

The **Oxford Book**  
of *American Essays*



**Benjamin Franklin, Francis Hopkinson, Washington Irving, Richard Henry Dana, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry David Thoreau, James Russell Lowell, Walt Whitman, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, George William Curtis, Theodore Winthrop, Charles Dudley Warner, Charles William Eliot, William Dean Howells, John Burroughs, Clarence King, Henry James, Hamilton Wright Mabie, Henry Cabot Lodge, William Crary Brownell, Edward Sandford Martin, Samuel McChord Crothers, Theodore Roosevelt, Nicholas Murray Butler, William Peterfield Trent**

# **The Oxford Book of American Essays**

**Walking, Americanism in Literature, Our March  
to Washington, I Talk of Dreams, Colonialism in  
USA...**

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# INTRODUCTION

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The customary antithesis between "American" literature and "English" literature is unfortunate and misleading in that it seems to exclude American authors from the noble roll of those who have contributed to the literature of our mother-tongue. Of course, when we consider it carefully we cannot fail to see that the literature of a language is one and indivisible and that the nativity or the domicile of those who make it matters nothing. Just as Alexandrian literature is Greek, so American literature is English; and as Theocritus demands inclusion in any account of Greek literature, so Thoreau cannot be omitted from any history of English literature as a whole. The works of Anthony Hamilton and Rousseau, Mme. de Staël and M. Maeterlinck are not more indisputably a part of the literature of the French language than the works of Franklin and Emerson, of Hawthorne and Poe are part of the literature of the English language. Theocritus may never have set foot on the soil of Greece, and Thoreau never adventured himself on the Atlantic to visit the island-home of his ancestors; yet the former expressed himself in Greek and the latter in English,—and how can either be neglected in any comprehensive survey of the literature of his own tongue?

None the less is it undeniable that there is in Franklin and Emerson, in Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, whatever their mastery of the idiom they inherited in common with Steele and Carlyle, with Browning and Lamb, an indefinable and intangible flavor which distinguishes the first group from the second. The men who have set down the feelings and the

thoughts, the words and the deeds of the inhabitants of the United States have not quite the same outlook on life that we find in the men who have made a similar record in the British Isles. The social atmosphere is not the same on the opposite shores of the Western ocean; and the social organization is different in many particulars. For all that American literature is,—in the apt phrase of Mr. Howells,—"a condition of English literature," nevertheless it is also distinctively American. American writers are as loyal to the finer traditions of English literature as British writers are; they take an equal pride that they are also heirs of Chaucer and Dryden and subjects of King Shakspeare; yet they cannot help having the note of their own nationality.

Green, when he came to the Fourth of July, 1776, declared that thereafter the history of the English-speaking people flowed in two currents; and it is equally obvious that the stream of English literature has now two channels. The younger and the smaller is American—and what can we call the older and the ampler except British? A century ago there were published collections entitled the *British Poets*, the *British Novelists*, and the *British Essayists*; and the adjective was probably then chosen to indicate that these gatherings included the work of Scotch and Irish writers. Whatever the reason, the choice was happy; and the same adjective would serve to indicate now that the selections excluded the work of American writers. The British branch of English literature is the richer and the more various; yet the American branch has its own richness and its own variety, even if these qualities have revealed themselves only in the past hundred years.

It may be noted also that although American literature has not been adorned by so great a galaxy of brilliant names as illumined British literature in the nineteenth

century, it has had the good fortune to possess more authors of cosmopolitan fame than can be found in the German literature of the past hundred years, in the Italian, or in the Spanish. A forgotten American essayist once asserted that "foreign nations are a contemporaneous posterity," and even if this smart saying is not to be taken too literally, it has its significance. There is therefore food for thought in the fact that at least half a dozen, not to say half a score, of American authors have won wide popularity outside the limits of their own language,—a statement which could not be made of as many German or Italian or Spanish authors of the nineteenth century. From the death of Goethe to the arrival of the playwrights of the present generation, perhaps Heine is the sole German writer either of prose or of verse who has established his reputation broadly among the readers of other tongues than his own. And not more than one or two Spanish or Italian authors have been received even by their fellow Latins, as warmly as the French and the Germans have welcomed Cooper and Poe, Emerson and Mark Twain.

It is to present typical and characteristic examples of the American contribution to English literature in the essay-form that this volume has been prepared. Perhaps the term "essay-form" is not happily chosen since the charm of the essay lies in the fact that it is not formal, that it may be whimsical in its point of departure, and capricious in its ramblings after it has got itself under way. Even the Essay is itself a chameleon, changing color while we study it. There is little in common between Locke's austere *Essay on the Human Understanding* and Lamb's fantastic and frolicsome essay on *Roast Pig*. He would be bold indeed who should take compass and chain to measure off the precise territory of the Essay and to mark with scientific exactness the



boundaries which separate it from the Address on the one side and from the Letter on the other.

"Some (there are) that turn over all books and are equally searching in all papers," said Ben Jonson; "that write out of what they presently find or meet, without choice.... Such are all the Essayists, ever their master Montaigne." Bacon and Emerson followed in the footsteps of Montaigne, and present us with the results of their browsings among books and of their own dispersed meditations. In their hands the essay lacks cohesion and unity; it is essentially discursive. Montaigne never stuck to his text, when he had one; and the paragraphs of any of Emerson's essays might be shuffled without increasing their fortuitous discontinuity.

After Montaigne and Bacon came Steele and Addison, in whose hands the essay broadened its scope and took on a new aspect. The eighteenth century essay is so various that it may be accepted as the forerunner of the nineteenth century magazine, with its character-sketches and its brief tales, its literary and dramatic criticism, its obituary commemorations and its serial stories—for what but a serial story is the succession of papers devoted to the sayings and doings of Sir Roger? It was a new departure, although the writers of the *Tatler* and of the *Spectator* had profited by the *Conversations* of Walton and by the *Characters* of La Bruyère, by the epistles of Horace and by the comedies of Molière. (Has it ever been pointed out that the method of Steele and Addison in depicting Sir Roger is curiously akin to the method of Molière in presenting M. Jourdain?)

The delightful form of poetry which we call by a French name, *vers de société*, (although it has flourished more abundantly in English literature than in French) and which Mr. Austin Dobson, one of its supreme masters, prefers to call by Cowper's term, "familiar verse," may be accepted as

the metrical equivalent of the prose essay as this was developed and expanded by the English writers of the eighteenth century. And as the familiar verse of our language is ampler and richer than that of any other tongue, so also is the familiar essay. Indeed, the essay is one of the most characteristic expressions of the quality of our race. In its ease and its lightness and its variety, it is almost unthinkable in German; and even in French it is far less frequent than in English and far less assiduously cultivated.

As Emerson trod in the footsteps of Bacon so Washington Irving walked in the trail blazed by Steele and Addison and Goldsmith; and Franklin earlier, although his essays are in fact only letters, had revealed his possession of the special quality the essay demands,—the playful wisdom of a man of the world who is also a man of letters. Indeed, Dr. Franklin was far better fitted to shine as an essayist than his more ponderous contemporary, Dr. Johnson; certainly Franklin would never have "made little fishes talk like whales." And in the nineteenth century the American branch of English literature has had a group of essayists less numerous than that which adorned the British branch, but not less interesting or less important to their own people.

Among these American essayists we may find all sorts and conditions of writers,—poets adventuring themselves in prose, novelists eschewing story-telling, statesmen turning for a moment to matters of less weight, men of science and men of affairs chatting about themselves and airing their opinions at large. In their hands, as in the hands of their British contemporaries, the essay remains infinitely various, refusing to conform to any single type, and insisting on being itself and on expressing its author. We find in the best of these American essayists the familiar style and the

everyday vocabulary, the apparent simplicity and the seeming absence of effort, the horror of pedantry and the scorn of affectation, which are the abiding characteristics of the true essay. We find also the flavor of good talk, of the sprightly conversation that may sparkle in front of a wood fire and that often vanishes with the curling blue smoke.

It is the bounden duty of every maker of an anthology to set forth the principles that have guided him in the choice of the examples he is proffering to the public. The present editor has excluded purely literary criticism, as not quite falling within the boundaries of the essay, properly so-called. Then he has avoided all set orations, although he has not hesitated to include more than one paper originally prepared to be read aloud by its writer, because these examples seemed to him to fall within the boundaries of the essay. (Nearly all of Emerson's essays, it may be noted, had been lectures in an early stage of their existence.) Furthermore he has omitted all fiction, strictly to be so termed, although he would gladly have welcomed an apologue like Mark Twain's "Traveling with a Reformer," which is essentially an essay despite its use of dialogue. He has included also Franklin's "Dialogue with the Gout," which is instinct with the true spirit of the essay; and he has accepted as essays Franklin's "Ephemera" and "The Whistle," although they were both of them letters to the same lady. As the essay flowers out of leisure and out of culture, and as there has been in the United States no long background of easy tranquillity, there is in the American branch of English literature a relative deficiency in certain of the lighter forms of the essay more abundantly represented in the British branch; and therefore the less frequent examples of these lighter forms have here been companioned by graver discussions, never grave enough,

however, to be described as disquisitions. Finally, every selection is presented entire, except that Dana's paper on Kean's acting has been shorn of a needless preparatory note.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

# THE EPHEMERA: AN EMBLEM OF HUMAN LIFE

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TO MADAME BRILLON, OF PASSY

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**

You may remember, my dear friend, that when we lately spent that happy day in the delightful garden and sweet society of the Moulin Joly, I stopped a little in one of our walks, and stayed some time behind the company. We had been shown numberless skeletons of a kind of little fly, called an ephemera, whose successive generations, we were told, were bred and expired within the day. I happened to see a living company of them on a leaf, who appeared to be engaged in conversation. You know I understand all the inferior animal tongues. My too great application to the study of them is the best excuse I can give for the little progress I have made in your charming language. I listened through curiosity to the discourse of these little creatures; but as they, in their national vivacity, spoke three or four together, I could make but little of their conversation. I found, however, by some broken expressions that I heard now and then, they were disputing warmly on the merit of two foreign musicians, one a *cousin*, the other a *moscheto*; in which dispute they spent their time, seemingly as regardless of the shortness of life as if they had been sure of living a month. Happy people! thought I; you are certainly under a wise, just, and mild government, since you have no

public grievances to complain of, nor any subject of contention but the perfections and imperfections of foreign music. I turned my head from them to an old gray-headed one, who was single on another leaf, and talking to himself. Being amused with his soliloquy, I put it down in writing, in hopes it will likewise amuse her to whom I am so much indebted for the most pleasing of all amusements, her delicious company and heavenly harmony.

"It was," said he, "the opinion of learned philosophers of our race, who lived and flourished long before my time, that this vast world, the Moulin Joly, could not itself subsist more than eighteen hours; and I think there was some foundation for that opinion, since, by the apparent motion of the great luminary that gives life to all nature, and which in my time has evidently declined considerably towards the ocean at the end of our earth, it must then finish its course, be extinguished in the waters that surround us, and leave the world in cold and darkness, necessarily producing universal death and destruction. I have lived seven of those hours, a great age, being no less than four hundred and twenty minutes of time. How very few of us continue so long! I have seen generations born, flourish, and expire. My present friends are the children and grandchildren of the friends of my youth, who are now, alas, no more! And I must soon follow them; for, by the course of nature, though still in health, I cannot expect to live above seven or eight minutes longer. What now avails all my toil and labor in amassing honey-dew on this leaf, which I cannot live to enjoy! What the political struggles I have been engaged in for the good of my compatriot inhabitants of this bush, or my philosophical studies for the benefit of our race in general! for in politics what can laws do without morals? Our present race of ephemeræ will in a course of minutes become

corrupt, like those of other and older bushes, and consequently as wretched. And in philosophy how small our progress! Alas! art is long, and life is short! My friends would comfort me with the idea of a name they say I shall leave behind me; and they tell me I have lived long enough to nature and to glory. But what will fame be to an ephemera who no longer exists? And what will become of all history in the eighteenth hour, when the world itself, even the whole Moulin Joly, shall come to its end and be buried in universal ruin?"

To me, after all my eager pursuits, no solid pleasures now remain, but the reflection of a long life spent in meaning well, the sensible conversation of a few good lady ephemeræ, and now and then a kind smile and a tune from the ever amiable *Brillante*.

# THE WHISTLE

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**TO MADAME BRILLON**

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**

I received my dear friend's two letters, one for Wednesday and one for Saturday. This is again Wednesday. I do not deserve one for to-day, because I have not answered the former. But, indolent as I am, and averse to writing, the fear of having no more of your pleasing epistles, if I do not contribute to the correspondence, obliges me to take up my pen; and as Mr. B. has kindly sent me word that he sets out to-morrow to see you, instead of spending this Wednesday evening, as I have done its namesakes, in your delightful company, I sit down to spend it in thinking of you, in writing to you, and in reading over and over again your letters.

I am charmed with your description of Paradise, and with your plan of living there; and I approve much of your conclusion, that, in the meantime, we should draw all the good we can from this world. In my opinion we might all draw more good from it than we do, and suffer less evil, if we would take care not to give too much for *whistles*. For to me it seems that most of the unhappy people we meet with are become so by neglect of that caution.

You ask what I mean? You love stories, and will excuse my telling one of myself.

When I was a child of seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and being charmed



with the sound of a *whistle*, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my *whistle*, but disturbing all the family. My brothers, and sisters, and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and laughed at me so much for my folly, that I cried with vexation; and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, *Don't give too much for the whistle*; and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, *who gave too much for the whistle*.

When I saw one too ambitious of court favor, sacrificing his time in attendance on levees, his repose, his liberty, his virtue, and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself, *This man gives too much for his whistle*.

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by that neglect, *He pays, indeed, said I, too much for his whistle*.

If I knew a miser, who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, *Poor man, said I, you pay too much for your whistle*.

When I met with a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, and ruining his health in their pursuit, *Mistaken man*, said I, *you are providing pain for yourself, instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.*

If I see one fond of appearance, or fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in a prison, *Alas!* say I, *he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle.*

When I see a beautiful sweet-tempered girl married to an ill-natured brute of a husband, *What a pity*, say I, *that she should pay so much for a whistle!*

In short, I conceive that great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimates they have made of the value of things, and by their *giving too much for their whistles.*

Yet I ought to have charity for these unhappy people, when I consider that, with all this wisdom of which I am boasting, there are certain things in the world so tempting, for example, the apples of King John, which happily are not to be bought; for if they were put to sale by auction, I might very easily be led to ruin myself in the purchase, and find that I had once more given too much for the *whistle.*

Adieu, my dear friend, and believe me ever yours very sincerely and with unalterable affection.

# DIALOGUE BETWEEN FRANKLIN AND THE GOUT

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Midnight, 22 October, 1780.

FRANKLIN. Eh! Oh! eh! What have I done to merit these cruel sufferings?

GOUT. Many things; you have ate and drank too freely, and too much indulged those legs of yours in their indolence.

FRANKLIN. Who is it that accuses me?

GOUT. It is I, even I, the Gout.

FRANKLIN. What! my enemy in person?

GOUT. No, not your enemy.

FRANKLIN. I repeat it, my enemy; for you would not only torment my body to death, but ruin my good name; you reproach me as a glutton and a tippler; now all the world, that knows me, will allow that I am neither the one nor the other.

GOUT. The world may think as it pleases; it is always very complaisant to itself, and sometimes to its friends; but I very well know that the quantity of meat and drink proper for a man, who takes a reasonable degree of exercise, would be too much for another, who never takes any.

FRANKLIN. I take—eh! oh!—as much exercise—eh!—as I can, Madam Gout. You know my sedentary state, and on that account, it would seem, Madam Gout, as if you might spare me a little, seeing it is not altogether my own fault.

GOUT. Not a jot; your rhetoric and your politeness are thrown away; your apology avails nothing. If your situation

in life is a sedentary one, your amusements, your recreation, at least, should be active. You ought to walk or ride; or, if the weather prevents that, play at billiards. But let us examine your course of life. While the mornings are long, and you have leisure to go abroad, what do you do? Why, instead of gaining an appetite for breakfast, by salutary exercise, you amuse yourself with books, pamphlets, or newspapers, which commonly are not worth the reading. Yet you eat an inordinate breakfast, four dishes of tea, with cream, and one or two buttered toasts, with slices of hung beef, which I fancy are not things the most easily digested. Immediately afterwards you sit down to write at your desk, or converse with persons who apply to you on business. Thus the time passes till one, without any kind of bodily exercise. But all this I could pardon, in regard, as you say, to your sedentary condition. But what is your practice after dinner? Walking in the beautiful gardens of those friends with whom you have dined would be the choice of men of sense; yours is to be fixed down to chess, where you are found engaged for two or three hours! This is your perpetual recreation, which is the least eligible of any for a sedentary man, because, instead of accelerating the motion of the fluids, the rigid attention it requires helps to retard the circulation and obstruct internal secretions. Wrapt in the speculations of this wretched game, you destroy your constitution. What can be expected from such a course of living, but a body replete with stagnant humors, ready to fall prey to all kinds of dangerous maladies, if I, the Gout, did not occasionally bring you relief by agitating those humors, and so purifying or dissipating them? If it was in some nook or alley in Paris, deprived of walks, that you played awhile at chess after dinner, this might be excusable; but the same taste prevails with you in Passy, Auteuil, Montmartre, or

Sanoy, places where there are the finest gardens and walks, a pure air, beautiful women, and most agreeable and instructive conversation; all which you might enjoy by frequenting the walks. But these are rejected for this abominable game of chess. Fie, then, Mr. Franklin! But amidst my instructions, I had almost forgot to administer my wholesome corrections; so take that twinge,—and that.

FRANKLIN. Oh! eh! oh! Ohhh! As much instruction as you please, Madam Gout, and as many reproaches; but pray, Madam, a truce with your corrections!

GOUT. No, Sir, no,—I will not abate a particle of what is so much for your good,—therefore—

FRANKLIN. Oh! eh!—It is not fair to say I take no exercise, when I do very often, going out to dine and returning in my carriage.

GOUT. That, of all imaginable exercises, is the most slight and insignificant, if you allude to the motion of a carriage suspended on springs. By observing the degree of heat obtained by different kinds of motion, we may form an estimate of the quantity of exercise given by each. Thus, for example, if you turn out to walk in winter with cold feet, in an hour's time you will be in a glow all over; ride on horseback, the same effect will scarcely be perceived by four hours' round trotting; but if you loll in a carriage, such as you have mentioned, you may travel all day and gladly enter the last inn to warm your feet by a fire. Flatter yourself then no longer, that half an hour's airing in your carriage deserves the name of exercise. Providence has appointed few to roll in carriages, while he has given to all a pair of legs, which are machines infinitely more commodious and serviceable. Be grateful, then, and make a proper use of yours. Would you know how they forward the circulation of your fluids, in the very action of transporting you from place

to place; observe when you walk, that all your weight is alternately thrown from one leg to the other; this occasions a great pressure on the vessels of the foot, and repels their contents; when relieved, by the weight being thrown on the other foot, the vessels of the first are allowed to replenish, and, by a return of this weight, this repulsion again succeeds; thus accelerating the circulation of the blood. The heat produced in any given time depends on the degree of this acceleration; the fluids are shaken, the humors attenuated, the secretions facilitated, and all goes well; the cheeks are ruddy, and health is established. Behold your fair friend at Auteuil; a lady who received from bounteous nature more really useful science than half a dozen such pretenders to philosophy as you have been able to extract from all your books. When she honors you with a visit, it is on foot. She walks all hours of the day, and leaves indolence, and its concomitant maladies, to be endured by her horses. In this, see at once the preservative of her health and personal charms. But when you go to Auteuil, you must have your carriage, though it is no farther from Passy to Auteuil than from Auteuil to Passy.

FRANKLIN. Your reasonings grow very tiresome.

GOUT. I stand corrected. I will be silent and continue my office; take that, and that.

FRANKLIN. Oh! Ohh! Talk on, I pray you.

GOUT. No, no; I have a good number of twinges for you to-night, and you may be sure of some more to-morrow.

FRANKLIN. What, with such a fever! I shall go distracted. Oh! eh! Can no one bear it for me?

GOUT. Ask that of your horses; they have served you faithfully.

FRANKLIN. How can you so cruelly sport with my torments?

GOUT. Sport! I am very serious. I have here a list of offenses against your own health distinctly written, and can justify every stroke inflicted on you.

FRANKLIN. Read it then.

GOUT. It is too long a detail; but I will briefly mention some particulars.

FRANKLIN. Proceed. I am all attention.

GOUT. Do you remember how often you have promised yourself, the following morning, a walk in the grove of Boulogne, in the garden de la Murette, or in your own garden, and have violated your promise, alleging, at one time, it was too cold, at another too warm, too windy, too moist, or what else you pleased; when in truth it was too nothing, but your insuperable love of ease?

FRANKLIN. That I confess may have happened occasionally, probably ten times in a year.

GOUT. Your confession is very far short of the truth; the gross amount is one hundred and ninety-nine times.

FRANKLIN. Is it possible?

GOUT. So possible, that it is fact; you may rely on the accuracy of my statement. You know M. Brillon's gardens, and what fine walks they contain; you know the handsome flight of an hundred steps, which lead from the terrace above to the lawn below. You have been in the practice of visiting this amiable family twice a week, after dinner, and it is a maxim of your own, that "a man may take as much exercise in walking a mile, up and down stairs, as in ten on level ground." What an opportunity was here for you to have had exercise in both these ways! Did you embrace it, and how often?

FRANKLIN. I cannot immediately answer that question.

GOUT. I will do it for you; not once.

FRANKLIN. Not once?

GOUT. Even so. During the summer you went there at six o'clock. You found the charming lady, with her lovely children and friends, eager to walk with you, and entertain you with their agreeable conversation; and what has been your choice? Why, to sit on the terrace, satisfy yourself with the fine prospect, and passing your eye over the beauties of the garden below, without taking one step to descend and walk about in them. On the contrary, you call for tea and the chess-board; and lo! you are occupied in your seat till nine o'clock, and that besides two hours' play after dinner; and then, instead of walking home, which would have bestirred you a little, you step into your carriage. How absurd to suppose that all this carelessness can be reconcilable with health, without my interposition!

FRANKLIN. I am convinced now of the justness of Poor Richard's remark, that "Our debts and our sins are always greater than we think for."

GOUT. So it is. You philosophers are sages in your maxims, and fools in your conduct.

FRANKLIN. But do you charge among my crimes, that I return in a carriage from M. Brillon's?

GOUT. Certainly; for, having been seated all the while, you cannot object the fatigue of the day, and cannot want therefore the relief of a carriage.

FRANKLIN. What then would you have me do with my carriage?

GOUT. Burn it if you choose; you would at least get heat out of it once in this way; or, if you dislike that proposal, here's another for you; observe the poor peasants, who work in the vineyards and grounds about the villages of Passy, Auteuil, Chaillot, etc.; you may find every day among these deserving creatures, four or five old men and women, bent and perhaps crippled by weight of years, and too long



and too great labor. After a most fatiguing day, these people have to trudge a mile or two to their smoky huts. Order your coachman to set them down. This is an act that will be good for your soul; and, at the same time, after your visit to the Brillons, if you return on foot, that will be good for your body.

FRANKLIN. Ah! how tiresome you are!

GOUT. Well, then, to my office; it should not be forgotten that I am your physician. There.

FRANKLIN. Ohhh! what a devil of a physician!

GOUT. How ungrateful you are to say so! Is it not I who, in the character of your physician, have saved you from the palsy, dropsy, and apoplexy? one or other of which would have done for you long ago, but for me.

FRANKLIN. I submit, and thank you for the past, but entreat the discontinuance of your visits for the future; for, in my mind, one had better die than be cured so dolefully. Permit me just to hint, that I have also not been unfriendly to *you*. I never feed physician or quack of any kind, to enter the list against you; if then you do not leave me to my repose, it may be said you are ungrateful too.

GOUT. I can scarcely acknowledge that as any objection. As to quacks, I despise them; they may kill you indeed, but cannot injure me. And, as to regular physicians, they are at last convinced that the gout, in such a subject as you are, is no disease, but a remedy; and wherefore cure a remedy?—but to our business,—there.

FRANKLIN. Oh! oh!—for Heaven's sake leave me! and I promise faithfully never more to play at chess, but to take exercise daily, and live temperately.

GOUT. I know you too well. You promise fair; but, after a few months of good health, you will return to your old habits; your fine promises will be forgotten like the forms of

the last year's clouds. Let us then finish the account, and I will go. But I leave you with an assurance of visiting you again at a proper time and place; for my object is your good, and you are sensible now that I am your *real friend*.

# CONSOLATION FOR THE OLD BACHELOR

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## FRANCIS HOPKINSON

Mr. Aitken: Your Old Bachelor having pathetically represented the miseries of his solitary situation, severely reproaching himself for having neglected to marry in his younger days, I would fain alleviate his distress, by showing that it is possible he might have been as unhappy—even in the honorable state of matrimony.

I am a shoemaker in this city, and by my industry and attention have been enabled to maintain my wife and a daughter, now six years old, in comfort and respect; and to lay by a little at the year's end, against a rainy day.

My good wife had long teased me to take her to New York, in order to visit Mrs. Snip, the lady of an eminent taylor in that city, and her cousin; from whom she had received many pressing invitations.

This jaunt had been the daily subject of discussion at breakfast, dinner, and supper for a month before the time fixed upon for putting it in execution. As our daughter Jenny could by no means be left at home, many and great were the preparations to equip Miss and her Mamma for this important journey; and yet, as my wife assured me, there was nothing provided but what was *absolutely necessary*, and which we could not possibly do without. My purse sweat at every pore.

At last, the long-expected day arrived, preceded by a very restless night. For, as my wife could not sleep for

thinking on the approaching jaunt, neither would she suffer me to repose in quiet. If I happened through wearisomeness to fall into a slumber, she immediately roused me by some unseasonable question or remark: frequently asking if I was sure the apprentice had greased the chair-wheels, and seen that the harness was clean and in good order; often observing how surprised her cousin *Snip* would be to see us; and as often wondering how poor dear Miss *Jenny* would bear the fatigue of the journey. Thus past the night in delightful discourse, if that can with propriety be called a discourse, wherein my wife was the only speaker—my replies never exceeding the monosyllables *yes* or *no*, murmured between sleeping and waking.

No sooner was it fair daylight, but up started my notable wife, and soon roused the whole family. The little trunk was stuffed with baggage, even to bursting, and tied behind the chair, and the chair-box was crammed with trumpery which *we could not possibly do without*. Miss *Jenny* was drest, and breakfast devoured in haste: the old negro wench was called in, and the charge of the house committed to her care; and the two apprentices and the hired maid received many wholesome cautions and instructions for their conduct during our absence, all which they most liberally promised to observe; whilst I attended, with infinite patience, the adjustment of these preliminaries.

At length, however, we set off, and, turning the first corner, lost sight of our habitation, with great regret on my part, and no less joy on the part of Miss *Jenny* and her Mamma.

When we got to Poole's Bridge, there happened to be a great concourse of wagons, carts, &c., so that we could not pass for some time—Miss *Jenny* frightened—my wife very impatient and uneasy—wondered I did not call out to those

impudent fellows to make way for us; observing that I had not the spirit of a louse. Having got through this difficulty, we proceeded without obstruction—my wife in good-humor again—Miss *Jenny* in high spirits. At *Kensington* fresh troubles arise. "Bless me, Miss *Jenny*," says my wife, "where is the bandbox?" "I don't know, Mamma; the last time I saw it, it was on the table in your room." What's to be done? The bandbox is left behind—it contains Miss *Jenny's* new wire-cap—there is no possibility of doing without it—as well no New York as no wire-cap—there is no alternative, we must e'en go back for it. Teased and mortified as I was, my good wife administered consolation by observing, "That it was my business to see that everything was put into the chair that ought to be, but there was no depending upon me for anything; and that she plainly saw I undertook this journey with an ill-will, merely because she had set her heart upon it." Silent patience was my only remedy. An hour and a half restored to us this essential requisite—the wire-cap—and brought us back to the place where we first missed it.

After innumerable difficulties and unparalleled dangers, occasioned by ruts, stumps, and tremendous bridges, we arrived at Neshamony ferry: but how to cross it was the question. My wife protested that neither she nor *Jenny* would go over in the boat with the horse. I assured her that there was not the least danger; that the horse was as quiet as a dog, and that I would hold him by the bridle all the way. These assurances had little weight: the most forcible argument was that she must go that way or not at all, for there was no other boat to be had. Thus persuaded, she ventured in—the flies were troublesome—the horse kicked—my wife in panics—Miss *Jenny* in tears. *Ditto* at *Trenton-ferry*.

As we started pretty early, and as the days were long, we reached Trenton by two o'clock. Here we dined. My wife found fault with everything; and whilst she disposed of what I thought a tolerable hearty meal, declared there was nothing fit to eat. Matters, however, would have gone on pretty well, but Miss *Jenny* began to cry with the toothache—sad lamentations over Miss *Jenny*—all my fault because I had not made the glazier replace a broken pane in her chamber window. N. B. I had been twice for him, and he promised to come, but was not so good as his word.

After dinner we again entered upon our journey—my wife in good-humor—Miss *Jenny's* toothache much easier—various chat—I acknowledge everything my wife says for fear of discomposing her. We arrive in good time at Princetown. My wife and daughter admire the College. We refresh ourselves with tea, and go to bed early, in order to be up by times for the next day's expedition.

In the morning we set off again in tolerable good-humor, and proceeded happily as far as *Rocky-hill*. Here my wife's fears and terrors returned with great force. I drove as carefully as possible; but coming to a place where one of the wheels must unavoidably go over the point of a small rock, my wife, in a great fright, seized hold of one of the reins, which happening to be the wrong one, she pulled the horse so as to force the wheel higher up the rock than it would otherwise have gone, and overset the chair. We were all tumbled hickledy-pickledy, into the road—Miss *Jenny's* face all bloody—the woods echo to her cries—my wife in a fainting-fit—and I in great misery; secretly and most devoutly wishing cousin *Snip* at the devil. Matters begin to mend—my wife recovers—Miss *Jenny* has only received a slight scratch on one of her cheeks—the horse stands quite still, and none of the harness broke. Matters grew worse