

Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

TALE OF A TUB

Jonathan Swift



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JONATHAN SWIFT

A Tale of a Tub

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This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

Jonathan Swift asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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Foreword

Treatises writ by the fame Author, moft of them mentioned in the following Discourses; which will be fpeedily publifhed.

A Character of the prefent Set of Wits in this Ifland. A Panegyricall Effay upon the Number THREE. A Differtation upon the principal productions of Grub-ftree. Lectures upon the Diffection of Human Nature. A Panegyrick upon the World. An Analytical Difcourfe upon Zeal, Hiftori-theo-phyfically confidered. A general Hiftory of Ears. A modeft Defence of the Proceedings of the Rabble in all Ages. A Defcription of the Kingdom of Abfurdities. A Voyage into England, by a Perfon of Quality in Terra Auftralis incognita, tranflated from the Original. A Critical Effay upon the Art of Canting, Philofophically, Phyfically, and Mufically confidered.

To the right Honourable John Lord Somers.

My LORD,

Though the author has written a large Dedication, yet that being addrefsed to a Prince whom I am never likely to have the honour of being known to; a person, besides, as far as I can obferve, not at all regarded or thought on by any of our prefent writers; and I being wholly free from that flavery which booksellers usually lie under to the caprices of authors, I think it a wife piece of prefumption to infcribe thefe papers to your Lordship, and to implore your Lordship's protection of them. God and your Lordship know their faults and their merits; for as to my own particular, I am altogether a

stranger to the matter; and though everybody else should be equally ignorant, I do not fear the sale of the book at all the worse upon that score. Your Lordship's name on the front in capital letters will at any time get off one edition: neither would I desire any other help to grow an alderman than a patent for the sole privilege of dedicating to your Lordship.

I should now, in right of a dedicator, give your Lordship a list of your own virtues, and at the same time be very unwilling to offend your modesty; but chiefly I should celebrate your liberality towards men of great parts and small fortunes, and give you broad hints that I mean myself. And I was just going on in the usual method to peruse a hundred or two of dedications, and transcribe an abstract to be applied to your Lordship, but I was diverted by a certain accident. For upon the covers of these papers I casually observed written in large letters the two following words, DETUR DIGNISSIMO, which, for aught I knew, might contain some important meaning. But it unluckily fell out that none of the Authors I employ understood Latin (though I have them often in pay to translate out of that language). I was therefore compelled to have recourse to the Curate of our Parish, who Englished it thus, Let it be given to the worthiest; and his comment was that the Author meant his work should be dedicated to the sublimest genius of the age for wit, learning, judgment, eloquence, and wisdom. I called at a poet's chamber (who works for my shop) in an alley hard by, showed him the translation, and desired his opinion who it was that the Author could mean. He told me, after some consideration, that vanity was a thing he abhorred, but by the description he thought himself to be the person aimed at; and at the same time he very kindly offered his own assistance gratis towards penning a dedication to himself. I desired him, however, to give a second guess. Why then, said he, it must be I, or my Lord Somers. From thence I

went to several other wits of my acquaintance, with no small hazard and weariness to my person, from a prodigious number of dark winding stairs; but found them all in the same story, both of your Lordship and themselves. Now your Lordship is to understand that this proceeding was not of my own invention; for I have somewhere heard it is a maxim that those to whom everybody allows the second place have an undoubted title to the first.

This infallibly convinced me that your Lordship was the person intended by the Author. But being very unacquainted in the style and form of dedications, I employed those wits aforesaid to furnish me with hints and materials towards a panegyric upon your Lordship's virtues.

In two days they brought me ten sheets of paper filled up on every side. They swore to me that they had ransacked whatever could be found in the characters of Socrates, Aristides, Epaminondas, Cato, Tully, Atticus, and other hard names which I cannot now recollect. However, I have reason to believe they imposed upon my ignorance, because when I came to read over their collections, there was not a syllable there but what I and everybody else knew as well as themselves: therefore I grievously suspect a cheat; and that these Authors of mine stole and transcribed every word from the universal report of mankind. So that I took upon myself as fifty shillings out of pocket to no manner of purpose.

If by altering the title I could make the same materials serve for another dedication (as my betters have done), it would help to make up my loss; but I have made several persons dip here and there in those papers, and before they read three lines they have all assured me plainly that they cannot possibly be applied to any person besides your Lordship.

I expected, indeed, to have heard of your Lordship's bravery at the head of an army; of your undaunted courage in mounting a breach or scaling a

wall; or to have had your pedigree traced in a lineal descent from the House of Austria; or of your wonderful talent at dress and dancing; or your profound knowledge in algebra, metaphysics, and the Oriental tongues: but to ply the world with an old beaten story of your wit, and eloquence, and learning, and wisdom, and justice, and politeness, and candour, and evenness of temper in all scenes of life; of that great discernment in discovering and readiness in favouring deserving men; with forty other common topics; I confess I have neither conscience nor countenance to do it. Because there is no virtue either of a public or private life which some circumstances of your own have not often produced upon the stage of the world; and those few which for want of occasions to exert them might otherwise have passed unseen or unobserved by your friends, your enemies have at length brought to light.

It is true I should be very loth the bright example of your Lordship's virtues should be lost to after-ages, both for their sake and your own; but chiefly because they will be so very necessary to adorn the history of a late reign; and that is another reason why I would forbear to make a recital of them here; because I have been told by wise men that as dedications have run for some years past, a good historian will not be apt to have recourse thither in search of characters.

There is one point wherein I think we dedicators would do well to change our measures; I mean, instead of running on so far upon the praise of our patron's liberality, to spend a word or two in admiring their patience. I can put no greater compliment on your Lordship's than by giving you so ample an occasion to exercise it at present. Though perhaps I shall not be apt to reckon much merit to your Lordship upon that score, who having been formerly used to tedious harangues, and sometimes to as little purpose, will

be the readier to pardon this, especially when it is offered by one who is, with all respect and veneration,

My LORD, Your Lordship's most obedient and most faithful Servant,
THE BOOKSELLER

The Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity.

SIR,

I here present your Highness with the fruits of a very few leisure hours, stolen from the short intervals of a world of business, and of an employment quite alien from such amusements as this; the poor production of that refuse of time which has lain heavy upon my hands during a long prorogation of Parliament, a great dearth of foreign news, and a tedious fit of rainy weather. For which, and other reasons, it cannot choose extremely to deserve such a patronage as that of your Highness, whose numberless virtues in so few years, make the world look upon you as the future example to all princes. For although your Highness is hardly got clear of infancy, yet has the universal learned world already resolved upon appealing to your future dictates with the lowest and most resigned submission, fate having decreed you sole arbiter of the productions of human wit in this polite and most accomplished age. Methinks the number of appellants were enough to shock and startle any judge of a genius less unlimited than yours; but in order to prevent such glorious trials, the person, it seems, to whose care the education of your Highness is committed, has resolved, as I am told, to keep you in almost an universal ignorance of our studies, which it is your inherent birthright to inspect.

It is amazing to me that this person should have assurance, in the face of the sun, to go about persuading your Highness that our age is almost wholly illiterate and has hardly produced one writer upon any subject. I know very well that when your Highness shall come to riper years, and have gone through the learning of antiquity, you will be too curious to neglect inquiring into the authors of the very age before you; and to think that this insolent, in the account he is preparing for your view, designs to reduce them to a number so insignificant as I am ashamed to mention; it moves my zeal and my spleen for the honour and interest of our vast flourishing body, as well as of myself, for whom I know by long experience he has professed, and still continues, a peculiar malice.

It is not unlikely that, when your Highness will one day peruse what I am now writing, you may be ready to expostulate with your governor upon the credit of what I here affirm, and command him to show you some of our productions. To which he will answer—for I am well informed of his designs—by asking your Highness where they are, and what is become of them? and pretend it a demonstration that there never were any, because they are not then to be found. Not to be found! Who has mislaid them? Are they sunk in the abyss of things? It is certain that in their own nature they were light enough to swim upon the surface for all eternity; therefore, the fault is in him who tied weights so heavy to their heels as to depress them to the centre. Is their very essence destroyed? Who has annihilated them? Were they drowned by purges or martyred by pipes? Who administered them to the posteriors of ———. But that it may no longer be a doubt with your Highness who is to be the author of this universal ruin, I beseech you to observe that large and terrible scythe which your governor affects to bear continually about him. Be pleased to remark the length and strength, the

sharpness and hardness, of his nails and teeth; consider his baneful, abominable breath, enemy to life and matter, infectious and corrupting, and then reflect whether it be possible for any mortal ink and paper of this generation to make a suitable resistance. Oh, that your Highness would one day resolve to disarm this usurping maitre de palais of his furious engines, and bring your empire hors du page.

It were endless to recount the several methods of tyranny and destruction which your governor is pleased to practise upon this occasion. His inveterate malice is such to the writings of our age, that, of several thousands produced yearly from this renowned city, before the next revolution of the sun there is not one to be heard of. Unhappy infants! many of them barbarously destroyed before they have so much as learnt their mother-tongue to beg for pity. Some he stifles in their cradles, others he frights into convulsions, whereof they suddenly die, some he flays alive, others he tears limb from limb, great numbers are offered to Moloch, and the rest, tainted by his breath, die of a languishing consumption.

But the concern I have most at heart is for our Corporation of Poets, from whom I am preparing a petition to your Highness, to be subscribed with the names of one hundred and thirty-six of the first race, but whose immortal productions are never likely to reach your eyes, though each of them is now an humble and an earnest appellant for the laurel, and has large comely volumes ready to show for a support to his pretensions. The never-dying works of these illustrious persons your governor, sir, has devoted to unavoidable death, and your Highness is to be made believe that our age has never arrived at the honour to produce one single poet.

We confess immortality to be a great and powerful goddess, but in vain we offer up to her our devotions and our sacrifices if your Highness's

governor, who has usurped the priesthood, must, by an unparalleled ambition and avarice, wholly intercept and devour them.

To affirm that our age is altogether unlearned and devoid of writers in any kind, seems to be an assertion so bold and so false, that I have been sometimes thinking the contrary may almost be proved by uncontrollable demonstration. It is true, indeed, that although their numbers be vast and their productions numerous in proportion, yet are they hurried so hastily off the scene that they escape our memory and delude our sight. When I first thought of this address, I had prepared a copious list of titles to present your Highness as an undisputed argument for what I affirm. The originals were posted fresh upon all gates and corners of streets; but returning in a very few hours to take a review, they were all torn down and fresh ones in their places. I inquired after them among readers and booksellers, but I inquired in vain; the memorial of them was lost among men, their place was no more to be found; and I was laughed to scorn for a clown and a pedant, devoid of all taste and refinement, little versed in the course of present affairs, and that knew nothing of what had passed in the best companies of court and town. So that I can only avow in general to your Highness that we do abound in learning and wit, but to fix upon particulars is a task too slippery for my slender abilities. If I should venture, in a windy day, to affirm to your Highness that there is a large cloud near the horizon in the form of a bear, another in the zenith with the head of an ass, a third to the westward with claws like a dragon; and your Highness should in a few minutes think fit to examine the truth, it is certain they would be all chanced in figure and position, new ones would arise, and all we could agree upon would be, that clouds there were, but that I was grossly mistaken in the zoography and topography of them.