next neighbour had three cows, one of which had one day unluckily broken down our garden fence, and made great ravage among the plants. The old lady drove her out of the garden, and seeing the owner in an adjacent field, made a motion to him with her stick, which had got the name of the witch’s wand, to take her away. That very night it happened that the cow slunk her calf and died. Early the next day, without the least intimation of a charge, she was seized and conducted before the magistrates and clergy of the neighbourhood who had assembled on the occasion, and there accused of diabolical practices. Out of about one hundred and fifty adults that the village contained, not less than seventy appeared as witnesses against her. The man with the cows deposed first. He swore to all the circumstances of the affair in the garden, and the subsequent death of his cow, with every exaggeration that a superstitious fancy could suggest. Another deposed, that on the night of his grandmother’s death he had heard strange buzzings in the air, and that upon going out into the yard he discovered *me* sitting on the house top; that next morning all the milk in the dairy was found to be as sour as vinegar. Others swore they had frequently seen her in a certain garden in the shape of a hare, and that on being discovered she had sprung thro’ the hedge and disappeared. The fears of others had imagined this hare into a deer. One in particular made oath, that on a certain stormy night he had seen her dart through the keyhole of the door with *me* on her arm. Endless, indeed,

were the depositions made and to be made, fresh evidences tumbling in on the backs of each other. Throughout the whole of this tumultuous business she shewed a confidence and firmness which are seldom known to be the companions of guilt, and by her looks evinced the deserved contempt she had for it. Without being suffered to say one word in her defence; she was next taken into a private room, and, in the presence of several *grave* matrons, stript from top to toe. Every part of her withered body was minutely examined; but to their great astonishment no marks were discovered about her, but those she possessed in common with other women. At length it was resolved to put her innocence to the left test! In consequence of which she was hurried away to a spacious deep pond at the foot of a hill; and without any regard to the feelings of humanity or grey hairs, plunged headlong in from the bank. Every body seemed sure she would float on the water like a cork; and no measures being previously taken to prevent the *supposed* consequences of innocence, she suddenly sunk to the bottom, and appeared no more! No sooner was she missed than they began to look about to see which way she had escaped, some among the bushes, some in the air, their frenzy not allowing them to bestow one thought on the real cause of her absence. At last one man wiser than the rest, cried out, 'that the true sign of a witch was her sinking, consequently she must yet be in the pond.' So that the unfortunate accident which deprived her of life, and which in their judgements was to be considered as a fair exculpation, was now converted into a proof of her guilt.

"The house was soon after surrounded with men and dogs in quest of me, who had all this time lain snug at home waiting the event; but I had the good fortune to elude all their malice. As soon as they had forced the back-door, I bounced out through the very thick of them, and by the help of a light pair of heels soon gained a neighbouring wood, where I lived upon my own endeavors till the common course of nature brought me to my end.

"I next passed into a greyhound, and resided for many years in that very village I had been last driven from; where I often heard related the story of the witch and her black car, with all the circumstances that attended it. In this state I was reckoned the most cunning courser that ever followed a hare; and was frequently taken to the wood in quest of my former self, where, in my life-time, I had been often seen and hunted by many inhabitants of the village.

"As nothing is more natural than revenge, I fought it by all occasions on the enemies of myself and unfortunate mistress; and till the day of my death never ceased to keep their minds in a state of continual alarm, by scratching large holes and howling under their windows in the dead of night. I at length died of old age, and was buried in my master's garden with many marks of distinction, as a reward for my great services and wonderful sagacity.

"I am now come to a period in which, to my great joy, I once more got possession of a human body. My parents, indeed, were of low extraction; my mother sold fish about the streets of this metropolis, and my father was a water-carrier celebrated by Ben Jonson in his comedy of 'Every Man in his Humour.' I was early in life initiated in the profession of horse-holder to those who came to visit the playhouse, where I was well-known by the name of 'Pimping Billy.' My sprightly genius soon distinguished me here from the

common herd of that calling, insomuch that I added considerably to my income by standing ‘pander,’ as it is politely called, to country ladies and gentlemen who were unacquainted with the ways of the town. But this employment getting me frequently engaged in lewd quarrels, I was content to give it up at the expense of many a well-tanned hide. I soon after contracted a friendship with that great man and first of geniuses, the ‘Immortal Shakspeare,’ and am happy in now having it in my power to refuse the prevailing opinion of his having run his country for deer-stealing, which is as false as it is disgracing. The fact is, Sir, that he had contracted an intimacy with the wife of a country Justice near Stratford, from his having extolled her beauty in a common ballad; and was unfortunately, by his worship himself, detected in a very awkward situation with her. Shakspeare, to avoid the consequences of this discovery, thought it most prudent to decamp. This I had from his own mouth.

“With equal falsehood has he been father’d with many spurious dramatic pieces. ‘Hamlet, Othello, As you like it, the Tempest, and Midsummer’s Night Dream, ,’ for five; of all which I confess myself to be the author. And that I should turn poet is not to be wondered at, since nothing is more natural than to contract the *ways* and *manners* of those with whom we live in habits of strict intimacy.

“You will of course expect me to say something of the comments that have been made by various hands on these works of mine and his: but the fact is, they all run so wide of the real sense, sense, that it would be hard to say who has erred most.

“In this condition I for some time enjoyed an uninterrupted happiness, living at my ease on the profits of my stage-pieces, and what I got by horse-holding. But, alas! How transient is all human felicity! The preference given to Shakspeare over me, and the great countenance shewn him by the *fir st* crowned head in the world, and all people of taste and quality, threw me into so violent a fit of the spleen, that it soon put a period to my existence.

“I was next turned into a bear, and after being baited in every town throughout England, and killing not less than two hundred dogs, to the great diversion and *edification* of many thousands of all ranks, expired of the wounds I had from time to time received. My next state of existence was a calf, in which you may well believe I did not continue long. I thence passed into a game cock, and soon after shared the common fate.

“I may now be said to have had a recess from business: for from this period my spirit lay buried in a state of total forgetfulness for thirty years; at the end of which time I was once more sensible of existence in a mouse. I had my residence in the house of a great man at the west end of the town: but that everlasting bustle and uproar that reigned there, held me in such continual dread, that I was content to renounce a sumptuous living, for what chance might send me in a more peaceful habitation. I accordingly sallied out in search of new adventures. After many long marches and counter-marches I took post in that house where the great ***** first breath’d his vital air. When I entered this mansion, I was apprehensive that I had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire, for I found all in hurry and consternation; but my fears were soon removed, by hearing orders given to fetch the

midwife with all haste. Whilst the lady was in the pangs of childbirth above, I was foraging below (for I had been three days without eating) : but scarcely had I begun my depredations, when I was caught by an ill-looking fellow in the very act of munching a piece of cheese. I was instantly put into a wire trap, and roasted to death before the fire, to the infinite sport of all the kitchen tribe.

“Being now emancipated from my little prison, I sprung aloft with great joy, and took my station amongst the gossips in the groaning-chamber; soon after which, the boy appeared, I am very sorry that I am not able, for reasons before given, to inform you of what further happened on this occasion; as, doubtless, the most minute particular relating to the birth of a man, who acted so conspicuous a part on the theatre of this world, would be very acceptable to an enquiring mind. I have, however, heard say, when I was a child, that an eagle was seen sitting on the house-top, and on each side of him a vulture: but I do not affirm this to you for a fact, as I have no authority for it but my nurse.

“I shall pass over my juvenile exploits at court while a page, as well as the part I took in the affairs of an unfortunate prince, for which I have been held out by many as a monster of ingratitude; but let any man in this world lay his hand on his heart and say, if he can, that in my circumstances he would not have done the same.

“The great actions that afterwards signalized my life are well known to you and all the world, as well as my subsequent disgrace, the common fate of all great men.

“ As in Brutus a boundless ambition guided all my actions, and in the end brought destruction on me: so in the **** * ***** every act of my life was marked with the most *unbounded, unexampled* avarice. In this passion all others seemed wholly swallowed up. To gratify this was the ultimate wish of my soul. All my victories; that coolness and contempt of death so dreaded and admired by my enemies ; my intrigues and cabals; my labours and fatigues in war ; the exertion of my great abilities ; all tended to this single point.

“Whilst I was seated on the pinnacle of military glory, and the eyes of all the world fixed on me, as something more than man ; I was no less astonished at the strange reverses I beheld in the fortunes of the choicest spirits that ever informed a material substance ! Can you believe, Sir, that Cyrus and Alexander served many campaigns in my army as common solders ; whilst Darius, as is in every state doomed the buffet and disport of fortune, daily groaned under a heavy load of camp equipage? I will, Sir, affirm it to you for a fact, and pledge my credit on the truth of it. And it is no less true, that Cincinnatus, that great and valiant Roman. Served me several years, after my disgrace, in quality of chief gardener. But this brings me to part of my story that I cannot remember, even at this distance of time, without feeling the most cutting anguish.

“Cincinnatus was one day trimming a rose-tree in my garden: I was at the same time at some distance from him, pondering in my mind the various changes I had experienced; when I heard him suddenly exclaim, ‘O Jupiter!’ and then starting back, he stood as motionless as if he had been rooted in the earth. I cast my eyes on his right hand, which

he held extended from his body, and perceived a bee perched on his fore finger, with its wings expanded. I then drew near him, wondering how this little creature could be the object of so much surprise: but, Oh! What language can paint my astonishment when in the body of this humble insect I clearly discovered the great soul of the heroic Caesar! 'I was no longer *****_*****, but Brutus. The remembrance of his friendship; my persidy towards him; the look he gave me; and the words he uttered after I had plunged the dagger in his breast; all crowded into my imagination, and overwhelmed me in a torrent of despair! A sudden horror pervaded my whole soul!--and the *black deed*, which so many ages had passed over, flood before me in all its guilt! I attempted to speak, but my tongue refused its office---my limbs failed me, and I fell as dead to the earth.' Here he sunk back on the chair in an agony of grief; but with the assistance of a cordial; and the proper application of a smelling-bottle, he soon revived, and went on as follows. 'Two days elapsed before I returned to the use of my senses; when I found my friends ranged round my bed, some weeping over me, others endeavoring to sooth and comfort me: but the wounds of Caesar, all bloody and gaping, now presented themselves as so many witnesses appearing against me, and as if each had spoke with the tongue of Anthony . At this melting sight I burst into a flood of tears, and, in spite of every effort to restrain them, betrayed evident signs of the most excruciating anguish. When the first transports of my grief were over, I arose, and endeavoured with philosophy and fortitude to conceal the remorse that preyed upon me. Two years elapsed without affording me the least alleviation of my misery; nor could time, which seldom fails to be a cure for the most stubborn grief, ever restore me to my wonted tranquility.

"In the last scenes of life he would behold me with pity and astonishment, imputing *that* to dotage and a second childhood, which, indeed, proceeded from a very different cause.

"With what justice one body can be punished for the crimes of another, merely because the same spirit has informed them both, is far beyond my ken; but if this circumstance, which I have related with strict truth, can throw any light on so mysterious a matter, the world is heartily welcome to it.

"No sooner was I released from my last illustrious habitation, than I felt myself impelled with a resistless violence over a vast and immense ocean, and there doomed to the ravenous carcase of a shark. For forty years I continued to feed on the human species, at the end of which time I taken on a hook by a ship at sea, and with axes and knives put to the most excruciating death I had ever suffered. From the body of the shark I quickly passed into that of a rat on board of the same ship, compelled in the day to conceal myself amongst the cargo in the hold, and in the night to seek for a sustenance amongst the platters and bread-bags of those very sailors who had so cruelly butchered me in my last state. A long voyage had reduced the crew to great distress; insomuch that one of my species was considered a delicious meal ; and I was obliged to act with the utmost wariness to avoid the snare that was nightly set for me and my companions. At length misfortune and distress multiplied to fast, that I was not without hopes of seeing them devour each other, as they had before done me, when a sight of the land put a period to their calamities. The first night after our arrival in the Thames, impatient for the shore I had been so long absent from, I ventured overboard, and, as soon as I had reached it,

shaped my course for the west end of town, where I arrived safe the following evening, and took up my residence in a noble family not far from Grosvenor square.

“For man the day was ordained for labour, the night for rest: but here, by a strange inversion of the order of nature, I, whose support depended on darkness and obscurity, often found myself obliged to run many imminent hazards in search of food. The lord of this dwelling was a man something turned to fifty, silly and capricious in the extreme; in his stature low, and much deformed. His lady had not yet numbered twenty winters, and was, in a word, a paragon of beauty: yet seemed very dissatisfied with all that nature had done for her. The afternoon was spent in decorating her person; the night in riot and dissipation; and when I have told you that she seldom went to bed till one in the morning, nor rose before noon, I have given you a *compendious* history of her life.

“The vast disparity in the personal attractions of this pair failed not soon to produce what must ever happen where the want of them is not supplied with better qualities. She *despised* and *detested* him, whilst he *adored* and *idolized* her. They had now been married about two years, when my lord discovered that his lady’s extravagance was an overmatch for his fortune; and, as he was naturally parsimonious, lost no time in remonstrating with her on the probable consequences of her conduct. But she was deaf to every thing that founded like innovation: ‘twas the fashion’ was her invariable cry---‘did she do any thing that was not done by all people of fashion? Fashion, Sir, is the *creed* of the *great*, and all deviation from it---*herefy*.’

“Finding that his own admonitions were of no avail, he had recourse to the interposition of friends; but all to as little purpose—not even that ruin which stared them in the face could prevail on her pleasures. Thus were they running before the wind to certain destruction, when an untoward accident promised to avert the danger that threatened, and pleaded more powerfully with her than all the prayers and intreaties of husband and friends.

“Amongst the many servants they retained in their service, a Swiss footman, named Ticho, seemed to possess the first place in the confidence of both. This fellow had a vigorous person and engaging manner, and was what is called, in the language of the ladies, a woman’s man in every sense of the phrase. Long had his lady sighed in secret for him; and the comparisons she would often draw in private between her husband and her footman kindled at last a flame that must be extinguished, or burn her up. After many struggles between virtue and passion, in which the former but seldom gains the ascendant, she communicated her longings to this son of gallantry; and often was I a witness to their stolen enjoyments. I should have observed to you, that, since I knew them, my lord and lady never slept in the same bed, but for what reason I cannot tell; and that it was behind a chest of drawers in her ladyship’s bedchamber I had my quarters. I thought it proper to mention that circumstance, lest you might be puzzled to find out by what means I became acquainted with her secrets.

“Ticho seemed very sensible of his happiness, and never let slip an opportunity of feasting his foul on the luscious banquet (for, indeed, Jupiter himself might have rioted

on her charms), whilst his lady seemed equally enraptured in the possession of her dear Ticho.

“On a certain night when these lovers lay close encircled in each other’s arms, and all was hush, I ventured from my hiding place in search of food. I had reached the bottom of the stairs, and was making my way to an aperture that led into the pantry; when suddenly a large tabby cat sprung upon me. I escaped from her gripe and retreated up stairs with the utmost precipitation, puss following close at my tail. Just as I had gained the hole that led into my lady’s chamber, she sprang with such violence against the partition, that his lordship awoke in a fright, and ran out of his room with a light in his hand. As in the greatest dangers it is natural, next to ourselves, to think if the preservation of those nearest our heart, he instantly flew into his beloved’s chamber. Ticho and his mistress, roused by the noise, jumped out of bed; and the footman, with guilty strides, had reached the door when his matter entered, and ran plump against him!

It might here, Sir, be expected, that I should call in to my aid some fine simile to picture the ridiculous situation of this *naked trio*; but, as it exceeds every attempt within the compass of my abilities, I shall only simply tell you what really happened---My lady shrieked and fell on the bed---my lord trembled and stared---Ticho stroked his whiskers, and walked out of the room.

“When his lordship had recovered a little from the consternation this disagreeable discovery had thrown him into, he began in a tremulous voice to upbraid her ladyship with ingratitude and infidelity: but she instantly threw herself at his feet and implored forgiveness, not even once attempting to call in her *old* auxiliary, though it must be confessed she never had a fairer opportunity. Mt lord shook and chided---my lady wept and entreated---but men are not made of stone; and, if they were, who could resist an angel’s tears? In fine, Sir, beauty triumphed; and a treaty being opened, it was agreed to commit the conditions of reconciliation to paper, which were to be mutually signed and exchanged.

“Whilst his lordship was employed in drawing them up, my imagination was so pestered with sieges and surrenders that I had totally forgot what I *was*; and was just on the point of bursting from my lodgment to enquire what authority existed for entering into any treaty without my concurrence, when the mewling of the tabby cat called me back to my *insignificancy* and *nothingness*.

“His lordship, having finished writing, read over the conditions, which were severally answered by my lady. They stood as follow:

Conditions entered into by ----- and -----, which are to be considered as the basis of an everlasting reconciliation, after an unfortunate discovery:

Condition I. Ticho to be paid a month’s wages, and instantly discharged. Answer. That no handle may be given to the tongue of slander, Ticho to be retained in his service till a

convenient opportunity can be found to send him abroad---his lordship's *honour* being equally concerned in this measure.

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Condition II. In order to retrieve the exhausted state of his lordship's fortune, the family shall immediately retire to the country, and there remain during his lordship's pleasure.---
-- Answer. Agreed to retire as soon as the necessary preparations can be made, and to stay as long as may hereafter be found expedient.

Condition III. To prevent any *accidents* that might in future happen, his lordship and her ladyship shall never more sleep in separate beds.—Answer. Agreed to, except when her ladyship is indisposed.

Condition IV. That his lordship may have every possible security that no attempts shall in future be made on his honour, her ladyship to swear on the holy evangelists never more to violate the conjugal vow in thought or deed.--- Answer. This condition wholly inadmissible, as it would be a *shock to decency* for a lady to swear!

“A warm debate now ensued---my lord insisted on the conditions without any modification---my lady replied---my lord rejoined. At length her ladyship proposed the happy expedient of retiring to bed in his lordship's chamber, and postponing the further discussion of the conditions

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Till the morning; which was instantly closed with.

“With the result was I cannot inform you, for the passage leading to the pantry was afterwards so closely guarded by the tabby cat, that I had no alternative but to quit the house, or starve; and so the following night I took my leave.

“After a perilous march of six nights, I entered the *inhospitable* dwelling of a *titled* magistrate in the neighbourhood of Bunhill-row; and took post in strong ground behind a small-beer cask in the cellar. Having pitched my tent, I very cautiously ventured forth to reconnoitre the enemy's works, and discover the most convenient pass to and from the pantry. After a diligent inspection of two hours, I found the latter wholly inaccessible on every side; and the daylight appearing, I retreated into my works and there, without having tasted a morsel, lay snug till the ensuing night, when I resolved to storm it with my whole force. I began the attack about eleven o'clock, upon the bottom of the door, and kept up an unremitting gnawing till five in the morning, without being able to effect a practicable breach. I then once more retreated into my lines, determining to renew the attack the succeeding night; but, alas! When the much-wished-for time came, I found the breach I had in part made compleatly repaired. Despairing now

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Of success, I began to out-scout, in the hope that *chance* would throw me on something: but a *few bones* in the dust hole, *closely picked*, were all I could find!

“It might here appear strange that, under so many discouragements, I did not strike my tent and move off the ground; but my post, Sir, was so well secured against any sudden attempts of the enemy, that I determined not to quit it till the last extremity: add to this, that neither dog nor cat had any admittance here to interrupt my repose. *Disappointed* (almost) *in the last hope* of being able to force the pantry, I had recourse to various expedients, to preserve my existence. The knight’s boots and shoes went to wreck---and sometimes, by chance, I would get access, through her neglect, to the cook’s grease-pot. At others, I used to introduce my tail through the open work of the pantry, and after having whisked it about whatever happened to be in the way, eagerly licked off what had adhered to it. But this only served to increase my longing; and my condition might very well have been likened to that of Tantalus, as the poets have feigned, or a poor ship-wrecked mariner after a long voyage, who anxiously beholds the desired port without a hope that he shall ever reach it! I a thousand times wished myself a bear again, a jack-ass, or the meanest reptile; and cursed my too precipitate retreat from my last sumptuous quarters, where I thought a possibility had existed of eluding the vigilance of the tabby cat, or, at least, wearing out her patience with disappointment.

“It had been observed of me in a former state, ‘that I never fought a battle that I did not win, nor besieged a town I did not take:’ but here I found all my attempts and exertions completely foiled. In the midst of this calamitous situation, to encourage and animate me, I called over my former victories and success; and resolved once more to assail the pantry, and leave no scheme untried to insure success. I now considered myself as a *forlorn hope*, and determined to conquer or perish! For my strength was so far exhausted as to render a retreat a measure that threatened certain destruction. I lay close in my lines the whole of that day preceding the night I intended to put my design in execution; and about ten o’clock moved out towards the scene of the action. It now occurred to me, that I had a better chance of succeeding by sap; but this being a work of time, it by no means suited with my circumstances: a *coup-de-main*, therefore, was my only hope. Having fixed on a spot that I judged the most assailable, I began to gnaw, and about five the next morning found, to my great joy, that I had made a breach sufficiently large to admit my head. You may very well believe, Sir, that I lost not one moment in entering the works. The first dish I came to was the remains of a ham; but it was so very *stale*, and smelt so *unpleasant*, that notwithstanding my starving condition, I passed on to the next,---part of a bullock’s heart, which had been roasted for dinner two days before. Seeing no other kind of animal food in this *well-supplied* magazine, I was going to fall on, when my nostrils were assailed with the smell of a *Suffolk* cheese, about one-third gone. I fell on it with a rapaciousness that might well be expected after such long abstinence; and having eaten my fill, proceeded to cut off some small pieces and throw them out through the breach, with intent to convey them to my own magazine against the day of want: but, alas! When I attempted to retreat I found myself swelled to such an enormous size, that I stuck fast in the hole. I exerted my utmost efforts for a full hour without success, and was at last so completely hemmed in, as to put it out of my power to retreat, or advance. In this state I continued, condemning my *rashness* and want of *foresight*, till past seven o’clock, when I was spied out by one of the footmen, who instantly called down the rest of the servants to be witnesses of my disgrace.

I would most gladly have entered into a convention with this *motley* crew, and agreed to have left my plunder behind as one condition; but my straitened situation allowed me no terms; and so after they had all satisfied their curiosity, I fell a victim to the brawny arm of the cook-maid, who knocked me on the head with a broomstick.

“I next passed into a spaniel dog, and became the property of a military character very well known in this capital, and at most of the public places in the kingdom. As this gentleman is a striking instance of the partiality and villainy of fortune, in raising men to stations for which nature never designed them, I shall make no apology for relating as much of his history as I can vouch for a fact.

“Captain Tag was once a haberdasher’s apprentice in the neighbourhood of Bond-street; though, indeed, his *Herculean* shoulders, and *well-fortified* skull, were much better calculated for the meridian of Fleet-market. This athletic young man owed his first commission in the army to the friendship of a *patriotic* alderman, to whose lady he is said to be akin: in return for which good office, he afterwards not only took much pains to expose the foibles of his benefactor, but employed half a dozen garretteers to lampoon his kinswoman in as many different periodical papers. About two months after he got his appointment he set out to join his regiment, then on actual service abroad, whither I attended him; and shortly after our arrival, part of the regiment in which was his company was sent on an ever-memorable expedition. As the whole minutia of his deportment during the serge does not fall within my know-

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Ledge, I shall only relate such parts of it as I was either eye-witness to, or heard from indisputable characters. A redoubt of the enemy’s was on a certain night ordered to be stormed, and the company in which he served made a part of the detachment destined for that service. The business was executed with the usual gallantry of British troops; but, in the very fury of the assault, an accident happened which I am almost ashamed to relate, as by some it might be deemed a reflection on an enterprize which does so much honour to all concerned in it but himself. The fact is, Sir, that as our hero was crossing a ditch, he unfortunately fell into it flat upon his back! This is not all, Sir,---he had the *prudence* to continue in that *warlike* position till the redoubt was carried. In this situation he was soon after discovered by a lieutenant in the same corps, who, desiring him to account for such unsoldier-like behaviour, he replied, he was wounded in the hip. The lieutenant entertaining suspicions from seeing no appearance of blood, proceeded, with the assistance of a soldier, to loose his breeches, for the purpose of examining the part pretended to be affected; when, lo! the effluvia emitting from a certain place, which decency forbids to name, fully evinced where the wound had been received. I shall pass over the disagreeable ceremony that succeeded this discovery---suffice it to say, that a fit of pretended illness prevented any further enquiry into his conduct at that time; and lie

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Afterwards had the option of standing the event of a court-martial, or signing a resignation. Conscious of guilt, he wisely preferred the latter mode of getting rid of a profession for which he was not by any means calculated. I shall pass over a tedious sea voyage, and once more return with him to England. A few months after, receiving intelligence, that several of his prosecutors in the regiment were dead, he got so artful a

misrepresentation of the *hardships* of his case drawn up and presented to the secretary at war, that he absolutely obtained an order to return, and stand or fall by the sentence of a court-martial.

“We now again crossed the Atlantic ocean. The circumstance of his resignation, and the propriety of afterwards granting a trial, were fully discussed in a court of enquiry; and it being concluded that a false statement of facts had induced the secretary at war to comply with his request, a trial was refused, and their reasons for the same transmitted home. Tag now disappointed in the hope of being reinstated, we again returned to England, where a small patrimony not being equal to the *wants* of *so fine* a gentleman, he had recourse to the most nefarious practices: and, in the space of six months bilked more bawdy-houses, and cozened more Jews, than half the bloods and *scavoir vivres* in this great metropolis. He has been damned clever at a *Fou d’esprit*, without even knowing what it means; and passed for a man of fashion and fortune, without either *money* or *taste*. Some months after our arrival in town, he took lodgings in the neighbourhood of St. James’s, and had the consummate impudence (a quality he much abounds in), to pay his addresses to a wealthy lady in the same neighbourhood, assuming the title of a gentleman in the sister kingdom: but she fortunately discovered his real character, and sent him a card of dismissal, intimating, that ‘none but the brave deserved the fair.’

“He one evening went into a coffeehouse near Charing cross, and hastily informed the company, that news had that moment arrived of Gibraltar being carried by a *coup-de-main*. An old gentleman complained, ‘that our language had become so patched and interlarded with French, that now-a-days a common conversation was not to be understood by a home-bred Englishman, and begged of Tag to ‘give him the plain English of *coup de-main*.’ ‘Why, Sir, replied Tag, ‘a *coup de-main* is a fort of ----- don’t you know, Sir, what a *coup de main* is? I thought every body knew that.’ -----The old gentleman declared, ‘it might be an army of Saracens for any thing he knew; and a wag in the corner of a box, at the same time observing, that Tag’s definition ‘was a *very ingenious* one,’ a gentleman at the further end of the room replied, that, ‘the *captain* had travelled for it.’ Tag now fixing his eyes upon the last speaker, recognized the phiz of his quondam friend,

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the lieutenant heretofore mentioned, in a *very dirty* piece of business. The game was now up-----he sneaked out of the room, and never afterwards shewed his face in it.

“after the account already given of this gentleman, you will, perhaps, be surprized when I tell you, that he has since, through the influence of a woman of rank, been preferred to a lieutenant in an old regiment: and it is to the same *generous* friendship, that every place of polite resort in this kingdom is now, in turn, indebted for his company and *instructing* conversation.

“I have consulted the god of rallery for a suitable epithet for his *mock* hero; and, amongst the vast variety of characters he has exhibited, have not been able to find one that bears a complete affinity to him: but as he well known within the purlieus of Covent-garden and

vicinity of Kings-place, by the name of the *Bilking* Captain, let him henceforth be distinguished by that title.

“From the body of Shag (for that was my name) I was driven by the wheel of a hackney coach, in one of my master’s midnight excursions, and quickly passed into that of a Jack-ass: and this, Sir, brings me to that period of my existence in which you will discover my motive for placing this confidence in you. You cannot but remember, that about three years ago, as you were walking on the road leading from Hampstead to Highgate, you met an old man driving an ass, heavily laden with sand---I was then, Sir, that very ass. The barbarities he was exercising on me induced you to stop and severely reprimand him for his brutality; desiring him “henceforth to be more cautious, since he could not tell but in *that* ass he might be goading and tormenting his own father.” These, Sir, were your own words, which had the desired effect; for he ever after treated me with great kindness; and to this circumstance are you indebted for my story.

“My next change was into what you now behold me; and which, from reading a certain author, I was then induced to believe would be my last; contrary, indeed, as you may well suppose, to my own conviction, founded on the experience of so many ages. My master at first designed me for the spit; but trembling at the Idea of *annihilation* I cast about how to prolong my existence. I began by *lying* down at his feet and *scratching* my back against his shoes; and displaying various *other* tokens of *great* sagacity. This soon brought him to relent from his bloody purpose, and turn his thoughts to making a better market of me. He now exults and prides himself on his ingenuity in teaching so stupid an animal to perform such *wonderful* things: though sometimes he is not a little puzzled when a name, or a word, is called for that he cannot spell himself, to see me pick out the letters that compose it without any previous notice from him. But his interest, joined to his natural insensibility, will not allow him to bestow much consideration on so strange a circumstance.

“Some months after my name had been trumpeted through the kingdom, master received notice that my company was desired by a *great* man on a certain evening, precisely at seven o’clock. The whole of the intermediate time was employed in preparing for this intended visit. My bristles were combed out, and my whole body rubbed over with the best scented pomatum: my master decked out his person upon the occasion with a new suit of blue and gold, which, indeed, he has never worn since, and a new collar was also purchased for me. When the appointed hour approached, we set out, as desired, with great secrecy, in a coach hired for the purpose, and on our arrival at the house found two gentlemen in waiting for us. They conducted us up stairs into a spacious room, and introduced us to a middle-aged good-looking man, who received us very courteously. A lady, with a countenance full of benignity and good-nature, soon after appeared, attended by five or six children; upon which my master was ordered to prepare for exhibition. A triple alphabet was placed on the floor; and the spectators being seated, the word *sovereignty* was called for. Scarcely had I picked out the first letter, when a servant entered in great consterna-

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tion, and acquainted the lord of the house, who I understood, held a great post, that a young man with one arm and of mean appearance was at the door, who said, that two

months had elapsed since he had sent in a memorial requesting an audience, and tho' he had constantly attended every day since, no notice whatever had been taken of it; and that he now insisted upon being admitted. This intelligence threw the company into great disorder, and the servant had hardly finished speaking when the young man entered. He had a handsome manly countenance, strongly marked with disappointment, and wore a shabby blue coat with facings which had once been white, the rest of his dress corresponding with it, and had lost his

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left arm. From this appearance I concluded he was a discarded officer of the navy. He bowed with great respect to the *great* man and his consort and then casting his eyes upon me and the characters arranged on the floor, turned round with a look full of indignation, and loudly exclaimed on the cruelty and injustice of being denied, after all his services, what was not refused even to a *hog*, the dirtiest brute in the whole creation! At this the great man expressed much astonishment, never before having heard a syllable of the memorial alluded to. My master was now ordered to retire into as distant apartment; but so strong was my desire to know the purport of this unprecedented visit, that I betrayed an obstinacy very justly ascribed

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to my species, and not always inseparable from great characters. My master, therefore, was obliged to withdraw without me. The gentleman was now ordered to communicate his business; upon which he addressed himself to the great man, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words.

“In me, Sir, you behold a sad instance of the vicissitudes of fortune! And, impelled by cruel necessity, I am now come to lay the distresses of many, involved in one common misfortune, at your feet.

“At the conclusion of a long war it will of course happen, that a great number of naval officers, for whom the state has hitherto made no provision, will be compelled to seek for a subsistence. It will be very natural to suppose them unfit for mercantile transactions, trade being a thing so very opposite to the line of their former profession, to say nothing of that system of prejudice imbibed by people of traffic against young men bred to a sea-life. Hence it must follow, not to mention the impropriety of it, that the gentlemen of the navy have but little prospect of support in that way.

“It will not be necessary to make an exact calculation of the number of this class of officers turned upon the world without any apparent means of getting a livelihood! It will, doubtless, amount to thousands at least,

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The majority of whom have been taught from their boyhood to consider a man of war as the theatre of all the actions of their future life. Many of these, to be sure, are the sons of gentlemen of wealth and rank; but the far greater number belong to indigent though respectable families, and have no hopes but their rise in the navy, and no fortune but their sword.

“Wholly deprived of the poor emoluments of our profession, it will be but fair to ask by what means are we to subsist? Since it cannot be reasonably supposed that we are calculated for laborious employments. This great metropolis---every sea-port town in England---daily exhibits a melancholy picture of our distresses!---and my own appearance, I am sorry to say, is too strong a confirmation of the truth of what I advance. What a falling off is here! Many, Sir, amongst us, once deemed the table companions of captains, admirals, nay of a king’s son! Now that their services are no longer wanted, are reduced to humiliating necessity of exchanging their swords and cockades for the *insignia* of the most *contemptible* callings! Our parents had much better made Barbers and Taylors of us, than to have given us a profession which only taught us to look high, to make us the more sensible of our fall.

“But let me ask, Sir, are we entitled to no provision from the state? It will, I am aware, be answered, that she is not equal to the task—that our burdens (which is too true) are already too heavy, and much more to as little purpose;--and whence, you will ask, must come the means to support such an additional burden? The maintenance of fifty of us, Sir, would not amount to the price of one apostate!—but without descending to particulars, I answer in one word—abolish *corruption*, and the means are already found. That state that cannot subsist without it, truly stands on a tottering foundation. But, to say nothing of this, who sees not the weakness of such reasoning? Since, if it be allowed to hold good in our café, it must equally, nay infinitely more affect other descriptions of men, who never can be allowed to have half so good a claim to their country’s favour.

“Suppose that an annual stipend, barely sufficient to keep a man above want, were granted to each of that class of officers in question, who had served a prescribed time, and gone through the ceremonies required to qualify him for a commission-----if would not, probably, amount in ten years to half the sum that a noble duke and his adherents would uselessly lavish, *merely* because they belong to the ordinance! And, if a certain great man amongst them would turn his thoughts towards redressing the grievances of his own profession, how would, perhaps, be able to render his country more essential service, than if he were to build a wall, at his own expence, from the South-foreland to the Lizard point.

“But I will suppose, that an additional burden *shall* attend the measure I have mentioned (the expediency of which I wish our misfortunes may not one day teach us), it would, I am convinced, be cheerfully contributed to by every individual in a Nation whose distinguishing characteristic is generosity to those who have fought and bled in her defence. Who, I ask, are more proper objects of her attention? If a generous sacrifice of the ease and comforts of life; if a cheerful exchange of a healthy and happy air for the contagion of foreign and inhospitable climes; if *watching* and *starving*, and gallantly venturing life, to secure to her safety and prosperity, can give a claim to her favour; then have we a just title to her protection. O publick virtue, whither art thou flown! A favourite (only because he is a favourite), without one earthly pretension to distinction—a very drone in the commonwealth---a fellow, who, to use a vulgar phrase, has never been out of the smoke of his mother’s chimney, shall enjoy a *sinecure* of hundreds---nay, thousands a year;---whilst he who has been mutilated in fighting for his country (here he

held out his stump) shall be daily put to his shifts how to get a dinner! Is this justice! is this reward!

“A great evil in the navy, and no less deserving of your notice, Sir, is the shameful prostitution of its appointments, even by those who know the *fatality* of it. If we retrospect to the promotions in the late war, we shall find, without any regard to merit, *boys* advanced to be lieutenants, who, two years before, had been whipping their tops at school; and lieutenants promoted to captains, who knew no more, Sir, about the management of a ship than your coachman!-----a partiality which *no* consideration of rank can justify; whilst, on the other hand, real abilities have been *neglected* and suffered to *languish* in obscurity. Men too, of mean principles and low breeding (from a fatal necessity resulting from bad policy), have been admitted amongst us, the unavoidable consequences of which have been contempt and disgrace intailed upon our profession.

“good order and discipline are the life and soul of all military operations; but where shall we find these when ignorance and inexperience predominate? A subaltern officer in the army is soon made up: he has little more to learn than the exercise of a musket, and the manoeuvring a company, which are both to be acquired in three months. But the case widely differs with the naval officer---It requires years of experience, service, and application, to fit him for his duty: and, when it is considered that our empire by sea is the sole security for

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Our liberties, what can be a more important object of the nation’s care than the cultivation of his abilities, and the reward of his services?---Amongst all the general battles fought in the late war, point out, if you can (excepting one instance, and there your force was superior), in which you have had the advantage; an *unfortunate* proof, the France has not advanced to an equality with you, but that you have *declined* to an equality with her!

“The neglect, and in consequence the decline of our navy is, of all political evils, the most alarming to this country: but whilst men in office obstinately pursue the track their predecessors have walked in before them, what hope that we shall ever see it upon any better footing? In this regard there has ever been an unaccountable supineness, like an evil genius, attending upon them. The good to be deduced from the adoption of a measure, viewed only in perspective, does not seem to be able to attract their attention---they appear not to look beyond the present moment; and, as if posterity had no claim to their regard, shamefully neglect all means of future advantage. A greater empire than yours has dwindled and *dissolved*; not because her true interests were *not* understood, but because they were *neglected* and *despised*.

“But I will even grant that no necessity for a fresh naval establishment ever existed till *this moment*; it cannot

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be admitted that *that* is the *café* now; since, in all human probability, in a future war, we shall have to contend with the *united force* of the three greatest maritime powers (except ourselves) in the whole world.

“Much was hoped from the present lord at the head of the admiralty when he came first into office. He had risen by successive steps, and I believe very deservedly, to the top of his profession.---His knowledge and long experience would not suffer him to lie ignorant of what was wanting towards that great object; a naval reformation---but, if we may be allowed to judge of the *future* by the *past*, there appears but little prospect of his attempting any thing towards so desirable an end. He, like his predecessors, can make himself very easy in the enjoyment of a splendid fortune, and a place of three thousand a year, without feeling much anxiety either about the future safety of his country, or the distresses of those who have a claim to his attention. He is very sensible, that at the conclusion of the late war not half (to speak within compass) of the lieutenants were by any means equal to the task their situation imposed on them: and what steps, I pray, has he taken since that period to improve their talents? Even the *few* at present in commission (if we except those on board ships abroad, and the small craft employed in the suppression of smuggling at home) have been suffered to remain in a state of *shameful inactivity*:

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For surely serving in guard-ships, *constantly moved* in the different ports, can be called very little better. Instead of exercising and preparing them by practice to *trials* and *difficulties* inseparable from the important stations their country’s safety has called on them to fill; they have been left to *moulder* and *rust* in an indolent ease: and, should it be found necessary at some not far removed period to equip your numerous ships, I will venture to affirm that not *one* in *three* of them would be properly officered: and the consequences that must inevitably result from such a misfortune are *too apparent* to stand in need of being pointed out. Suppose the commander of a ship to possess the courage and skill of the noble Admiral himself (and, thank God, we want not

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many such), the fate of a battle might be pronounced *precarious*, indeed, when the success of it rested on *his bare existence!* I wish not to be personal, or I would point out where the loss of superiors, and the ignorance of a successor, have produced the most shameful consequences. Further: it may be reasonably presumed, that a *scarcity of most invaluable* but *neglected* description of men, called *sailors*, will in a future war render it necessary to adopt the expedient of entering a greater number of landsmen than has been practiced in former wars.---The necessity therefore of experienced officers becomes doubly evident; for if the *blind* be set to lead the *blind*----the proverb, Sir, will tell you the rest.

“Let it not, however, be thought that I would wish to deprive the noble admiral above-mentioned of the praise he deserves. I will acknowledge he has rendered his country service; has stood amongst the *foremost* in the support of his national character, and has *sometimes* not suffered transcendent merit to pass by unnoticed.

“How alarming a circumstance must it be to every Englishman, to see the rapid advances France has made in her marine within these very few years past! And her exertions at this moment towards the same great object, obviously point out the ultimate end of her views. Her policy in leaguering herself with the great maritime powers, and thereby precluding this kingdom from an alliance with them, ought to convince every man of common

understanding, that, as she has stript you of great part of your empire by land, he¹ sole aim now is to strip you of your empire by sea also.

“How necessary then, nay, how absolutely *essential* to our *existence*, is it to open every door to naval emulation, since our dominion on the sea can alone secure our right in the great scale of empire? Retrench, and be *Oeconomist* as much as you can in other respects; but, if you have the true interest of your country at heart, you must not be a niggard in *this*. Many geniuses, who might hereafter become the glory and ornament of their profession, would then be prevented from turning adventurers in foreign service; by which means the great bulwark of the nation is weakened and additional strength thrown into the hands of our enemies, which I wish we may not one day sadly experience.

“How many confessedly able and gallant young men, who served as lieutenants in the last war, have since, from a *mean* and *fatal* policy, been driven to seek support in any manner they could, to the great disgrace of the service, and the commissions they once bore! And can it, Sir, be expected that men, with their feelings and spirit, shall linger away their best days as *castaways* and *starving monuments* of their country’s ingratitude, while they have it in their power to pursue their profession under other states? The greatest pecuniary reward in the power of the nation to bestow on us can be deemed but *small*, indeed, when compared with the hardships, distresses, and dangers the most of us have undergone. In vain, then, shall mandates be issued, forbidding us to enter into foreign engagements, while no provision is made for us at home: and, when the kingdom shall find herself involved in another war, in vain shall your proclamations call on us to desert the services of those who opened their arms to receive us when cast out and rejected by our own country.

“But to whom, Sir, shall we look up for a remedy to our grievance? Is it to administration? Alas! Their situations are but temporary---‘they are here today, and gone to-morrow;’ and I am sorry to say, that we have reason to suppose them *too* attentive to their own private views to advert, either to the good of their country, or our necessities. Bare merit, therefore, can no more hope to find a successful advocate in them, than it can be thought they will look forward to a good to be reaped, perhaps, in half a century hence.

“But is the measure, let me ask, beneath the interference of Majesty itself? The feelings and views of a king *ought* and *must* be widely different from those of men who hang on his favours. His glory rests not on the partial advancement of an undeserving subject; but on the just distribution of rewards to all: and he never can I am sure, be better employed than in devising means to rescue from want and attach to his service, a description of his subjects who have often *fought*, often *bled*, in the defence of his crown and dignity.

“But if no consideration that can be urged will induce measures to prevent the evils that threaten---what remains but to make a *last appeal* to the feelings and interests of the nation at large? As countrymen and fellow-subjects we will call on them to behold the defenders of their liberties reduced to a level with the most mean and un-

Deserving of the community, and compelled, *as a reward for their services*, to seek amongst *aliens* and *foes* that support which an unfortunate policy has denied them amongst their *kindred* and *friends*! We will call on them to behold their *trust*, abused and their *treasure* exhausted, in the support of a power inimical to their true interests!---We will call on them to remember the rich legacy their ancestors bequeathed them, written in characters of their best blood!-----Finally we will call on them to weep with us over the grave of their country's *falling greatness*, and sing a *requiem* to her *departing glory*!”

“At the conclusion of the speech the great man advanced towards him,

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and with a look full of complacency presented him with a paper, which he received with a low bow. He then said something to him, but in so low a voice that I could not distinguish what it was. It, however, had a very sensible effect upon the gentlemen; for he bowed a second time so *very low*, that his forehead nearly came into contact with the floor.---He then retired.

“My master was now called in, and ordered to proceed with the exhibition. I went through my evolutions with great exactness; the great man expressing his approbation by loud and repeated bursts of laughter; and the rest of the audience (excepting the little masters and misses) joining in the applause. They, indeed, through the

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Whole of my performance shewed evident dissatisfaction, and evinced by their looks that they had not been used to such *genteel* company. They expressed much displeasure at my *loud grunting* and -----, for the calls of nature at last became so very pressing and importunate, that I could not longer refuse to obey them.

“The performance being ended, we were conducted to the coach by the same gentleman who introduced us : and returned home with as much privacy as we set out, my master expressing by his looks the joy of his heart. On our arrival we were told, that great numbers of all ranks had been there to visit me, who were informed by the maid, that I had been taken suddenly ill, and was incapable of appearing that night; and she at the same time expressed her regret at their disappointment.

“Thus, Sir, do you behold me in this state, the object of more admiration than I ever was in the *monarch*, the *orator*, or the *general*! but, alas! Neither riches or fame have now any charms for me. I am unhappily become the slave of a passion, I confess to you, I never before was sensible of. In short, Sir, not to hold you in suspense, I am fallen in love!---and tho' the object of my affection is no more that a *fellow performer*, I entertain no hope of ever being able to gratify my passion. I have endeavoured behind the scenes, whenever an opportunity

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offered , to signify, in the best manner my form would admit of, how vehemently I burn for her; but she inhumanly rejects all my caresses, sometimes taking me by the sore feet, which I stroke down her lovely hands with, and rudely throwing them from her: at others, filliping me on the snout with her polished fingers, and rending my heart with the odious epithet of ‘filthy creature!’ To utter one word would, I fear, draw on me the imputation of

wizard, with all its horrid consequences; or, ere this, I certainly had tried whether the honour and vanity of an intimacy with a *crowned head* could not have borne down the qualms excited by the disgusting figure of a *bore-pig*. In fine, Sir, judge how great must be my mortification at being rejected by a woman in so humble a sphere!--I, who have conquered and planted empires, given laws to the greatest nations in the world, and on whose smiles the most illustrious and beautiful of the sex have lived, and thought themselves happy.

“Thus, Sir, here I given you a true and faithful account of all I know myself.”

I was now proceeding to ask him many important question, which I much wish to be satisfied in; but the arrival of his master put an end to our interview, which you may depend I will seek the earliest opportunity of renewing; and shall not fail to make you acquainted with the result.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours &c.

TRANSMIGRATUS

Woolwich
June 26, 1786.

SM

03/20/05