Common Sense
by Thomas Paine

Excerpt from Part Three,
Thoughts on the Present Day State of American Affairs

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, or rather that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms, as the last resource, decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent hath accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who tho' an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the house of commons, on the score, that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied "they will last my time." Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a country, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now. Now is the seed time of continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new æra for politics is struck; a new method of thinking hath arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the nineteenth of April, i.e. to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which, though proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great-Britain; the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened that the first hath failed, and the second hath withdrawn her influence.

As much hath been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, hath passed away and left us as we were, it is but right, that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of the many material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with, and dependant on Great-Britain. To examine that connexion and dependance, on the principles of nature and common sense, to see what we have to trust to, if separated, and what we are to expect, if dependant.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connexion with Great-Britain, that the same connexion is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true, for I answer roundly, that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power had any thing to do with her. The commerce, by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us, say some. That she has engrossed us is true, and defended the continent at our expence as well as her own is admitted, and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive, viz. the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas, we have been long led away by ancient prejudices, and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great-Britain, without considering, that her motive was interest not attachment; that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her enemies on her own account, from those who had no quarrel with us on any other account, and who will always be our enemies on the same account. Let Britain wave her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependance, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover last war ought to warn us against connexions.

It has lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the parent country, i.e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very round-about way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be our enemies as Americans, but as our being the subjects of Great-Britain.

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase parent or mother country hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudice, as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of neighbour; if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of townsman; if he travel out of the county, and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him countryman, i.e. county-man; but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France or any other part of Europe, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of Englishmen. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the globe, are countrymen; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller ones; distinctions too limited for continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province, are of English descent. Wherefore I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow and ungenerous.

But admitting, that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain, being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title: And to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the Peers of England are descendants from the same country; therefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the colonies, that in conjunction they might bid defiance to the world. But this is mere presumption; the fate of war is uncertain, neither do the expressions mean any thing; for this continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants, to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because, it is the interest of all Europe to have America a free port. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation, to shew, a single advantage that this continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection, are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance:

Because, any submission to, or dependance on Great-Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels; and sets us at variance with nations, who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom, we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do, while by her dependence on Britain, she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, because of her connection with Britain. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now will be wishing for separation then, because, neutrality in that case, would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Every thing that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'Tis time to part. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one, over the other, was never the design of Heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled encreases the force of it. The reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

The authority of Great-Britain over this continent, is a form of government, which sooner or later must have an end: And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and positive conviction, that what he calls "the present constitution" is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that this government is not sufficiently lasting to ensure any thing which we may bequeath to posterity: And by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect, which a few present fears and prejudices conceal from our sight.

Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offence, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation, may be included within the following descriptions. Interested men, who are not to be trusted; weak men, who cannot see; prejudiced men, who will not see; and a certain set of moderate men, who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent, than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of sorrow; the evil is not sufficient brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us for a few moments to Boston, that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now, no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg.

Endangered by the fire of their friends if they continue within the city, and plundered by the soldiery if they leave it. In their present condition they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief, they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, "Come, come, we shall be friends again, for all this." But examine the passions and feelings of mankind, Bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me, whether you can hereafter love, honour, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain, whom you can neither love nor honour, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say, you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and still can shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy of the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. It is not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she do not conquer herself by delay and timidity. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected, the whole continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man will not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things to all examples from former ages, to suppose, that this continent can longer remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain does not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is now a fallacious dream. Nature hath deserted the connexion, and Art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "never can true reconcilement grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and only tended to convince us, that nothing flatters vanity, or confirms obstinacy in Kings more than repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more than that very measure to make the Kings of Europe absolute: Witness Denmark and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake, let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats, under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say, they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary, we thought so at the repeal of the stamp-act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations, which have been once defeated, will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice: The business of it will soon be too weighty, and intricate, to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power, so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us, they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness—There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care; but there is something very absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems: England to Europe, America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independance; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this continent to be so; that every thing short of that is mere patchwork, that it can afford no lasting felicity,—that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time, when, a little more, a little farther, would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth.

As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the continent, or any ways equal to the expence of blood and treasure we have been already put to.

The object, contended for, ought always to bear some just proportion to the expence. The removal of North, or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade, was an inconvenience, which would have sufficiently ballanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, it is scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly, do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for in a just estimation, it is as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law, as for land. As I have always considered the independancy of this continent, as an event, which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the event could not be far off. Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter, which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest; otherwise, it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen tempered Pharaoh of England for ever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of father

of his people can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul. But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the continent. And that for several reasons.

First. The powers of governing still remaining in the hands of the king, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this continent. And as he hath shewn himself such an inveterate enemy to liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power; is he, or is he not, a proper man to say to these colonies, "You shall make no laws but what I please." And is there any inhabitant in America so ignorant, as not to know, that according to what is called the present constitution, that this continent can make no laws but what the king gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise, as not to see, that (considering what has happened) he will suffer no law to be made here, but such as suit his purpose. We may be as effectually enslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England. After matters are made up (as it is called) can there be any doubt, but the whole power of the crown will be exerted, to keep this continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going forward we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarrelling or ridiculously petitioning.—We are already greater than the king wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavour to make us less? To bring the matter to one point. Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says No to this question is an independant, for independancy means no more, than, whether we shall make our own laws, or whether the king, the greatest enemy this continent hath, or can have, shall tell us "there shall be no laws but such as I like."

But the king you will say has a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and good order, there is something very ridiculous, that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall say to several millions of people, older and wiser than himself, I forbid this or that act of yours to be law. But in this place I decline this sort of reply, though I will never cease to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer, that England being the King's residence, and America not so, makes quite another case. The king's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it can be in England, for there he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into as strong a state of defence as possible, and in America he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.

America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics, England consults the good of this country, no farther than it answers her own purpose. Wherefore, her own interest leads her to suppress the growth of ours in every case which doth not promote her advantage, or in the least interferes with it. A pretty state we should soon be in under such a second-hand government, considering what has happened! Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name: And in order to shew that reconciliation now is a dangerous doctrine, I affirm, that it would be policy in the king at this time, to repeal the acts for the sake of reinstating himself in the government of the provinces; in order, that he may accomplish by craft and subtilty, in the long run, what he cannot do by force and violence in the short one. Reconciliation and ruin are nearly related.

Secondly. That as even the best terms, which we can expect to obtain, can amount to no more than a temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things, in the interim, will be unsettled and unpromising. Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government hangs but by a thread, and who is every day tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance; and numbers of the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval, to dispense of their effects, and quit the continent.

But the most powerful of all arguments, is, that nothing but independance, i.e. a continental form of government, can keep the peace of the continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain now, as it is more than probable, that it will be followed by a revolt somewhere or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity; (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate). Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they now possess is liberty, what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose, they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies, towards a British government, will be like that of a youth, who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her. And a government which cannot preserve the peace, is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independance, fearing that it would produce civil wars. It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there are ten times more to dread from a patched up connexion than from independance. I make the sufferers case my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as man, sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

The colonies have manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to continental government, as is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the least pretence for his fears, on any other grounds, than such as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz. that one colony will be striving for superiority over another.

Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority, perfect equality affords no temptation. The republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Swisserland are without wars, foreign or domestic: Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest; the crown itself is a temptation to enterprizing ruffians at home; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers, in instances, where a republican government, by being formed on more natural principles, would negociate the mistake.

If there is any true cause of fear respecting independance, it is because no plan is yet laid down. Men do not see their way out—Wherefore, as an opening into that business, I offer the following hints; at the same time modestly affirming, that I have no other opinion of them myself, than that they may be the means of giving rise to something better. Could the straggling thoughts of individuals be collected, they would frequently form materials for wise and able men to improve into useful matter.

Excerpt from
The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse

by Dorothy Kilner

INTRODUCTION

During a remarkably severe winter, when a prodigious fall of snow confined everybody to their habitations, who were happy enough to have one to shelter them from the inclemency of the season, and were hot obliged by business to expose themselves to its rigour, I was on a visit to Meadow Hall; where had assembled likewise a large party of young folk, who all seemed, by their harmony and good humour, to strive who should the most contribute to render pleasant that confinement which we were all equally obliged to share. Nor were those further advanced in life less anxious to contribute to the general satisfaction and entertainment.

After the more serious employment of reading each morning was concluded, we danced, we sung, we played at blind-man's-buff, battledore and shuttlecock, and many other games equally diverting and innocent; and when tired of them, drew our seats round the fire, while each one in turn told some merry story to divert the company.

At last, after having related all that we could recollect worth reciting, and being rather at a loss what to say next, a sprightly girl in company proposed that every one should relate the history of their own lives; 'and it must be strange indeed,' added she, 'if that will not help us out of this difficulty, and furnish conversation for some days longer; and by that time, perhaps, the frost will break, the snow will melt, and set us all at liberty. But let it break when it will, I make a law, that no one shall go from Meadow Hall till they have told their own history: so take notice, ladies and gentlemen, take notice, everybody, what you have to trust to. And because,' continued she, 'I will not be unreasonable, and require more from you than you can perform, I will give all you who may perhaps have forgotten what passed so many years ago, at the beginning of your lives, two days to recollect and digest your story; by which time if you do not produce something pretty and entertaining, we will never again admit you to dance or play among us.'

All this she spoke with so good-humoured a smile, that every one was delighted with her, and promised to do their best to acquit themselves to her satisfaction; whilst some (the length of whose lives had not rendered them forgetful of the transactions which had passed) instantly began their memoirs, as they called them: and really some related their narratives with such spirit and ingenuity, that it quite distressed us older ones, lest we should disgrace ourselves when it should fall to our turns to hold forth. However, we were all determined to produce something, as our fair directress ordered. Accordingly, the next morning I took up my pen, to endeavour to draw up some kind of a history, which might satisfy my companions in confinement. I took up my pen, it is true, and laid the paper before me; but not one word toward my appointed task could I proceed.

The various occurrences of my life were such as, far from affording entertainment, would, I was certain, rather afflict; or, perhaps, not interesting enough for that, only stupefy, and render them more weary of the continuation of the frost than they were before I began my narration. Thus circumstanced, therefore, although by myself, I broke silence by exclaiming, 'What a task his this sweet girl imposed upon me! One which I shall never be able to execute to my own satisfaction or her amusement. The adventures of my life (though deeply interesting to myself) will be insipid and unentertaining to others, especially to my young hearers: I cannot, therefore, attempt it.'—

'Then write mine, which may be more diverting,' said a little squeaking voice, which sounded as if close to me.

I started with surprise, not knowing any one to be near me; and looking round, could discover no object from whom it could possibly proceed, when casting my eyes upon the ground, in a little hole under the skirting-board, close by the fire, I discovered the head of a mouse peeping out. I arose with a design to stop the hole with a cork, which happened to lie on the table by me; and I was surprised to find that it did not run away, but suffered me to advance quite close, and then only retreated a little into the hole, saying in the same voice as before, 'Will you write my history?'

You may be sure that I was much surprised to be so addressed by such an animal; but, ashamed of discovering any appearance of astonishment, lest the mouse should suppose it had frightened me, I answered with the utmost composure, that I would write it willingly if it would dictate to me.

'Oh, that I will do,' replied the mouse, 'if you will not hurt me.'—

'Not for the world,' returned I; 'come, therefore, and sit upon my table, that I may hear more distinctly what you have to relate.' It instantly accepted my invitation, and with all the nimbleness of its species, ran up the side of my chair, and jumped upon my table; when, getting into a box of wafers, it began as follows.

But, before I proceed to relate my new little companion's history, I must beg leave to assure my readers that, in earnest, I never heard a mouse speak in all my life; and only wrote the following narrative as being far more entertaining, and not less instructive, than my own life would have been: and as it met with the high approbation of those for whom it was written, I have sent it to Mr. Marshall, for him to publish it, if he pleases, for the equal amusement of his little customers.

PART I.

Like all other newborn animals, whether of the human, or any other species, I can not pretend to remember what passed during my infant days. The first circumstance I can recollect was my mother's addressing me and my three brothers, who all lay in the same nest, in the following words:-

‘I have, my children, with the greatest difficulty, and at the utmost hazard of my life, provided for you all to the present moment; but the period is arrived, when I can no longer pursue that method: snares and traps are everywhere set for me, nor shall I, without infinite danger, be able to procure sustenance to support my own existence, much less can I find sufficient for you all; and, indeed, with pleasure I behold it as no longer necessary, since you are of age now to provide and shift for yourselves; and I doubt not but your agility will enable you to procure a very comfortable livelihood. Only let me give you this one caution—never (whatever the temptation may be) appear often in the same place; if you do, however you may flatter yourselves to the contrary, you will certainly at last be destroyed.’ So saying, she stroked us all with her fore paw as a token of her affection, and then hurried away, to conceal from us the emotions of her sorrow, at thus sending us into the wide world.

She was no sooner gone, than the thought of being our own directors so charmed our little hearts, that we presently forgot our grief at parting from our kind parent; and, impatient to use our liberty, we all set forward in search of some food, or rather some adventure, as our mother had left us victuals more than sufficient to supply the wants of that day. With a great deal of difficulty, we clambered up a high wall on the inside of a wainscot, till we reached the story above that we were born in, where we found it much easier to run round within the skirting-board, than to ascend any higher.

While we were there, our noses were delightfully regaled with the scent of the most delicate food that we had ever smelt; we were anxious to procure a taste of it likewise, and after running round and round the room a great many times, we at last discovered a little crack, through which we made our entrance. My brother Longtail led the way; I followed; Softdown came next; but Brighteyes would not be prevailed upon to venture. The apartment which we entered was spacious and elegant; at least, differed so greatly from anything we had seen, that we imagined it the finest place upon earth. It was covered all over with a carpet of various colours, that not only concealed some bird-seeds which we came to devour, but also for some time prevented our being discovered; as we were of much the same hue with many of the flowers on the carpet.

At last a little girl, who was at work in the room, by the side of her mamma, shrieked out as if violently hurt. Her mamma begged to know the cause of her sudden alarm. Upon which she called out, ‘A mouse! a mouse! I saw one under the chair!’

‘And if you did, my dear,’ replied her mother, ‘is that any reason for your behaving so ridiculously? If there were twenty mice, what harm could they possibly do? You may easily hurt and destroy then; but, poor little things! they cannot, if they would, hurt you.’

‘What, could they not bite me?’ inquired the child.

‘They may, indeed, be able to do that; but you may be very sure that they have no such inclination,’ rejoined the mother. ‘A mouse is one of the most timorous things in the world; every noise alarms it: and though it chiefly lives by plunder, it appears as if punished by its fears for the mischiefs which it commits among our property.

It is therefore highly ridiculous to pretend to be alarmed at the sight of a creature that would run from the sound of your voice, and wishes never to come near you, lest, as you are far more able, you should also be disposed to hurt it.'

'But I am sure, madam,' replied the little girl, whose name I afterwards heard was Nancy, 'they do not always run away; for one day, as Miss Betsy Kite was looking among some things which she had in her box, a mouse jumped out and ran up her frock sleeve—she felt it quite up on her arm.'

'And what became of it then?' inquired the mother.

'It jumped down again,' replied Nancy, 'and got into a little hole in the window-seat; and Betsy did not see it again.'

'Well, then, my dear,' resumed the lady, 'what harm did it do her? Is not that a convincing proof of what I say, that you have no cause to be afraid of them, and that it is very silly to be so? It is certainly foolish to be afraid of any thing, unless it threatens us with immediate danger; but to pretend to be so at a mouse, and such like inoffensive things, is a degree of weakness that I can by no means suffer any of my children to indulge.'

'May I then, madam,' inquired the child, 'be afraid of cows and horses, and such great beasts as those?'

'Certainly not,' answered her mother, 'unless they are likely to hurt you. If a cow or an horse runs after you, I would have you fear them so much as to get out of the way; but if they are quietly walking or grazing in a field, then to fly from them, as if you thought they would eat you instead of the grass, is most absurd, and discovers great want of sense. I once knew a young lady, who, I believe, thought it looked pretty to be terrified at everything, and scream if dog or even a mouse looked at her: but most severely was she punished for her folly, by several very disagreeable accidents she by those means brought upon herself.

'One day when she was drinking tea in a large company, on the door being opened, a small Italian greyhound walked into the drawing-room. She happened to be seated near the mistress of the dog, who was making tea: the dog, therefore, walked toward her, in order to be by his favourite; but, upon his advancing near her, she suddenly jumped up, without considering what she was about, overturned the water-urn, the hot iron of which rolling out, set fire to her clothes, which instantly blazed up, being only muslin, and burnt her arms, face, and neck, most dreadfully: she was so much hurt as to be obliged to be put immediately to bed; nor did she recover enough to go abroad for many months. Now, though every one was sorry for her sufferings, who could possibly help blaming her for her ridiculous behaviour, as it was entirely owing to her own folly that she was so hurt? When she was talked to upon the subject, she pleaded for her excuse, that she was so frightened she did not know what she did, nor whither she was going; but as she thought that the dog was coming to her she could not help jumping up, to get out of his way. Now what ridiculous arguing was this! Why could not she help it? And if the dog had really been going to her, what harm would it have done?

Could she suppose that the lady whose house she was at, would have suffered a beast to walk about the house loose, and go into company, if he was apt to bite and hurt people? Or why should she think he would more injure her, than those he had before passed by? But the real case was, she did not think at all; if she had given herself time for that, she could not have acted so ridiculously. Another time, when she was walking, from the same want of reflection, she very nearly drowned herself. She was passing over a bridge, the outside rails of which were in some places broken down: while she was there, some cows, which a man was driving, met her: immediately, without minding whither she went, she shrieked out, and at the same time jumped on one side just where the rail happened to be broken, and down she fell into the river; nor was it without the greatest difficulty that she was taken out time enough to save her life. However, she caught a violent cold and fever, and was again, by her own foolish fears, confined to her bed for some weeks. Another accident she once met with, which though not quite so bad as the two former, yet might have been attended with fatal consequences. She was sitting in a window, when a wasp happened to fly toward her; she hastily drew back her head, and broke the pane of glass behind her, some of which stuck in her neck. It bled prodigiously; but a surgeon happily being present, made some application to it, which prevented its being followed by any other ill effects than only a few days weakness, occasioned by the loss of blood. Many other misfortunes of the like kind she frequently experienced; but these which I have now related may serve to convince you how extremely absurd it is for people to give way to and indulge themselves in such groundless apprehensions, and, by being afraid when there is no danger, subject themselves to real misfortunes and most fatal accidents. And if being afraid of cows, dogs, and wasps (all of which, if they please, can certainly hurt us) is so ridiculous, what must be the folly of those people who are terrified at a little silly mouse, which never was known to hurt anybody?'

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of some gentlemen and ladies; and we having enjoyed a very fine repast under one of the chairs during the time that the mother and daughter had held the above discourse, on the chairs being removed for some of the visitors to sit upon, we thought it best to retire: highly pleased with our meal, and not less with the kind goodwill which the lady had, we thought, expressed towards us. We related to our brother Brighteyes all that had passed, and assured him he had no reason to apprehend any danger from venturing himself with us. Accordingly he promised, if such was the case, that the next time we went and found it safe, if we would return back and call him, he would certainly accompany us.

'In the mean time, do pray, Nimble,' said he, addressing himself to me, 'come with me to some other place, for I long to taste some more delicate food than our mother has provided for us: besides, as perhaps it may be a long while before we shall be strong enough to bring anything away with us, we had better leave that, in case we should ever be prevented from going abroad to seek for fresh supplies.'

'Very true,' replied I; 'what you say is quite just and wise, therefore I will with all my heart attend you now, and see what we can find.' So saying, we began to climb; but not without difficulty, for very frequently the bits of mortar which we stepped upon gave way beneath our feet, and tumbled us down together with them lower than when we first set off.

However, as we were very light, we were not much hurt by our falls; only indeed poor Brighteyes, by endeavouring to save himself, caught by his nails on a rafter, and tore one of them from off his right fore-foot, which was very sore and inconvenient. At length we surmounted all difficulties, and, invited by a strong scent of plum-cake, entered a closet, where we found a fine large one, quite whole and entire. We immediately set about making our way into it, which we easily effected, as it was most deliciously nice, and not at all hard to our teeth.

Brighteyes, who had not before partaken of the bird-seed, was overjoyed at the sight. He almost forgot the pain of his foot, and soon buried himself withinside the cake; whilst I, who had pretty well satisfied my hunger before, only ate a few of the crumbs, and then went to take a survey of the adjoining apartment. I crept softly under the door of the closet into a room, as large as that which I had before been in, though not so elegantly furnished; for, instead of being covered with a carpet, there was only a small one round the bed; and near the fire was a cradle, with a cleanly-looking woman sitting by it, rocking it with her foot, whilst at the same time she was combing the head of a little boy about four years old. In the middle of the room stood a table, covered with a great deal of litter; and in one corner was the little girl whom I had before seen with her mamma, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break. As I made not the least noise at my entrance, no one observed me for some time; so creeping under one of the beds, I heard the following discourse:—

'It does not signify, miss,' said the woman, who I found was the children's nurse, 'I never will put up with such behaviour: you know that I always do everything for you when you speak prettily; but to be ordered to dress you in such a manner, is what I never will submit to: and you shall go undressed all day before I will dress you, unless you ask me as you ought to do.' Nancy made no reply, but only continued crying.

'Aye! you may cry and sob as much as you please,' said the nurse; 'I do not care for that: I shall not dress you for crying and roaring, but for being good and speaking with civility.' Just as she said these words, the door opened, and in came the lady whom I before saw, and whose name I afterwards found was Artless. As soon as she entered, the nurse addressed her, saying, 'Pray, madam, is it by your desire that Miss Nancy behaves so rudely, and bids me dress her directly, and change the buckles in her shoes, or else she will slap my face? Indeed she did give me a slap upon my hand; so I told her, that I would not dress her at all; for really, madam, I thought you would not wish me to do it, whilst she behaved so; and I took the liberty of putting her to stand in the corner.'

'I do not think,' replied Mrs. Artless, 'that she deserves to stand in the room at all, or in the house either, if she behaves in that manner: if she does not speak civilly when she wants to be assisted, let her go without help, and see what will become of her then. I am quite ashamed of you, Nancy! I could not have thought you would behave so; but since you have, I promise that you shall not be dressed today, or have any assistance given you, unless you speak in a very different manner.'

Whilst Mrs. Artless was talking, nurse went out of the room. Mrs. Artless then took her seat by the cradle, and looking into it, found the child awake, and I saw her take out a fine little girl, about five months old: she then continued her discourse, saying, 'Look here, Nancy, look at this little baby, see how unable it is to help itself; were we to neglect attending to it, what do you think would become of it?

Suppose I were now to put your sister upon the floor, and there leave her, tell me what do you think she could do, or what would become of her?' Nancy sobbed out, that she would die.

'And pray, my dear,' continued Mrs. Artless, 'if we were to leave you to yourself, what would become of you? It is true, you talk and run about better than Polly: but not a bit better could you provide for, or take care of yourself. Could you buy or dress your own victuals? could you light your own fire? could you clean your own house, or open and shut the doors and windows? could you make your own clothes, or even put them on without some assistance, when made? And who do you think will do anything for you, if you are not good, and do not speak civilly? Not I, I promise you, neither shall nurse, nor any of the servants; for though I pay them wages to help to do my business for me, I never want them to do anything unless they are desired in a pretty manner. Should you like, if when I want you to pick up my scissors, or do any little job, I were to say, "Pick up my scissors this moment, or I will slap your face?" Should not you think that it sounded very cross and disagreeable?'

'Yes, madam,' replied Nancy.

'Then why,' rejoined Mrs. Artless, 'should you speak cross to anybody, particularly to servants and poor people? for to behave so to them, is not only cross, but insolent and proud: it is as if you thought that because they are rather poorer, they are not so good as yourself, whereas, I assure you, poverty makes no difference in the merit of people; for those only are deserving of respect who are truly good; and a beggar who is virtuous, is far better than a prince who is wicked.'

I was prevented from hearing any more of this very just discourse, by the little boy's opening the door and letting in a cat; which, though it was the first that I had ever seen in my life, I was certain was the same destructive animal to our race, which I had frequently heard my mother describe. I therefore made all possible haste back to the closet, and warning Brighteyes of our danger, we instantly returned by the same way which we came, to our two brothers, whom we found waiting for us, and wondering at our long absence. We related to them the dainty cheer which we had met with, and agreed to conduct them thither in the evening.

Accordingly, as soon as it grew towards dusk, we climbed up the wall, and all four together attacked the plum-cake, which no one had touched since we left it; but scarcely had we all seated ourselves round it, than on a sudden the closet-door opened, and a woman entered. Away we all scampered as fast as possible, but poor Brighteyes, who could not move quite so fast on account of his sore toe, and who likewise having advanced farther into the cake, was discovered before he could reach the crack by which we entered. The woman, who had a knife in her hand, struck at him with it, at the same time exclaiming, 'Bless me, nurse, here is a mouse in the closet!'

Happily, she missed her aim, and he only received a small wound on the tip of his tail. This interruption sadly alarmed us, and it was above an hour before we could have courage to venture back, when finding everything quiet, except Mrs. Nurse's singing to her child, we again crept out, and once more surrounded the cake. We continued without any further alarm till we were perfectly satisfied, and then retired to a little distance behind the wainscot, determined there to sleep, and to breakfast on the cake the next day.

Pride and Prejudice
by Jane Austen

Chapter VIII

AT five o'clock the two ladies retired to dress, and at half-past six Elizabeth was summoned to dinner. To the civil inquiries which then poured in, and amongst which she had the pleasure of distinguishing the much superior solicitude of Mr. Bingley, she could not make a very favourable answer.

Jane was by no means better. The sisters, on hearing this, repeated three or four times how much they were grieved, how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill themselves; and then thought no more of the matter: and their indifference towards Jane, when not immediately before them, restored Elizabeth to the enjoyment of all her original dislike.

Their brother, indeed, was the only one of the party whom she could regard with any complacency. His anxiety for Jane was evident, and his attentions to herself most pleasing; and they prevented her feeling herself so much an intruder as she believed she was considered by the others. She had very little notice from any but him. Miss Bingley was engrossed by Mr. Darcy, her sister scarcely less so; and as for Mr. Hurst, by whom Elizabeth sat, he was an indolent man, who lived only to eat, drink, and play at cards, who, when he found her prefer a plain dish to a ragout, had nothing to say to her.

When dinner was over, she returned directly to Jane, and Miss Bingley began abusing her as soon as she was out of the room. Her manners were pronounced to be very bad indeed,—a mixture of pride and impertinence: she had no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty. Mrs. Hurst thought the same, and added,—

"She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild."

"She did indeed, Louisa. I could hardly keep my countenance. Very nonsensical to come at all! Why must she be scampering about the country, because her sister had a cold? Her hair so untidy, so blowzy!"

"Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud, I am absolutely certain, and the gown which had been let down to hide it not doing its office."

"Your picture may be very exact, Louisa," said Bingley; "but this was all lost upon me. I thought Miss Elizabeth Bennet looked remarkably well when she came into the room this morning. Her dirty petticoat quite escaped my notice."

"You observed it, Mr. Darcy, I am sure," said Miss Bingley; "and I am inclined to think that you would not wish to see your sister make such an exhibition."

"Certainly not."

"To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ancles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! what could she mean by it? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum."

"It shows an affection for her sister that is very pleasing," said Bingley.

"I am afraid, Mr. Darcy," observed Miss Bingley, in a half whisper, "that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes."

"Not at all," he replied: "they were brightened by the exercise." A short pause followed this speech, and Mrs. Hurst began again,—

"I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet,—she is really a very sweet girl,—and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it."

"I think I have heard you say that their uncle is an attorney in Meryton?"

"Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Cheapside."

"That is capital," added her sister; and they both laughed heartily.

"If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside," cried Bingley, "it would not make them one jot less agreeable."

"But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world," replied Darcy.

To this speech Bingley made no answer; but his sisters gave it their hearty assent, and indulged their mirth for some time at the expense of their dear friend's vulgar relations.

With a renewal of tenderness, however, they repaired to her room on leaving the dining-parlour, and sat with her till summoned to coffee. She was still very poorly, and Elizabeth would not quit her at all, till late in the evening, when she had the comfort of seeing her asleep, and when it appeared to her rather right than pleasant that she should go down stairs herself. On entering the drawing-room, she found the whole party at loo, and was immediately invited to join them; but suspecting them to be playing high, she declined it, and making her sister the excuse, said she would amuse herself, for the short time she could stay below, with a book. Mr. Hurst looked at her with astonishment.

"Do you prefer reading to cards?" said he; "that is rather singular."

"Miss Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, "despises cards. She is a great reader, and has no pleasure in anything else."

"I deserve neither such praise nor such censure," cried Elizabeth; "I am not a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things."

"In nursing your sister I am sure you have pleasure," said Bingley; "and I hope it will soon be increased by seeing her quite well."

Elizabeth thanked him from her heart, and then walked towards a table where a few books were lying. He immediately offered to fetch her others; all that his library afforded.

"And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow; and though I have not many, I have more than I ever looked into."

Elizabeth assured him that she could suit herself perfectly with those in the room.

"I am astonished," said Miss Bingley, "that my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!"

"It ought to be good," he replied: "it has been the work of many generations."

"And then you have added so much to it yourself—you are always buying books."

"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these."

"Neglect! I am sure you neglect nothing that can add to the beauties of that noble place. Charles, when you build your house, I wish it may be half as delightful as Pemberley."

"I wish it may."

"But I would really advise you to make your purchase in that neighbourhood, and take Pemberley for a kind of model. There is not a finer county in England than Derbyshire."

"With all my heart: I will buy Pemberley itself, if Darcy will sell it."

"I am talking of possibilities, Charles."

"Upon my word, Caroline, I should think it more possible to get Pemberley by purchase than by imitation."

Elizabeth was so much caught by what passed, as to leave her very little attention for her book; and, soon laying it wholly aside, she drew near the card-table, and stationed herself between Mr. Bingley and his eldest sister, to observe the game.

"Is Miss Darcy much grown since the spring?" said Miss Bingley: "will she be as tall as I am?"

"I think she will. She is now about Miss Elizabeth Bennet's height, or rather taller."

"How I long to see her again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners, and so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the pianoforte is exquisite."

"It is amazing to me," said Bingley, "how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished as they all are."

"All young ladies accomplished! My dear Charles, what do you mean?"

"Yes, all of them, I think. They all paint tables, cover screens, and net purses. I scarcely know any one who cannot do all this; and I am sure I never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished."

"Your list of the common extent of accomplishments," said Darcy, "has too much truth. The word is applied to many a woman who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse or covering a screen; but I am very far from agreeing with you in your estimation of ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half-a-dozen in the whole range of my acquaintance that are really accomplished."

"Nor I, I am sure," said Miss Bingley.

"Then," observed Elizabeth, "you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman."

"Yes; I do comprehend a great deal in it."

"Oh, certainly," cried his faithful assistant, "no one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and, besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved."

"All this she must possess," added Darcy; "and to all she must yet add something more substantial in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading."

"I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any."

"Are you so severe upon your own sex as to doubt the possibility of all this?"

"I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united."

Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley both cried out against the injustice of her implied doubt, and were both protesting that they knew many women who answered this description, when Mr. Hurst called them to order, with bitter complaints of their inattention to what was going forward. As all conversation was thereby at an end, Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room.

"Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, when the door was closed on her, "is one of those young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I daresay, it succeeds; but, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very mean art."

"Undoubtedly," replied Darcy, to whom this remark was chiefly addressed, "there is meanness in all the arts which ladies sometimes condescend to employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunning is despicable."

Miss Bingley was not so entirely satisfied with this reply as to continue the subject.

Elizabeth joined them again only to say that her sister was worse, and that she could not leave her. Bingley urged Mr. Jones's being sent for immediately; while his sisters, convinced that no country advice could be of any service, recommended an express to town for one of the most eminent physicians. This she would not hear of; but she was not so unwilling to comply with their brother's proposal; and it was settled that Mr. Jones should be sent for early in the morning, if Miss Bennet were not decidedly better. Bingley was quite uncomfortable; his sisters declared that they were miserable. They solaced their wretchedness, however, by duets after supper; while he could find no better relief to his feelings than by giving his housekeeper directions that every possible attention might be paid to the sick lady and her sister.

The Lion and the Gnat

from the Fables of La Fontaine

by Jean de La Fontaine

"Go, paltry insect, refuse of the earth!"
Thus said the Lion to the Gnat one day.
The Gnat held the Beast King as little worth;
Immediate war declared—no joke, I say.
"Think you I care for Royal name?
I care no button for your fame;
An ox is stronger far than you,
Yet oxen often I pursue."
This said; in anger, fretful, fast,
He blew his loudest trumpet blast,
And charged upon the Royal Nero,
Himself a trumpet and a hero.
The time for vengeance came;
The Gnat was not to blame.
Upon the Lion's neck he settled, glad
To make the Lion raving mad;
The monarch foams: his flashing eye
Rolls wild. Before his roaring fly
All lesser creatures; close they hide
To shun his cruelty and pride:
And all this terror at
The bite of one small Gnat,
Who changes every moment his attack,
First on the mouth, next on the back;
Then in the very caverns of the nose,
Gives no repose.
The foe invisible laughed out,
To see a Lion put to rout;
Yet clearly saw
That tooth nor claw
Could blood from such a pigmy draw.
The helpless Lion tore his hide,
And lashed with furious tail his side;
Lastly, quite worn, and almost spent,
Gave up his furious intent.
With glory crowned, the Gnat the battle-ground
Leaves, his victorious trump to sound,
As he had blown the battle charge before,
Still one blast for the conquest more.
He flies now here, now there,
To tell it everywhere.
Alas! it so fell out he met
A spider's ambuscaded net,
And perished, eaten in mid-air.

What may we learn by this? why, two things, then:
First, that, of enemies, the smaller men
Should most be dreaded; also, secondly,
That passing through great dangers there may be
Still pitfalls waiting for us, though too small to see.

Little Red Cap

Grimm's Fairy Tales
by the Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time, there was a sweet little girl, who was loved by every one who looked at her, and most of all by her Grandmother. There was nothing that she would not have given the child!

Once she gave her a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would not wear anything else. So she was always called Little Red-Cap.

One day, her Mother said to her, "Come, Little Red-Cap, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your Grandmother. She is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets hot. Walk nicely and quietly. Do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle; then your Grandmother will get nothing! When you go into her room, don't forget to say 'Good morning,' and don't stop to peep into every corner, before you do it."

"I'll take great care," said Little Red-Cap to her Mother, and gave her hand on it.

The Grandmother lived in the wood, half an hour's distance from the village, and just as Little Red-Cap entered the wood, a Wolf met her. Red-Cap did not know what a wicked creature he was, and was not at all afraid of him.

"Good-day, Little Red-Cap," said he.

"Thank you kindly, Wolf."

"Whither away so early, Little Red-Cap?"

"To my Grandmother's."

"What have you got in your apron?"

"Cake and wine. Yesterday was baking-day, so poor sick Grandmother is to have something good, to make her stronger."

"Where does your Grandmother live, Little Red-Cap?"

"A good quarter of an hour farther on in the wood. Her house stands under the three large oak-trees; the nut-trees are just below. You surely must know it," replied Little Red-Cap.

The Wolf thought to himself, "What a tender young creature! what a nice plump mouthful—she will be better to eat than the old woman. I must act craftily, so as to catch both."

He walked for a short time by the side of Little Red-Cap, and then he said, "See, Little Red-Cap, how pretty the flowers are about here—why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing. You walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else in the wood is merry."

Little Red-Cap raised her eyes, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought, "Suppose I take Grandmother a fresh nosegay. That would please her too. It is so early in the day that I shall still get there in good time."

And so she ran from the path into the wood to look for flowers. And whenever she had picked one, she fancied that she saw a still prettier one farther on, and ran after it, and thus got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile, the Wolf ran straight to the Grandmother's house and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Little Red-Cap," replied the Wolf. "She is bringing cake and wine. Open the door."

"Lift the latch," called out the Grandmother, "I am too weak, and cannot get up."

The Wolf lifted the latch, the door flew open, and without saying a word he went straight to the Grandmother's bed, and devoured her. Then he put on her clothes, dressed himself in her cap, laid himself in bed, and drew the curtains.

Little Red-Cap, however, had been running about picking flowers. When she had gathered so many that she could carry no more, she remembered her Grandmother, and set out on the way to her.

She was surprised to find the cottage-door standing open. And when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling, that she said to herself, "Oh dear! how uneasy I feel to-day, and at other times I like being with Grandmother so much."

She called out, “Good morning,” but received no answer. So she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her Grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange.

“Oh! Grandmother,” she said, “what big ears you have!”

“The better to hear you with, my Child,” was the reply.

“But, Grandmother, what big eyes you have!” she said.

“The better to see you with, my dear.”

“But, Grandmother, what large hands you have!”

“The better to hug you with.”

“Oh! but Grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!”

“The better to eat you with!” And scarcely had the Wolf said this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red-Cap.

When the Wolf had satisfied his appetite, he lay down again in the bed, fell asleep and began to snore very loud. The huntsman was just passing the house, and thought to himself, “How the old woman is snoring! I must just see if she wants anything.”

So he went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw the Wolf lying in it. “Do I find thee here, thou old sinner!” said he. “I have long sought thee!”

Then just as he was going to fire at him, it occurred to him that the Wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that she might still be saved. So he did not fire, but took a pair of scissors, and began to cut open the stomach of the sleeping Wolf.

When he had made two snips, he saw the little Red-Cap shining, and then he made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying, “Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the Wolf!”

And after that the aged grandmother came out alive also, but scarcely able to breathe.

Red-Cap then quickly fetched great stones with which they filled the Wolf’s body. And when he awoke, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he tumbled down at once, and fell dead.

Then all three were delighted. The huntsman drew off the Wolf's skin and went home with it. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine which Red-Cap had brought, and grew strong again.

But Red-Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path to run into the wood, when my mother has forbidden me to do so."

The Renowned History of Goody Two-Shoes

by Anonymous

Chapter I. "How and about Little Margery and her Brother"

Care and Discontent shortened the Days of Little Margery's Father.--He was forced from his Family, and seized with a violent Fever in a Place where Dr. James's Powder was not to be had, and where he died miserably. Margery's poor Mother survived the Loss of her Husband but a few Days, and died of a broken Heart, leaving Margery and her little Brother to the wide World; but, poor Woman, it would have melted your Heart to have seen how frequently she heaved up her Head, while she lay speechless, to survey with languishing Looks her little Orphans, as much as to say, Do Tommy, do Margery, come with me. They cried, poor Things, and she sighed away her Soul; and I hope is happy.

It would both have excited your Pity, and have done your Heart good, to have seen how fond these two little ones were of each other, and how, Hand in Hand, they trotted about. Pray see them.

They were both very ragged, and Tommy had two Shoes, but Margery had but one. They had nothing, poor Things, to support them (not being in their own Parish) but what they picked from the Hedges, or got from the poor People, and they lay every Night in a Barn. Their Relations took no Notice of them; no, they were rich, and ashamed to own such a poor little ragged Girl as Margery, and such a dirty little curl-pated Boy as Tommy. Our Relations and Friends seldom take Notice of us when we are poor; but as we grow rich they grow fond. And this will always be the Case, while People love Money better than Virtue, or better than they do GOD Almighty. But such wicked Folks, who love nothing but Money, and are proud and despise the Poor, never come to any good in the End, as we shall see by and by.

Chapter II. "How and About Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith was a very worthy Clergyman, who lived in the Parish where Little Margery and Tommy were born; and having a Relation come to see him, who was a charitable good Man, he sent for these Children to him. The Gentleman ordered Little Margery a new Pair of Shoes, gave Mr. Smith some Money to buy her Cloathes; and said, he would take Tommy and make him a little Sailor; and accordingly had a Jacket and Trowsers made for him, in which he now appears. Pray look at him.
After some Days the Gentleman intended to go to London, and take little Tommy with him, of whom you will know more by and by, for we shall at a proper Time present you with some Part of his History, his Travels and Adventures.

The Parting between these two little Children was very affecting, Tommy cried, and Margery cried, and they kissed each other an hundred Times. At last Tommy thus wiped off her Tears with the End of his Jacket, and bid her cry no more, for that he would come to her again, when he returned from Sea. However, as they were so very fond, the Gentleman would not suffer them to take Leave of each other; but told Tommy he should ride out with him, and come back at Night. When night came, Little Margery grew very uneasy about her Brother, and after sitting up as late as Mr. Smith would let her, she went crying to Bed.

Chapter III. "How Little Margery obtained the Name of Goody Two-Shoes, and what happened in the Parish"

As soon as Little Margery got up in the Morning, which was very early, she ran all round the Village, crying for her Brother; and after some Time returned greatly distressed. However, at this Instant, the Shoemaker very opportunely came in with the new Shoes, for which she had been measured by the Gentleman's Order.

Nothing could have supported Little Margery under the Affliction she was in for the Loss of her Brother, but the Pleasure she took in her two Shoes. She ran out to Mrs. Smith as soon as they were put on, and stroking down her ragged Apron thus, cried out, Two Shoes, Mame, see two Shoes. And so she behaved to all the People she met, and by that Means obtained the Name of Goody Two-Shoes, though her Playmates called her Old Goody Two-Shoes.

Little Margery was very happy in being with Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who were very charitable and good to her, and had agreed to breed her up with their Family; but as soon as that Tyrant of the Parish, that Graspall, heard of her being there, he applied first to Mr. Smith, and threatened to reduce his Tythes if he kept her; and after that he spoke to Sir Timothy, who sent Mr. Smith a peremptory Message by his Servant, that he should send back Meanwell's Girl to be kept by her Relations, and not harbour her in the Parish. This so distressed Mr. Smith that he shed Tears, and cried, Lord have Mercy on the Poor!

The Prayers of the Righteous fly upwards, and reach unto the Throne of Heaven, as will be seen in the Sequel.

Mrs. Smith was also greatly concerned at being thus obliged to discard poor Little Margery. She kissed her and cried; as also did Mr. Smith, but they were obliged to send her away; for the People who had ruined her Father could at any Time have ruined them.

Chapter IV. "How Little Margery learned to read, and by Degrees taught others"

Little Margery saw how good, and how wise Mr. Smith was, and concluded, that this was owing to his great Learning, therefore she wanted of all Things to learn to read. For this Purpose she used to meet the little Boys and Girls as they came from School, borrow their Books, and sit down and read till they returned;

By this Means she soon got more Learning than any of her Playmates, and laid the following Scheme for instructing those who were more ignorant than herself. She found, that only the following Letters were required to spell all the Words in the World; but as some of these Letters are large and some small, she with her Knife cut out of several Pieces of Wood ten Setts of each of these:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p q r (s) s t u v w x y z.

And six Setts of these:

A B C D E F G H I K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z.

And having got an old Spelling-Book, she made her Companions set up all the Words they wanted to spell, and after that she taught them to compose Sentences. You know what a Sentence is, my Dear, I will be good, is a Sentence; and is made up, as you see, of several Words.

The usual Manner of Spelling, or carrying on the Game, as they called it, was this: Suppose the Word to be spelt was Plumb Pudding (and who can suppose a better) the Children were placed in a Circle, and the first brought the Letter P, the next l, the next u, the next m, and so on till the Whole was spelt; and if any one brought a wrong Letter, he was to pay a Fine, or play no more. This was at their Play; and every Morning she used to go round to teach the Children with these Rattle-traps in a Basket, as you see in the Print.

I once went her Rounds with her, and was highly diverted, as you may be, if you please to look into the next Chapter.