

Daniel Defoe

Serious Reflections

During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe:
With His Vision of the Angelick World

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Даниэль Дефо

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«РИПОЛ Классик»

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Daniel Defoe was an English trader, writer, journalist, pamphleteer and spy. He wrote many political tracts and often was in trouble with the authorities, including prison time. The third book about Robinson Crousoe is a collection of Daniel Defoe's essays on moral topics. The name of Crusoe used to spur the public's interest in this work.

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The Publisher's Introduction

The publishing this extraordinary volume will appear to be no presumption, when it shall be remembered with what unexpected good and evil will the former volumes have been accepted in the world.

If the foundation has been so well laid, the structure cannot but be expected to bear a proportion; and while the parable has been so diverting, the moral must certainly be equally agreeable.

The success the two former parts have met with has been known by the envy it has brought upon the editor, expressed in a thousand hard words from the men of trade – the effect of that regret which they entertained at their having no share in it. And I must do the author the justice to say, that not a dog has wagged his tongue at the work itself, nor has a word been said to lessen the value of it, but which has been the visible effect of that envy at the good fortune of the bookseller.

The riddle is now expounded, and the intelligent reader may see clearly the end and design of the whole work; that it is calculated for, and dedicated to, the improvement and instruction of mankind in the ways of virtue and piety, by representing the various circumstances to which mankind is exposed, and encouraging such as fall into ordinary or extraordinary casualties of life, how to work through difficulties with unwearied diligence and application, and look up to Providence for success.

The observations and reflections, that take up this volume, crown the work; if the doctrine has been accepted, that application must of necessity please; and the author shows now, that he has learned sufficient experience how to make other men wise and himself unhappy.

The moral of the fable, as the author calls it, is most instructing; and those who challenged him most maliciously, with not making his pen useful, will have leisure to reflect, that they passed their censure too soon, and, like Solomon's fool, judged of the matter before they heard it.

Those whose avarice, prevailing over their honesty, had invaded the property of this book by a corrupt abridgment, have both failed in their hope and been ashamed of the fact; shifting off the guilt, as well as they could, though weakly, from one another. The principal pirate is gone to his place, and we say no more of him – *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*: it is satisfaction enough that the attempt has proved abortive, as the baseness of the design might give them reason to expect it would.

Robinson Crusoe's Preface

As the design of everything is said to be first in the intention, and last in the execution, so I come now to acknowledge to my reader that the present work is not merely the product of the two first volumes, but the two first volumes may rather be called the product of this. The fable is always made for the moral, not the moral for the fable.

I have heard that the envious and ill-disposed part of the world have raised some objections against the two first volumes, on pretence, for want of a better reason, that (as they say) the story is feigned, that the names are borrowed, and that it is all a romance; that there never were any such man or place, or circumstances in any man's life; that it is all formed and embellished by invention to impose upon the world.

I, Robinson Crusoe, being at this time in perfect and sound mind and memory, thanks be to God therefor, do hereby declare their objection is an invention scandalous in design, and false in fact; and do affirm that the story, though allegorical, is also historical; and that it is the beautiful representation of a life of unexampled misfortunes, and of a variety not to be met with in the world, sincerely adapted to and intended for the common good of mankind, and designed at first, as it is now farther applied, to the most serious uses possible.

Farther, that there is a man alive, and well known too, the actions of whose life are the just subject of these volumes, and to whom all or most part of the story most directly alludes; this may be depended upon for truth, and to this I set my name.

The famous "History of Don Quixote," a work which thousands read with pleasure, to one that knows the meaning of it, was an emblematic history of, and a just satire upon, the Duke de Medina Sidonia, a person very remarkable at that time in Spain. To those who knew the original, the figures were lively and easily discovered themselves, as they are also here, and the images were just; and therefore, when a malicious but foolish writer, in the abundance of his gall, spoke of the quixotism of R. Crusoe, as he called it, he showed, evidently, that he knew nothing of what he said; and perhaps will be a little startled when I shall tell him that what he meant for a satire was the greatest of panegyrics.

Without letting the reader into a nearer explication of the matter, I proceed to let him know, that the happy deductions I have employed myself to make, from all the circumstances of my story, will abundantly make him amends for his not having the emblem explained by the original; and that when in my observations and reflections of any kind in this volume I mention my solitudes and retirements, and allude to the circumstances of the former story, all those parts of the story are real facts in my history, whatever borrowed lights they may be represented by. Thus the fright and fancies which succeeded the story of the print of a man's foot, and surprise of the old goat, and the thing rolling on my bed, and my jumping out in a fright, are all histories and real stories; as are likewise the dream of being taken by messengers, being arrested by officers, the manner of being driven on shore by the surge of the sea, the ship on fire, the description of starving, the story of my man Friday, and many more most material passages observed here, and on which any religious reflections are made, are all historical and true in fact. It is most real that I had a parrot and taught it to call me by my name; such a servant a savage, and afterwards a Christian, and that his name was called Friday, and that he was ravished from me by force, and died in the hands that took him, which I represent by being killed; this is all literally true, and should I enter into discoveries many alive can testify them. His other conduct and assistance to me also have just references in all their parts to the helps I had from that faithful savage in my real solitudes and disasters.

The story of the bear in the tree, and the fight with the wolves in the snow, is likewise matter of real history; and, in a word, the "Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" are one whole scheme of a real life of eight and twenty years, spent in the most wandering, desolate, and afflicting circumstances that ever man went through, and in which I have lived so long in a life of wonders, in continued storms,

fought with the worst kind of savages and man eaters; by unaccountable surprising incidents, fed by miracles greater than that of ravens; suffered all manner of violences and oppressions, injurious reproaches, contempt of men, attacks of devils, corrections from Heaven, and oppositions on earth; have had innumerable ups and downs in matters of fortune, been in slavery worse than Turkish, escaped by an exquisite management, as that in the story of Xury, and the boat at Sallee; been taken up at sea in distress, raised again and depressed again, and that oftener perhaps in one man's life than ever was known before; shipwrecked often, though more by land than by sea. In a word, there is not a circumstance in the imaginary story but has its just allusion to a real story, and chimes part for part and step for step with the inimitable Life of Robinson Crusoe.

In like manner, when in these reflections I speak of the times and circumstances of particular actions done, or incidents which happened, in my solitude and island-life, an impartial reader will be so just to take it as it is, viz., that it is spoken or intended of that part of the real story which the island-life is a just allusion to; and in this the story is not only illustrated, but the real part I think: most justly approved. For example, in the latter part of this work called the Vision, I begin thus: "When I was in my island kingdom I had abundance of strange notions of my seeing apparitions," &c. All these reflections are just history of a state of forced confinement, which in my real history is represented by a confined retreat in an island; and it is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not. The story of my fright with something on my bed was word for word a history of what happened, and indeed all those things received very little alteration, except what necessarily attends removing the scene from one place to another.

My observations upon solitude are the same; and I think I need say no more than that the same remark is to be made upon all the references made here to the transactions of the former volumes, and the reader is desired to allow for it as he goes on.

Besides all this, here is the just and only good end of all parable or allegoric history brought to pass, viz., for moral and religious improvement. Here is invincible patience recommended under the worst of misery, indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances; I say, these are recommended as the only way to work through those miseries, and their success appears sufficient to support the most dead-hearted creature in the world.

Had the common way of writing a man's private history been taken, and I had given you the conduct or life of a man you knew, and whose misfortunes and infirmities perhaps you had sometimes unjustly triumphed over, all I could have said would have yielded no diversion, and perhaps scarce have obtained a reading, or at best no attention; the teacher, like a greater, having no honour in his own country. Facts that are formed to touch the mind must be done a great way off, and by somebody never heard of. Even the miracles of the blessed Saviour of the world suffered scorn and contempt, when it was reflected that they were done by the carpenter's son; one whose family and original they had a mean opinion of, and whose brothers and sisters were ordinary people like themselves.

There even yet remains a question whether the instruction of these things will take place, when you are supposing the scene, which is placed so far off, had its original so near home.

But I am far from being anxious about that, seeing, I am well assured, that if the obstinacy of our age should shut their ears against the just reflections made in this volume upon the transactions taken notice of in the former, there will come an age when the minds of men shall be more flexible, when the prejudices of their fathers shall have no place, and when the rules of virtue and religion, justly recommended, shall be more gratefully accepted than they may be now, that our children may rise up in judgment against their fathers, and one generation be edified by the same teaching which another generation had despised.

Rob. Crusoe.

Introduction

I must have made very little use of my solitary and wandering years if, after such a scene of wonders, as my life may be justly called, I had nothing to say, and had made no observations which might be useful and instructing, as well as pleasant and diverting, to those that are to come after me.

Chapter One. Of Solitude

How incapable to make us happy, and how unqualified to a Christian life.

I have frequently looked back, you may be sure, and that with different thoughts, upon the notions of a long tedious life of solitude, which I have represented to the world, and of which you must have formed some ideas, from the life of a man in an island. Sometimes I have wondered how it could be supported, especially for the first years, when the change was violent and imposed, and nature unacquainted with anything like it. Sometimes I have as much wondered why it should be any grievance or affliction, seeing upon the whole view of the stage of life which we act upon in this world it seems to me that life in general is, or ought to be, but one universal act of solitude; but I find it is natural to judge of happiness by its suiting or not suiting our own inclinations. Everything revolves in our minds by innumerable circular motions, all centering in ourselves. We judge of prosperity and of affliction, joy and sorrow, poverty, riches, and all the various scenes of life – I say, we judge of them by ourselves. Thither we bring them home, as meats touch the palate, by which we try them; the gay part of the world, or the heavy part; it is all one, they only call it pleasant or unpleasant, as they suit our taste.

The world, I say, is nothing to us but as it is more or less to our relish. All reflection is carried home, and our dear self is, in one respect, the end of living. Hence man may be properly said to be alone in the midst of the crowds and hurry of men and business. All the reflections which he makes are to himself; all that is pleasant he embraces for himself; all that is irksome and grievous is tasted but by his own palate.

What are the sorrows of other men to us, and what their joy? Something we may be touched indeed with by the power of sympathy, and a secret turn of the affections; but all the solid reflection is directed to ourselves. Our meditations are all solitude in perfection; our passions are all exercised in retirement; we love, we hate, we covet, we enjoy, all in privacy and solitude. All that we communicate of those things to any other is but for their assistance in the pursuit of our desires; the end is at home; the enjoyment, the contemplation, is all solitude and retirement; it is for ourselves we enjoy, and for ourselves we suffer. What, then, is the silence of life? And how is it afflicting while a man has the voice of his soul to speak to God and to himself? That man can never want conversation who is company for himself, and he that cannot converse profitably with himself is not fit for any conversation at all. And yet there are many good reasons why a life of solitude, as solitude is now understood by the age, is not at all suited to the life of a Christian or of a wise man. Without inquiring, therefore, into the advantages of solitude, and how it is to be managed, I desire to be heard concerning what solitude really is; for I must confess I have different notions about it, far from those which are generally understood in the world, and far from all those notions upon which those people in the primitive times, and since that also, acted; who separated themselves into deserts and unfrequented places, or confined themselves to cells, monasteries, and the like, retired, as they call it, from the world. All which, I think, have nothing of the thing I call solitude in them, nor do they answer any of the true ends of solitude, much less those ends which are pretended to be sought after by those who have talked most of those retreats from the world.

As for confinement in an island, if the scene was placed there for this very end, it were not at all amiss. I must acknowledge there was confinement from the enjoyments of the world, and restraint from human society. But all that was no solitude; indeed no part of it was so, except that which, as in my story, I applied to the contemplation of sublime things, and that was but a very little, as my readers well know, compared to what a length of years my forced retreat lasted.

It is evident then that, as I see nothing but what is far from being retired in the forced retreat of an island, the thoughts being in no composure suitable to a retired condition – no, not for a great while; so I can affirm, that I enjoy much more solitude in the middle of the greatest collection of

mankind in the world, I mean, at London, while I am writing this, than ever I could say I enjoyed in eight and twenty years' confinement to a desolate island.

I have heard of a man that, upon some extraordinary disgust which he took at the unsuitable conversation of some of his nearest relations, whose society he could not avoid, suddenly resolved never to speak any more. He kept his resolution most rigorously many years; not all the tears or entreaties of his friends – no, not of his wife and children – could prevail with him to break his silence. It seems it was their ill-behaviour to him, at first, that was the occasion of it; for they treated him with provoking language, which frequently put him into undecent passions, and urged him to rash replies; and he took this severe way to punish himself for being provoked, and to punish them for provoking him. But the severity was unjustifiable; it ruined his family, and broke up his house. His wife could not bear it, and after endeavouring, by all the ways possible, to alter his rigid silence, went first away from him, and afterwards away from herself, turning melancholy and distracted. His children separated, some one way and some another way; and only one daughter, who loved her father above all the rest, kept with him, tended him, talked to him by signs, and lived almost dumb like her father near twenty nine years with him; till being very sick, and in a high fever, delirious as we call it, or light-headed, he broke his silence, not knowing when he did it, and spoke, though wildly at first. He recovered of the illness afterwards, and frequently talked with his daughter, but not much, and very seldom to anybody else.

Yet this man did not live a silent life with respect to himself; he read continually, and wrote down many excellent things, which deserved to have appeared in the world, and was often heard to pray to God in his solitudes very audibly and with great fervency; but the injustice which his rash vow – if it was a vow – of silence was to his family, and the length he carried it, was so unjustifiable another way, that I cannot say his instructions could have much force in them.

Had he been a single man, had he wandered into a strange country or place where the circumstance of it had been no scandal, his vow of silence might have been as commendable and, as I think, much more than any of the primitive Christians' vows of solitude were, whose retreat into the wilderness, and giving themselves up to prayer and contemplation, shunning human society and the like, was so much esteemed by the primitive fathers; and from whence our religious houses and orders of religious people were first derived.

The Jews said John the Baptist had a devil because he affected solitude and retirement; and they took it from an old proverb they had in the world at that time, that “every solitary person must be an angel or a devil.”

A man under a vow of perpetual silence, if but rigorously observed, would be, even on the Exchange of London, as perfectly retired from the world as a hermit in his cell, or a solitaire in the deserts of Arabia; and if he is able to observe it rigorously, may reap all the advantages of those solitudes without the unjustifiable part of such a life, and without the austerities of a life among brutes. For the soul of a man, under a due and regular conduct, is as capable of reserving itself, or separating itself from the rest of human society, in the midst of a throng, as it is when banished into a desolate island.

The truth is, that all those religious hermit-like solitudes, which men value themselves so much upon, are but an acknowledgment of the defect or imperfection of our resolutions, our incapacity to bind ourselves to needful restraints, or rigorously to observe the limitations we have vowed ourselves to observe. Or, take it thus, that the man first resolving that it would be his felicity to be entirely given up to conversing only with heaven and heavenly things, to be separated to prayer and good works, but being sensible how ill such a life will agree with flesh and blood, causes his soul to commit a rape upon his body, and to carry it by force, as it were, into a desert, or into a religious retirement, from whence it cannot return, and where it is impossible for it to have any converse with mankind, other than with such as are under the same vows and the same banishment. The folly of this is evident many ways.

I shall bring it home to the case in hand thus: Christians may, without doubt, come to enjoy all the desirable advantages of solitude by a strict retirement and exact government of their thoughts, without any of these formalities, rigours, and apparent mortifications, which I think I justly call a rape upon human nature, and consequently without the breach of Christian duties, which they necessarily carry with them, such as rejecting Christian communion, sacraments, ordinances, and the like.

There is no need of a wilderness to wander among wild beasts, no necessity of a cell on the top of a mountain, or a desolate island in the sea; if the mind be confined, if the soul be truly master of itself, all is safe; for it is certainly and effectually master of the body, and what signify retreats, especially a forced retreat as mine was? The anxiety of my circumstances there, I can assure you, was such for a time as was very unsuitable to heavenly meditations, and even when that was got over, the frequent alarms from the savages put the soul sometimes to such extremities of fear and horror, that all manner of temper was lost, and I was no more fit for religious exercises than a sick man is fit for labour.

Divine contemplations require a composure of soul, uninterrupted by any extraordinary motions or disorders of the passions; and this, I say, is much easier to be obtained and enjoyed in the ordinary course of life, than in monkish cells and forcible retreats.

The business is to get a retired soul, a frame of mind truly elevated above the world, and then we may be alone whenever we please, in the greatest apparent hurry of business or company. If the thoughts are free, and rightly unengaged, what imports the employment the body is engaged in? Does riot the soul act by a differing agency, and is not the body the servant, nay, the slave of the soul? Has the body hands to act, or feet to walk, or tongue to speak, but by the agency of the understanding and will, which are the two deputies of the soul's power? Are not all the affections and all the passions, which so universally agitate, direct, and possess the body, are they not all seated in the soul? What have we to do then, more or less, but to get the soul into a superior direction and elevation? There is no need to prescribe the body to this or that situation; the hands, or feet, or tongue can no more disturb the retirement of the soul, than a man having money in his pocket can take it out, or pay it, or dispose of it by his hand, without his own knowledge.

It is the soul's being entangled by outward objects that interrupts its contemplation of Divine objects, which is the excuse for these solitudes, and makes the removing the body from those outward objects seemingly necessary; but what is there of religion in all this? For example, a vicious inclination removed from the object is still a vicious inclination, and contracts the same guilt as if the object were at hand; for if, as our Saviour says, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her" – that is, to desire her unlawfully – has committed the adultery already, so it will be no inverting our Saviour's meaning to say that he that thinketh of a woman to desire her unlawfully has committed adultery with her already, though he has not looked on her, or has not seen her at that time. And how shall this thinking of her be removed by transporting the body? It must be removed by the change in the soul, by bringing the mind to be above the power or reach of the allurements, and to an absolute mastership over the wicked desire; otherwise the vicious desire remains, as the force remains in the gunpowder, and will exert itself whenever touched with the fire.

All motions to good or evil are in the soul. Outward objects are but second causes; and though, it is true, separating the man from the object is the way to make any act impossible to be committed, yet where the guilt does not lie in the act only, but in the intention or desire to commit it, that separation is nothing at all, and effects nothing at all. There may be as much adultery committed in a monastery, where a woman never comes, as in any other place, and perhaps is so. The abstaining from evil, therefore, depends not only and wholly upon limiting or confining the man's actions, but upon the man's limiting and confining his desires; seeing to desire to sin is to sin; and the fact which we would commit if we had opportunity is really committed, and must be answered for as such. What, then, is there of religion, I say, in forced retirements from the world, and vows of silence or solitude? They

are all nothing. 'Tis a retired soul that alone is fit for contemplation, and it is the conquest of our desires to sin that is the only human preservative against sin.

It was a great while after I came into human society that I felt some regret at the loss of the solitary hours and retirements I had in the island; but when I came to reflect upon some ill-spent time, even in my solitudes, I found reason to see what I have said above – that a man may sin alone several ways, and find subject of repentance for his solitary crimes as well as he may in the midst of a populous city.

The excellency of any state of life consists in its freedom from crime; and it is evident to our experience that some society may be better adapted to a rectitude of life than a complete solitude and retirement. Some have said that next to no company, good company is best; but it is my opinion, that next to good company, no company is best; for as it is certain that no company is better than bad company, so 'tis as certain that good company is much better than no company.

In solitude a man converses with himself, and as a wise man said, he is not always sure that he does not converse with his enemy; but he that is in good company is sure to be always among his friends.

The company of religious and good men is a constant restraint from evil, and an encouragement to a religious life. You have there the beauty of religion exemplified; you never want as well instruction in, as example for, all that is good; you have a contempt of evil things constantly recommended, and the affections moved to delight in what is good by hourly imitation. If we are alone we want all these, and are led right or led wrong, as the temper of the mind, which is sometimes too much the guide of our actions as well as thoughts, happens to be constituted at that time. Here we have no restraint upon our thoughts but from ourselves, no restraint upon our actions but from our own consciences, and nothing to assist us in our mortifications of our desires, or in directing our desires, but our own reflections, which, after all, may often err, often be prepossessed.

If you would retreat from the world, then be sure to retreat to good company, retreat to good books, and retreat to good thoughts; these will always assist one another, and always join to assist him that flies to them in his meditations, direct him to just reflections, and mutually encourage him against whatever may attack him from within him or without him; whereas to retreat from the world, as it is called, is to retreat from good men, who are our best friends. Besides, to retreat, as we call it, to an entire perfect solitude, is to retreat from the public worship of God, to forsake the assemblies, and, in a word, is unlawful, because it obliges us to abandon those things which we are commanded to do.

Solitude, therefore, as I understand by it, a retreat from human society, on a religious or philosophical account, is a mere cheat; it neither can answer the end it proposes, or qualify us for the duties of religion, which we are commanded to perform, and is therefore both irreligious in itself, and inconsistent with a Christian life many ways. Let the man that would reap the advantage of solitude, and that understands the meaning of the word, learn to retire into himself. Serious meditation is the essence of solitude; all the retreats into woods and deserts are short of this; and though a man that is perfectly master of this retirement may be a little in danger of quietism, that is to say, of an affectation of reservedness, yet it may be a slander upon him in the main, and he may make himself amends upon the world by the blessed calm of his soul, which they perhaps who appear more cheerful may have little of.

Retiring into deserts in the first days of religion, and into abbeys and monasteries since, what have they been, or what have they been able to do, to wards purchasing the retirement I speak of? They have indeed been things to be reckoned among austerities and acts of mortification, and so far might be commendable; but I must insist upon it, that a retired soul is not affected with them any more than with the hurries of company and society. When the soul of a man is powerfully engaged in any particular subject, 'tis like that of St. Paul, wrapt up, whether it be into the third heaven, or to any degree of lower exaltation. Such a man may well say with the apostle above, u Whether I was in

the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell.” It was in such a wrapt-up state, that I conceived what I call my vision of the angelical world, of which I have here subjoined a very little part.

Is it rational to believe, that a mind exalted so far above the state of things with which we ordinarily converse, should not be capable of a separation from them, which, in a word, is the utmost extent of solitude? Let such never afflict themselves that they cannot retreat from the world; let them learn to retreat in the world, and they shall enjoy a perfect solitude, as complete, to all intents and purposes, as if they were to live in the cupola of St. Paul’s, or as if they were to live upon the top of Cheviot Hill in Northumberland.

They that cannot be retired in this manner must not only retire from the world, but out of the world, before they can arrive to any true solitude. Man is a creature so formed for society, that it may not only be said that it is not good for him to be alone, but ‘tis really impossible he should be alone. We are so continually in need of one another, nay, in such absolute necessity of assistance from one another, that those who have pretended to give us the lives and manner of the solitaires, as they call them, who separated themselves from mankind, and wandered in the deserts of Arabia and Lybia, are frequently put to the trouble of bringing the angels down from heaven to do one drudgery or another for them, forming imaginary miracles to make the life of a true solitaire possible. Sometimes they have no bread, sometimes no water, for a long time together, and then a miracle is brought upon the stage, to make them live so long without food; at other times they have angels come to be their cooks, and bring them roast-meat; to be their physicians, to bring them physic, and the like. If St. Hilary comes in his wanderings to the river Nile, an humble crocodile is brought to carry him over upon his back; though they do not tell us whether the crocodile asked him to ride, or he asked the crocodile, or by what means they came to be so familiar with one another. And what is all this to the retirement of the soul, with which it converses in heaven in the midst of infinite crowds of men, and to whom the nearest of other objects is nothing at all, any more than the objects of mountains and deserts, lions and leopards, and the like, were to those that banished themselves to Arabia?

Besides, in a state of life where circumstances are easy, and provision for the necessities of life, which the best saint cannot support the want of, is quietly and plentifully made, has not the mind infinitely more room to withdraw from the world, than when at best it must wander for its daily food, though it were but the product of the field?

Let no man plead he wants retirement, that he loves solitude, but cannot enjoy it because of the embarrassment of the world; ‘tis all a delusion; if he loves it, if he desires it, he may have it when, where, and as often as he pleases, let his hurries, his labours, or his afflictions be what they will; it is not the want of an opportunity for solitude, but the want of a capacity of being solitary, that is the case in all the circumstances of life.

I knew a poor but good man, who, though he was a labourer, was a man of sense and religion, who, being hard at work with some other men removing a great quantity of earth to raise a bank against the side of a pond, was one day so out of himself, and wrapt up in a perfect application of his mind to a very serious subject, that the poor man drove himself and his wheelbarrow into the pond, and could not recover himself till help came to him. This man was certainly capable of a perfect solitude, and perhaps really enjoyed it, for, as I have often heard him say, he lived alone in the world: (1) Had no family to embarrass his affections; (2) his low circumstances placed him below the observation of the upper degrees of mankind; (3) and his reserved meditations placed him above the wicked part, who were those in a sphere equal to himself, among whom, as he said, and is most true, it was very hard to find a sober man, much less a good man; so that he lived really alone in the world, applied himself to labour for his subsistence, had no other business with mankind but for necessities of life, and conversed in heaven as effectually, and, I believe, every way as divinely, as St. Hilary did in the deserts of Lybia among the lions and crocodiles.

If this retirement, which they call solitude, consisted only of separating the person from the world – that is to say, from human society – it were itself a very mean thing, and would every way as

well be supplied by removing from a place where a man is known to a place where he is not known, and there accustom himself to a retired life, making no new acquaintance, and only making the use of mankind which I have already spoken of, namely, for convenience and supply of necessary food; and I think of the two that such a man, or a man so retired, may have more opportunity to be an entire recluse, and may enjoy more real solitude than a man in a desert. For example: –

In the solitude I speak of, a man has no more to do for the necessities of life than to receive them from the hands of those that are to furnish them, and pay them for so doing; whereas in the solitude of deserts and wandering lives, from whence all our monkish devotion springs, they had every day their food, such as it was, to seek, or the load of it to carry, and except where, as is said, they put Providence to the operation of a miracle to furnish it, they had frequently difficulties enough to sustain life; and if we may believe history, many of them were starved to death for mere hunger or thirst, and as often the latter as the former.

Those that had recourse to these solitudes merely as a mortification of their bodies, as I observed before, and delivering themselves from the temptations which society exposed them to, had more room for the pretence, indeed, than those who allege that they did it to give up themselves to prayer and meditation. The first might have some reason in nature for the fact, as men's tempers and constitutions might lead; some having an inordinate appetite to crime, some addicted by nature to one ill habit, some to another, though the Christian religion does not guide us to those methods of putting a force upon our bodies to subdue the violence of inordinate appetite. The blessed apostle St. Paul seems to have been in this circumstance when being assaulted with what is called in the text “a thorn in the flesh;” be it what it will that is meant there, it is not to my purpose, but he prayed to the Lord thrice; that was the first method the apostle took, and thereby set a pious example to all those who are assaulted by any temptation. He did not immediately fly to austerities and bodily modifications, separating himself from mankind, or flying into the desert to give himself up to fasting, and a retreat from the world, which is the object of all private snare, but he applied himself by serious prayer to Him who had taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” And the answer likewise is instructing in the case; he was not driven out as Nebuchadnezzar into the desert – he was not commanded to retire into the wilderness that he might be free from the temptation; nothing less; but the answer was, “My grace is sufficient for thee” – sufficient without the help of artificial mortification.

So that even in the case of these forcible mortifications they are not required, much less directed, for helps to meditation; for if meditation could not be practised beneficially, and to all the intents and purposes for which it was ordained a duty, without flying from the face of human society, the life of man would be very unhappy.

But doubtless the contrary is evident, and all the parts of a complete solitude are to be as effectually enjoyed, if we please, and sufficient grace assisting, even in the most populous cities, among the hurries of conversation and gallantry of a court, or the noise and business of a camp, as in the deserts of Arabia and Lybia, or in the desolate life of an uninhabited island.

Chapter Two. An Essay Upon Honesty

When I first came home to my own country, and began to sit down and look back upon the past circumstances of my wandering state, as you will in charity suppose I could not but do very often, the very prosperity I enjoyed led me most naturally to reflect upon the particular steps by which I arrived to it. The condition I was in was very happy, speaking of human felicity; the former captivity I had suffered made my liberty sweeter to me; and to find myself jumped into easy circumstances at once, from a condition below the common rate of life, made it still sweeter.

One time as I was upon my inquiries into the happy concurrence of the causes which had brought the event of my prosperity to pass, as an effect, it occurred to my thoughts how much of it all depended, under the disposition of Providence, upon the principle of honesty which I met with in almost all the people whom it was my lot to be concerned with in my private and particular affairs; and I that had met with such extraordinary instances of the knavery and villainy of men's natures in other circumstances, could not but be something taken up with the miracles of honesty that I had met with among the several people I had had to do with, I mean, those whom I had more particularly to do with in the articles of my liberty, estate, or effects, which fell into their hands.

I began with my most trusty and faithful widow, the captain's wife with whom I first went to the coast of Africa, and to whom I entrusted £200, being the gain I had made in my first adventures to Guinea, as in the first volume, page 18, appears.

She was left a widow, and in but indifferent circumstances; but when I sent to her so far off as the Brazils, where I was in such a condition as she might have reasonably believed I should never have been able to come myself, and if I had, might be in no condition to recover it of her, and having myself nothing to show under her hand for the trust, yet she was so just that she sent the full value of what I wrote for, being £100; and to show, as far as in her lay, her sincere honest concern for my good, put in among many necessary things which I did not write for, I say, put in two Bibles, besides other good books, for my reading and instruction, as she said afterwards, in Popish and heathen countries, where I might chance to fall. Honesty not only leads to discharge every debt and every trust to our neighbour, so far as it is justly to be demanded, but an honest man acknowledges himself debtor to all mankind, for so much good to be done for them, whether for soul or body, as Providence puts an opportunity into his hands to do. In order to discharge this debt, he studies continually for opportunity to do all the acts of kindness and beneficence that is possible for him to do; and though very few consider it, a man is not a completely honest man that does not do this.

Upon this consideration I question much whether a covetous, narrow, stingy man, as we call him, one who gives himself up to himself, as born for himself only, and who declines the advantages and opportunities of doing good, I mean extremely so I say, I much question whether such a man can be an honest man; nay, I am satisfied he cannot be an honest man, for though he may pay every man his own, and be just, as he thinks it, to a farthing, yet this is part of the justice which, in the common phrase, is the greatest injustice. This is one meaning of that saying, summum jus, summa injuria.

To pay every man their own is the common law of honesty, but to do good to all mankind, as far as you are able, is the chancery law of honesty; and though, in common law or justice, as I call it, mankind can have no claim upon us if we do but just pay our debts, yet in heaven's chancery they will have relief against us, for they have a demand in equity of all the good to be done them that it is in our power to do, and this chancery court, or court of equity, is held in every man's breast – 'tis a true court of conscience, and every man's conscience is a lord chancellor to him. If he has not performed, if he has not paid this debt, conscience will decree him to pay it, on the penalty of declaring him a dishonest man, even in his own opinion; and if he still refuses to comply, will proceed by all the legal steps of a court of conscience process, till at last it will issue out a writ of rebellion against him, and proclaim him a rebel to nature and his own conscience.

But this is by the way, and is occasioned by the observations I have made of many people who think they are mighty honest if they pay their debts, and owe no man anything, as they call it; at the same time, like true misers, who lay up all for themselves, they think nothing of the debt of charity and beneficence which they owe to all mankind.

Rich men are their Maker's freeholders; they enjoy freely the estate He has given them possession of, with all the rents, profits, and emoluments, but charged with a fee farm rent to the younger children of the family, namely, the poor; or if you will, you may call them God's copy holders, paying a quit-rent to the lord of the manor, which quit-rent he has assigned for the use of the rest of mankind, to be paid in a constant discharge of all good offices, friendly, kind, and generous actions; and he that will not pay his rent cannot be an honest man, any more than he that would not pay his other just debts.

The Scripture concurs exactly with this notion of mine; the miser is called by the prophet Isaiah a vile person, one that works iniquity, and practises hypocrisy, and utters error before the Lord (Isaiah xxxii. 6). How does this appear? The very next words explain it. "He makes empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail." But lest this should seem a strained text, let us read on, both before and after verse 5. "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." Here the opposite to a liberal man is called a vile person, and the opposite to a bountiful man is called a churl; and in the verse following, the same vile person, as opposed to the liberal man, is called a wicked man, and the liberal man is set up a pattern for us all, in opposition to the vile, churlish, covetous wretch. – Vers. 7, 8. "The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right; but the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

In a word, I think my opinion justified by this text, that a churl, a morose, sour disposition, a covetous, avaricious, selfish-principled man, cannot be an honest man: he does not pay the common debt of mankind to one another, nor the fee-farm or quit-rent of his estate to God, who is his great landlord or lord of the manor, and who has charged the debt upon him. I know the miser will laugh at this notion, but I speak my own opinion, let it go as far as reason will carry it.

I come back to the examples I was giving in my private case. As the widow was honest to me, so was my good Portuguese captain; and it is this man's original honesty that makes me speak of the honest man's debt to mankind. It was honesty, a generous honesty, that led the poor man to take me up at sea, which, if he had neglected, my boy Xury and I had perished together; it was no debt to me in particular, but a debt to mankind, that he paid in that action, and yet he could not have been an honest man without it. You will say, if he had gone away and left me, he had been barbarous and inhuman, and deserved to be left to perish himself in the like distress; but, I say, this is not all the case; custom and the nature of the thing leads us to say it would have been hard-hearted and inhuman, but conscience will tell any man that it was a debt, and he could not but be condemned by the court of conscience in his own breast if he had omitted it – nay, in the sight of Heaven he had tacitly killed us, and had been as guilty of our death as a murderer, for he that refuses to save a life thrown into his hands takes it away; and if there is a just retribution in a future state, if blood is at all required there, the blood of every man, woman, and child whom we could have saved, and did not, shall be reckoned to us at that day as spilt by our own hands; for leaving life in a posture in which it must inevitably perish, is without question causing it to perish, and will be called so then, by whatever gilded dressed-up words we may express and conceal it now.

But I go farther, for my good Portuguese went farther with me; he not only paid the debt he owed to Heaven in saving our lives, but he went farther – he took nothing of what I had, though, in the common right of the sea, it was all his due for salvage, as the sailors call it; but he gave me the value of everything, bought my boat, which he might have turned adrift, my boy Xury, who was not my slave by any right, or, if he had, became free from that time; and the life of Xury, which he had

saved, as a servant, was his own, yet he bought everything of me for the full value, and took nothing of me, no, not for my passage.

Here was the liberal man devising liberal things, and the sequel made good the promissory text, for by these liberal things the honest liberal man might be truly said to stand. When I came to reward him at my coming to Lisbon to sell my plantation at Brazil, then he being poor and reduced, and not able to pay even what he owed me, I gave him a reward sufficient to make his circumstances easy all his life after.

The bounty of this man to me, when first he took me up out of the sea, was the highest and most complete act of honesty – a generous honesty, laying hold of an opportunity to do good to an object offered by the providence of Heaven, and thereby acknowledging the debt he had to pay to his Maker in the persons of His most distressed creatures.

And here also let me remind my readers of what, perhaps, they seldom much regard; it is not only a gift from Heaven to us to be put in a condition of doing good, but 'tis a gift, and a favour from Heaven, to have an opportunity of doing the good we are in a condition to do, and we ought to close with the opportunity, as a particular gift from above, and be as thankful for it, I say, as thankful for the occasion of doing good, as for the ability.

I might mention here the honesty of my fellow-planter in the Brazils, and of the two merchants and their sons, by whose integrity I had my share in the plantation preserved and taken care of; as also the honesty of the public treasurer for the church there, and the like; but I am earned off in my thoughts, to enlarge upon this noble principle, from the two examples I have already mentioned, viz., the Guinea captain's widow and the Portuguese; and this in particular, because, since I came to England to reside, I have met with abundance of disputes about honesty, especially in cases where honest men come to be unhappy men, when they fall into such circumstances as they cannot be honest, or rather, cannot show the principle of honesty which is really at the bottom of all their actions, and which, but for those circumstances which entirely disable them, would certainly show itself in every branch of their lives; such men I have too often seen branded for knaves by those who, if they come into the same condition, would perhaps do the same things, or worse than they may have done.

Both my widow and my Portuguese captain fell into low circumstances, so that they could not make good to me my money that was in their hands; and yet both of them showed to me that they had not only a principle of justice, but of generous honesty too, when the opportunity was put into their hands to do so.

This put me upon inquiring and debating with myself what this subtle and imperceptible thing called honesty is, and how it might be described, setting down my thoughts at several times, as objects presented, that posterity, if they think them worth while, may find them both useful and diverting. And first, I thought it not improper to lay down the conditions upon which I am to enter upon that description, that I may not be mistaken, but be allowed to explain what I mean by honesty, before I undertake to enter upon any discourses or observations about it.

And to come directly to it, for I would make as few preambles as possible, I shall crave the liberty, in all the following discourse, to take the term honesty, as I think all English expressions ought to be taken, namely, honestly, in the common acceptation of the word, the general vulgar sense of it, without any circumlocutions or double-entendres whatsoever; for I desire to speak plainly and sincerely. Indeed, as I have no talent at hard words, so I have no great veneration for etymologies, especially in English, but since I am treating of honesty, I desire to do it, as I say above, honestly, according to the genuine signification of the thing.

Neither shall I examine whether honesty be a natural or an acquired virtue – whether a habit or a quality – whether inherent or accidental: all the philosophical part of it I choose to omit.

Neither shall I examine it as it extends to spirituals and looks towards religion; if we inquire about honesty towards God, I readily allow all men are born knaves, villains, thieves, and murderers,

and nothing but the restraining power of Providence withholds us all from showing ourselves such on all occasions.

No man can be just to his Maker; if he could, all our creeds and confessions, litanies and supplications, were ridiculous contradictions and impertinences, inconsistent with themselves, and with the whole tenor of human life.

In all the ensuing discourse, therefore, I am to be understood of honesty, as it regards mankind among themselves, as it loots from one man to another, in those necessary parts of man's life, his conversation and negotiation, trusts, friendships, and all the incidents of human affairs.

The plainness I profess, both in style and method, seems to me to have some suitable analogy to the subject, honesty, and therefore is absolutely necessary to be strictly followed; and I must own, I am the better reconciled, on this very account, to a natural infirmity of homely plain writing, in that I think the plainness of expression, which I am condemned to, will give no disadvantage to my subject, since honesty shows the most beautiful, and the more like honesty, when artifice is dismissed, and she is honestly seen by her own light only; likewise the same sincerity is required in the reader, and he that reads this essay without honesty, will never understand it right; she must, I say, be viewed by her own light. If prejudice, partiality, or private opinions stand in the way, the man's a reading knave, he is not honest to the subject; and upon such an one all the labour is lost – this work is of no use to him, and, by my consent, the bookseller should give him his money again.

If any man, from his private ill-nature, takes exceptions at me, poor, wild, wicked Robinson Crusoe, for prating of such subjects as this is, and shall call either my sins or misfortunes to remembrance, in prejudice of what he reads, supposing me thereby unqualified to defend so noble a subject as this of honesty, or, at least, to handle it honestly, I take the freedom to tell such, that those very wild wicked doings and mistakes of mine render me the properest man alive to give warning to others, as the man that has been sick is half a physician. Besides, the confession which I all along make of my early errors, and which Providence, you see, found me leisure enough to repent of, and, I hope, gave me assistance to do it effectually, assists to qualify me for the present undertaking, as well to recommend that rectitude of soul which I call honesty to others, as to warn those who are subject to mistake it, either in themselves or others. Heaven itself receives those who sincerely repent into the same state of acceptance as if they had not sinned at all, and so should we also.

*They who repent, and their ill lives amend,
Stand next to those who never did offend.*

Nor do I think a man ought to be afraid or ashamed to own and acknowledge his follies and mistakes, but rather to think it a debt which honesty obliges him to pay; besides, our infirmities and errors, to which all men are equally subject, when recovered from, leave such impressions behind them on those who sincerely repent of them, that they are always the forwardest to accuse and reproach themselves. No man need advise them or lead them; and this gives the greatest discovery of the honesty of the man's heart, and sincerity of principles. Some people tell us they think they need not make any open acknowledgment of their follies, and 'tis a cruelty to exact it of them – that they could rather die than submit to it that their spirits are too great for it – that they are more afraid to come to such public confessions and recognitions than they would be to meet a cannon bullet, or to face an enemy. But this is a poor mistaken piece of false bravery; all shame is cowardice, as an eminent poet tells us that all courage is fear; the bravest spirit is the best qualified for a penitent. 'Tis a strange thing that we should not be ashamed to offend, but should be ashamed to repent; not afraid to sin, but afraid to confess. This very thought extorted the following lines from a friend of mine, with whom I discoursed upon this head: –

Among the worst of cowards let him be named, Who, having sinned, 's afraid to be ashamed;
And to mistaken courage he 's betrayed, Who, having sinned, 's ashamed to be afraid.

But to leave the point of courage and cowardice in our repenting of our offences, I bring it back to the very point I am upon, namely, that of honesty. A man cannot be truly an honest man without acknowledging the mistakes he has made, particularly without acknowledging the wrong done to his neighbour; and why, pray, is justice less required in his acknowledgment to his Maker? He, then, that will be honest must dare to confess he has been a knave; for, as above, speaking of our behaviour to God, we have been all knaves, and all dishonest; and if we come to speak strictly, perhaps it would hold in our behaviour to one another also, for where 's the man that is not chargeable by some or other of his neighbours, or by himself, with doing wrong, with some oppression or injury, either of the tongue or of the hands?

I might enlarge here upon the honesty of the tongue, a thing some people, who call themselves very honest men, keep a very slender guard upon, I mean, as to evil speaking, and of all evil-speaking that worst kind of it, the speaking hard and unjust things of one another.

This is certainly intended by the command of God, which is so express and emphatic, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; at least that part which is what we call slander, raising an injurious and false charge upon the character and conduct of our neighbour, and spreading it for truth.

But this is not all; that honesty I am speaking of respects all detraction, all outrageous assaults of the tongue; reproach is as really a part of dishonesty as slander, and though not so aggravated in degree, yet 'tis the same in kind.

There is a kind of murder that may be committed with the tongue, that is in its nature as cruel as that of the hand. This can never be the practice of an honest man; nay, he that practises it cannot be an honest man.

But perhaps I may come to this again, but I must go back to explain myself upon the subject a little farther in the general, and then you shall hear more of me as to the particulars.

Of Honesty in General

I have always observed, that however few the real honest men are, yet every man thinks himself and proclaims himself an honest man. Honesty, like heaven, has all men's good word, and all men pretend to a share of it; so general is the claim, that like a jest which is spoiled by the repetition, 'tis grown of no value for a man to swear by his faith, which is, in its original meaning, by his honesty, and ought to be understood so.

Like heaven, too, 'tis little understood by those who pretend most to it; 'tis too often squared according to men's private interest, though at the same time the latitude which some men give themselves is inconsistent with its nature.

Honesty is a general probity of mind, an aptitude to act justly and honourably in all cases, religious and civil, and to all persons, superior or inferior; neither is ability or disability to act so any part of the thing itself in this sense.

It may be distinguished into justice and equity, or, if you will, into debt and honour, for both make up but one honesty.

Exact justice is a debt to all our fellow-creatures; and honourable, generous justice is derived from that golden rule, Quod tibi fieri non vis alteri ne feceris; and all this put together, makes up honesty; honour, indeed, is a higher word for it, but 'tis the same thing, and

*Differs from justice only in the name,
For honesty and honour are the same.*

This honesty is of so qualifying a nature, that 'tis the most denominative of all possible virtues; an honest man is the best title can be given in the world; all other titles are empty and ridiculous

without it, and no title can be really scandalous if this remain. Tis the capital letter, by which a man's character will be known, when private qualities and accomplishments are worm-eaten by time; without it a man can neither be a Christian or a gentleman. A man may be a poor honest man, an unfortunate honest man; but a Christian knave, or a gentleman knave, is a contradiction. A man forfeits his character and his family by knavery, and his escutcheon ought to have a particular blot, like that of bastardy. When a gentleman loses his honesty, he ceases to be a gentleman, commences rake from that minute, and ought to be used like one.

Honesty has such a general character in the minds of men, that the worst of men, who neither practise or pretend to any part of it, will yet value it in others; no man ever could be so out of love with it as to desire his posterity should be without it; nay, such is the veneration all men have for it, that the general blessing of a father to his son is, "Pray God make thee an honest man."

Indeed, so general is the value of it, and so well known, that it seems needless to say anything in behalf of it. So far as it is found upon earth, so much of the first rectitude of nature and of the image of God seems to be restored to mankind.

The greatest mischief which to me seems to attend this virtue, like the thorn about the rose, which pricks the finger of those who meddle with it, is pride; 'tis a hard thing for a man to be very honest, and not be proud of it; and though he who is really honest has, as we say, something to be proud of, yet I take this honesty to be in a great deal of danger who values himself too much upon it.

True honest honesty, if I may be allowed such an expression, has the least relation to pride of any view in the world; 'tis all simple, plain, genuine, and sincere; and if I hear a man boast of his honesty, I cannot help having some fears for him, at least, that 'tis sickly and languishing.

Honesty is a little tender plant, not known to all who have skill in simples, thick sowed, as they say, and thin come up; 'tis nice of growth, it seldom thrives in a very fat soil, and yet a very poor ground, too, is apt to starve it, unless it has taken very good root. When it once takes to a piece of ground, it will never be quite destroyed; it may be choked with the weeds of prosperity, and sometimes 'tis so scorched up with the droughts of poverty and necessity, that it seems as if it were quite dead and gone; but it always revives upon the least mild weather, and if some showers of plenty fall, it makes full reparation for the loss the gardener had in his crop.

There is an ugly weed, called cunning, which is very pernicious to it, and which particularly injures it, by hiding it from our discovery, and making it hard to find. This is so like honesty, that many a man has been deceived with it, and has taken one for t' other in the market; nay, I have heard of some who have planted this wild honesty, as we may call it, in their own ground, have made use of it in their friendships and dealings, and thought it had been the true plant, but they always lost credit by it. And that was not the worst neither, for they had the loss who dealt with them, and who chaffered for a counterfeit commodity; and we find many deceived so still, which is the occasion there is such an outcry about false friends, and about sharpening and tricking in men's ordinary dealings in the world.

This true honesty, too, has some little difference in it, according to the soil or climate in which it grows, and your simplers have had some disputes about the sorts of it; nay, there have been great heats about the several kinds of this plant, which grows in different countries, and some call that honesty which others say is not; as, particularly, they say, there is a sort of honesty in my country, Yorkshire honesty, which differs very much from that which is found in these southern parts about London; then there is a sort of Scots honesty, which they say is a meaner sort than that of Yorkshire; and in New England I have heard they have a kind of honesty which is worse than the Scottish, and little better than the wild honesty called cunning, which I mentioned before. On the other hand, they tell us that in some parts of Asia, at Smyrna, and at Constantinople, the Turks have a better sort of honesty than any of us. I am sorry our Turkey Company have not imported some of it, that we might try whether it would thrive here or no. 'Tis a little odd to me it should grow to such a perfection in Turkey, because it has always been observed to thrive best where it is sowed with a sort of grain

called religion; indeed, they never thrive in these parts of the world so well apart as they do together. And for this reason, I must own, I have found that Scots honesty, as above, to be of a very good kind.

How it is in Turkey I know not, for, in all my travels, I never set my foot in the Grand Seignior's dominions.

But to waive allegories; disputes about what is or is not honesty are dangerous to honesty itself, for no case can be doubtful which does not border upon the frontiers of dishonesty; and he that resolves not to be drowned had best never come near the brink of the water.

That man who will do nothing but what is barely honest, is in great danger. It is certainly just for me to do everything the law justifies, but if I should only square my actions by what is literally lawful, I must throw every debtor, though he be poor, in prison, and never release him till he has paid the uttermost farthing; I must hang every malefactor without mercy; I must exact the penalty of every bond, and the forfeiture of every indenture. In short, I must be uneasy to all mankind, and make them so to me; and in a word, be a very knave too, as well as a tyrant, for cruelty is not honesty.

Therefore, the Sovereign Judge of every man's honesty has laid us down a general rule, to which all the particulars are resolved, *Quod tibi fieri, non vis alteri ne feceris*. This is a part of that honesty I am treating of, and which indeed is the more essential of the two; this is the test of behaviour, and the grand article to have recourse to when laws are silent.

I have heard some men argue, that they are not bound to any such considerations of the indigence of persons as lead to concessions of time, or compositions with them for debts; that 'tis all *ex gratia*, or the effects of policy, because circumstances lead them to judge it better to take what they can get than lose the whole.

Speaking of the letter of the law, I allow that they may be in the right.

On the other hand, a man who gives a bond for a debt, pleads he is answerable for no more than the law will force him to; that is, he may defend a suit, stand out to the last extremity, and at last keep out of the way, so as not to have judgment or execution served on him; he may secure his estate from the execution, as well as his person, and so never pay the debt at all, and yet in the eye of the law be an honest man; and this part of legal literal honesty is supported only by the other, namely, the cruel part; for really such a man, speaking in the sense of common justice, is a knave; he ought to act according to the true intent and meaning of his obligation, and in the right of a debtor to a creditor, which is to pay him his money when it became due, not stand out to the last, because he cannot be forced to it sooner.

The laws of the country indeed allow such actions as the laws of conscience can by no means allow, as in this case of the creditor suing for his debt, and the debtor not paying it till he is forced by law. The argument made use of to vindicate the morality of such a practice, stands thus: –

If a man trusts me with his money or goods upon my common credit, or upon my word, he then takes me for his money, and depends both upon my ability and my honesty; but if he comes and demands my bond, he quits his dependence upon my honesty, and takes the law for his security; so that the language of such an action is, he will have a bond, that it may be in his power to make me pay him whether I will or no; and as for my honesty, he 'll have nothing to do with it; what relief, then, I can have against this bond by the same law to which the person refers himself, is as legal an action on my side as the other man's suing for his own is on his.

And thus the letter of the law will ruin the honesty of both debtor and creditor, and yet both shall be justified too.

But if I may give my opinion in this case, neither of these are the honest man I am speaking of; for honesty does not consist of negatives, and 'tis not sufficient to do my neighbour no personal injury in the strict sense and letter of the law; but I am bound, where cases and circumstances make other measures reasonable, to have such regard to these cases and circumstances as reason requires. Thus, to begin with the creditor to the debtor, reason requires that where a man is reduced to extremities, he should not be destroyed for debt; and what is unreasonable cannot be honest.

Debt is no capital crime, nor ever was; and starving men in prison, a punishment worse than the gallows, seems to be a thing so severe as it ought not to be in the power of a creditor to inflict it. The laws of God never tolerated such a method of treating debtors as we have since thought proper, I won't say honest, to put in practice; but since the politics of the nation have left the debtor so much at mercy by the letter of the law, 'tis honest, with respect to the law, to proceed so; yet compassion is in this case thought reasonable – why shouldst thou take his bed from under him? says the text; which implies, 'tis unnatural and unreasonable.

I have heard some men insist upon it, that if a man be sued wrongfully at law, he ought rather to submit to the injury than oppose the wrong by the same law; and yet I never found those gentlemen so passive in matters of law, but they would sue a debtor at law if they could not otherwise obtain their right.

I confess I cannot blame them for the last, but I blame them for pretending to the first. I am not arguing against recovering a just debt by a just law, where the person is able but unwilling to be honest; but I think pursuing the debtor to all extremities, to the turning his wife and children into the street, expressed in the Scripture by taking his bed from under him, and by keeping the debtor in prison when really he is not able to pay it – there is something of cruelty in it, and the honest man I am speaking of can never do it.

But some may object, if I must serve all mankind as I would be served in like case, then I must relieve every beggar and release every poor debtor; for if I was a beggar I would be relieved, and if I was in prison I would be released; and so I must give away all I have. This is inverting the argument; for the meaning is in the negative still, do not to another anything, or put no hardship upon another, which you would not allow to be just if you were in their case.

Honesty is equity, every man is lord-chancellor to himself; and if he would consult that principle within him would find reason as fair an advocate for his neighbour as for himself. But I proceed.

Of the Trial of Honesty

Necessity makes an honest man a knave; and if the world was to be the judge according to the common received notion, there would not be an honest poor man left alive.

A rich man is an honest man – no thanks to him; for he would be a double knave to cheat mankind when he had no need of it: he has no occasion to press upon his integrity, nor so much as touch upon the borders of dishonesty. Tell me of a man that is a very honest man, for he pays everybody punctually, runs into nobody's debt, does no man any wrong; very well – what circumstances is he in? Why, he has a good estate, a fine yearly income, and no business to do. The devil must have full possession of this man if he should be a knave, for no man commits evil for the sake of it; even the devil himself has some farther design in sinning than barely the wicked part of it. No man is so hardened in crimes as to commit them for the mere pleasure of the fact – there is always some vice gratified; ambition, pride, or avarice makes rich men knaves, and necessity the poor. But to go on with this rich honest man; his neighbour, a thriving merchant, and whose honesty had as untainted a character as he can pretend to, has a rich ship cast away, or a factor abroad broke in his debt, and his bills come back protested, and he fails – is fain to abscond and make a composition. Our rich honest man flies out upon him presently he is a knave, a rogue, and don't pay people what he owes them; and we should have a law that he that runs into debt farther than he is able to pay should be hanged, and the like. If the poor man is laid hold on by some creditor, and put in prison – ay, there let him lie, he deserves it; 't will be an example to keep others from the like. And now, when all is done, this broken merchant may be as honest a man as the other.

You say you are an honest man: how do you know it? Did you ever want bread, and had your neighbour's loaf in your keeping, and would starve rather than eat it? Was you ever arrested, and being not able by yourself or friends to make peace with your plaintiff, and at the same time having

another man's money in your cash chest committed to your keeping, suffered yourself to be carried to gaol rather than break bulk and break in upon your trust? God Himself has declared that the power of extremity is irresistible, and that so, as to our integrity, that He has bid us not despise the thief that steals in such a case; not that the man is less a thief, or the fact less dishonest. But the text is most remarkably worded for instruction in this point; don't you despise the man, but remember, if you were driven to the same exigence, you would be the same man and do the same thing, though now you fancy your principle so good; therefore, whatever his crime may be as to God, don't reproach him with it here; but you that think you stand, take heed lest you fall.

I am of the opinion that I could state a circumstance in which there is not one man in the world would be honest. Necessity is above the power of human nature, and for Providence to suffer a man to fall into that necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace itself able to fortify the mind against it.

What shall we say to five men in a boat at sea, without provision, calling a council together, and resolving to kill one of themselves for the others to feed on, and eat him? With what face could the four look up and crave a blessing on that meat? With what heart give thanks after it? And yet this has been done by honest men, and I believe the most honest man in the world might be forced to it; yet here is no manner of pretence, but necessity, to palliate the crime. If it be argued it was the loss of one man to save the four, it is answered, but what authority to make him die to save their lives? How came the man to owe them such a debt? 'T was robbery and murder; 'twas robbing him of his life, which was his property, to preserve mine; 'tis murder, by taking away the life of an innocent man; and at best 'twas doing evil that good may come, which is expressly forbidden.

But there is a kind of equity pleaded in this case. Generally, when men are brought to such a pass, they cast lots who shall be the man, and the voluntary consent of the party makes it lawful (God Himself being supposed to determine who shall be the man), which I deny; for it is in no man's power legally to consent to such a lot; no man has a right to give away his own life; he may forfeit it to the law and lose it, but that 's a crime against himself, as well as against the law; and the four men might by our law have been tried and hanged for murder. All that can be said is, that necessity makes the highest crimes lawful, and things evil in their own nature are made practicable by it. From these extremes of necessity we come to lighter degrees of it, and so let us bring our honest man to some exigencies. He would not wrong any man of a farthing; he could not sleep if he should be in anybody's debt; and he cannot be an honest man that can.

That we may see now whether this man's honesty lies any deeper than his neighbour's, turn the scale of his fortune a little. His father left him a good estate; but here come some relations, and they trump up a title to his lands, and serve ejectments upon his tenants, and so the man gets into trouble, hurry of business, and the law. The extravagant charges of the law sink him of all his ready money, and, his rents being stopped, the first breach he makes upon his honesty (that is, by his former rules), he goes to a friend to borrow money, tells him this matter will be over, he hopes, quickly, and he shall have his rents to receive, and then lie will pay him again; and really he intends to do so. But here comes a disappointment; the trial comes on, and he is cast, and his title to the estate proves defective; his father was cheated, and he not only loses the estate, but is called upon for the arrears of the rent he has received; and, in short, the man is undone, and has not a penny to buy bread or help himself, and, besides this, cannot pay the money he borrowed.

Now, turn to his neighbour the merchant, whom he had so loudly called knave for breaking in his trade; he by this time has made up with his creditors and got abroad again, and he meets him in the street in his dejected circumstances. "Well," says the merchant, "and why don't you pay my cousin, your old neighbour, the money you borrowed of him?" – "Truly," says he, "because I have lost all my estate, and can't pay; nay, I have nothing to live on." – "Well, but," returns the merchant, "wan't you a knave to borrow money, and now can't pay it?" "Why, truly," says the gentleman, "when I borrowed it I really designed to be honest, and did not question but I should have my estate again,

and then I had been able also, and would have paid him to a penny, but it has proved otherwise; and though I would pay him if I had it, yet I am not able.” – “Well, but,” says the merchant again, “ did you not call me knave, though I lost my estate abroad by unavoidable disasters, as you have lost yours at home? Did you not upbraid me because I could not pay? I would have paid everybody, if I could, as well as you.” – “Why, truly,” says the gentleman, “I was a fool; I did not consider what it was to be brought to necessity; I ask your pardon.”

Now, let’s carry on this story. The merchant compounds with his creditors, and paying every one a just proportion as far as ‘twill go, gets himself discharged; and being bred to business, and industrious, falls into trade again, and raises himself to good circumstances, and at last a lucky voyage or some hit of trade sets him above the world again. The man, remembering his former debts, and retaining his principle of honesty, calls his old creditors together, and though he was formerly discharged from them all, voluntarily pays them the remainder of their debts. The gentleman being bred to no business, and his fortune desperate, goes abroad and gets into the army, and behaving himself well, is made an officer, and, still rising by his merit, becomes a great man; but in his new condition troubles not his head with his former debts in his native country, but settles in the court and favour of the prince under whom he has made his fortunes, and there sets up for the same honest man he did before.

I think I need not ask which of these two is the honest man, any more than which was the honest penitent, the Pharisee or the publican.

Honesty, like friendship, is tried in affliction; and he that cries out loudest against those who in the time of this trial are forced to give ground, would perhaps yield as far in the like shock of misfortune.

To be honest when peace and plenty flow upon our hands, is owing to the blessing of our parents; but to be honest when circumstances grow narrow, relations turbulent and quarrelsome, when poverty stares at us, and the world threatens, this blessing is from Heaven, and can only be supported from thence. God Almighty is very little beholding to them who will serve Him just as long as He feeds them. Twas a strong argument the devil used in that dialogue between Satan and his Maker about Job. “ Yes, he is a mighty good man, and a mighty just man, and well he may while you give him everything he wants: I would serve you myself, and be as true to you as Job, if you would be as kind and as bountiful to me as you are to him: but now, do but lay your finger on him; do but stop your hand a little, and cut him short; strip him a little, and make him like one of those poor fellows that now bow to him, and you will quickly see your good man be like other men; nay, the passion he will be in at his losses will make him curse you to your face.”

’Tis true the devil was mistaken in the man, but the argument had a great deal of probability in it, and the moral may be drawn, both from the argument and from the consequences:

That ’tis an easy thing to maintain the character of honesty and uprightness when a man has no business to be employed in, and no want to press him.

That when exigencies and distresses pinch a man, then is the time to prove the honesty of his principle.

The prosperous honest man can only by boasting tell the world he is honest, but the distressed and ruined honest man hears other people tell him he is honest.

In this case, therefore, since allowance must be made for human infirmities, we are to distinguish between an accident and a practice. I am not pleading to encourage any man to make no scruple of trespassing upon his honesty in time of necessity; but I cannot condemn every man for a knave who by unusual pressures, straits, difficulties, or other temptation, has been left to slip and do an ill action, as we call it, which perhaps this person would never have stooped to if the exigence had not been too great for his resolution. The Scripture says of David, “ He was a man after God’s own heart; “ and yet we have several things recorded of him, which, according to the modern way of censuring people in this age, would have given him the character of a very ill man. But I conceive

the testimony of David's uprightness, given us so authentically from the Scripture, is given from this very rule, that the inclination of his heart and the general bent of his practice were to serve and obey his great Sovereign Benefactor, however human frailty, backed with extremities of circumstances or powerful temptations, might betray him to commit actions which he would not otherwise have done. The falling into a crime will not denominate a man dishonest; for *humanum est errare*. The character of a man ought to be taken from the general tenor of his behaviour, and from his allowed practice. David took the shew-bread from the priests, which it was not lawful for him to eat. David knew that God, who commanded the shew-bread should not be eaten, had, however, commanded him by the law of Nature not to be starved, and therefore, pressed by his hunger, he ventures upon the commandment. And the Scripture is very remarkable in expressing it, "David, when he was an hungry." And the occasion for which our blessed Lord Himself quoted this text is very remarkable, viz., to prove that things otherwise unlawful may be made lawful by necessity. – Matt. xii. 4.

Another time, David in his passion resolves the destruction of Nabal and all his family, which, without doubt, was a great sin; and the principle which he went upon, to wit, revenge for his churlish and saucy answer to him, was still a greater sin; but the temptation, backed by the strength of his passion, had the better of him at that time; and this upright, honest man had murdered Nabal and all his house if God had not prevented him.

Many instances of like nature the Scripture has left upon record, giving testimony to the character of good men, from the general practice and bent of their hearts, without leaving any reproach upon them for particular failings, though those sins have been extraordinary provoking, and in their circumstances scandalous enough.

If any man would be so weak as from hence to draw encouragement to allow himself in easy trespasses upon his honesty, on the pretence of necessities, let him go on with me to the further end of this observation, and find room for it if he can.

If ever the honest man I speak of, by whatsoever exigence or weakness, thus slips from the principle of his integrity, he never fails to express his own dislike of it; he acknowledges upon all occasions, both to God and to man, his having been overcome, and been prevailed upon to do what he does not approve of; he is too much ashamed of his own infirmity to pretend to vindicate the action, and he certainly is restored to the first regulation of his principles as soon as the temptation is over. No man is fonder to accuse him than he is to accuse himself, and he has always upon him the sincere marks of a penitent.

'Tis plain from hence that the principle of the man's integrity is not destroyed, however he may have fallen, though seven times a day; and I must, while I live, reckon him for an honest man.

Nor am I going about to suppose that the extremities and exigencies which have pressed men of the best principles to do what at another time they would not do, make those actions become less sinful, either in their own nature or circumstances. The guilt of a crime with respect to its being a crime, viz., an offence against God, is not removed by the circumstances of necessity. It is without doubt a sin for me to steal another man's food, though it was to supply starving nature; for how do I know whether he whose food I steal may not be in as much danger of starving for want of it as I? And if not, 'tis taking to my own use what I have no right to, and taking it by force or fraud; and the question is not as to the right or wrong, whether I have a necessity to eat this man's bread or no, but whether it be his or my own? If it be his, and not my own, I cannot do it without a manifest contempt of God's law, and breaking the eighth article of it, "Thou shalt not steal." Thus, as to God, the crime is evident, let the necessity be what it will.

But when we are considering human nature subjected, by the consequences of Adam's transgression, to frailty and infirmity, and regarding things from man to man, the exigencies and extremities of straitened circumstances seem to me to be most prevailing arguments why the denomination of a man's general character ought not by his fellow-mor-tals (subject to the same infirmities) to be gathered from his mistakes, his errors, or failings; no, not from his being guilty of

any extraordinary sin, but from the manner and method of his behaviour. Does he go on to commit frauds, and make a practice of his sin? Is it a distress? Is it a storm of affliction and poverty has driven him upon the lee-shore of temptation? Or is the sin the port he steered for? A ship may by stress of weather be driven upon sands and dangerous places, and the skill of the pilot not be blamable; but he that runs against the wind, and without any necessity, upon a shelf which he sees before him, must do it on purpose to destroy the vessel, and ruin the voyage.

In short, if no man can be called honest but he who is never overcome to fall into any breach of this rectitude of life, none but he who is sufficiently fortified against all possibility of being tempted by prospects, or driven by distress, to make any trespass upon his integrity – woe be unto me that write, and to most that read! where shall we find the honest man?

The Scripture is particularly expressive of this in the words, “The righteous man falleth seven times a day, and riseth again.” Why, this is very strange; if a man come to commit seven crimes in a day, that is, many, for the meaning is indefinite, can this be an honest man? What says the world of him? Hang him; he is a knave, a rascal, a dishonest fellow. This is the judgment of men; but in the judgment of Scripture this may be a righteous man.

The main design of this head, and the proper application of it, is to tell us we ought not to be too hasty to brand our brother for his sins, his infirmities, or misfortunes, since he that is dishonest in your eyes, by a casual or other crime which he commits, may rise from that disaster by a sincere repentance, and be to-morrow an honest man than thyself in the eyes of his Maker.

But here I am assaulted with another censorious honest man. Here you talk of falling to-day, and rising again to-morrow; sinning and repenting; why, here is a fellow has cheated me of £500, and he comes canting to me of his repentance, tells me he hopes God has forgiven him, and it would be hard for me to call to remembrance what God has wiped out; he is heartily sorry for the fault, and the like, and begs my pardon, that is, begs my estate indeed. For what is all this to my money? Let him pay me, and I will forgive him too. God may forgive him the sin, but that’s nothing to my debt.

Why, truly, in answer to this in part, you are in the right if the man be able to make you any satisfaction, and does not do it; for I question not, but every trespass of this nature requires restitution as well as repentance; restitution as far as the possible power of the party extends; and if the last be not found, the first is not likely to be sincere.

But if the man either is not able to make you any restitution at all, or does make you restitution to the utmost of his capacity, and then comes and says as before, then the poor man is in the right, and you in the wrong; for I make no question likewise to affirm, and could prove it by unanswerable arguments, he may be an honest man who cannot pay his debts, but he cannot be an honest man who can, and does not.

Innumerable accidents reduce men from plentiful fortunes to mean and low circumstances; some procured by their own vices and intemperance; some by infirmities, ignorance, and mere want of judgment to manage their affairs; some by the frauds and cheats of other men; some by mere casualty and unavoidable accidents, wherein the sovereignty of Providence shows us, that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, or riches to men of understanding.

First, some by vices and intemperance are reduced to poverty and distress. Our honest man cannot fall in the misfortunes of this class, because there the very poverty is a sin, being produced from a sinful cause. As it is far from being allowed as an excuse to a murderer to say he was in drink, because it is excusing a crime with a crime, so for a man to ruin his fortunes, as the prodigal in the Gospel, with riotous living, all the effects are wicked and dishonest, as they partake of the dishonesty of the cause from whence they proceed; for he cannot be an honest man who wants wherewith to pay his debts after having spent what should have discharged them in luxury and debauches.

Secondly, some by ignorance and want of judgment to manage their affairs are brought to poverty and distress. These may be honest men, notwithstanding their weakness, for I won’t undertake that none of our honest men shall be fools. ‘Tis true the good man is the wise man as to the main part

of wisdom, which is included in his piety; but many a religious man, who would not do any wrong wilfully to his neighbour, is obliged at last to injure both his own family and other people's for want of discretion to guide him in his affairs, and to judge for himself; and therefore I dare not tax all our fools with being knaves, nor will I say but such a man may be honest. Some will say that such a man should not venture into business which he is not able to manage, and therefore 'twas the vice of his understanding, and, like the case in the first article, is excusing a fault with a fault.

I cannot allow this, for if I am asked why a fool ventures into trade, I answer, because he is a fool, not because he is a knave.

If fools could their own ignorance discern,
They'd be no longer fools, because they'd learn.

If you would convince a man that he wants discretion, you must give him discretion to be convinced; till then he cannot know he has it not, because he has it not. No man is answerable either to God or man for that which he never was master of. The most proper expression that ever I met with in this nature, was of a certain idiot or natural which a gentleman of my acquaintance kept in his family, who being on his deathbed, was observed to be very pensive and much concerned about dying. The gentleman sent a minister to him, who, as well as he could to his understanding, discoursed with him about death and judgment to come. The poor creature, who was hardly ever able to give a rational answer to a question before, after hearing him very attentively, broke out into tears with this expression – that he hoped God would not require anything of him that He had not given him judgment to understand. Whatever it may be as to the soul, I am positive, in the case of human affairs, no man is answerable to man for any more than his discretion. Events are not in our power; a man may be nicely honest in life, though he may be weak enough in judgment.

Thirdly, some are ruined, and are yet merely passive, being either defrauded and cheated by knaves, or plundered and rifled by thieves, or by immediate casualties, as fire, enemies, storms, floods, and the like; these are things which neither touch the man's honesty nor his discretion. Thus Job was, by God's permission and the agency of the devil, reduced in a moment from a plentiful estate to be as naked as he came out of his mother's womb. I would fain ask those who say no man can be an honest man if he does not pay his debts, who paid Job's debts if he owed any, and where was his dishonesty if he did not pay them? I still readily grant that he cannot be an honest man who does not pay his debts if he can; but if otherwise, then the words ought to be altered, and they should say, he cannot be an honest man who borrows any money, or buys anything upon his credit; and this cannot be true.

But since I have led myself into the argument, I cannot but make a small digression concerning people who fail in trade. I conceive the greatest error of such is their terror about breaking, by which they are tempted while their credit is good, though their bottom be naught, to push farther in, expecting, or at least hoping, by the profits of some happy voyage, or some lucky hit, as they call it, to retrieve their circumstances, and stand their ground.

I must confess I cannot vindicate the honesty of this; for he who, knowing his circumstances to be once naught, and his bottom worn out, ought not in justice to enter into any man's debt, for then he trades on their risk, not on his own, and yet trades for his own profits, not theirs. This is not fair, because he deceives the creditor, who ventures his estate on that bottom which he supposes to be good, and the other knows it not. Nay, though he really pays this creditor, he is not honest; for, in conscience, his former creditors had a right to all his effects in proportion to their debts; and if he really pays one all, and the rest but a share, 'tis a wrong to the whole.

I would therefore advise all tradesmen who find their circumstances declining, as soon, at least, as they first discern themselves to be incapable of paying their debts, if not while yet they can pay every one all, make a full stop, and call all people together; if there is enough to pay them all, let

them have it; if not let them have their just shares of it. By this means you will certainly have God's blessing, and the character of an honest man left to begin again with; and creditors are often prevailed with, in consideration of such a generous honesty, to throw back something to put such a man in a posture to live again, or by further voluntary credit and friendship to uphold him. This is much better also with respect to interest, as well as honesty, than to run on to all extremities, till the burden falls too heavy either for debtor or creditor to bear. This would prevent many of the extremities, which, I say, puts the honesty of a man to so extraordinary a trial.

An honest principle would certainly dictate to the man, if it were consulted with, that when he knows he is not able to pay, it is not lawful for him to borrow. Taking credit is a promise of payment: a promise of payment is tacitly understood, and he cannot be honest who promises what he knows he cannot perform, as I shall note more at large on another head. But if the man be paid, yet it was not an honest act; 'twas deceiving the man, and making him run a greater risk than he knew of, and such a risk as he would not have run had he known your circumstances and bottom as you do; so that here is deceit upon deceit.

This I know is a disputed point, and a thing which a great many practise who pass for very honest men in the world, but I like it not the better for that; I am very positive, that he who takes my goods on the foot of his credit, when, if he should die the next day, he knows his estate will not pay me five shillings in the pound, though he should not die, but does pay me at the time appointed, is as much guilty of a fraud as if he actually robbed my house. Credit is a received opinion of a man's honesty and ability, his willingness to pay, and his having wherewith to pay; and he who wants either of these, his credit is lame. Men won't sell their goods to a litigious, quarrelsome man, though he be never so rich, nor to a needy man, though he be never so honest. Now if all the world believe that I am honest and able, and I know that I am not the last, I cannot be the first if I take their goods upon credit; 'tis vain to pretend men trade upon the general risk of men's appearance, and the credit of common fame, and all men have an equal hazard. I say no; men may venture their estates in the hands of a flourishing bankrupt, and he by virtue of his yet unshaken credit is trusted; but he cannot be honest that takes this credit, because he knows his circumstances are quite otherwise than they are supposed to be, that the man is deceived, and he is privy to the deceit.

This digression is not so remote from the purpose as I expected when I began it: the honesty that I am speaking of chiefly respects matters of commerce, of which credit and payment of debt are the most considerable branches.

There is another article in trade, which many very honest men have made familiar to themselves, which yet, I think, is in no case to be defended, and that is relating to counterfeit money. Custom, before the old money was suppressed in England, had prevailed so far upon honesty, that I have seen some men put all their brass money among their running cash, to be told over in every sum they paid, in order to have somebody or other take it; I have heard many people own they made no scruple of it, but I could never find them give one good reason to justify the honesty of it.

First, they say it comes for money, and it ought to go so: to which I answer, that is just as good a reason as this: A has cheated me, and therefore I may cheat B. If I have received a sum of money for good, and knowing not that any of it is otherwise offer it in payment to another, this is just and honest; but if, on this other man's telling it over, he returns me a piece of brass or counterfeit money which I change again, and afterwards, knowing this to be such, offer the same piece to another, I know no worse fraud in its degree in the world, and I doubt not to prove it so beyond contradiction.

If the first person did not take this piece of money, it was because, being both watchful and skilful, he could discover it; and if I offer it to another, 'tis with an expectation that he, being either less watchful or less skilful, shall overlook it, and so I shall make an advantage of my neighbour's ignorance, or want of care.

I'll put some parallel cases to this, to illustrate it. Suppose a blind man comes into a shop to buy goods of me, and giving me a guinea to change, I shall give him the remainder in bad money, would

not everybody say 'twas a barbarous thing? Why, the other is all one, for if the person be ignorant of money, he is blind as to the point in hand; and nothing can be more unfair than to take the advantage.

Suppose, again, a young boy or a servant newly entered in trade is sent to buy goods, and by his master's order he asks for such a commodity; and you, presuming upon the rawness of the messenger, deliver a sort of a meaner quality, and take the full price of him; would you grudge to be used scurvily for such a trick? Why, no less or better is offering brass for silver, presuming only the want of care or skill in the receiver shall pass it unobserved.

"Ay, but," says a learned tradesman, who would be thought honester than ordinary, "I always change it again, if it be brought back." Yes, sir, so does a pickpocket give you your handkerchief again when you have fastened on him, and threatened him with the mob. The matter, in short, is this: if the man whom you have cheated can cheat nobody else, then no thanks to you; when he comes to you, and charges the fraud upon you, you 'll make satisfaction, because, if you won't, the law will compel you to it.

But if the fraud may be earned on, as you are manifestly willing, consenting, and instrumental in it that it should, behold the consequence: your first sin against honesty is multiplied in all the hands through whom this piece of bad money knowingly so passes, till at last it happens to go single to a poor man that can't put it off, and the wrong and injury may issue where it was wanted to buy bread for a starving family.

All the excuses I could ever meet with could never satisfy me that it can consist with honesty to put brass or copper away for gold or silver, any more than it would to give a blind messenger sand instead of sugar, or brown bread instead of white.

Of Honesty in Promises

"A man is known by his word, and an ox by his horns," says an old English proverb. If I understand the true meaning of it, 'tis that the honesty of a man is known by his punctually observing his word, as naturally and plainly as any creature is known by the most obvious distinction. 'Tis the peculiar quality of an honest man, the distinguishing mark to know him by. His word or promise is as sacred to him in all his affairs in the world as the strongest obligation which can be laid on him; nor is it a thing formed by him from settled resolutions, or measures of policy taken up of course to raise or fix his reputation, but it is the native produce of his honest principle; 'tis the consequence, and his honesty is the cause; he ceases to be honest when he ceases to preserve this solemn regard to his word.

If he gives his word, any man may depend upon it for the safety of his life or estate; he scorns to prevaricate or shift himself off from the punctual observance of it, though it be to his loss.

I can't abate an honest man an inch in the punctual observance of a promise made upon parole if it be in the man's possible power to perform it, because there seems to be something too base to consist with honesty in the very nature of a man that can go back from his word.

The reverence our ancestors paid to their promises, or word passed, I am of the opinion, gave that remarkable brand of infamy and scandal upon the affront of giving the lie. A gentleman, which is, in short, the modern term for an honest man, or a man of honour, cannot receive a greater reproach than to be told he lies; that is, that he forfeits his word, breaks his veracity; for the minute he does that he ungentlemands himself, disgraces the blood of his family, degenerates from his ancestors, and commences rake, scoundrel, and anything.

Some people, who have run their points of honour to the extremes, are of the opinion that this affront of the lie ought not to be given to anything they call a gentleman, or that calls himself so, till he has so far exposed himself to all other degrees of infamy as to bear kicking or caning, and the like; that after this, when he breaks his word, he may be told he lies, or anything else; but till then the very thing itself is so intolerable an abuse, that the person who ventures to trespass so foully on the rules of good manners deserves not the honour of fair play for his life; but as some beasts of prey are

refused the fair law of the field, and are knocked down in every hedge, so these, like bullies and mere rakes, may be pistolled in the dark and stabbed at the corner of an alley; that is to say, any measure may be used with them to dismiss them from the society of mankind, as fellows not sufferable in the commonwealth of good manners.

I do not argue for these extremes; but I instance in this to testify the veneration all good men have for the word or promise of an honest man, and the esteem which the integrity of the mind, expressed by a zealous regard to the words of the mouth, has obtained in the world. The French, when they express themselves in vindication of their honour, always bring it about by this, *Je suis homme de parole*, I am an honest man, or a man of my word; that is, I am a man that may be trusted upon my parole, for I never break my word.

Such was the value put upon the promises of men in former time, that a promise of payment of money was recoverable in our courts by law, till the inconveniences proved so many that an Act was made on purpose to restrain it to a sum under ten pounds. But to this day if a man promises marriage to a woman, especially if she has granted him any favours upon that condition, the laws of the land, which therein have regard to the laws of honour, will oblige him to make it good, and allow it to be a sufficient plea to forbid his marrying with anybody else.

There are innumerable instances of the veneration all nations pay to the expressive article of human veracity. In the war you meet with frequent instances of prisoners dismissed by a generous enemy upon their parole, either to pay their ransom, or to procure such or such conditions, or come back and surrender themselves prisoners; and he that should forfeit this parole would be posted in the enemy's army, and hissed out of his own.

I know nothing a wise man would not choose to do rather than, by breaking his word, give the world such an undeniable testimony of his being a knave. This is that good name which Solomon says is better than life, and is a precious ointment, and which when a man has once lost he has nothing left worth keeping. A man may even hang himself out of the way, for no man that looks like a man will keep his company.

When a man has once come to breaking his word, no man that has any value for his reputation cares to be seen in his company; but all good men shun him, as if he were infected with the plague.

There are men, indeed, who will be exceeding punctual to their words and promises, who yet cannot be called honest men, because they have other vices and excursions that render them otherways wicked. These give their testimony to the beauty of honesty by choosing it as the best mask to put a gloss upon their actions, and conceal the other deformities of their lives; and so honesty, like religion, is made use of to disguise the hypocrite, and raise a reputation upon the shadow, by the advantage it takes of the real esteem the world has of the substance. I say of this counterfeit honesty, as is said of religion in like cases. If honesty was not the most excellent attainment, 't would not be made use of as the most specious pretence; nor is there a more exquisite way for a man to play the hypocrite, than to pretend an extraordinary zeal to the performance of his promises; because, when the opinion of any man's honesty that way has spread in the thoughts of men, there is nothing so great but they will trust him with, nor so hard but they will do it for him.

All men reverence an honest man: the knaves stand in awe of him, fools adore him, and wise men love him; and thus is virtue its own reward.

Honest men are in more danger from this one hypocrite than from twenty open knaves; for these have a mark placed upon them by their general character, as a buoy upon a rock to warn strangers from venturing upon it. But the hypocrites are like a pit covered over, like shoals under water, and danger concealed which cannot be seen. I must confess I have found these the most dangerous, and have too deeply suffered by throwing myself on their protestations of honesty. The esteem I always entertained of the most beautiful gift God has bestowed, or man could receive, has made me the easier to be deceived with the resemblance of it.

So much as I, or any one else, by the viciousness of our own nature, or the prevailing force of accidents, snares, and temptations, have deviated from this shining principle, so far as we have been foolish as well as wicked, so much we have to repent of towards our Maker, and be ashamed of towards our neighbour.

For my part, I am never backward to own, let who will be the reader of these sheets, that to the dishonour of my Maker, and the just scandal of my own honesty, I have not paid that due regard to the rectitude of this principle which my own knowledge has owned to be its due; let those who have been juster to themselves, and to the Giver of it, rejoice in the happiness, rather than triumph over the infirmity. But let them be sure they have been juster on their own parts; let them be positive that their own integrity is untainted, and would abide all the trials and racks that a ruined fortune, strong temptations, and deep distresses, could bring it into; let them not boast till these dangers are past, and they put their armour off; and if they can do it, then I will freely acknowledge they have less need of repentance than I.

Not that I pretend, as I noted before, and shall often repeat, that these circumstances render my failing, or any man's else, the less a sin, but they make the reason why we that have fallen should rather be pitied than reproached by those who think they stand, because, when the same assaults are made upon the chastity of their honour, it may be every jot as likely to be prostituted as their neighbour's.

And such is the folly of scandal, as well as the blindness of malice, that it seldom fixes reproach upon the right foot. I have seen so much of it, with respect to other people, as well as to myself, that it gives me a very scoundrel opinion of all those people whom I find forward to load their neighbours with reproach. Nothing is more frequent in this case than to run away with a piece of a man's character, in which they err, and do him wrong, and leave that part of him untouched which is really black, and would bear it; this makes me sometimes, when with the humblest and most abasing thoughts of myself I look up, and betwixt God and my own soul, cry out, "What a wretch am I!" at the same time smile at the hare-brained enemy, whose tongue, tipped with malice, runs ahead of his understanding, and missing the crimes for which I deserve more than he can inflict, reproaches me with those I never committed. Methinks I am ready to call him back, like the huntsman, when the dogs run upon the foil, and say, "Hold, hold, you are wrong; take him here, and you have him."

I question not but 'tis the same with other people; for when malice is in the heart, reproach generally goes a mile before consideration, and where is the honesty of the man all this while? This is trampling upon my pride, sed majori fastu, but with greater pride; 'tis exposing my dishonesty, but with the highest knavery; 'tis a method no honest man will take, and when taken, no honest man regards; wherefore, let none of these sons of slander take satisfaction in the frequent acknowledgments I am always ready to make of my own failing, for that humility with which I always find cause to look into my own heart, where I see others worse, and more guilty of crimes than they can lay to my charge, yet makes me look back upon their weakness with the last contempt, who fix their impotent charges where there is not room to take hold, and run away with the air and shadow of crimes never committed.

I have instanced this, not at all on my own account, for 'tis not worth while, for if I am injured, what 's that to troubling the world with when I am forgotten? But while I am examining the nicest article in the world, honesty, I cannot but lay down these three heads from the preceding observations:

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He who is forward to reproach the infirmities of other men's honesty, is very near a breach of his own.

He that hastily reproaches another without sufficient ground, cannot be an honest man.

Where there may be sufficient ground of reproach, yet an honest man is always tender of his neighbour's character from the sense of his own frailty.

But I return to honesty, as it affects a man's pledging his word, which is the counterpart of his principle, and this because, as I said, I should chiefly regard this honesty as it concerns human affairs, conversation, and negotiation.

And here I meet with a tradesman come just in from dunning one of his neighbours. "Well, I have been at a place for money," says he, "but I can get none. There 's such an one, he passes for an honest man, but I am sure he is a great rogue to me, for he has promised me my money a long time, but puts me off still from time to time; he makes no more of breaking his word, than of drinking a glass of beer. I am sure he has told me forty lies already. This is one of your honest men; if all such honest men were hanged, we should have a better trade." And thus he runs on.

If all such honest men were hanged, they that were left might have a better trade; but how many of them would there be?

Now, though I shall in no way vindicate men's hasty promises absolutely to perform what is doubtful in the event, yet I cannot agree that every man who, having promised a payment, does not perform it to his time, is a knave or a liar. If it were so, the Lord have mercy upon three parts of the city.

Wherefore, to state this matter clearly, it must be taken a little to pieces, and the articles spoken to apart.

First. Without question, when a man makes a promise of payment to another on a set day, knowing in his own thoughts that it is not probable he should be capable to comply with it, or really designing not to comply with it, or not endeavouring to comply with it, 'tis a deceit put upon the party, 'tis a premeditated formal lie, the man that made it is a stranger to honesty; he is a knave, and everything that is base and bad. But,

Secondly. Promises ought to be understood, both by the person to whom and the person by whom they are made, as liable to those contingencies that all human affairs and persons are liable to, as death, accidents, disappointments, and disorder. Thus, if a man who ought to pay me to-day tells me, "Sir, I cannot comply with you to-day; but if you call for it next week, you shall have it;" if I may put this answer into plainer English, and I suppose the man to be an honest man, I cannot understand his meaning otherwise than thus: –

"Sir, I acknowledge your money is due. I have not cash enough by me to pay you to-day, but I have several running bills, and several persons who have promised me money, which I doubt not I shall receive against such a time; and if you call then, I make no question but I shall be able to do it; and if it is possible for me to pay you, I will do it at that time without fail."

I confess it were as well to express themselves thus at large in all the appointments people make for payment, and would the persons who make them consider it, they would do so; but custom has prevailed in our general way of speaking, whereby all things that are subject to the common known contingents of life, or visible in the circumstances of the case, are understood without being expressed. For example: –

I make an appointment of meeting a man positively at such a town, such a certain day or hour. If I were talking to a Turk or a pagan that knows nothing, or believes nothing of supreme Providence, I would say – If the Lord of heaven and earth, that governs all my actions, please to preserve and permit me. But when I am talking to a Christian, it should seem to be so universally supposed that every appointment is subjected and submits to the government of Providence, that the repetition would be needless; and that when a man promises positively to meet, 'tis with a general sub-intelligitur, a reserve as natural as Nature itself, to the Divine permission. All men know, that unless I am alive I cannot come there, or if I am taken sick, both which may easily happen, I shall disappoint him. And, therefore, if he should urge me again to come without fail, and I should reply, "I won't fail if I am alive and well," the man ought to take it for an affront, and ask me if I take him for a fool, to think if I am taken sick, I should come with my bed at my back, or if death should intervene, he had occasion to speak with my ghost.

In this sense, a tradesman who promises payment of money at a set time; first, 'tis supposed he has it not now in his hands, because he puts off the person demanding to a further day, and promises to comply with it then. This promise, therefore, can be understood no otherwise than that he expects to receive money by that time. Now, if this man, by the like disappointments from other men, or any other involuntary casualty, is really and bonâ fide unable to comply with the time of promised payment, I can not see but this may befall an honest man, and he neither designing to fail when he promised, not being able to prevent the accident that obliged him to do it, nor in any way voluntary in the breach, is not, in my opinion, guilty of a lie, or breach of his honour, though he did not make those verbal reserves in the promises he had given.

If every man who cannot comply with promised payments should be thus branded with lying and dishonesty, then let him who is without the sin cast the stone, for nobody else ought to do it.

'Tis true, there is a difference between an accident and a practice; that is, in short, there is a difference between him who meets with a great many occasions thus to break his word, and he that meets with but few; but if it be a crime, he that commits it once is no more an honest man than he that commits it forty times; and if it be not a crime, he that does it forty times is as honest as he that has occasion to do it but once.

But let no man take encouragement from hence to be prodigal of his word, and slack in his performance; for this nice path is so near the edge of the pit of knavery, that the least slip lets you fall in.

These promises must have abundance of circumstances to bring the honest man out of the scandal.

As, first. The disappointments which occasioned this breach of his word must have been unforeseen and unexpected, otherwise the expectation of performing his promise was ill grounded, and then his honesty is answerable for the very making the promise, as well as the breaking it.

Second. No endeavours must be wanting to comply with the promise, otherwise 'tis wrong to say, "I am disappointed, and can't make good my word." The man ought to say, "Sir, I have disappointed myself by my negligence or wilfulness, and have obliged myself to break my word;" or, in English, "Sir, I am a knave; for though I made you a promise which I might have performed, I took no care about it, not valuing the forfeiture of my word."

If, then, the case is so nice, though, in the strictness of speaking, such a disappointment may oblige an honest man to break his word, yet every honest man, who would preserve that character to himself, ought to be the more wary, and industriously avoid making such absolute unconditional promises, because we are to avoid the circumstances of offence.

But as to the nature of the thing, 'tis plain to me that a man may in such cases be obliged to break his word unwillingly; and nothing can be a fraud or dishonest action in that case, which is not either voluntary in itself, or the occasion voluntarily procured.

Of Relative Honesty

As honesty is simple and plain, without gloss and pretence, so it is universal. He that may uphold an untainted reputation in one particular, may be justly branded with infamy in another. A man may be punctual in his dealings, and a knave in his relations; honest in his warehouse, and a knave at his fireside; he may be a saint in his company, a devil in his family; true to his word, and false to his friendship; but whosoever he be, he is no honest man. An honest man is all of a piece the whole contexture of his life; his general conduct is genuine, and squared according to the rules of honesty; he never runs into extremes and excesses on one hand or other.

I confess I find this thing which they call relative honesty very little thought of in the world, and that which is still worse, 'tis very little understood. I 'll bring it down to but a few examples, some of which frequently happen among us, and will therefore be the more familiarly received.

There are relative obligations entailed on us in our family circumstances, which are just debts, and must be paid, and which, in a word, a man can no more be honest if he does not make conscience of discharging, than he can in the case of the most unquestionable debts between man and man.

The debts from children to parents, and from wives to their husbands, are in a manner relatively changed, and the obligation transferred into the order of religious duties. God, the guide and commander of all subordination, has, as it were, taken that part into His own hand. 'Tis rather called a duty to Him than a relative duty only. But if men take this for a discharge to them of all relative obligations to wives and to children, or that God had less required one than the other, they must act upon very wrong principles.

Nature, indeed, dictates in general a man's providing subsistence for his family, and he is declared to be so far from a Christian that he is worse than an infidel that neglects it. But there are other parts of our obligations which honesty calls upon us to perform.

A wife and children are creditors to the father of the family, and he cannot be an honest man that does not discharge his debt to them, any more than he could if he did not repay money borrowed to a stranger; and not to lead my reader on to intricate and disputed particulars, I instance principally in those that nobody can dispute, as, first, education. By this I mean, not only putting children to school, which some parents think is all they have to do with or for their children, and indeed with some is all that they know how to do, or are fit to do; I say, I do not mean this only, but several other additional cares, as: (1.) Directing what school, what parts of learning are proper for them, what improvements they are to be taught; (2.) studying the genius and capacities of their children in what they teach them. Some children will voluntarily learn one thing, and can never be forced to learn another, and for want of which observing the genius of children we have so many learned blockheads in the world, who are mere scholars, pedants, and no more. (3.) But the main part of this debt which relative honesty calls upon us to pay to our children, is the debt of instruction, the debt of government, the debt of example. He that neglects to pay any of these to his family is a relative knave, let him value himself upon his honesty in paying his other debts as much as he will.

'Tis a strange notion men have of honesty and of their being honest men, as if it related to nothing but tradesmen or men who borrow and lend, or that the title was obtained by an ordinary observance of right and wrong between man and man. 'Tis a great mistake; the name of an honest man is neither so easily gained, nor so soon lost as these men imagine. David was a very honest man, notwithstanding his passion and revenge in the case of Nabal, his murder in the case of Uriah, or his adultery in the case of Bathsheba. The intent and main design of his life was upright; and whenever he fell by the power of that temptation that overcame him, he rose again by repentance.

Let no vain men flatter themselves with the pride of their honesty in mere matters of debtor and creditor, though that is also absolutely necessary and essential to an honest man.

But trace this honest man home to his family. Is he a tyrant or a churl to his wife? Is he a stranger to the conduct and behaviour of his children? Is he an Eli to their vices? Are they uninstructed, uncorrected, unexhorted, ungoverned, or ill governed? That man is a knave, a relative knave; he neither does his duty to God, or pays the debt of a husband, or of a parent, to his wife or his family.

Secondly, after the debt of education, there is the debt of induction due from us to our children. The debt from a parent is far from ending when the children come from school, as the brutes who turn their young off from them when they are just able to pick for themselves. It is our business, doubtless, to introduce them into the world, and to do it in such a manner as suits the circumstances we are in, as to their supply, and the inclinations and capacities of our children. This is a debt the want of paying which makes many children too justly reproach their parents with neglecting them in their youth, and not giving them the necessary introduction into the world, as might have qualified them to struggle and shift for themselves.

Not to do this is to ruin our children negatively on one hand, as doing it without judgment and without regard to our family circumstances, and our children's capacities, is a positive ruining them

on the other. I could very usefully run out this part into a long discourse on the necessity there is of consulting the inclinations and capacities of our children in our placing them out in the world. How many a martial spirit do we find damned to trade, while we spoil many a good porter, and convert the able limbs and bones of a blockhead into the figure of a long robe, or a gown and cassock?

How many awkward clumsy fellows do we breed to surgery or to music, whose fingers and joints Nature originally designed, and plainly showed it us by their size, were better suited for the blacksmith's sledge or the carpenter's axe, the waterman's oar or the carman's whip?

Whence comes it to pass that we have so many young men brought to the bar and to the pulpit with stammering tongues, hesitations and impediments in their speech, unmusical voices, and no common utterance; while, on the other hand, Nature's cripples – bow-legged, battle hammed, and half-made creatures – are bred tumblers and dancingmasters?

I name these because they occur most in our common observation, and are all miserable examples, where the children curse the knavery of their fathers in not paying the debt they owed to them as parents, in putting them to employments that had been suitable to their capacities, and suitable to what Nature had cut them out for.

I came into a public-house once in London, where there was a black mulatto-looking man sitting, talking very warmly among some gentlemen, who, I observed, were listening very attentively to what he said, and I sat myself down and did the like. 'T was with great pleasure I heard him discourse very handsomely on several weighty subjects. I found he was a very good scholar, had been very handsomely bred, and that learning and study were his delight; and, more than that, some of the best of science was at that time his employment. At length I took the freedom to ask him if he was born in England?

He replied with a great deal of good humour in the manner, but with an excess of resentment at his father, and with tears in his eyes, "Yes, yes, sir, I am a true-born Englishman; to my father's shame be it spoken, who, being an Englishman himself, could find it in his heart to join himself to a negro woman, though he must needs know the children he should beget would curse the memory of such an action, and abhor his very name for the sake of it. Yes, yes," says he, repeating it again, "I am an Englishman, and born in lawful wedlock; happy had it been for me, though my father had gone to the devil for whoredom, had he lain with a cook-maid, or produced me from the meanest beggar-woman in the street. My father might do the duty of nature to his black wife; but, God knows, he did no justice to his children. If it had not been for this damned black face of mine," says he, then smiling, "I had been bred to the law, or brought up in the study of divinity; but my father gave me learning to no manner of purpose, for he knew I should never be able to rise by it to anything but a learned valet de chambre. What he put me to school for I cannot imagine; he spoiled a good tarpauling when he strove to make me a gentleman. When he had resolved to marry a slave and lie with a slave, he should have begot slaves, and let us have been bred as we were born; but he has twice ruined me – first, with getting me a frightful face, and then going to paint a gentleman upon me."

It was a most affecting discourse indeed, and as such I record it; and I found it ended in tears from the person, who was in himself the most deserving, modest, and judicious man that I ever met with under a negro countenance in my life.

After this story I persuaded myself I need say no more to this case; the education of our children, their instruction, and the introducing them into the world, is a part of honesty, a debt we owe to them; and he cannot be an honest man that does not, to the utmost of his ability and judgment, endeavour to pay it.

All the other relative obligations, which family circumstances call for the discharge of, allow the same method of arguing for, and are debts in their proportion, and must be paid upon the same principle of integrity. I have neither room nor is there any occasion to enlarge upon them.

Chapter Three. Of the Immorality of Conversation, and the Vulgar Errors of Behaviour

Conversation is the brightest and most beautiful part of life; 'tis an emblem of the enjoyment of a future state, for suitable society is a heavenly life; 'tis that part of life by which mankind are not only distinguished from the inanimate world, but by which they are distinguished from one another. Perhaps I may be more particularly sensible of the benefit and of the pleasure of it, having been so effectually mortified with the want of it. But as I take it to be one of the peculiars of the rational life that man is a conversable creature, so it is his most complete blessing in life to be blessed with suitable persons about him to converse with. Bringing it down from generals to particulars, nothing can recommend a man more, nothing renders him more agreeable, nothing can be a better character to give of one man to another, next to that of his being an honest and religious man, than to say of him that he is very good company.

How delightful is it to see a man's face always covered with smiles, and his soul shining continually in the goodness of his temper; to see an air of humour and pleasantness sit ever upon his brow, and to find him on all occasions the same, ever agreeable to others and to himself – a steady calm of mind, a clear head, and serene thoughts always acting the mastership upon him. Such a man has something angelic in his very countenance; the life of such a man is one entire scene of composure; 'tis an anticipation of the future state, which we well represent by an eternal peace.

To such a man to be angry, is only to be just to himself, and to act as he ought to do; to be troubled or sad is only to act his reason, for as to being in a passion he knows nothing of it; passion is a storm in the mind, and this never happens to him; for all excesses, either of grief or of resentment, are foreigners, and have no habitation with him. He is the only man that can observe that Scripture heavenly dictate, "be angry and sin not;" and if ever he is very angry, 'tis with himself, for giving way to be angry with any one else.

This is the truly agreeable person, and the only one that can be called so in the world; his company is a charm, and is rather wondered at than imitated. 'Tis almost a virtue to envy such a man; and one is apt innocently to grieve at him, when we see what is so desirable in him, and cannot either find it or make it in ourselves.

But take this with you in the character of this happy man, namely, that he is always a good man, a religious man. 'Tis a gross error to imagine that a soul blackened with vice, loaded with crime, degenerated into immorality and folly, can be that man – can have this calm, serene soul, those clear thoughts, those constant smiles upon his brow, and the steady agreeableness and pleasantry in his temper, that I am speaking of; there must be intervals of darkness upon such a mind. Storms in the conscience will always lodge clouds upon the countenance, and where the weather is hazy within it can never be sunshine without; the smiles of a disturbed mind are all but feigned and forged; there may be a good disposition, but it will be too often and too evidently interrupted by the recoils of the mind, to leave the temper untouched and the humour free and unconcerned; when the drum beats an alarm within, it is impossible but the disturbance will be discovered without.

Mark the man of crime; sit close to him in company; at the end of the most exuberant excursion of his mirth, you will never fail to hear his reflecting faculty whisper a sigh to him; he will shake it off, you will see him check it and go on. Perhaps he sings it off, but at the end of every song, nay, perhaps of every stanza, it returns; a kind of involuntary sadness breaks upon all his joy; he perceives it, rouses, despises it, and goes on; but in the middle of a long laugh in drops a sigh; it will be, it can be no otherwise; and I never conversed closely with a man of levity in my life but I could perceive it most plainly; 'tis a kind of respiration natural to a stifled conviction – a hesitation that is the consequence of a captivated virtue, a little insurrection in the soul against the tyranny of profligate principles.

But in the good man the calm is complete – it is all nature, no counterfeit; he is always in humour, because he is always composed:

He's calm without, because he's clear within.

A stated composure of mind can really proceed from nothing but a fund of virtue; and this is the reason why it is my opinion that the common saying, that content of mind is happiness, is a vulgar mistake, unless it be granted that this content is first founded on such a basis as the mind ought to be contented with, for otherwise a lunatic in Bedlam is a completely happy man; he sings in his hutch, and dances in his chain, and is as contented as any man living. The possession or power which that vapour or delirium! has upon his brain makes him fancy himself a prince, a monarch, a statesman, or just what he pleases to be; as a certain duchess is said to have believed herself to be an empress, has her footmen drawn up, with javelins, and dressed in antic habits, that she may see them through a window, and believe them to be her guards; is served upon the knee, called her majesty, imperial majesty, and the like; and with this splendour her distempered mind is deluded, forming ideas of things which are not, and at the same time her eyes are shut to the eternal captivity of her circumstances; in which she is made a property to other persons, her estate managed by guardianship, and she a poor demented creature to the last degree, an object of human compassion, and completely miserable.

The only contentment which entitles mankind to any felicity is that which is founded upon virtue and just principles, for contentment is nothing more or less than what we call peace; and what peace where crime possesses the mind, which is attended, as a natural consequence, with torment and disquiet? What peace where the harmony of the soul is broken by constant regret and self-reproaches? What peace in a mind under constant apprehensions and terrors of something yet attending to render them miserable; and all this is inseparable from a life of crime:

For where there 's guilt, there always will be fear.

Peace of mind makes a halcyon upon the countenance, it gilds the face with a cheerful aspect, such as nothing else can procure; and which indeed, as above, it is impossible effectually to counterfeit.

*Bow, mighty reason, to thy Maker's name,
For God and Peace are just the same;
Heaven is the emanation of His face,
And want of peace makes hell in ev'ry place.*

*Tell us, ye men of notion, tell us why
You seek for bliss and wild prosperity
In storms and tempests, feuds and war –
Is happiness to be expected there?
Tell us what sort of happiness
Can men in want of peace possess?*

*Blest charm of Peace, how sweet are all those hours
We spend in thy society!
Afflictions lose their acid powers,
And turn to joys when join'd to thee.*

*The darkest article of life with peace Is but the gate of happiness;
Death in his blackest shapes can never fright,
Thou can'st see day beyond his night;*

*The smile of Peace can calm the frown of Fate,
And, spite of death, can life anticipate,
Nay, hell itself, could it admit of peace,
Would change its nature, and its name would cease;
The bright transforming blessing would destroy
The life of death, and damn the place to joy;
The metamorphosis would be so strange,
T'would fright the devils, and make them bless the change;*

*Or else the brightness would be so intense
They'd shun the light, and fly from thence.*

*Let heav'n, that unknown happiness,
Be what it will, 'tis best described by peace.
No storms without, or storms within;
No fear, no danger there, because no sin:
'Tis bright essential happiness,
Because He dwells within whose name is Peace.*

*Who would not sacrifice for thee
All that men call felicity?
Since happiness is but an empty name,
A vapour without heat or flame,
But what from thy original derives –
And dies with thee, by whom it lives.*

But I return to the subject of conversation, from which this digression is made only to show that the fund of agreeable conversation is, and can only be, founded in virtue; this alone is the thing that keeps a man always in humour, and always agreeable.

They mistake much who think religion or a strict morality discomposes the temper, sours the mind, and unfits a man for conversation. 'Tis irrational to think a man can't be bright unless he is wicked; it may as well be said a man cannot be merry till he is mad, not agreeable till he is offensive, not in humour till he is out of himself. 'Tis clear to me no man can be truly merry but he that is truly virtuous; wit is as consistent with religion as religion is with good manners; nor is there anything in the limitations of virtue and religion, I mean the just restraints which religion and virtue lay upon us in conversation, that should abate the pleasure of it; on the contrary, they increase it. For example: restraints from vicious and indecent discourses; there's as little manners in those things as there is mirth in them, nor indeed does religion or virtue rob conversation of one grain of true mirth. On the contrary, the religious man is the only man fully qualified for mirth and good humour, with this advantage, that when the vicious and the virtuous man appears gay and merry, but differ, as they must do, in the subject of their mirth, you may always observe the virtuous man's mirth is superior to the other, more suitable to him as a man, as a gentleman, as a wise man, and as a good man; and, generally speaking, the other will acknowledge it, at least afterward, when his thoughts cool, and as his reflections come in.

But what shall we do to correct the vices of conversation? How shall we show men the picture of their own behaviour? There is not a greater undertaking in the world, or an attempt of more consequence to the good of mankind, than this; but 'tis as difficult also as it is useful, and at best I shall make but a little progress in it in this work: let others mend it.

Of Unfitting Ourselves for Conversation

Before I enter upon the thing which I call the immorality of conversation, let me say a little about the many weak and foolish ways by which men strive, as it were, to unfit themselves for conversation. Human infirmities furnish us with several things that help to make us unconvertible; we need not study to increase the disadvantages we lie under on that score. Vice and intemperance, not as a crime only, that I should speak of by itself, but even as a distemper, unfit us for conversation; they help to make us cynical, morose, surly, and rude. Vicious people boast of their polite carriage and their nice behaviour, how gay, how good-humoured, how agreeable! For a while it may be so; but trace them as men of vice, follow them till they come to years, and observe, while you live, you never see the humour last, but they grow fiery, morose, positive, and petulant. An ancient drunkard is a thing indeed not often seen, because the vice has one good faculty with it, viz., that it seldom hands them on to old age; but an ancient and good-humoured drunkard I think I never knew.

It seems strange that men should affect unfitting themselves for society, and study to make themselves unconvertible, whereas their being truly sociable as men is the thing which would most recommend them, and that to the best of men, and best answers to the highest felicity of life. Let no man value himself upon being morose and cynical, sour and unconvertible – 'tis the reverse of a good man; a truly religious man follows the rule of the apostle – "Be affable, be courteous, be humble; in meekness esteeming every man better than ourselves; " whereas conversation now is the reverse of the Christian rule; 'tis interrupted with conceitedness and affectation – a pride, esteeming ourselves better than every man; and that which is worse still, this happens generally when indeed the justice of the case is against us, for where is the man who, thus overruling himself, is not evidently inferior in merit to all about him? Nay, and frequently those who put most value upon themselves, have the least merit to support it. Self-conceit is the bane of human society, and, generally speaking, is the peculiar of those who have the least to recommend them: 'tis the ruin of conversation, and the destruction of all improvement; for how should any man receive any advantage from the conversation of others, who believes himself qualified to teach them, and not to have occasion to learn anything from them?

Nay, as the fool is generally the man that is conceited most of his own wit, so that very conceit is the ruin of him; it confirms him a fool all the days of his life, for he that thinks himself a wise man is a fool, and knows it not; nay, 'tis impossible he should continue to be a fool if he was but once convinced of his folly:

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