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Gulliver's Travels

Advertisement

Mr Sympson's letter to Captain Gulliver, prefixed to this volume, will make a long advertisement unnecessary. Those interpolations complained of by the captain were made by a person since deceased,* on whose judgement the publisher relied to make any alterations that might be thought necessary. But this person, not rightly comprehending the scheme of the author, nor able to imitate his plain simple style, thought fit among many other alterations and insertions to complement the memory of Her late Majesty by saying that "she governed without a chief minister". We are assured that the copy sent to the bookseller in London was a transcript of the original – which original being in the possession of a very worthy gentleman in London and a most intimate friend of the author's,* after he had bought the book in sheets and compared it with the originals, bound it up with blank leaves and made those corrections which the reader will find in our edition. For the same gentleman did us the favour to let us transcribe his corrections.*

A Letter from Capt. Gulliver to His Cousin Sympson

I hope you will be ready to own publicly, whenever you shall be called to it, that by your great and frequent urgency you prevailed on me to publish a very loose and uncorrect account of my travels, with direction to hire some young gentlemen of either university to put them in order and correct the style, as my cousin Dampier* did by my advice in his book called *A Voyage round the World*. But I do not remember I gave you power to consent that anything should be omitted, and much less that anything should be inserted. Therefore, as to the latter, I do here renounce everything of that kind – particularly a paragraph about Her Majesty the late Queen Anne, of most pious and glorious memory – although I did reverence and esteem her more than any of human species. But you, or your interpolator, ought to have considered that, as it was not my inclination, so was it not decent to praise any animal of our composition before my master Houyhnhnm. And besides, the fact was altogether false; for to my knowledge, being in England during some part of her Majesty’s reign, she did govern by a chief minister – nay, even by two successively: the first whereof was the Lord of Godolphin, and the second the Lord of Oxford; so that you have made me “say the thing that was not”. Likewise, in the account of the Academy of Projectors, and several passages of my discourse to my Master Houyhnhnm, you have either omitted some material circumstances or minced or changed them in such a manner that I do hardly know mine own work. When I formerly hinted to you something of this in a letter, you were pleased to answer that you were afraid of giving offence; that people in power were very watchful over the press, and apt not only to interpret, but to punish everything which looked like an “innuendo” (as I think you called it). But pray, how could that which I spoke so many years ago – and at about five thousand leagues’ distance, in another reign – be applied to any of the Yahoos who now are said to govern the Herd; especially at a time when I little thought on or feared the unhappiness of living under them? Have not I the most reason to complain, when I see these very Yahoos carried by Houyhnhnms in a vehicle as if these were brutes and those the

rational creatures? And, indeed, to avoid so monstrous and detestable a sight was one principal motive of my retirement hither.

Thus much I thought proper to tell you in relation to yourself and to the trust I reposed in you.

I do in the next place complain of my own great want of judgement in being prevailed upon by the entreaties and false reasonings of you and some others, very much against mine own opinion, to suffer my travels to be published. Pray bring to your mind how often I desired you to consider, when you insisted on the motive of public good, that the Yahoos were a species of animals utterly incapable of amendment by precepts or examples. And so it hath proved: for instead of seeing a full stop put to all abuses and corruptions – at least in this little island, as I had reason to expect – behold, after above six months' warning, I cannot learn that my book hath produced one single effect according to mine intentions. I desired you would let me know by a letter when party and faction were extinguished, judges learned and upright, pleaders honest and modest, with some tincture of common sense, and Smithfield* blazing with pyramids of law books, the young nobility's education entirely changed, the physicians banished, the female Yahoos abounding in virtue, honour, truth and good sense; courts and levees of great ministers thoroughly weeded and swept; wit, merit and learning rewarded; all disgracers of the press in prose and verse condemned to eat nothing but their own cotton* and quench their thirst with their own ink. These, and a thousand other reformations, I firmly counted upon by your encouragement, as indeed they were plainly deducible from the precepts delivered in my book. And it must be owned that seven months were a sufficient time to correct every vice and folly to which Yahoos are subject, if their natures had been capable of the least disposition to virtue or wisdom. Yet so far have you been from answering mine expectation in any of your letters that, on the contrary, you are loading our carrier every week with libels and keys and reflections and memoirs and second parts – wherein I see myself accused of reflecting upon great statesfolk, of degrading human nature (for so they have still the confidence to style it) and of abusing the female sex. I find, likewise, that the writers of those bundles are not agreed among themselves: for some of them will not allow me to be author of mine own travels, and others make me author of books to which I am wholly a stranger.

I find, likewise, that your printer hath been so careless as to confound the times and mistake the dates of my several voyages and returns,

neither assigning the true year, or the true month, or day of the month. And I hear the original manuscript is all destroyed since the publication of my book. Neither have I any copy left; however, I have sent you some corrections, which you may insert if ever there should be a second edition. And yet I cannot stand to them, but shall leave that matter to my judicious and candid readers to adjust it as they please.

I hear some of our sea Yahoos find fault with my sea language as not proper in many parts, nor now in use. I cannot help it. In my first voyages, while I was young, I was instructed by the oldest mariners and learnt to speak as they did. But I have since found that the sea Yahoos are apt, like the land ones, to become newfangled in their words (which the latter change every year), insomuch as I remember – upon each return to mine own country – their old dialect was so altered that I could hardly understand the new. And I observe, when any Yahoo comes from London out of curiosity to visit me at mine own house, we neither of us are able to deliver our conceptions in a manner intelligible to the other.

If the censure of Yahoos could any way affect me, I should have great reason to complain that some of them are so bold as to think my book of travels a mere fiction out of mine own brain, and have gone so far as to drop hints that the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos have no more existence than the inhabitants of Utopia.*

Indeed I must confess that, as to the people of Lilliput, Brobdingrag (for so the word should have been spelt, and not erroneously Brobdingnag) and Laputa, I have never yet heard of any Yahoo so presumptuous as to dispute their being or the facts I have related concerning them, because the truth immediately strikes every reader with conviction. And is there less probability in my account of the Houyhnhnms or Yahoos, when it is manifest, as to the latter, there are so many thousands even in this city who only differ from their brother brutes in Houyhnhnmland because they use a sort of jabber and do not go naked? I wrote for their amendment, and not their approbation. The united praise of the whole race would be of less consequence to me than the neighing of those two degenerate Houyhnhnms I keep in my stable, because from these, degenerate as they are, I still improve in some virtues, without any mixture of vice.

Do these miserable animals presume to think that I am so far degenerated as to defend my veracity? Yahoo as I am, it is well known through all Houyhnhnmland that by the instructions and example of

my illustrious master I was able in the compass of two years (although I confess with the utmost difficulty) to remove that infernal habit of lying, shuffling, deceiving and equivocating so deeply rooted in the very souls of all my species – especially the Europeans.

I have other complaints to make upon this vexatious occasion, but I forbear troubling myself or you any further. I must freely confess that, since my last return, some corruptions of my Yahoo nature have revived in me by conversing with a few of your species – and particularly those of mine own family, by an unavoidable necessity – else I should never have attempted so absurd a project as that of reforming the Yahoo race in this kingdom. But I have now done with all such visionary schemes for ever.

April 2, 1727

The Publisher to the Reader

The author of these travels, Mr Lemuel Gulliver, is my ancient and intimate friend; there is likewise some relation between us by the mother's side. About three years ago Mr Gulliver, growing weary of the concourse of curious people coming to him at his house in Redriff, made a small purchase of land, with a convenient house, near Newark, in Nottinghamshire, his native county, where he now lives retired, yet in good esteem among his neighbours.

Although Mr Gulliver was born in Nottinghamshire, where his father dwelt, yet I have heard him say his family came from Oxfordshire; to confirm which, I have observed in the churchyard at Banbury, in that county, several tombs and monuments of the Gullivers.

Before he quitted Redriff, he left the custody of the following papers in my hands, with the liberty to dispose of them as I should think fit. I have carefully perused them three times. The style is very plain and simple, and the only fault I find is that the author, after the manner of travellers, is a little too circumstantial. There is an air of truth apparent through the whole, and indeed the author was so distinguished for his veracity that it became a sort of proverb among his neighbours at Redriff when any one affirmed a thing, to say it was as true as if Mr Gulliver had spoke it.

By the advice of several worthy persons – to whom, with the author's permission, I communicated these papers – I now venture to send them into the world, hoping they may be, at least for some time, a better entertainment to our young noblemen than the common scribbles of politics and party.

This volume would have been at least twice as large if I had not made bold to strike out innumerable passages relating to the winds and tides, as well as to the variations and bearings in the several voyages, together with the minute descriptions of the management of the ship in storms, in the style of sailors. Likewise, the account of the longitudes and latitudes, wherein I have reason to apprehend that Mr Gulliver may be a little dissatisfied. But I was resolved to fit the work as much as possible to the

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

general capacity of readers. However, if my own ignorance in sea affairs shall have led me to commit some mistakes, I alone am answerable for them. And if any traveller hath a curiosity to see the whole work at large, as it came from the hand of the author, I will be ready to gratify him.

As for any further particulars relating to the author, the reader will receive satisfaction from the first pages of the book.

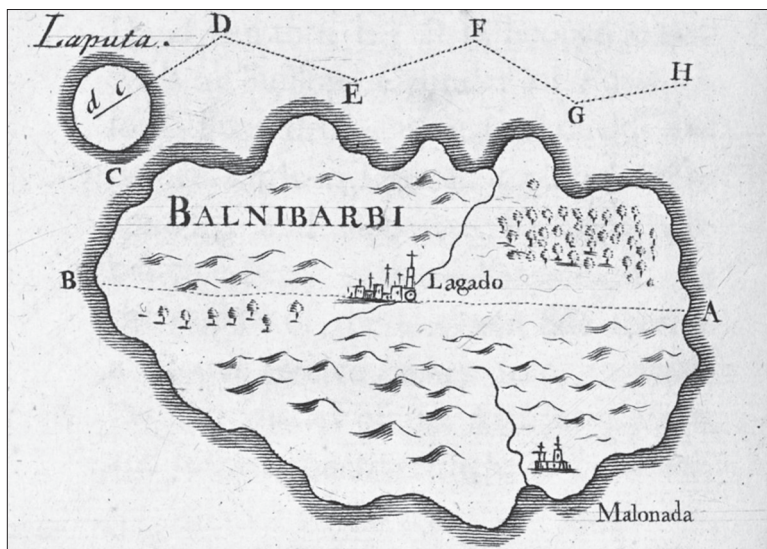
Richard Sympson

PART ONE

A Voyage to Lilliput

At the centre of the island there is a chasm about fifty yards in diameter, from whence the astronomers descend into a large dome, which is therefore called *flandona gagnole*, or the “astronomers’ cave”, situated at the depth of a hundred yards beneath the upper surface of the adamant. In this cave are twenty lamps continually burning, which from the reflection of the adamant cast a strong light into every part. The place is stored with great variety of sextants, quadrants, telescopes, astrolabes and other astronomical instruments. But the greatest curiosity, upon which the fate of the island depends, is a lodestone of a prodigious size, in shape resembling a weaver’s shuttle. It is in length six yards, and in the thickest part at least three yards over. This magnet is sustained by a very strong axle of adamant passing through its middle, upon which it plays, and is poised so exactly that the weakest hand can turn it. It is hooped round with a hollow cylinder of adamant – four foot deep, as many thick and twelve yards in diameter – placed horizontally and supported by eight adamantine feet, each six yards high. In the middle of the concave side there is a groove twelve inches deep, in which the extremities of the axle are lodged, and turned round as there is occasion.

This stone cannot be moved from its place by any force, because the hoop and its feet are one continued piece with that body of adamant which constitutes the bottom of the island.



Appendix

Alexander Pope's Verses on *Gulliver's Travels*

*Ode to Quinbus Flestrin, the Man Mountain,
by Titty Tit, Poet Laureate, to His Majesty of Lilliput
Translated into English*

In amaze
Lost I gaze!
Can our eyes
Reach thy size!
May my lays
Swell with praise,
Worthy thee!
Worthy me!
Muse, inspire
All thy fire!
Bards of old
Of him told.
When they said
Atlas' head
Propped the skies:
See! and believe your eyes!

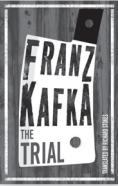
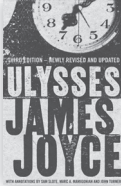
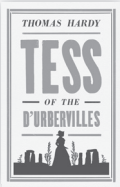
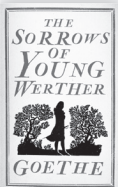
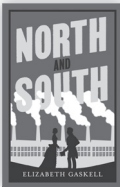
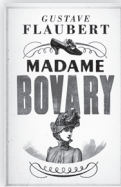
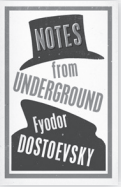
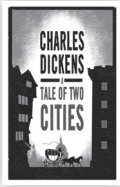
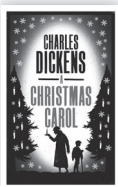
See him stride
Valleys wide,
Over woods,
Over floods!
When he treads,
Mountains' heads
Groan and shake:
Armies quake:
Lest his spurn
Overturn
Man and steed,
Troops, take heed!
Left and right,
Speed your flight!
Lest an host
Beneath his foot be lost!

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- 432 Anton Chekhov, *Three Years*
- 433 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Uncle's Dream*