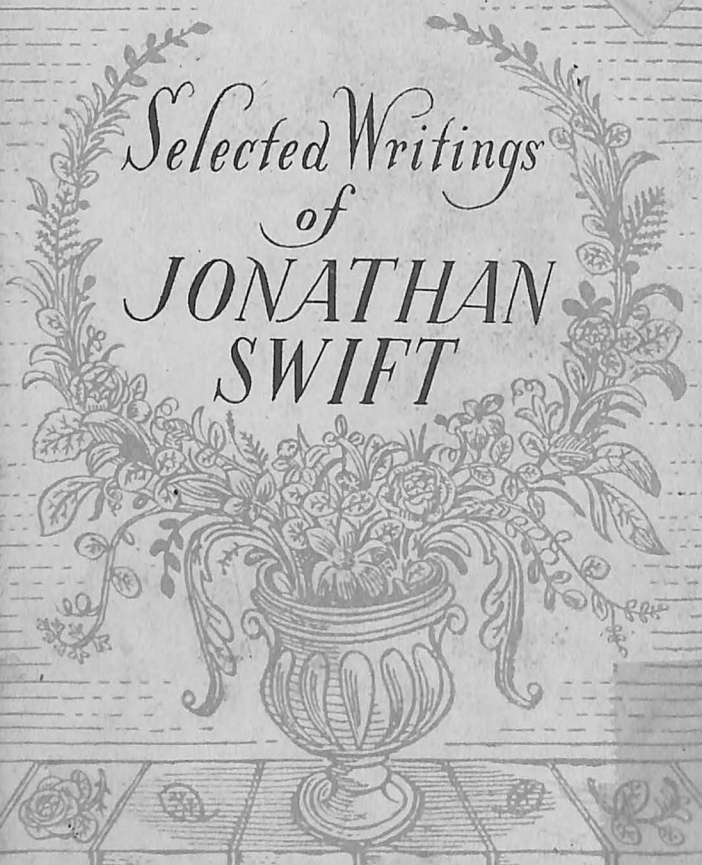


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SWIFT**



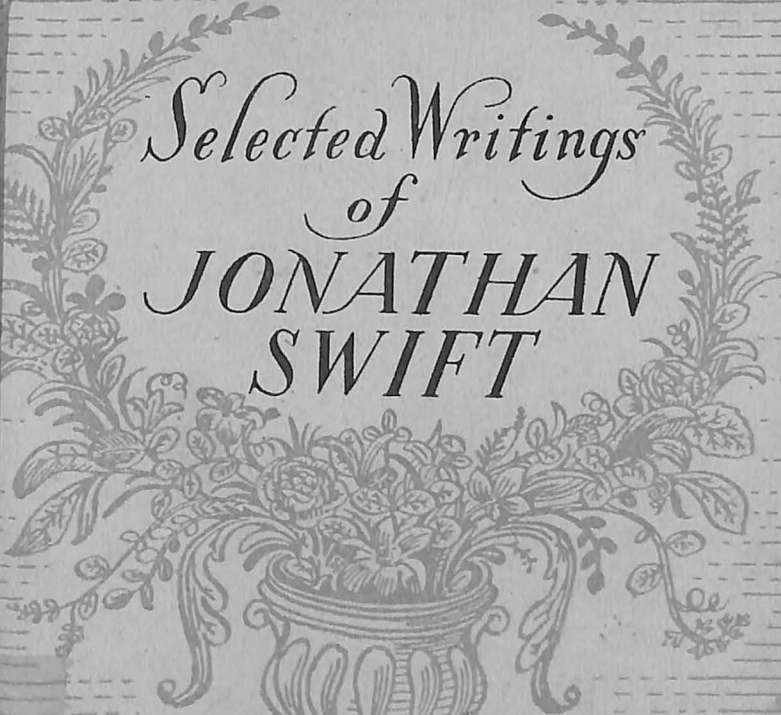
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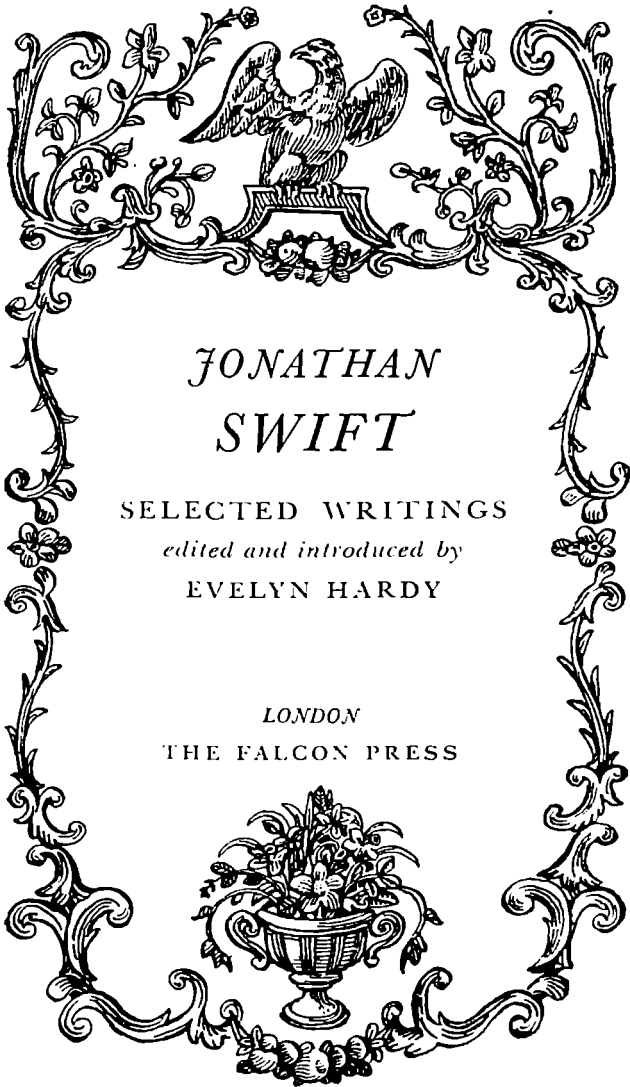
OF

JONATHAN SWIFT

GENERAL EDITOR

★

LEONARD RUSSELL



JONATHAN
SWIFT

SELECTED WRITINGS

edited and introduced by

EVELYN HARDY

LONDON

THE FALCON PRESS

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Introduction

ANYONE who makes selections from Swift's writings opens himself to the charges which Swift made against the unknown 'emendator' of the first edition of *Gulliver's Travels*. He declared that he could not endure the 'mingled-mangled manner' of the 'murdered pages': that 'the whole sting had been taken out in several passages in order to soften them . . . that the style was debased, the humour quite lost and the matter insipid'. Yet few of us have time to read nineteen volumes of prose works and seven of correspondence, excluding three of verse. The purpose of this selection is to introduce Swift in a variety of moods and styles, some of them unknown to the average reader, and to whet the appetite for more of his work.

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin in 1667, a posthumous child. His father, after whom he was named, was of Yorkshire stock, but born and bred in Herefordshire. He followed his brother Godwin,* who had been made Attorney-General in the Palatinate of Tipperary, to Ireland, and was appointed Steward of the King's Inns, Dublin. But he died shortly afterwards, leaving his widow with a small daughter and a child scarce formed in the womb. The welfare of the family, more especially of Jonathan, devolved upon his uncle Godwin.

A series of early domestic accidents had a profound and disabling effect upon the child. His Irish nurse, growing attached to him, took him with her to England without the mother's knowledge when he was a year old. Barely had he been returned to her in Ireland, at the age of four, when his mother went back to Leicestershire leaving the boy behind her. Thus the fatherless child was alternately seized and 'abandoned' by two women, and changed his country twice,

*Denis Johnston argues that Godwin followed Jonathan senior.

within the space of a few years, and these the most impressionable of his life. At the age of six, virtually an orphan, he was sent to Kilkenny School, the 'Eton of Ireland', and when not yet fifteen he was entered at Trinity College, Dublin. His uncle, while financially responsible for him, does not appear to have treated the lad with affection or insight, and as Swift says of himself, 'sunk and discouraged in his spirits, . . . he . . . neglected his academic studies', taking his degree only by special grace. While at the University he became convinced of several things—that he could reason perfectly well without the training in syllogistic argumentation then enforced, that economy was a bitter but essential art, and that independence was above all other blessings the most desirable.

The revolution of 1688 forced him, together with other English Protestants, to flee to England, where he took refuge with his mother. Eventually he joined the household of Sir William Temple, with whose family his own had been associated in Ireland, and whose wife was distantly related to Swift's mother. He remained with Temple at Sheen or at Moor Park in Surrey, intermittently, for ten years. The temper of the retired diplomat and statesman was not congenial to Swift: of the effect of Lady Temple (better known as Dorothy Osborne) on this firebrand from Ireland we hear nothing. Swift's duties as amanuensis and reader to Temple gradually enlarged until finally Temple trusted him to entertain King William at Moor Park and to argue with his chief ministers at Kensington Palace. His arduous solitary study, omnivorous reading, and conversations with his patron developed and trained him for the unofficial role which he was later to play of helmsman to the nation. While at Moor Park he wrote a quantity of verse and prose, discarding much, but preserving (and publishing later) the significant *Tale of a Tub*. Here, too, he met and loved Hester, or Esther, Johnson (daughter of a companion to Temple's sister, Lady Giffard), who was eight years old upon his first arrival, and about fifteen when he returned from a sojourn in Ireland in 1696.

During his first year with Temple, Swift experienced the first attack of an ailment (*labyrinthine vertigo*) which dogged

him throughout life, afflicting him with spasms of deafness and giddiness. Partly to improve his health and partly to assert his independence of Temple, he returned to Ireland and eventually entered the church, not without assistance from Sir William. He obtained the prebend of Kilroot, in the diocese of Connor, but, restless and insufficiently occupied in this remote parish, he obtained the succession for a friend and returned to Temple, with whom he remained until the latter's death in 1699.

Disappointed in his hopes of advancement through Temple or the King's partisans, Swift accepted a chaplaincy to Lord Berkeley, who had recently been made one of the Lords Justices of Ireland. While retaining this post he became Vicar of Laracor, in county Meath. His first political pamphlet, *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions between the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome*, an impressive one, appeared in 1701, when he was in London, and in 1707 he began to be known as a writer, although an unavowed one. During these years he passed backwards and forwards between England and Ireland, keeping in touch with men of rank and position who recognized, sometimes ruefully, his mounting intellectual powers. At this time, and again in 1710-13, he was busy in London pleading the cause of the Irish clergy, who, he considered, should benefit by a remission of tithes, as the English clergy had already done through the thoughtful practicality of Queen Anne, in 1704. Originally ambitious to be allied with the Whig ministers in power, Swift went over to the Tories when he clearly saw the unsatisfactoriness of trying to work with people whose ideals he could share neither in religious nor political matters.

With the advent of the Tory leaders, Harley, who became Lord Treasurer, and St. John, Secretary of State, to power, Swift's unacknowledged rule began. For Harley, with that gift of picking the right man for the job which characterized him, early recognized Swift's superb gifts as a political pamphleteer which he used to the full on behalf of the Ministry. Swift's editorship and writing in the *Examiner*, the mouthpiece for national policy, established the Press in the position of eminence which it still holds. Thus Swift, now an M.A. and

a Doctor of Divinity, found himself consulted on secret ministerial matters, solicited by all and sundry because of his influence with the great, and moving, not only with ease but with almost regal authority, amongst them. When the Spanish Ambassador was at Court he asked to be presented to Dr. Swift, since 'his Master (the Emperor) and the King of France, and the Queen, were more obliged to me than any man in Europe'. And such was Swift's arrogance that he caused the Lord Treasurer with staff and robe of office to walk through the crowded rooms of his own levee to carry a message for him.

The number of people whom Swift at this time assisted is astonishing, chief amongst them young and unknown writers. Gay, Prior, Parnell, Diaper, Philips and Harrison, Congreve, Addison, Steele and the philosopher Berkeley, all received through him encouragement and advancement: and a host of humbler people, whose supplications became intolerable, caused him to change his lodgings and teach his servant to lie on his behalf.

But, strangely, he could do nothing for himself. The Queen had an aversion for him which sprang, it was alleged, from her distrust of him as the author of *A Tale of a Tub*, that rollicking satire on religious and philosophic pedantry and pretentiousness: and beneath his bursts of temper, his sallies of wit, and his tremendous exertions for others, for the State, or his party, there lay a pool of despondency which drained his vitality and whose presence hardly any but Stella divined. He had angled for English and Irish bishoprics and deaneries, had hoped to be made secretary on a projected embassy to Vienna, had contemplated going to Virginia, or Sweden, and had heard it rumoured that he was to be made Provost of his old college, or Master of the Savoy. "The most he was able to wring from an unwilling Sovereign, and dissentient ministers who professed to love and admire him, was the Deanery of St. Patrick's, the finest in Ireland, but a position far below his proper expectations, measured by his services and ability.

He was installed Dean in June, 1713. But he was not to be left in peace. His friend Erasmus Lewis, Under-Secretary of State, wrote privately and urgently begging him to come

back to England. Realizing the unique position Swift had held (a position without title, recognition, or remuneration) and his unique power, he begged him to attempt a final reconciliation between Harley, now Earl of Oxford, and St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. Swift knew by then that the estrangement between these two politicians was radical, and that the country was heading for a ruin which he was powerless, single-handed, to avert. Time and time again, during the days of his ascendancy, he had undertaken this thankless task, which, so long as he was present, his charm, sincerity, and conviction had achieved. He acceded, crossed to England, made a final attempt to bring them together, and then retired to the country to await the inevitable crash, which was not long in coming. The Queen died, Swift's party was annihilated, Harley was removed to the Tower, and St. John fled to France. Both were under suspicion of having connived with the Pretender.

Swift's hopes, fears, vexations, disappointments and triumphs are all recorded faithfully in the *Journal to Stella*, his letters to Hester Johnson, the child whom he had known and taught at Moor Park, now grown to womanhood. In 1695 while at Kilroot, he had wooed and then virtually rejected Jane Waring, who, baffled by his alternating moods of ardour and frigidity, gentleness and ferocity, and by his strange exactions, had hesitated to accept him. Thenceforward he put the notion of matrimony out of his head, but in 1701 he took an equivocal step whereby he maintained a precarious balance between the conflicting currents of his passions—he persuaded Stella and her friend Rebecca Dingley, who was a kinswoman to Temple and considerably older than Stella, to settle near him in Ireland, under the pretext that living there was cheaper. The two women remained bracketed in his mind and life. In 1703-4 we find him writing to 'the two ladies', and the daily *Journal* continued the custom. So curious, so fenced-round with unnatural barriers was this half-hearted relationship, into which Swift nevertheless put all that remained of an estranged and divided self, that he himself declared that he hardly ever saw Stella of a morning, except on a journey, and never without Mistress Dingley. During his years of English triumph Stella remained uncomplaining in Ireland,

living humbly in lodgings, sharing the most brilliant years of his life only on paper, and with a small group of intimate friends known to both of them.

It was during these same years of crowded activity that Swift met Hester Vanhomrigh, whom he called Vanessa. Her father had been Lord Mayor of Dublin, and after his death his widow determined to dissipate his fortune in London society. Hester was a moody, immature girl of neglected ability. Quick to sense this, Swift took her studies in hand and as he had guided Stella, intellectually and morally, so he guided Vanessa. Quick to respond (for his imperious manner, intuitive perceptiveness, and complex character, all made him attractive to women), Vanessa confessed herself in love with him. Swift's reactions may be read in his long autobiographical account of the disclosure, the poem *Cadenus and Vanessa*, written for her without an eye to publication. He was taken by surprise, flattered and chagrined: he strove to outline the boundaries of their future relationship without enforcing them, and without bidding Vanessa farewell. The confusion into which he was thrown when intimately involved with a woman blinded him as to her real character and prevented him from estimating her strengths and weaknesses. The result was a long-drawn-out state of siege, in which Vanessa pleaded pathetically and with an increasing insistence for more consideration and greater intimacy and Swift, unwilling to free himself from Stella, and unable to give himself fully to a single woman, withdrew further and further before her entreaties.

The Vanhomrighs were an early-dying family, inclined to consumption. Vanessa lost first her mother, then a brother, and finally her younger sister. She was involved in clearing her mother's debts, transferring her sister and herself to their Irish property, and in long law-suits over her father's estate, which continued after her death to the distraction of her executors. In all these calamities Vanessa turned to Swift as her natural protector and he, touched by her plight, continued to advise her, which only bound her to him more intricately and hopelessly. What happened at the end is not clear, but it is evident that Vanessa intruded too far into Swift's privacy

and, fearful and enraged, he struck her down as brutally as if he had used physical violence. She died in 1724, and Stella in 1728.

Some curious parallels existed in their lives. Both women had been christened Hester and chose to alter their names to the more popular Esther, signing their wills thus. Both were fatherless when Swift first met them. The education of both was undertaken by him, Stella's in larger measure than Vanessa's. He was considerably older than both. Both women loved the man, and were unable to escape from this love, no matter how unsatisfying, into happiness with another, although both had proposals of marriage after being associated with Swift. Both suffered from coming within his orbit, Vanessa more because she was more rigorously excluded from the hampered love which he could give, and because she was too old when he met her to be moulded, as he had moulded Stella, into a second self acceding to his warped emotional necessities. Stella is said to have been clandestinely married to Swift, but the evidence comes down to us weak and vitiated and the student of Swift's writings will find sufficient internal evidence to make him consider it improbable.

One further thought on this vexed subject. Why did both Stella and Vanessa submit, Stella more silently and Vanessa with lamentations, to such treatment? The answer lies in the compelling power of Swift. I do not think that anyone, unless he knew Swift in the flesh, can estimate this power, which seems to speak to us across the grave. He had always been able to command attention, respect, and submission, from those far above him in station, by sheer force of personality. His outbursts of temper were frightful and his reproofs terrible. His servants, well tested in humility before entering his service, trembled before him. His printer, Faulkner, admitted openly that when Dean Swift ordered him to eat up the butts of asparagus on his plate he had done so. Peers of the realm came or went at his bidding, and Vanessa confessed that when he was angry there was something so awful in his look that it struck her dumb.

In his remaining years in Ireland after the deaths of both women—and they were long years—Swift grew to resemble

a prisoner who lives because he must and diverts himself accordingly. He amused himself with his little court of Irish friends, kept up a correspondence with his cherished English ones—Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, Harley, Harley's son (the second Earl of Oxford), Lady Betty Germain, and many others; renewed his study of the classics, history, and mathematics, became interested in coins, made puns; exercised with maniacal insistence, and eased heart and mind by constant writing. He was pugnacious and often tactless with his Archbishop and Chapter. He took a passionate interest in the welfare of the poor, proposing badges for beggars and measures for relieving the hardships of prostitutes. His miserliness, which grew upon him, was balanced by unsurpassed charity to dependants and supplicants. He gave vent to his arrogance by assuming the direction of his friends' servants and even wives, while visiting them in their country homes. But savageness and misanthropy turned to settled gloom, and the closing years of his life were clouded, if not by actual insanity, by something very close to it. The retaining walls of the will had broken down and the repressed unconscious took increasing charge. For the last five or six years he was nothing more than the shell of his former magnificent self.

Yet to these latter years, before decay set in, belong some of his most powerful verse, and before the death of Stella he rose like a gaunt Quixote to smite the English, and mankind in general, with two masterpieces of varying calibre—the *Drapier's Letters* and *Gulliver's Travels*. The former, and other of his Irish pamphlets, made him a national hero. The Irish towns voted him their freedom; manufacturers and corporations sought his advice; and when Prime Minister Walpole suggested arresting him because of his pernicious influence he was told that a guard of 10,000 soldiers would be needed to protect the messenger bearing the warrant. Something of his old delight in practical jokes is evident in his dismissal of a crowd which had gathered round the Deanery to witness an eclipse, by sending a servant to say that it had been postponed by the Dean's orders.

Gulliver, published anonymously like all his work (with one minor exception), brought him fame on the continent, where

he was already known, as well as in the British Isles. Sir Walter Scott says that it was read by rich and poor alike, but one gets the impression that Swift's uncanny powers of satire and verisimilitude were neither fully appreciated nor understood by his contemporaries, who stood too close to him to estimate his strength. Voltaire alone, with whom he corresponded, seemed to estimate him properly when he called him 'un Rabelais perfectionné'.

He visited England twice in the last thirty years of his life: in 1725-6, when he stayed with Pope at Twickenham, and in the spring of 1727, being recalled in the autumn of that year by friends who feared for Stella's life. He died in the Deanery of St. Patrick's in October 1745, and was buried in the Cathedral. Nearby hangs a stone inscribed with his own epitaph which shocks any who come near it with its persistent vituperative power.

Swift's style, outer reflection of the inner man, mirrors his character. Despite constant attacks of illness (which doctors now think were hysterical in origin) and despite hypochondriacal nursing of his health, he was a man of immense vitality, who expressed himself not only in masculine writing but in action. He rejoiced, as he thought, in seeing life realistically, and in his prose and verse does not balk at unpleasantness. He worshipped reason and disliked mystery, so that his style is equable, logical, straightforward, and unaffected.

But his impassivity, clarity, rationality, and apparently effortless simplicity are deceptive. For Swift was an extremely complex character and he reveals this complexity subtly. The opposing trends resemble a bewildering number of threads which (in his best work) he manipulates like a weaver following an intricate design.

In several respects his style is unique—in the intense earnestness with which he approaches a subject; in his deadly use of satire; in his ability to take daring flights into the realm of the unreal (while remaining tethered to the confines of reality sufficiently to suggest probability, and hence placating the reader); and fourthly, in the buried emotional quality of his work, which often suggests poetry.

Both in his life and work Swift presents the anomaly of appearing to be highly unromantic and unpoetical whilst remaining a poet in essence, a poet *manqué*. Fearful of being betrayed by his emotions—(which he in turn denied and betrayed, ashamed of the least display of them)—he reveals, despite himself, a wealth of emotional life which, suppressed and inverted, runs underground. His prose (and even his verse, which I must ignore) is therefore deceptive: it appears to be detached, lucid, and rational but, below, the streams of thwarted feeling boil like molten lava. We know that as a young man Swift wished to be a poet, looking for encouragement to his cousin Dryden, who did him the disservice of further discouraging him. The very fierceness of his denigration of all that is romantic indicates the longing which Swift unconsciously had to surrender himself to love, to the beautiful and delicate.

The essential tragedy of Swift's life lies, therefore, in a maiming of the emotional life which prevented him from becoming a full-orbed man, so that happiness and success eluded him. He lacked wholeness, in so far as reason was elevated and feeling suppressed, the rational deified and the mystical despised. There is tragic irony in the fact that Swift, one of the greatest exponents of the philosophy of the Age of Reason, was himself the victim of that philosophy. For anyone who attempts to live by reason, and reason alone, will be caught out and punished by life.

There are indications that Swift was aware of his emotional disability, but did not understand it. He put it down to 'coldness of temper', stated that he 'did not know what love was' and argued that 'violent friendship was better than violent love'.

He felt himself excluded from a portion of life and knew himself exceptional. In the *Journal to Stella* he confesses that he cannot even have an ordinary illness without complications obscure even to the physicians: and there are numerous references in the same letters to the alternating moods of expectancy and despondency which tease and make him their victim.

Two other marked characteristics spring from this inner

starvation—his misconceived fear of madness, and his need for secrecy. The former is obvious in *A Tale of a Tub*: in a remark which he made to a friend when out walking: 'I shall be like that tree, I shall die at the top'; in his satirical piece, *A Serious and Useful Scheme to make an Hospital for Incurables*; in his prayers for Stella, when she was dying, that reason might not desert her; in his final magnificent bequest of £12,000 to found a hospital for the insane in Dublin. All these things indicate the intensity of his fear of losing conscious control, of making terms with his irrational nature, which sprang from a mistaken conviction that to be reconciled with his unconscious would engender madness.

His need for secrecy, which made him adopt what Lady Gregory has called 'the cloak and the mask'; to publish anonymously; to hide his deepest feelings; to adopt the 'little language in the *Journal*, and to 'write small' for fear of discovery; to drop from society at long intervals and disconnect himself from his friends; to keep the presence of Stella in his life from Vanessa and Vanessa from Stella, and to escape giving himself to either—all bespeak a dwarfed and pitifully ungrown self, too immature, too vulnerable to shield itself from the bewildering complexities and sharp attacks of this world. The 'desolate dean' was at heart no more than a small child, dreading exposure and ridicule, and only to Stella did he dare disclose this stumbling, prattling self.

Swift is not one of the greatest of English divines: he lacks spirituality, and his worship of Reason as the guiding force in life made him an enemy of mysticism. His religion is negative rather than positive, and expresses itself inversely. The royal Houyhnhnms coldly comment on what man *might* be rather than what he is: his potential divine splendour is implied but not believed in, and only the severity of Swift's castigation of humankind remains to show us how his heart longed to believe in what his mind refused. A conviction that man was a growing creature and might be melted by the love of God would have lifted him above pessimism and an attitude towards mankind which was both static and degrading.

From scraps of conversation faithfully recorded, from the indirect evidence of many of his poems, from *Gulliver* and

the *Journal to Stella*, and other works stripped of their political quarrelling, from the *Fragment of Autobiography*, and from the more consciously drawn *Cadenus and Vanessa*, we piece together this confusing character. Ultimately a single sentence, and a few words from his self-composed epitaph, sum him up best for us:

‘Do not the villainies and corruptions of men
(in power) *eat your flesh and exhaust your spirits?*’

he asked his friendly Delany, and when the latter replied in the negative, ‘*How can you help it?*’ Swift asked insistently. Lastly, the ‘savage indignation which lacerates the heart’. Therein lies the excessive sensitivity, enraged vulnerability, and self-torture of this Titan who, for half a century, never rested from trying to help others, while himself disabled from participating fully in life; who searched fiercely for the comforting good news of the gospel without appearing ever to find it.

I wish to acknowledge the kindness of Mr. Martin Freeman in allowing me to make unstinted use of Swift’s and Vanessa’s letters; of Mr. Harold Williams in letting me draw upon his edition of the *Journal of Stella*; of Mr. John Hayward for giving me the opportunity of using his selections from the prose writings of Swift as a basis for many of my own; and of Dr. David Nichol Smith for granting me permission to quote from Swift’s letters to Ford.

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EVELYN HARDY.

A SHORT LIST OF MODERN EDITIONS
OF SOME
OF SWIFT'S PROSE WORKS

- GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, with an Introduction by Harold Williams (Everyman's Library, 1941).
- THE JOURNAL TO STELLA, (1) edited by J. K. Moorhead (Everyman, 1940); (2) edited by Harold Williams (Clarendon Press, 1948).
- VANESSA AND HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH JONATHAN SWIFT, edited by Martin Freeman (Selwyn & Blount, 1921).
- THE LETTERS OF JONATHAN SWIFT TO CHARLES FORD, edited by David Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1935).
- GULLIVER'S TRAVELS AND SELECTED WRITINGS IN PROSE AND VERSE, edited by John Hayward (Nonesuch Press, 1944).
- THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JONATHAN SWIFT, D.D., edited by Dr. F. Elrington Ball, 6 vols. (London, 1910-14).
- THE PROSE WORKS OF JONATHAN SWIFT, D.D., WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION by Lecky, edited by Temple Scott, 12 vols. (London, 1897-1908).
- THE PROSE WORKS OF JONATHAN SWIFT, edited by Herbert Davis, 14 vols. (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1939-1948).

Resolutions: When I Come to be Old

(The *Resolutions* were written when Swift was thirty-two, and indicate how his character had already set. They show us certain pronounced characteristics which remained his throughout life, such as over-fastidiousness, and that ever-present fear of making an early and impecunious marriage, from which his mother had suffered. They reveal his weaknesses, and what he feared as weaknesses. The fifth resolution, a strange and terrible interdict, bore its sad fruit in his inability to be intimate with any woman.)

Not to marry a young woman.

Not to keep young company unless they really desire it.

Not to be peevish, or morose, or suspicious.

Not to scorn present ways, or wits, or fashions, or men, or war, etc.

Not to be fond of children, or let them come near me hardly.

Not to tell the same story over and over to the same people.

Not to be covetous.

Not to neglect decency, or cleanliness, for fear of falling into nastiness.

Not to be over severe with young people, but give allowances for their youthful follies, and weaknesses.

Not to be influenced by, or give ear to, knavish tattling servants, or others.

Not to be too free of advice nor trouble any but those that desire it.

To desire some good friends to inform me which of these resolutions I break, or neglect, and wherein; and reform accordingly.

Not to talk much, nor of myself.

Not to boast of my former beauty, or strength, or favour with ladies, etc.

Not to hearken to flatteries, nor conceive I can be beloved by
a young woman, *et eos qui hereditatem captant odisse
ac vitare.*

Not to be positive or opiniative.

Not to set up for observing all these rules, for fear I should
observe none.

A Digression on Madness

from *A Tale of a Tub*

(*A Tale of a Tub*—common name for a cock-and-bull story—was Swift's first masterpiece. As an old man, looking at the *Tale*, Swift exclaimed, 'Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book'. It was written when he was thirty and living with Sir William Temple, but not published until 1704, and then anonymously. In the *Digression on Madness* Swift gravely asserts that madness is the upsetting of the understanding by vapours which arise from the 'lower faculties', and that derangement is likely to occur when certain strong vapours are prevented their normal outlet. The passage here quoted on the relativity between genius and madness may be considered an unconscious comment on Swift's inner conflicts. Half in jest and half in earnest he asserts that we are all mad, and happy so long as deluded: the more we have to face truth the more insupportable will reality be. This hideous philosophy, mockingly stated, was based on a conviction which increasingly tormented its master.)

WHEN a man's fancy gets astride on his reason, when imagination is at cuffs with the senses, and common understanding as well as common sense, is kicked out of doors; the first proselyte he makes, is himself, and when that is once compassed, the difficulty is not so great in bringing over others: a strong delusion always operating from without, as vigorously as from within. For, cant and vision are to the ear and the eye, the same that tickling is to the touch. Those entertainments and pleasures we most value in life, are such as dupe and play the wag with the senses. For, if we take an examination of what is generally understood by happiness, as it has respect, either to the understanding or the senses, we shall find all its properties and adjuncts will herd under this short definition: that, *it is a perpetual posses-*

sion of being well-deceived. And first, with relation to the mind or understanding; 'tis manifest what mighty advantages fiction has over truth; and the reason is just at our elbow; because imagination can build nobler scenes, and produce more wonderful revolutions than fortune or nature will be at expense to furnish. Nor is mankind so much to blame in his choice, thus determining him, if we consider that the debate merely lies between things past, and things conceived; and so the question is only this; whether things that have place in the imagination, may not as properly be said to exist, as those that are seated in the memory; which may be justly held in the affirmative, and very much to the advantage of the former, since this is acknowledged to be the womb of things, and the other allowed to be no more than the grave . . .

I do here gladly embrace an opportunity I have long sought for, of recommending it as a very noble undertaking . . . to bring in a bill, for appointing commissioners to inspect into Bedlam,¹ and the parts adjacent; who shall be empowered to send for persons, papers, and records; to examine into the merits and qualifications of every student and professor; to observe with utmost exactness their several dispositions and behaviour; by which means, duly distinguishing and adapting their talents, they might produce admirable instruments for the several offices in a State, for the principal management of affairs ecclesiastical, civil and military; proceeding in such methods as I shall here humbly propose. And, I hope the gentle reader will give some allowance to my great solitudes in this important affair, upon account of that high esteem I have ever born that honourable society, whereof I had some time the happiness to be an unworthy member.

(1) Swift was made a Governor of Bethlehem Hospital in 1714, eighteen years after *A Tale of a Tub* was published.

A Meditation upon a Broomstick

(The *Meditation* springs from the happy, prankish side of Swift's nature. He had a love of practical joking—which does not always strike us as felicitous—a gift for mimicry and parody, and a hatred of affectation and pedantry.)

THIS single stick, which you now behold ingloriously lying in that neglected corner, I once knew in a flourishing state in a forest, it was full of sap, full of leaves, and full of boughs; but now, in vain does the busy art of man pretend to vie with nature, by tying that withered bundle of twigs to its sapless trunk; 'tis now at best but the reverse of what it was, a tree turned upside down, the branches on the earth, and the root in the air; 'tis now handled by every dirty wench, condemned to do her drudgery, and by a capricious kind of fate, destined to make other things clean, and be nasty itself; at length, worn to the stumps in the service of the maids, 'tis either thrown out of doors, or condemned to its last use of kindling fires. When I beheld this, I sighed, and said within myself, Surely Man is a Broom-stick; Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair on his head, the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable, till the axe of intemperance has lopped off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk; he then flies unto art, and puts on a peruke, valuing himself upon an unnatural bundle of hairs, all covered with powder that never grew on his head; but now should this our broom-stick pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, though the sweepings of the finest lady's chamber, we should be apt to ridicule and despise its vanity, partial judges that we are! of our own excellencies, and other men's faults.

But a broom-stick, perhaps you'll say, is an emblem of a

tree standing on its head; and pray what is man, but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually a-cock-horse and rational: his head where his heels should be; grovelling on the earth, and yet with all his faults, he sets up to be an universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances, rakes into every slut's corner of nature, bringing hidden corruptions to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before, sharing deeply all the while, in the very same pollutions he pretends to sweep away: his last days are spent in slavery to women, and generally the least deserving; till worn to the stumps, like his Brother Bezom, he's either kicked out of doors, or made use of to kindle flames, for others to warm themselves by.

Predictions for the Year 1708

by Isaac Bickerstaff

(A cobbler, who took the name of Partridge, had become famous as an astrologer in London. The gullible and ignorant made him rich, and King William made him honorary court physician. Swift, who hated mystery and pretence, amused himself in 1708 by publishing predictions, under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, in rivalry with Partridge. Instead of vague, oracular utterances Swift promised fulfilled events, the first of which should be the death of Partridge himself. The day after the date set for his death Swift published an announcement of the demise of Partridge. The Astrologer indignantly announced that he was alive: Bickerstaff replied that his saying so in print was no proof. Ultimately Partridge was ruined. The controversy involved most of the wits of the day. Congreve conspired with Swift to write articles in defence of Partridge, which the poor man accepted and published in good faith. So effective was Swift's hoax that the Company of Stationers struck Partridge's name from their rolls, the Lord Chamberlain decided against him in an action which he brought at court, and the Portuguese Inquisition condemned Bickerstaff to the flames. Swift's hoax was a triumph: his singular power of making an assumption, and then of proving this assumption by minute, realistic, and seemingly logical consequences, is here amply displayed. One admires the cleverness of invention and the assiduity of Swift's attack but deplores the cruelty of a jester who could not rest until he had destroyed his opponent.)

I have consider'd the gross abuse of astrology in this Kingdom, and upon debating the matter with myself, I could not possibly lay the fault upon the art, but upon those gross impostors who set up to be the artists. I know several learned men have contended that the whole is a cheat; that it is absurd and ridiculous to imagine, the stars can have

any influence at all upon human actions, thoughts or inclinations; and whoever has not bent his studies that way, may be excused for thinking so, when he sees in how wretched a manner that noble art is treated by a few mean illiterate traders between us and the stars; who import a yearly stock of nonsense, lies, folly, and impertinence, which they offer to the world as genuine from the planets, tho' they descend from no greater a height than their own brains.

I intend in a short time to publish a large and rational defence of this art, and therefore shall say no more in its justification at present, than that it hath been in all ages defended by many learned men, and among the rest by Socrates himself, whom I look upon as undoubtedly the wisest of uninspired mortals: to which if we add, that those who have condemned this art, tho' otherwise learn'd, having been such as either did not apply their studies this way or at least did not succeed in their applications: their testimony will not be of much weight to its disadvantage, since they are liable to the common objection of condemning what they did not understand.

Nor am I at all offended, or think it an injury to the art, when I see the common dealers in it, the students in astrology, the Philomaths, and the rest of that tribe, treated by wise men with the utmost scorn and contempt; but rather wonder, when I observe gentlemen in the country, rich enough to serve the nation in Parliament, poring in Partridge's Almanack, to find out the events of the year at home and abroad; nor dare to propose a hunting match, till Gadbury or he have fix'd the weather.

I will allow either of the two I have mention'd, or any others of the fraternity, to be not only astrologers, but conjurers too, if I do not produce a hundred instances in all their Almanacks, to convince any reasonable man, that they do not so much as understand common grammar and syntax; that they are not able to spell any word out of the usual road, nor even in their prefaces to write correct common sense or intelligible English. Then for their Observations and Predictions, they are such as will equally suit any age or country in the world. 'This month a certain great person will be threatened with

death or sickness.' This the newspaper will tell them, for there we find at the end of the year, that no month passes without the death of some person of note; and it would be hard if it should be otherwise, when there are at least two thousand persons of note in this Kingdom, many of them old, and the Almanack-maker has the liberty of chusing the sickliest season of the year where he may fix his prediction; again, 'This month an eminent clergyman will be preferr'd'; of which there may be some hundreds, half of them with one foot in the grave. Then, 'Such a planet in such a house shows great machinations, plots and conspiracies, that may in time be brought to light': after which; if we hear of any discovery, the astrologer gets the honour, if not, his prediction still stands good. And at last, 'God preserve K. William from all his open and secret enemies, Amen'. When, if the King should happen to have died, the astrologer plainly foretold it; otherwise it passes but for the pious ejaculation of a loyal subject: tho' it unluckily happen'd in some of their almanacks, that poor K. William was pray'd for many months after he was dead, because it fell out that he died about the beginning of the year.

To mention no more of their impertinent predictions; what have we to do with their advertisements about pills and drinks for the venereal disease, or their mutual quarrels in verse and prose of Whig and Tory, wherewith the stars have little to do?

Having long observ'd and lamented these, and a hundred other abuses of this art too tedious to repeat, I resolv'd to proceed in a new way, which I doubt not will be to the general satisfaction of the Kingdom: I can this year produce but a specimen of what I design for the future: having employ'd most part of my time in adjusting and correcting the calculations I made for some years past, because I would offer nothing to the World of which I am not as fully satisfied, as that I am now alive. For these last two years I have not fail'd in above one or two particulars, and those of no very great moment. I exactly foretold the miscarriage at Toulon, with all its particulars; and the loss of Admiral Shovell, tho' I was mistaken as to the day, placing that accident about 36 hours sooner than it happen'd; but upon reviewing my schemes, I quickly found the cause of that error. I likewise foretold the

battle at Almanza to the very day and hour, with the loss on both sides, and the consequences thereof. All which I show'd to some friends many months before they happen'd. That is, I gave them papers sealed up, to open in such a time, after which they were at liberty to read them; and there they found my predictions true in every article, except one or two very minute.

As for the few following predictions I now offer to the world, I forebore to publish them till I had perused the several almanacks for the year we are now entered on. I find them all in the usual strain, and I beg the reader will compare their manner with mine: and here I make bold to tell the world, that I lay the whole credit of my art upon the truth of these predictions; and I will be content, that Partridge, and the rest of his clan, may hoot me for a cheat and impostor if I fail in any single particular of moment. I believe, any man who reads this paper will look upon me to be at least a person of as much honesty and understanding, as a common maker of almanacks. I do not lurk in the dark; I am not wholly unknown in the world; I have set my name at length, to be a mark of infamy to mankind, if they shall find I deceive them.

In one thing I must desire to be forgiven, that I talk more sparingly of home affairs; as it would be imprudence to discover secrets of state, so it would be dangerous to my person, but in smaller matters, and that are not of publick consequence, I shall be very free; and the truth of my conjectures will as much appear from these as the other. As for the most signal events abroad in France, Flanders, Italy and Spain, I shall make no scruple to predict them in plain terms: some of them are of importance, and I hope I shall seldom mistake the day they will happen: therefore I think good to inform the reader, that I all along make use of the old style observ'd in England, which I desire he will compare with that of the newspapers, at the time they relate the actions I mention.

I must add one word more; I know it hath been the opinion of several learned, who think well enough of the true art of astrology, that the stars do only incline, and not force, the actions or wills of men: and therefore, however, I may proceed by right rules, yet I cannot in prudence so confi-

dently assure the events will follow exactly as I predict them.

I hope I have maturely consider'd this objection, which in some cases is of no little weight: for example; a man may by the influence of an over-ruling planet be disposed or inclined to lust, rage, or avarice, and yet by the force of reason overcome that bad influence; and this was the case of Socrates; but the great events of the world usually depending upon numbers of men, it cannot be expected they should all unite to cross their inclinations, from pursuing a general design, wherein they unanimously agree. Besides, the influence of the stars reaches to many actions and events, which are not any way in the power of reason; as sickness, death, and what we commonly call accidents, with many more, needless to repeat.

But it is now time to proceed to my predictions, which I have begun to calculate from the time that the sun enters into Aries. And that I take to be properly the beginning of the natural year. I pursue them to the time that he enters Libra, or somewhat more, which is the busy period of the year. The remainder I have not yet adjusted, upon account of several impediments needless here to mention. Besides, I must remind the reader again, that this is but a specimen of what I design in succeeding years to treat more at large, if I may have liberty and encouragement.

My first prediction is but a trifle, yet I will mention it, to show how ignorant these Scottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack-maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time. . . .

This is the furthest I have proceeded in my calculations for the present year. I do not pretend that these are all the great events which will happen in this period, but that those that I have set down will infallibly come to pass. It will perhaps still be objected, why I have not spoke more particularly of affairs at home, or of the success of our armies abroad, which I might add I could very largely have done; but those in power have wisely discourag'd men from meddling in publick concerns, and I was resolv'd by no means to give the least offence. This

I will venture to say, that it will be a glorious campaign for the allies, wherein the English forces both by sea and land, will have their full share of honour; that Her Majesty Queen Anne will continue in health and prosperity; and that no ill accident will arrive to any in the chief ministry.

As to the particular events I have mention'd, the readers may judge by the fulfilling of them, whether I am of the level with common astrologers; who with an old paoltry cant, and a few pot-hooks for planets to amuse the vulgar, have, in my opinion, too long been suffer'd to abuse the world: but an honest physician ought not to be despis'd, because there are such things as mountebanks. I hope I have some share of reputation which I would not willingly forfeit for a frolick of humour; and I believe no gentleman, who reads this paper, will look upon it to be of the same last or mould with the common scribbles that are every day hawk'd about. My fortune has plac'd me above the little regards of scribbling for a few pence, which I neither value nor want: therefore let not wise men too hastily condemn this essay, intended for a good design to cultivate and improve an ancient art long in disgrace by having fallen into mean and unskilful hands. A little time will determine, whether I have deceived others, or myself; and I think it no very unreasonable request, that men would please to suspend their judgments till then. . . .

Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation

(This deals with a subject always dear to Swift. He laid great emphasis on the importance of good conversation. In his character of Stella, written on the night that she died, he twice states that her conversation was one of her chief attractions for him and he repeats this in letters about her. He praised Vanessa for a similar gift. But apart from its personal purport, the essay has a general interest, for it shows to what a low ebb the society of Queen Anne and its conversation had receded. Swift believed the seventeenth century to have been the hey-day of literature and fine conversation. He has enlarged his theme in the better-known *Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* published in 1737-38, and said to have been acted in a Dublin theatre.)

MOST things, pursued by men for the happiness of public or private life, our wit or folly have so refined, that they seldom subsist but in idea; a true friend, a good marriage, a perfect form of government, with some others, require so many ingredients, so good in their several kinds, and so much niceness in mixing them, that for some thousands of years men have despaired of reducing their schemes to perfection. But, in conversation, it is, or might be otherwise; for here we are only to avoid a multitude of errors, which, although a matter of some difficulty, may be in every man's power, for want of which it remains as mere an idea as the other. Therefore it seems to me, that the truest way to mend conversation, is to know the faults and errors to which it is subject, and from thence every man to form maxims to himself whereby it may be regulated, because it requires few talents to which most men are not born, or at least may not acquire without any great genius or study. For nature has left every man a capacity of being agreeable, though not of shining in company; and there are an hundred

men sufficiently qualified for both, who, by a very few faults, that they might correct in half an hour, are not so much as tolerable.

I was prompted to write my thoughts upon this subject by mere indignation, to reflect that so useful and innocent a pleasure, so fitted for every period and condition of life, and so much in all men's power, should be so much neglected and abused. . . .

I think I have gone over most of the errors in conversation, that have fallen under my notice or memory, except some that are merely personal, and others too gross to need exploding: such as lewd or profane talk; but I pretend only to treat the errors of conversation in general, and not the several subjects of discourse, which would be infinite. Thus we see how human nature is most debased, by the abuse of that faculty, which is held the great distinction between men and brutes; and how little advantage we make of that which might be the greatest, the most lasting, and the most innocent, as well as useful pleasure of life. In default of which, we are forced to take up with those poor amusements of dress and visiting, or the mere pernicious ones of play, drink, and vicious amours, whereby the nobility and gentry of both sexes are entirely corrupted both in body and mind, and have lost all notions of love, honour, friendship, generosity; which, under the name of fopperies, have been for some time laughed out of doors.

This degeneracy of conversation, with the pernicious consequences thereof upon our humours and dispositions, has been owing, among other causes, to the custom arisen, for some time past, of excluding women from any share in our society, further than in parties at play, or dancing, or in the pursuit of an amour. I take the highest period of politeness in England (and it is of the same date in France) to have been the peaceable part of King Charles 1st's reign; and from what we read of those times, as well as from the accounts I have formerly met with from some who lived in that court, the methods then used for raising and cultivating conversation, were altogether different from ours. Several ladies, whom we find celebrated by the poets of that age, had assemblies at

their houses, where persons of the best understanding, and of both sexes, met to pass the evenings in discoursing upon whatever agreeable subjects were started; and although we are apt to ridicule the sublime, platonic notions they had, or personated, in love and friendship, I conceive their refinements were grounded upon reason, and that a little grain of the romance is no ill ingredient to preserve and exalt the dignity of human nature, without which it is apt to degenerate into everything that is sordid, vicious and low. If there were no other use in the conversation of ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a restraint upon those odious topics of immodesty, and indecencies, into which the rudeness of our northern genius is so apt to fall. And, therefore, it is observable in those sprightly gentlemen about the town, who are so very dextrous at entertaining a vizard mask in the park, or the playhouse, that in the company of ladies of virtue and honour, they are silent and disconcerted, and out of their element.

The Journal to Stella

(None of Swift's letters to Stella survive, and it is thought that he purposely destroyed them after her death. *The Journal* has to take their place. It is an almost daily record, sent off to Ireland at fortnightly intervals, of Swift's life and thoughts in London, Windsor and elsewhere, from September 2nd, 1710, to June 6th 1713. It is not light reading, and is at first sight disappointing to those who look for fine passages or romantic disclosures. But it grows upon one like the taste for good wine. The variety of subjects which it covers is fascinating and the vivid pictures of Court, domestic, and street life, unforgettable. Above all, there are the touching lines in which Swift bares his heart to Stella, whom he seems to be ashamed to love. I have excluded passages of the 'little language' between them, since it can only be irritating without a key and because it does not show Swift as clearly as many other passages. At the time of writing, Swift, as far as we know, did not yet openly call Hester Johnson 'Stella': nor was the *Journal* addressed to her alone but also to Rebecca Dingley, as an emotional precaution. Its present name was given to it in 1779 by one of Swift's editors.)

10th November 1711

I had good walking today in the city, and take all opportunities of it on purpose for my health; but I can't walk in the Park,¹ because that is only for walking sake, and loses time, so I mix it with business: I wish MD² walked half as much as Presto.³ If I was with you, I'd make you walk; I would walk behind or before you, and you should have masks on, and be tucked up like anything, and Stella is

- (1) St. James's Park, Swift's favourite London walking-place,
- (2) MD, his monograph for Stella, and elsewhere for Stella and her companion-friend, Dingley.
- (3) The nickname given him by the Italian Duchess of Shrewsbury.

naturally a stout walker, and carries herself firm, methinks I see her strut, and step clever over a kennel,' and Dingley² would do well enough, if her petticoats were pinned up; but she is so embroiled, and so fearful, and then Stella scolds, and Dingley stumbles, and is so daggled. Have you got the whalebone petticoats amongst you yet? I hate them; a woman here may hide a moderate gallant under them. Pshaw, what's all this I'm saying? methinks I am talking to MD face to face.

30th June 1711

I am glad at heart MD rides, and rides, and rides . . . O Lord, how hasty we are, Stella can't stay writing and writing; she must write and go a cock-horse, pray now. Well; but the horses are not come to the door; the fellow can't find the bridle; your stirrup is broken; where did you put the whips, Dingley? Marg'et,³ where have you laid Mrs. Johnson's ribband to tie about her? reach me my mask: sup up this before you go. So, so, a gallop, a gallop: sit fast, sirrah, and don't ride hard upon the stones.—Well, now Stella is gone, tell me, Dingley, is she a good girl? and what news is that you are to tell me? . . . O, Madam Stella . . . was it pleasant riding? did your horse stumble? how often did the man light to settle your stirrup? ride nine miles? faith you have galloped indeed. Well, but where's the fine thing you promised me? I have been a good boy, ask Dingley else. I believe you did not meet the fine-thing man: faith you are a cheat.

5th and 6th June 1711

I am cruel thirsty this hot weather. I am just this minute going to swim. I take Patrick⁴ down with me to hold my night-gown, shirt and slippers, and borrow a napkin of my landlady for a cap. So farewell till I come up; but there's no danger,

(1) A gutter

(2) Rebecca Dingley, Stella's lifelong friend and companion who was fifteen years older than Stella and outlived her by an equal number of years.

(3) Their servant girl

(4) Swift's rascally Irish servant.

don't be frightened—I have been swimming' this half hour and more; and when I was coming out I dived, to make my head and all through wet, like a cold bath; but as I dived, the napkin fell off and is lost, and I have that to pay for. O faith, the great stones were so sharp, I could hardly set my feet on them as I came out. It was pure and warm. I got to bed, and will now go to sleep. . . .

Nothing makes me so excessively peevish as hot weather . . . I walked home, and was here by ten, so miserably hot, that I was in as perfect a passion as ever I was in my life at the greatest affront or provocation. Then I sat an hour, till I was quite dry and cool enough to go swim; which I did, but with so much vexation, that I think I have given it over: for I was every moment disturbed by boats, rot them; and that puppy Patrick, standing ashore, would let them come within a yard or two, and then call sneakingly to them. The only comfort I proposed here in hot weather is gone; for there is no jesting with those boats after 'tis dark; I had none last night. I dived to dip my head, and held my cap on with both my hands, for fear of losing it. Pox take the boats! Amen.

15th November 1712

I believe you have heard the story of my escape in opening the bandbox sent to Lord Treasurer, the prints have told a thousand lies of it but at last we gave them a true account of it at length, printed in the evening: only I would not suffer them to name me, having been so often named before, and teased to death with questions. I wonder how I came to have so much presence of mind, which is usually not my talent; but so it pleased God, and I saved myself and him, for there was a bullet apiece. A gentleman told me, that if I had been killed, the Whigs would have called it a judgment, because the barrells were of inkhorns, with which I had done them so much mischief. There was a pure Grubstreet² of it full of lies and inconsistencies. I do not like these things at all; and I wish myself more and more among my willows:³ there is a devilish

(1) In the Thames at Chelsea Reach

(2) A ballad (3) At Laracor

spirit among people; and the ministry must exert themselves or sink.¹

23rd September 1710

Patrick is drunk about three times a week, and I bear it, and he has got the better of me; but one of these days I will positively turn him off to the wide world, when none of you are by to intercede for him. . . .

10th and 11th December 1710

This son of a b—— Patrick, is out of the way, and I can do nothing; am forced to borrow coals. . . .

I am come home again as yesterday, and the puppy had again locked up my ink, notwithstanding all I said to him yesterday: but he came home a little after me, so all is well. . . .

6th January 1710-11

I went last night to put some coals on my fire after Patrick was gone to bed; and there I saw in a closet a poor linnet he has bought to bring over to Dingley: it cost him sixpence, and is as tame as a doormouse. I believe he does not know he is a bird: where you put him, there he stands, and seems to have neither hope nor fear; I suppose in a week he will die of the spleen. Patrick advised with me before he bought him. I laid fairly before him the greatness of the sum and the rashness of the attempt; showed how impossible it was to carry him safe over the salt sea: but he would not take my counsel, and he'll repent it.

31st January 1710-11

We are here in as smart a frost for the time as I have seen, delicate walking weather, and the Canal and Rosamond's

(1) Swift characteristically plays down on his own part in this drama—the second attempt upon the life of Harley. It is related immediately after his announcement of the sensational duel between the Duke of Hamilton (who was killed) and Lord Mohun. Swift was deeply concerned for the Duchess whose grief he tried to abate and whom he tenderly cared for.

Pond¹ full of the rabble sliding and with skates, if you know what those are. Patrick's bird's water freezes in the gallypot, and my hands in bed.

30th March 1710-11

Mrs. Vanhomrigh desires me to breakfast with her, because she is to intercede for Patrick, who is so often drunk and quarrelsome in the house, that I was resolved to send him over. . . .

5th May 1711

I walked here after nine, two miles, and I found a parson drunk fighting with a seaman, and Patrick and I were so wise to part them, but the seaman followed him to Chelsea, cursing at him, and the parson slipped into a house, and I know no more. It mortified me to see a man in my coat so overtaken. A pretty scene for one that just came from sitting with the prime ministers. . . .

30th June 1711

We have plays acted in our town, and Patrick was at one of them, oh, ho! He was damnably mauled one day when he was drunk; he was at cuffs with a brother footman, who dragged him along the floor upon his face, which looked for a week after as if he had the leprosy; and I was glad enough to see it. I have been ten times sending him over to you; yet now he has new clothes, and a laced hat, which the hatter brought by his orders, and he offered to pay for the lace out of his wages. . . .

21st July 1711

I got Lord Winchelsea to bring me to town. Here I found that Patrick had broke open the closet to get my linen and nightgown, and sent them to Windsor, and there they are; and he not thinking I would return so soon, is gone upon his

(1) In St. James's Park.

rambles: so here I am left destitute, and forced to borrow a nightgown of my landlady, and have not got a rag to put on tomorrow: faith, it gives me the spleen.

3rd October 1711

[Windsor] . . . I cooled my heels in the cloisters again till after ten: then came in Patrick. I went up, shut the chamber-door, and gave him two or three swinging cuffs on the ear, and I have strained the thumb of my left hand with pulling him, which I did not feel until he was gone. He was plaguily afraid and humbled.

The Conduct of the Allies

(Despite the fact that the immediate situation which inspired it is long past and dead, *The Conduct of the Allies* is still a great 'State' paper and one of the finest political pamphlets of all time. It was written to prove what Swift believed: that the war with France was ruining the country; that it had ceased to be required by national, and was being fanned by private Whig, interest; that the territorial and other advantages which England had won were being given away to her allies. We who find ourselves faced with the most crippling debt ever known in history may read this quotation with wry faces.)

TIS easy to entail debts on succeeding ages, and to hope they will be able and willing to pay them; but how to ensure peace for any term of years, is difficult enough to apprehend. Will human nature ever cease to have the same passions? Princes to entertain designs of interest or ambition, and occasions of quarrel to arise? May not we ourselves, by the variety of events and incidents which happen in the world, be under a necessity of recovering towns out of the very hands of those, for whom we are now ruining our country to take them? Neither can it be said, that those states, with whom we may probably differ, will be in as bad a condition as ourselves; for, by the circumstances of our situation, and the impositions of our allies, we are more exhausted than either they, or the enemy; and by the nature of our government, the corruption of our manners, and the opposition of factions, we shall be more slow in recovering.

It will, no doubt, be a mighty comfort to our grandchildren, when they see a few rags hang up in Westminster Hall, which cost an hundred millions, whereof they are paying the arrears, and boasting, as beggars do, that their grandfathers were rich and great.

I have often reflected on that mistaken notion of credit, so boasted of by the advocates of the late ministry: was not all that credit built upon funds, raised by the landed men, whom they so much hate and despise? Are not the greatest part of those funds raised from the growth and product of land? Must not the whole debt be entirely paid, and our fleets and garrisons be maintained, by the land and malt-tax, after a peace? If they call it credit to run ten millions in debt, without parliamentary security, by which the public is defrauded of almost half, I must think such credit to be dangerous, illegal, and perhaps treasonable. Neither hath any thing gone further to ruin the Nation, than their boasted credit. For my own part, when I saw this false credit sink, upon the change of the ministry, I was singular enough to conceive it a good omen. It seemed as if the young extravagant heir had got a new steward, and was resolved to look into his estate before things grew desperate, which made the usurers forbear feeding him with money, as they used to do.

Seven Letters to Vanessa

(These letters cover a period of ten years, and there are twenty-eight of them in existence. The story of their survival, discovery, appearance in the sale-room and purchase for the nation makes fascinating reading.¹ In them we see the tangles and cross-currents of their relationship and how Vanessa, passionate and frustrated, appealed to Swift's sense of pity whilst often wearying him with her emotional exactions, to which he could not fully respond.)

31st May 1713

TO MISS HESSY VANHOMRIGH.

I promised to write to you: and I have let you know that it is impossible for anybody to have more acknowledgments at heart, for all your kindness and generosity to me. I hope this journey will restore my health: I will ride but little every day, and I will write a common letter to you all, from some of my stages, but directed to you. I could not get here till ten this night. Pray be merry, and eat and walk and be good, and send me your commands, whatever Mr. Lewis shall think proper to advise you. I have hardly time to put my pen to paper, but I would make good my promise. Pray God preserve you and make you happy and easy—and so adieu, brat.

Mr. B's house 11 at night,
company waiting who came to take
leave of me.

Service to Mother and Molkin.²

(1) See the introduction to Martin Freeman's edition of their Correspondence, London 1921, from which the following letters are taken.

(2) Vanessa's younger sister, Mary.

Laracor, July 8th, 1713.

TO MISS HESSY.

I stayed but a fortnight in Dublin, very sick, and returned not one visit of a hundred that were made me—but all to the Dean, and none to the Doctor. I am riding here for life, and think I am something better, and hate the thoughts of Dublin, and prefer a field-bed and an earthen floor before the great house there,¹ which they say is mine. I had your last splenetic letter. I told you when I left England, I would endeavour to forget everything there, and would write as seldom as I could. I did indeed design one general round of letters to my friends, but my health has not suffered me. I design to pass the greatest part of the time I stay in Ireland here in the cabin where I am now writing, neither will I leave the Kingdom till I am sent for; and if they have no further service for me I will never see England again. At my first coming I thought I should have died with discontent, and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me; but it begins to wear off, and change to dullness. My river walk is extremely pretty, and my canal in great beauty, and I see trouts playing in it.

I know not any one thing in Dublin; but Mr. Ford is very kind, and writes to me constantly what passes among you. I find you are likewise a good politician: and I will say so much to you, that I verily think, if the thing you know of had been published just upon the Peace, the Ministry might have avoided what hath since happened. But I am now fitter to look after willows, and to cut hedges than to meddle with affairs of state. I must order one of the workmen to drive those cows out of my Island, and make up the ditch again; a work much more proper for a country vicar than driving out factions and fencing against them. And I must go and take my bitter draught to cure my head, which is spoilt by the bitter draughts the public hath given me.

How does Davila go on? Johnny Clark is chosen portreeve of our town of Trim; and we shall have the assizes there next week, and fine doings; and I must go and borrow a horse to

(1) The Deanery of St. Patrick's.

meet the judges, and Joe Beaumont and all the boys that can get horses will go, too. Mr. Warburton has but a thin school. Mr. Percival has built up the other side of his house, but people whisper that it is but scurvily built. Mr. Steers is come to live in Mr. Melthorp's house, and 'tis thought the widow Melthorp will remove to Dublin.

Nay, if you do not like this sort of news, I have no better. So go to your Dukes and Duchesses, and leave me to Goodman Bumford and Patrick Dolan of Clonduggan. Adieu.

August 12th, 1714.

TO MRS. VAN-HOMRIGH, *at Mr. Handcock's in Little Rider Street, near St. James's Street, London.*

I had your letter last post, and before you can send me another I shall set out for Ireland. I must go and take the oaths, and the sooner the better. I think, since I have known you, I have drawn an old house upon my head. You should not have come by Wantage for a thousand pound.¹ You used to brag you were very discreet. Where is it gone? It is probable I may not stay in Ireland long, but be back by the beginning of winter. When I am there, I will write to you as soon as I can conveniently, but it shall be always under a cover; and if you write to me, let some other direct it; and I beg you will write nothing that is particular, but which may be seen; for I apprehend letters will be opened and inconveniences will happen. If you are in Ireland while I am there I shall see you very seldom. It is not a place for any freedom, but where everything is known in a week and magnified a hundred degrees. These are rigorous laws that must be passed through; but it is probable we may meet in London in winter, or if not, leave all to Fate, that seldom cares to humour our inclinations. I say all this out of the perfect esteem and friendship I have for you. These public misfortunes have altered all my measures and broke my spirits. God Almighty bless you.

(1) Swift was in retreat at Letcombe, Berks, and Vanessa seems to have paid him an unwelcome surprise visit there.

I shall, I hope, be on horseback in a day after this comes to your hand. I would not answer your questions for a million, nor can I think of them with any ease of mind. Adieu.

(*End of 1714*)?

TO MRS. HESSY VAN.

I will see you in a day or two, and believe me, it goes to my soul not to see you oftener. I will give you the best advice, countenance and assistance I can. I would have been with you sooner if a thousand impediments had not prevented me. I did not imagine you had been under difficulties: I am sure my whole fortune should go to remove them. I cannot see you, I fear, today, having affairs of my place to do; but pray think it not want of friendship or tenderness, which I will always continue to the utmost.

Monday morn.

*Gaulstown, near Kinnegad,
July 5th, 1721.*

TO MRS. VANHOMRIGH.

It was not convenient, hardly possible, to write to you before now, though I had a more than ordinary desire to do it, considering the disposition I found you in last; though I hope I left you in a better. I must here beg you to take more care of your health, by company and exercise; or else the spleen will get the better of you, than which there is not a more foolish or troublesome disease, and what you have no pretences in the world to, if all the advantages of life can be any defence against it. Cad—¹ assures me he continues to esteem and love and value you above all things, and so will do to the end of his life, but at the same time entreats that you would not make yourself or him unhappy by imaginations. The wisest men of all ages have thought it the best course to seize the minutes as they fly, and to make every innocent

(1) His abbreviation of *Cadenus*, the name by which he had called himself in his long poem to her written in 1712-13—a play on *Decanus*, or Dean.

action an amusement. If you knew how I struggle for a little health, what uneasiness I am at in riding and walking, and refraining from everything agreeable to my taste, you would think it but a small thing to take a coach now and then, and to converse with fools or impertinents, to avoid spleen and sickness. Without health you will lose all desire of drinking your coffee,' and [be] so low as to have no spirits.

I answer all your questions that you were used to ask Cad—, and he protests he answers them in the affirmative. How go your law affairs? You were once a good lawyer, but Cad— had spoiled you. I had a weary journey in an Irish stagecoach, but am pretty well since. Pray write to me cheerfully, without complaints or expostulations, or else Cad— shall know it and punish you.

What is this world, without being as easy in it as prudence and fortune can make it? I find it every day more silly and insignificant, and I conform myself to it for my own ease. I am here as deep employed in other folks' plantations and ditchings as if they were my own concern, and think of my absent friends with delight, and hopes of seeing them happy and of being happy with them. Shall you, who have so much honour and good sense, act otherwise, to make Cad— and yourself miserable? Settle your affairs, and quit this scoundrel island, and things will be as you desire.

I can say no more, being called away, mais, soyez assurée que jamais personne du monde a été aiméé, honorée, estimée, adorée par votre ami que vous. I drank no coffee since I left you, nor intend till I see you again. There is none worth drinking but yours, if myself may be the judge. Adieu.

*Lough-Gall, County of Armagh.
July 13th, 1722.*

TO MRS. VANHOMRIGH.

I received yours, and have changed places so often since that I could not assign a place where I might expect an answer

(1) The significance of the references to coffee-drinking is not discoverable now. Some writers have gone so far as to suggest a sexual symbol.

from —: and if you be now in the country, and this letter does not reach you in the due time after the date, I shall not expect to hear from you, because I leave this place the beginning of August. I am well pleased with account of your visit and the behaviour of the ladies. I see every day as silly things among both sexes, and yet endure them, for the sake of amusements. The worst thing in you and me is that we are too hard to please, and whether we have not made ourselves so, is the question. At least I believe we have the same reason. One thing I differ from you in, that I do not quarrel with my best friends. I believe you have ten angry passages in your letter, and every one of them enough to spoil two days apiece of riding and walking. We differ prodigiously in one point: I fly from the spleen to the world's end, you run out of your way to meet it. I doubt the bad weather has hindered you much from the diversions of your country house, and put you upon thinking in your chamber. The use I have made of it was to read I know not how many diverting books of history and travels. I wish you would get yourself a horse, and have always two servants to attend you, and visit your neighbours, the worse the better. There is a pleasure in being revered, and that is always in your powers, by your superiority of sense, and an easy fortune. The best maxim I know in this life is, to drink your coffee when you can, and when you cannot, to be easy without it. While you continue to be splenetic, count upon it, I will always preach. Thus much I sympathize with you, that I am not cheerful enough to write, for I believe coffee once a week is necessary to that. I can sincerely answer all your questions, as I used to do; but then I give all possible way to amusements, because they preserve my temper as exercise does my health; and without health and good humour I had rather be a dog. I have shifted scenes oftener than I ever did in my life, and I believe have lain in thirty beds since I left the town, and always drew up the cloths with my left hand, which is a superstition I have learned these ten years.

These country posts are always so capricious, that we are forced to send our letters at a call, on a sudden; and mine is now demanded, though it goes not out till tomorrow. Be cheer-

ful, and read and ride and laugh, as Cad— used to advise you long ago. I hope your affairs are on some better settlement. I long to see you in figure and equipage, pray do not lose that taste. Farewell.

August 7th, 1722.

TO MRS. VANHOMRY.¹

I am this hour leaving my present residence, and if I fix anywhere, shall let you know it; for I would fain wait till I get a little good weather for riding and walking, there never having been such a season as this remembered; though I doubt you know nothing of it but what you learn by sometimes looking out at your back windows to call your people. I had your last, with a splenetic account of your law affairs. You were once a better solicitor, when you could contrive to make others desire your consent to an Act of Parliament against their own interest to advance yours. Yet at present you want neither power nor skill, but disdain to exercise either. When you are melancholy, read diverting or amusing books: it is my receipt, and seldom fails. Health, good humour and fortune are all that is valuable in this life, and the last contributes to the two former.

I have not rode in all above poor four hundred miles since I saw you, nor do I believe I shall ride above two hundred more till I see you again. But I desire you will not venture to shake me by the hand: for I am in mortal fear of the itch, and have no hope left, but that some ugly vermin called ticks have got into my skin, of which I have pulled out some and must scratch out the rest. Is not this enough to give one the spleen? for I doubt no Christian family will receive me. And this is all a man gets by a northern journey. It would be unhappy for me to be as nice in my conversation and company as you are, which is the only thing wherein you agree with Glass-heel² who declares there is not a conversable creature in Ireland except Cad—. What would you do in these parts, where politeness is as much a stranger as cleanliness?

(1) Swift's last recorded letter to Vanessa.

(2) Swift's pseudonym for Charles Ford of Woodpark.

I am stopped, and this letter is intended to travel with me, so adieu till the next stage.

August 8th. Yesterday I rode 28 miles without being weary, and I wish little Heskinage could do as much. Here I leave this letter to travel one way while I go another, but where I do not know, nor what cabins or bogs are in my way. I see you this moment as you are visible at ten in the morning; and now you are asking your questions round, and I am answering them with a great deal of affected delays; and the same scene has passed forty times, as well as the other from two till seven, longer than the first by two hours, yet each has ses *agrémens particuliers*.

A long vacation, law lies asleep, and bad weather; how do you wear away the time? Is it among the fields and groves of your country seat, or among your cousins in Town, or thinking in a train that will be sure to vex you, and then reasoning and forming teasing conclusions from mistaken thoughts? The best companion for you is a philosopher, whom you would regard as much as a sermon. I have read more trash since I left you than would fill all your shelves, and am abundantly the better for it, though I scarce remember a syllable. Go over the scenes of Windsor, Cleveland Row, Ryder Street, St. James's, Kensington, the Sluttery, the Colonel in France, etc. Cad— thinks often of these, especially on horseback, as I am assured. What a foolish thing is Time, and how foolish is man, who would be as angry if time stopped as if it passed. But I will not proceed at this rate, for I am writing and thinking myself fast into the spleen, which is the only thing I would not compliment you by imitating. So adieu till the next place I fix in, if I fix at all till I return, and that I leave to fortune and the weather.

(Vanessa died June 2nd 1723, ten months later.)

The Blunders, Deficiencies, Distresses and Misfortunes of Quilca

(In the Spring of 1725, Swift, Stella, and Rebecca Dingley went into county Cavan to the 'cabin' of Thomas Sheridan, which stood about twelve miles from Kells, and which he called *Quilca*.)

The new house all going to ruin before it is finished. . . .

The Dean's bed threatening every night to fall under him.

The passages open overhead, by which the cats pass continually into the cellar, and eat the victuals; for which one was tried, condemned, and executed by the sword. . . .

The kitchen perpetually crowded with savages. . . .

Not a bit of turf in this cold weather; and Mrs. Johnson and the Dean in person, with all their servants, forced to assist at the bog, in gathering up the wet bottoms of old clamps. . . .

The grate in the ladies' bedchamber broke, and forced to be removed, by which they were compelled to be without fire; the chimney smoking intolerably; and the Dean's greatcoat was employed to stop the wind from coming down the chimney, without which expedient they must have starved¹ to death. . . .

Not one utensil for a fire, except an old pair of tongs, which travels through the house, and is likewise employed to take the meat out of the pot, for want of a flesh-fork. . . .

The spit blunted with poking into bogs for timber, and tears the meat to pieces. . . .

The ladies' and Dean's servants growing fast into the manners and thieveries of the natives; the ladies themselves very much corrupted; the Dean perpetually storming, and in danger of either losing all his flesh, or sinking into barbarity for the sake of peace.

(1) Frozen.

Mrs. Dingley full of cares for herself, and blunders and negligence for her friends. Mrs. Johnson sick and helpless. The Dean deaf and fretting. . . .

Bellum lactaeum: or the milky battle, fought between the Dean and the crew of *Quilca*: the latter insisting on their privilege of not milking till eleven in the forenoon; whereas Mrs. Johnson wanted milk at eight for her health. In this battle the Dean got the victory; but the crew of *Quilca* begin to rebel again; for it is this day almost ten o'clock, and Mrs. Johnson has not get her milk. . . .

A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms

from *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*

(*Gulliver's Travels* is the one work of Swift's which everyone recognizes as his. Yet it is his most mutilated and unknown, even the title being misquoted. Ironically, the voyages which Swift wrote 'to wonderfully mend the world' and which he drenched with satire in order 'to vex the world rather than divert it', in which he lampooned the whole of mankind, are now become mere stories for children. Swift lived for another twenty years after writing the *Travels* and wrote much that is fine in those years, but *Gulliver* is his most complex and most fantastic work, his most sustained piece of irony, in which he reveals all unconsciously his own predispositions and attitudes—his profound despondency at the stupidity, ignorance, self-will and duplicity of mankind, and his fundamental revulsion for women. I have included only two passages, the satire on war, and on law.)

HE asked me what were the usual causes or motives that made one country go to war with another. I answered, they were innumerable; but I should only mention a few of the chief. Sometimes the ambition of princes, who never think they have land or people enough to govern: sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war in order to stifle or divert the clamour of the subjects against their evil administration. Difference in opinions hath cost many millions of lives: for instance, whether flesh be bread, or bread be flesh: whether the juice of a certain berry be blood or wine: whether whistling be a vice or a virtue: whether it be better to kiss a post, or throw it into the fire: what is the best colour for a coat, whether black, white, red or grey; and whether it should be long or short, narrow or wide, dirty or clean; with many more. Neither are any wars so furious and bloody, or of so long continuance, as

those occasioned by difference in opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent.

Sometimes the quarrel between two princes is to decide which of them shall dispossess a third of his dominions, where neither of them pretend to any right. Sometimes one prince quarrelleth with one another, for fear the other should quarrel with him. Sometimes a war is entered upon, because the enemy is too strong, and sometimes because he is too weak. Sometimes our neighbours want the things which we have, or have the things which we want; and we both fight, till they take ours or give us theirs. It is a very justifiable cause of war to invade a country after the people have been wasted by famine, destroyed by pestilence, or embroiled by factions amongst themselves. It is justifiable to enter into a war against our nearest ally, when one of his towns lies convenient for us, or a territory of land, that would render our dominions round and compact. If a prince send forces into a nation, where the people are poor and ignorant, he may lawfully put half of them to death, and make slaves of the rest, in order to civilize and reduce them from their barbarous way of living. It is a very kingly, honourable, and frequent practice, when one prince desires the assistance of another, to secure him against an invasion, that the assistant, when he hath driven out the invader, should seize on the dominions himself, and kill, imprison or banish the prince he came to relieve. Alliance by blood or marriage, is a sufficient cause of war between princes; and the nearer the kindred is, the greater is their disposition to quarrel; poor nations are hungry, and rich nations are proud; and pride and hunger will ever be at variance. For these reasons, the trade of a soldier is held the most honourable of all others; because a soldier is a Yahoo hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species, who have never offended him, as possibly he can.

There is likewise a kind of beggarly princes in Europe not able to make war by themselves, who hire out their troops to richer nations for so much a day to each man; of which they keep three-fourths to themselves, and it is the best part of their maintenance; such are those in many northern parts of Europe.

‘What you have told me,’ said my master, ‘upon the subject of war, doth indeed discover most admirably the effects of that reason you pretend to: however, it is happy that the shame is greater than the danger; and that nature hath left you utterly incapable of doing much mischief; for your mouths lying flat with your faces, you can hardly bite each other to any purpose, unless by consent. Then, as to the claws upon your feet before and behind, they are so short and tender, that one of our Yahoos would drive a dozen of yours before him. And therefore, in recounting the numbers of those who have been killed in battle, I cannot but think that you have said *the thing which is not.*’

I could not forbear shaking my head and smiling a little at his ignorance. And, being no stranger to the art of war, I gave him a description of cannons, culverins, muskets, carabines, pistols, bullets, powder, swords, bayonets, sieges, retreats, attacks, undermines, countermines, bombardments, sea-fights; ships sunk with a thousand men; twenty thousand killed on each side; dying groans, limbs flying in the air; smoke, noise, confusion, trampling to death under horses’ feet; flight, pursuit, victory; fields strewed with carcasses left for food to dogs, and wolves, and birds of prey; plundering, stripping, ravishing, burning and destroying. And to set forth the valour of my own dear countrymen, I assured him, that I had seen them blow up a hundred enemies at once in a siege, and as many in a ship; and beheld the dead bodies drop down in pieces from the clouds, to the great diversion of all the spectators.

I was going on to more particulars, when my Master commanded me silence. He said, whoever understood the nature of Yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an animal, to be capable of every action I had named, if their strength and cunning equalled their malice. But, as my discourse had increased his abhorrence of the whole species, so he found it gave him a disturbance in his mind, to which he was wholly a stranger before. He thought his ears being used to such abominable words, might by degrees admit them with less detestation. That, although he hated the Yahoos of this country, yet he no more blamed them for their odious qualities than he did a *gmayh* (a bird of prey) for its cruelty, or a

sharp stone for cutting his hoof. But, when a creature pretending to reason, could be capable of such enormities, he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty might be worse than brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of reason, we were only possessed of some quality fitted to increase our natural vices; as the reflection from a troubled stream returns the image of an ill-shapen body, not only larger, but more distorted.

He added, that he had heard too much upon the subject of war, both in this, and some former discourses. . . .

I had said, that some of our crew left their country on account of being ruined by law: . . . he was at a loss how it should come to pass, that the law which was intended for everyman's preservation, should be any man's *ruin*. Therefore he desired to be farther satisfied what I meant by law, and the dispensers thereof, according to the present practice in my own country: because he thought, nature and reason were sufficient guides for a reasonable animal, as we pretended to be, in showing us what we ought to do, and what to avoid. . . .

I said there was a society of men amongst us, bred up from their youth in the art of proving by words multiplied for the purpose, that white is black, and black is white, according as they are paid. To this society all the rest of the people are slaves.

For example. If my neighbour hath a mind to my cow, he hires a lawyer to prove that he ought to have my cow from me. I must then hire another to defend my right; it being against all rules of law that any man should be allowed to speak for himself. Now in this case, I who am the true owner lie under two great disadvantages. First, my lawyer being practised almost from his cradle in defending falsehood; is quite out of his element when he would be an advocate for justice, which as an office unnatural, he always attempts with great awkwardness, if not with ill-will. The second disadvantage is, that my lawyer must proceed with great caution: or else, he will be reprimanded by the judges, and abhorred by his brethren, as one who would lessen the practice of the law.

And therefore I have but two methods to preserve my cow. The first is, to gain over my adversary's lawyer with a double fee; who will then betray his client, by insinuating that he hath justice on his side. The second way is, for my lawyer to make my cause appear as unjust as he can; by allowing the cow to belong to my adversary; and this if it be skilfully done, will certainly bespeak the favour of the bench.

Now, your honour is to know, that these judges are persons appointed to decide all controversies of property, as well as for the trial of criminals; and picked out from the most dextrous lawyers, who are grown old or lazy; and having been biased all their lives against truth and equity, lie under such a fatal necessity of favouring fraud, perjury and oppression; that I have known some of them to have refused a large bribe from the side where justice lay, rather than injure the faculty, by doing anything unbecoming their nature or their office.

It is a maxim among these lawyers, that whatever hath been done before, may legally be done again; and therefore they take special care to record all the decisions formerly made against common justice, and the general reason of mankind. These, under the name of precedents, they produce as authorities to justify the most iniquitous opinions; and the judges never fail of directing accordingly.

In pleading, they studiously avoid entering into the merits of the cause; but are loud, violent and tedious in dwelling upon all circumstances which are not to the purpose. For instance, in the case already mentioned: they never desire to know what claim or title my adversary hath to my cow; but whether the said cow were red or black; her horns long or short; whether the field I graze her in be round or square; whether she were milked at home or abroad; what diseases she is subject to, and the like. After which they consult precedents, adjourn the cause, from time to time, and in ten, twenty, or thirty years come to an issue.

It is likewise to be observed, that this society hath a peculiar cant and jargon of their own, that no other mortal can understand, and wherein all their laws are written, which they take special care to multiply; whereby they have wholly confounded the very essence of truth and falsehood, of right and

wrong; so that it will take thirty years to decide whether the field, left me by my ancestors for six generations, belong to me, or to a stranger three hundred miles off.

In the trial of persons accused for crimes against the State, the method is much more short and commendable: the judge first sends to sound the disposition of those in power; after which he can easily hang or save the criminal, strictly preserving all the forms of law.

Here my Master, interposing, said it was a pity, that creatures endowed with such prodigious abilities of mind as these lawyers, by the description I gave of them must certainly be, were not rather encouraged to be instructors of others in wisdom and knowledge. In answer to which, I assured his honour, that in all points out of their own trade, they were usually the most ignorant and stupid generation amongst us, the most despicable in common conversation, avowed enemies to all learning and knowledge; and equally disposed to pervert the general reason of mankind, in every other subject of discourse, as in that of their own profession.

On the Death of Mrs. Johnson

(Stella's character)

(*On the Death of Mrs. Johnson* was begun on the night of Stella's death, which Swift would not witness. He broke down and began again during her funeral, which he did not attend.)

THIS day, being Sunday, January 28th, 1727-8, about eight o'clock at night a servant brought me a note, with an account of the death of the truest, most virtuous, and valuable friend, that I or perhaps any other person ever was blessed with. She expired about six in the evening of this day; and, as soon as I am left alone, which is about eleven at night, I resolve, for my own satisfaction, to say something of her life and character.

She was born at Richmond in Surrey on the thirteenth day of March, in the year 1681. Her father was a younger brother of a good family in Nottinghamshire, her mother of a lower degree; and indeed she had little to boast of her birth. I knew her from six years old, and had some share in her education, by directing what books she should read, and perpetually instructing her in the principles of honour and virtue; from which she never swerved in any one action or moment of her life. She was sickly from her childhood until about the age of fifteen: But then grew into perfect health, and was looked upon as one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London, only a little too fat. Her hair was blacker than a raven, and every feature of her face in perfection. She lived generally in the country, with a family, where she contracted an intimate friendship with another lady of more advanced years. I was then (to my mortification) settled in Ireland; and, about a year after, going to visit my friends in England, I found she was a little uneasy upon the death of a

person on whom she had some dependance. Her fortune, at that time, was in all not above fifteen hundred pounds, the interest of which was but a scanty maintenance, in so dear a country, for one of her spirit. Upon this consideration, and indeed very much for my own satisfaction, who had few friends or acquaintance in Ireland, I prevailed with her and her dear friend and companion, the other lady, to draw what money they had into Ireland, a great part of their fortune being in annuities upon funds. Money was then at ten *per cent.* in Ireland besides the advantage of turning it, and all necessaries of life at half the price. They complied with my advice, and soon after came over; but, I happening to continue some time longer in England, they were much discouraged to live in Dublin, where they were wholly strangers. She was at that time about nineteen years old, and her person was soon distinguished. But the adventure looked so like a frolic, the censure held, for some time as if there were a secret history in such a removal; which, however soon blew off by her excellent conduct. She came over with her friend on the — in the year 170—; and they both lived together until this day, when death removed her from us. For some years past, she had been visited with continual ill-health; and several times, within these two years, her life was despaired of. But, for this twelve-month past, she never had a day's health; and properly speaking, she hath been dying six months, but kept alive, almost against nature, by the generous kindness of two physicians, and the care of her friends. Thus far I writ the same night between eleven and twelve.

Never was any of her sex born with better gifts of the mind, or more improved them by reading and conversation. Yet her memory was not of the best, and was impaired in the latter years of her life. But I cannot call to mind that I ever once heard her make a wrong judgment of persons, books, or affairs. Her advice was always the best, and with the greatest freedom, mixed with the greatest decency. She had a gracefulness somewhat more than human in every motion, word, and action. Never was so happy a conjunction of civility, freedom, easiness and sincerity. There seemed to be a combination among all that knew her, to treat her with

a dignity much beyond her rank: Yet people of all sorts were never more easy than in her company. Mr. Addison, when he was in Ireland, being introduced to her, immediately found her out; and if he had not soon after left the kingdom, assured me he would have used all endeavours to cultivate her friendship. . . . All of us, who had the happiness of her friendship, agreed unanimously, that, in an afternoon or evening's conversation, she never failed before we parted of delivering the best thing that was said in the company. . . . She never mistook the understanding of others; nor ever said a severe word, but where a much severer was deserved.

Her servants loved and almost adored her at the same time. She would, upon occasions, treat them with freedom, yet her demeanour was so awful, that they durst not fail in the least point of respect. She chid them seldom, but it was with severity, which had an effect upon them for a long time after.

January 29th; My head aches,¹ and I can write no more.

January 30th, Tuesday.

This is the night of the funeral, which my sickness will not suffer me to attend. It is now nine at night, and I am removed into another apartment, that I may not see the light in the church, which is just over against the window of my bed-chamber.

With all the softness of temper that became a lady, she had the personal courage of a hero. She and her friend having removed their lodgings to a new house, which stood solitary, a parcel of rogues, armed, attempted the house, where there was only one boy: She was then about four and twenty: And, having been warned to apprehend some such attempt, she learned the management of a pistol; and the other women and servants being half-dead with fear, she stole softly to her dining-room window, put on a black hood, to prevent being seen, primed the pistol fresh, gently lifted up the sash; and, taking her aim with the utmost presence of mind, discharged the pistol loaden with the bullets, into the body of one villain, who stood the fairest mark. The fellow, mortally wounded, was carried off by the rest, and died the next morning, but

(1) Swift's spelling.

his companions could not be found. The Duke of Ormond hath often drank her health to me upon that account, and had always an high esteem of her. She was indeed under some apprehensions of going in a boat, after some danger she had narrowly escaped by water, but she was reasoned thoroughly out of it. She was never known to cry out, or discover any fear, in a coach or on horseback, or any uneasiness by those sudden accidents with which most of her sex, either by weakness or affectation, appear so much disordered.

She never had the least absence of mind in conversation, nor was given to interruption, or appeared eager to put in her word by waiting impatiently until another had done. She spoke in a most agreeable voice, in the plainest words, never hesitating, except out of modesty before new faces, where she was somewhat reserved; nor, among her nearest friends, ever spoke much at a time. She was but little versed in the common topics of female chat; scandal, censure, and detraction, never came out of her mouth: Yet, among a few friends, in private conversation, she made little ceremony in discovering her contempt of a coxcomb, and describing all his follies to the life; but the follies of her own sex she was rather inclined to extenuate or to pity.

When she was once convinced by open facts of any breach of truth or honour, in a person of high station, especially in the church, she could not conceal her indignation, nor hear them named without showing her displeasure in her countenance. . . .

Her frequent fits of sickness, in most parts of her life, had prevented her from making progress in reading which she would otherwise have done. She was well versed in the Greek and Roman story, and was not unskilled in that of France and England. She spoke French perfectly, but forgot much of it by neglect and sickness. She had read carefully all the best books of travels, which serve to open and enlarge the mind. . . . She had a true taste of wit and good sense, both in poetry and prose, and was a perfect good critic of style: Neither was it easy to find a more proper or impartial judge, whose advice an author might better rely on, if he intended to send a thing into the world, provided it was on a

subject that came within the compass of her knowledge. Yet, perhaps, she was sometimes too severe, which is a safe and pardonable error. She preserved her wit, judgment, and vivacity to the last, but often used to complain of her memory.

Her fortune, with some accession, could not, as I have heard say, amount to much more than two thousand pounds, whereof a great part fell with her life, having been placed upon annuities in England, and one in Ireland. . . . She became, and continued all her life a most prudent oeconomist; yet still with a strong bent to the liberal side, wherein she gratified herself by avoiding all expence in cloaths, (which she ever despised) beyond what was merely decent. And, although her frequent returns of sickness were very chargeable, except fees to physicians, of which she met with several so generous that she could force nothing on them, (and indeed she must otherwise have been undone;) yet she never was without a considerable sum of ready money. Insomuch that, upon her death, when her nearest friends thought her very bare, her executors found in her strong box about a hundred and fifty pounds in gold. She lamented the narrowness of her fortune in nothing so much, as that it did not enable her to entertain her friends so often, and in so hospitable a manner as she desired. Yet they were always welcome; and, while she was in health to direct, were treated with neatness and elegance: So that the revenues of her and her companion, passed for much more considerable than they really were. They lived always in lodgings, their domesticks consisting of two maids and one man. She kept an account of all the family expences, from her arrival in Ireland to some months before her death; and she would often repine, when looking back upon the annals of her household bills, that every thing necessary for life was double the price, while interest of money was sunk almost to one half; so that the addition made to her fortune was indeed grown absolutely necessary.

(I since writ as I found time.)

But her charity to the poor was a duty not to be diminished, and therefore became a tax upon those tradesmen who furnish the fopperies of other ladies. She bought cloaths as seldom as possible, and those as plain and cheap as consisted with the

situation she was in; and wore no lace for many years. Either her judgment or fortune was extraordinary, in the choice of those on whom she bestowed her charity; for it went further in doing good than double the sum from any other hand. And I have heard her say, she always met with gratitude from the poor: Which must be owing to her skill in distinguishing proper objects, as well as her gracious manner in relieving them.

But she had another quality that much delighted her, although it may be thought a kind of check upon her bounty; however it was a pleasure she could not resist: I mean that of making agreeable presents, wherein I never knew her equal, although it be an affair of as delicate a nature as most in the course of life. She used to define a present, That it was a gift to a friend of something he wanted or was fond of, and which could not be easily gotten for money. . . . As to presents made to herself, she received them with great unwillingness, but especially from those to whom she had ever given any; being on all occasions the most disinterested mortal I ever knew or heard of.

From her own disposition, at least as much as from the frequent want of health, she seldom made any visits; but her own lodgings, from before twenty years old, were frequented by many persons of the graver sort, who all respected her highly, upon her good sense, good manners, and conversation. . . . the greatest number of her acquaintance was among the clergy. Honour, truth, liberality, good nature, and modesty, were the virtues she chiefly possessed, and most valued in her acquaintance; and where she found them, would be ready to allow for some defects, nor valued them less, although they did not shine in learning or in wit; but would never give the least allowance for any failures in the former, even to those who made the greatest figure in either of the two latter. . . .

She never interrupted any persons who spoke; she laught at no mistakes they made, but helped them out with modesty; and if a good thing were spoken, but neglected, she would not let it fall, but set it in the best light to those who were present. She listened to all that was said, and had never the least distraction, or absence of thought. . . .

By returning very few visits, she had not much company of her own sex, except those whom she most loved for their easiness, or esteemed for their good sense; and those, not insisting on ceremony, came often to her. But she rather chose men for her companions, the usual topics of ladies' discourse being such as she had little knowledge of, and less relish. Yet no man was upon the rack to entertain her, for she easily descended to any thing that was innocent and diverting. News, politics, censure, family-management, or town-talk, she always diverted to something else; but these indeed seldom happened, for she chose her company better. . . .

She was never positive in arguing, and she usually treated those who were so, in a manner which well enough gratified that unhappy disposition; yet in such a sort as made it very contemptible, and at the same time did some hurt to the owners. . . . When she saw any of the company very warm in a wrong opinion, she was more inclined to confirm them in it than oppose them. The excuse she commonly gave when her friends asked the reason, was, That it prevented noise, and saved time. Yet I have known her very angry with some whom she much esteemed for sometimes falling into that infirmity.

She loved Ireland much better than the generality of those who owe both their birth and riches to it; and, having brought over all the fortune she had in money, left the reversion of the best part of it, one thousand pounds, to Dr. Stephens's Hospital. She detested the tyranny and injustice of England, in their treatment of this kingdom. She had indeed reason to love a country, where she had the esteem and friendship of all who knew her, and the universal good-report of all who ever heard of her, without one exception, if I am told the truth by those who keep general conversation. Which character is the more extraordinary, in falling to a person of so much knowledge, wit, and vivacity, qualities that are used to create envy, and consequently censure; and must be rather imputed to her great modesty, gentle behaviour, and inoffensiveness, than to her superior virtues.

Although her knowledge, from books and company, was more extensive than usually falls to the share of her sex; yet she was so far from making a parade of it, that her female

visitants, on their first acquaintance, who expected to discover it, by what they call hard words and deep discourse, would be sometimes disappointed, and say, they found she was like other women. But wise men, through all her modesty, whatever they discoursed on, could easily observe that she understood them very well, by the judgment shewn in her observations as well as in her questions.

An Evening Prayer

AWAKEN thoroughly in us a serious sense of these things, that so today, while it is called today, we may see and know the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes, before that long night cometh when no man can work. O that every night may so effectually put us in mind of our last, that we may every day take care so to live, as we shall then wish we had lived when we come to die: that so when that night shall come, we may as willingly put off these bodies, as we now put off our clothes, and may rejoice to rest from our labours, and that our war with the world, the devil, and our own corrupt nature, is at an end. . . . We beseech thee to take us, and ours, and all that belongs to us, into thy fatherly care this night. Let thy holy angels be our guard, while we are not in a condition to defend ourselves, that we may not be under the power of devils, or wicked men; and preserve us, also, O Lord, from every evil accident, that, after a comfortable and refreshing sleep, we may find ourselves, and all that belongs to us, in peace and safety. . . .

*A Modest Proposal for preventing
The Children of Poor People from being
a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country,
and for making them Beneficial to the Public*

(Swift considered the Irish 'an abandoned and profligate race' whom he despaired of being able to rouse or help, but he felt it his duty to try. From 1720 until the eclipse of his mental powers, he harried and flayed the public, attempting to rouse them into self-awareness. His subjects ranged from banks and coinage, to bishops and the letting of leases, Dublin corruptions, the distressed condition of beggars, and weavers, bills for settling the tithe on hemp and flax, Irish coal, the tillage of the country, and over-population.

Ireland was not only his child but his dispossessed, unredeemed self. A race at loggerheads with its past and with the more powerful English, estranged from its roots, it typified his shadow self which he both loved and despised. The most celebrated of his Irish tracts are *A Short View of Ireland*, the *Modest Proposal*, and the *Drapier's Letters*.

In the whole of English literature it would be hard to find a more terrible piece of irony than the *Modest Proposal*. The very word 'modest' grates on one's heartstrings, and so consummate is Swift's power of making things plausible that a French writer believed the *Proposal* to be a serious suggestion.

The man of action is here displayed as well as the subjective writer. Swift used that dispassionate, matter-of-fact style of his, which covered a volcano of masked emotion, to point out to the English ministers in London that their countrymen were guilty of little short of cannibalism in starving the Irish and their children.)

IT is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors, crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling, to beg sustenance for their helpless infants, who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children, in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the Commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars, it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts, for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of other projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true a child, just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year with little other nourishment, at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them, in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expense than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders, from which number I subtract thirty thousand couples, who are able to maintain their own children, although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom; but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident, or disease within the year. There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born: The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared, and provided for, which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed; for we can neither employ them in handicraft, or agriculture; we neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: They can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old, except where they are of towardsly parts; although, I confess, they learn the rudiments much earlier, during which time, they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers, as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me, that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl, before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most on the Exchange, which cannot turn to account either to the parents or the kingdom, the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now herefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout.

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males, which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may at a year old be offered in sale to the persons of quality, and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year if tolerably nursed increaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Infant's flesh will be in season throughout the year, but most plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolific diet, there are more children born in Roman Catholic countries about nine months after lent, than at any other season; therefore reckoning a year after lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants, is at least three to one in this kingdom, and

therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us.

I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included, and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

As to our city of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose, in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting, although I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs.

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased, in discoursing on this matter, to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said, that many gentlemen of this kingdom, having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years of age, nor under twelve; so great a number of both sexes in every country being now ready to starve, for want of work and service: And these to be disposed of by their parents if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend, and so deserving a patriot, I cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me from frequent experience, that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our schoolboys, by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable, and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would,

I think with humble submission, be a loss to the public, because they soon would become breeders themselves: And besides it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice, (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, however so well intended.

But in order to justify my friend, he confessed, that this expedient was put into his head by the famous *Sallmanaazor*, a native of the island Formosa, who came from thence to London, above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend, that in his country when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality, as a prime dainty, and that, in his time, the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the emperor, was sold to his Imperial Majesty's Prime Minister of State, and other great Mandarins of the Court, in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny, that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who, without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at the play-house, and assemblies in foreign fineries, which they never will pay for; the kingdom would not be the worse.

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed, and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain about the matter, because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold, and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the younger labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition. They cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree, that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it, and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages by the proposal which I have

made are obvious and many as well as of the highest importance.

For *first*, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants, who have chosen rather to leave their country, than stay at home, and pay tithes against their conscience, to an Episcopal curate.

Secondly, the poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to distress, and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old, and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, besides the profit of a new dish, introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste, and the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, the constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum, by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, this food would likewise bring great custom to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best recipes for dressing it to perfection; and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating, and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care

and tenderness of mothers towards their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life, to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit instead of expence; we should soon see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market: men would become fond of their wives, during the time of their pregnancy, as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sows when they are ready to farrow, nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barreled beef: the propagation of swine's flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables, which are no way comparable in taste, or magnificence to a well grown, fat yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a Lord Mayor's feast, or any other public entertainment. But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city, would be constant customers for infants' flesh, besides others who have it at merry meetings, particularly at weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses, and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and it was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other than ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound: of using neither cloaths, nor household furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture: of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury: of

curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women: of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence and temperance: of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo; of quitting our animosities, and factions, nor act any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken: of being a little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing: of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants. Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shop-keepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them in practice.

But as to my self, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expence and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, the flesh being of too tender a consistence, to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author or authors, will be pleased maturely to consider two points. *First*, as things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for a hundred thousand useless mouths

and backs. And *secondly*, there being a round million of creatures in human figure, throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two millions of pounds sterling adding those, who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and labourers with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians, who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor cloaths to cover them from inclemencies of weather, and the most inevitable prospect of intailing the like, or greater miseries upon their breed for ever.

I profess in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

Thoughts on Religion

(These are interesting as essays in embryo and were printed posthumously. It is significant that the word which occurs in them most frequently is *Reason*.)

To say a man is bound to believe, is neither true nor sense.

You may force men, by interest or punishment, to say or swear they believe, and to act as if they believed: You can go no further.

Violent zeal for truth hath an hundred to one odds to be either petulancy, ambition, or pride.

The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed when it cannot be overcome.

It is impossible that anything so natural, so necessary, and so universal as death, should ever have been designed by providence as an evil to mankind.

Although reason were intended by providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which, from the dictates of reason, every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning.

I look upon myself, in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by Providence for defending a post assigned me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can. Although

I think my cause is just, yet one great motion is my submitting to the pleasure of Providence, and to the laws of my country.

I am not answerable to God for the doubts that arise in my own breast, since they are the consequence of that reason which he hath planted in me, if I take care to conceal those doubts from others, if I use my best endeavours to subdue them, and if they have no influence on the conduct of my life.

Directions to Servants

(Extracts)

(The *Directions* are said to have occupied Swift for many years. Either he was dissatisfied with them or he intended to continue to collect material for them indefinitely, for they remained unfinished when his mind failed. The Preface to the Dublin edition of 1746 tells us that it was written 'to expose the villainies and frauds of servants to their masters and mistresses'. Swift never failed to note the waste, folly, and stupidity of humankind, of which the behaviour of servants was merely one example. Their misdemeanours exacerbated his hypersensitive nature and with that piercing eye which, as Lady Gregory says, must have counted the thefts of the mice behind the wainscote, he silently noted their misdeeds.)

RULES THAT CONCERN ALL SERVANTS IN GENERAL

WHEN your Master or Lady call a servant by name, if that servant be not in the way, none of you are to answer, for then there will be no end of your drudgery; and Masters themselves allow, that if a servant comes when he is called, it is sufficient.

When you have done a fault, be always pert and insolent, and behave yourself as if you were the injured person; this will immediately put your Master or Lady off their mettle. . . .

It often happens that servants sent on messages, are apt to stay out somewhat longer than the message requires, perhaps, two, four, six or eight hours, or some such trifle, for the temptation to be sure was great, and flesh and blood cannot always resist: When you return, the Master storms, the Lady scolds; stripping, cudgelling, and turning off is the word: But here you ought to be provided with a set of excuses, enough to serve on all occasions: for instance, your uncle came fourscore miles

to town this morning, on purpose to see you, and goes back by break of day tomorrow: a brother-servant, that borrowed money of you when he was out of place, was running away to Ireland: You were taking leave of an old fellow-servant who was shipping for Barbadoes; Your father sent a cow to you to sell, and you could not find a chapman till nine at night: You were taking leave of a dear cousin who is to be hanged next Saturday: You wrenched your foot against a stone, and were forced to stay three hours in a shop, before you could stir a step: Some nastiness was thrown on you out of a garrett window, and you were ashamed to come home before you were cleaned, and the smell went off: You were pressed for the sea-service, and carried before a Justice of the Peace, who kept you three hours before he examind you, and you got off with much ado: A bailiff by mistake, seized you for a debtor, and kept you the whole evening in a sponging house: You were told your Master had gone to a tavern, and come to some mischance, and your grief was so great that you inquired for his Honour in a hundred taverns between Pall Mall and Temple Bar. . . .

Masters and Ladies are usually quarrelling with the servants for not shutting the doors after them: but neither Masters nor Ladies consider that those doors must be open before they can be shut, and that the labour is double to open and shut the doors; therefore the best and shortest, and easiest way is to do neither. But if you are so often teased to shut the door, that you cannot easily forget it, then give the door such a clap as you go out, as will shake the whole room, and make every thing rattle in it, to put your Master and Lady in mind that you observe their directions. . . .

Write your own name and your sweetheart's with the smoke of a candle on the roof of the kitchen, or the servant's hall, to show your learning. . . .

When you have broken all your earthen drinking vessels below stairs (which is usually done in a week) the copper pot will do as well; it can boil milk, heat porridge, hold small beer, or in case of necessity serve for a jordan; therefore apply it indifferently to all these uses; but never wash or scour it, for fear of taking off the tin. . . .

Whoever comes to visit your Master or Lady when they are abroad, never burthen your memory with the person's name, for indeed you have too many other things to remember. Besides, it is a porter's business, and your Master's fault he does not keep one, and who can remember names; and you will certainly mistake them, and you can neither write nor read. . . .

If your Master or Lady happen once in their lives to accuse you wrongfully, you are a happy servant, for you have nothing more to do, than for every fault you commit while you are in their service, to put them in mind of that false accusation, and protest yourself equally innocent in the present case. . . .

The servants' candlesticks are generally broken, for nothing can last forever. But you may find out many expedients: You may conveniently stick your candle in a bottle, or with a lump of butter against the wainscoat, in a powder-horn, or in an old shoe, or in a cleft stick, or in the barrel of a pistol, or upon its own grease on a table, in a coffee-cup or a drinking-glass, a horn can, a tea-pot, a twisted napkin, a mustard pot, an inkhorn, a marrowbone, a piece of dough, or you may cut a hole in the loaf and stick it there. . . .

There are several ways of putting out candles, and you ought to be instructed in them all: you may run the candle end against the wainscoat, which puts the snuff out immediately: You may lay it on the floor, and tread the snuff out with your foot: You may hold it upside down until it is choked with its own grease; or cram it into the socket of the candlestick: You may whirl it round in your hand till it goes out: When you go to bed, after you have made water, you may dip the candle end into the chamber pot: You may spit on your finger and thumb, and pinch the snuff until it goes out: the cook may rub the candle's nose into the meal tub, or the groom into a vessel of oats, or a lock of hay, or a heap of litter: the housemaid may put out her candle by running it against a looking glass, which nothing cleans so well as candle snuff: But the quickest and best of all methods, is to blow it out with your breath, which leaves the candle clear and readier to be lighted. . . .

DIRECTIONS TO THE BUTLER

If an humble companion, a Chaplain, a Tutor, or a dependent cousin happen to be at table, whom you find to be little regarded by the Master, and the Company, which nobody is readier to discover and observe than we servants, it must be the business of you and the footman, to follow the example of your betters, by treating him many degrees worse than any of the rest, and you cannot please your master better, or at least your lady. . . .

Always lock up a cat in the closet where you keep your china plates, for fear the mice may steal in and break them. . . .

If a gentleman dines often with your master, and gives you nothing when he goes away, you may use several methods to shew him some marks of your displeasure, and quicken his memory: if he calls for bread or drink, you may pretend not to hear, or send it to another who called after him: If he asks for wine, let him stay a while, and then send him small beer; give him always foul glasses: send him a spoon when he wants a knife; wink at the footman to leave him without a plate: By these, and the like expedients, you may probably be a better man by half a crown before he leaves the house, provided you watch an opportunity of standing by when he is going.

DIRECTIONS TO THE COOK

If a lump of soot falls into the soup, and you cannot conveniently get it out, stir it well in, and it will give the soup a high French taste. . . .

When you find you cannot get dinner ready at the time appointed, put the clock back, and then it may be ready to a minute. . . .

To save time and trouble, cut your apples and onions with the same knife: well-bred gentry love the taste of an onion in everything they eat. . . .

Lump three or four pounds of butter together with your hands, then dash it against the wall just over the dresser, so

as to have it ready to pull by pieces as you have occasion for it. . . .

DIRECTIONS TO THE FOOTMAN

Never clean your shoes on the scraper, but in the entry, or at the foot of the stairs, by which you will have the credit of being at home, almost a minute sooner, and the scraper will last the longer. . . .

While grace is saying after meat, do you and your brethren take the chairs from behind the company, so that when they go to sit again, they may fall backwards, which will make them all merry; but be you so discreet as to hold your laughter till you get to the kitchen, and then divert your fellow servants. . . .

If you are ordered to break the claws of a crab or lobster, clap it between the sides of the dining room door between the hinges: thus you can do it gradually without mashing the meat, which is often the fate of the street door-key, or the pestle. . . .

DIRECTIONS TO THE GROOM

Consider your master's health, and rather than let him take long journies, say the cattle are weak, and fallen in their flesh with hard riding; tell him of a very good inn five miles nearer than he intended to go; or leave one of his horse's foreshoes loose in the morning; or contrive that the saddle may pinch the beast in his withers; or keep him without corn all night and morning, so that he may tire on the road; or wedge a thin plate of iron between the hoof and the shoe, to make him halt; and all this in perfect tenderness to your master. . . .

DIRECTIONS TO THE CHAMBER-MAID

If you happen to break any china with the top of the wisk on the mantle-tree or the cabinet, gather up the fragments, put them together as well as you can, and place them behind the rest, so that when your lady comes to discover them, you

may safely say they were broke long ago, before you came to the service. This will save your lady many an hour's vexation. . . .

DIRECTION TO THE WAITING-MAID

When you lock up a silk mantua, or laced head in a trunk or chest, leave a piece out, that when you open the trunk again, you may know where to find it. . . .

DIRECTIONS FOR THE LAUNDRESS

When your linen is pinned on the line, or on a hedge, and it rains, whip it off, although you tear it, etc. But the place for hanging them, is on young fruit trees, especially in blossom; the linen cannot be torn, and the trees give them a fine smell. . . .

*The Difficulty of Knowing Oneself: A Sermon**

(Swift did not like preaching and said of himself that he could only preach political pamphlets. The titles of some of his sermons preserved for us are: *On Doing Good, The Trinity, The Martyrdom of King Charles II, Mutual Subjection, The Testimony of Conscience, Brotherly Love, The Poor Man's Contentment, and On Sleeping in Church*. We know so little of Swift's thoughts on himself that *The Difficulty of Knowing Oneself* is especially valuable.)

SOMETIMES, and in some persons, the inward grief and anguish of the mind may be too big to be expressed by so little a thing as a tear, and then it turneth its edge inward upon the mind; and like those wounds of the body which bleed inwardly, generally proves the most fatal and dangerous to the whole body of sin; not infallible, because a very small portion of sorrow may make some tender dispositions melt, and break out into tears; or a man may perhaps weep at parting with his sins, as he would bid the last farewell to an old friend. . . .

I proceed now . . . to shew whence it comes to pass that man, the only creature in the world that can reflect and look into himself, should know so little of what passes within him, and be so very much unacquainted even with the standing dispositions and complexion of his own heart. The prime reason of it is, because we so very seldom converse with ourselves, and take so little notice* of what passes within us; for a man can no more know his own heart than he can his own face, any other way than by reflection; he may as well tell over every feature of the smaller portions of his face without the help of a looking glass, as can tell all the inward

*Considered by some scholars, but not proven to be, of doubtful authenticity.

bents and tendencies of his soul, those standing features and lineaments of the inward man, and know all the various changes that this is liable to from custom, from passion, and from opinion, without a very frequent use of looking within himself.

For our passions and inclinations are not always upon the wing, and always moving toward their respective objects, but retire now and then into the more dark and hidden recesses of the heart, where they lie concealed for a while, until a fresh occasion calls them forth again; so that not every transient, oblique glance upon the mind, can bring a man into a thorough knowledge of all its strengths and weaknesses; for a man may sometimes turn the eye of the mind inward upon itself, as he may behold his natural face in a glass, and go away, 'and straight forget what manner of man he was'. But a man must rather sit down and unravel every action of the past day into its circumstances and particularities, and observe how every little thing moved and affected him, and what manner of impression it made upon his heart; this, done with that frequency and carefulness which the importance of the duty does require, would in a short time bring him into a nearer and more intimate acquaintance with himself.

But when men instead of this do pass away months and years in a perfect slumber of the mind, without once awaking it, it is no wonder they should be so very ignorant of themselves, and know very little more of what passes within them than the very beasts which perish. . . .

Nay, it is easy to observe very different thoughts in a man, of the sin that he is most fond of, according to the different ebbs and flows of his inclination to it. For as soon as the appetite is alarmed, and seizeth upon the heart, a little cloud gathereth about the head, and spreads a kind of darkness over the face of the soul, whereby it is hindered from taking a clear and distinct view of things; but no sooner is the appetite tired and satiated, but the same cloud passes away like a shadow, and a new light springing up in the mind of a sudden, the man sees much more, both of the folly and of the danger of the sin, than he did before. . . .

Again: how wild and impertinent, how busy and incoherent

a thing is the imagination, even in the best and wisest of men; insomuch, that every man may be said to be mad, but every man does not show it! Then as to the passions, how noisy, how turbulent, and how tumultuous are they, how easy they are stirred and set a-going, how eager and hot in the pursuit, and what strange disorder and confusion do they throw a man into; so that he can neither think, nor speak, nor act, as he should do, while he is under the dominion of any one of them.

Thus let every man look with a severe and impartial eye into all the distinct regions of the heart, and, no doubt, several deformities and irregularities, that he never thought of, will open and disclose themselves upon so near a view; and rather make the man ashamed of himself than proud. . . .