

VARIOUS

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THEREFORE AND BECAUSE

A distinguished general-officer being appointed to a command in which he would be called on to discharge judicial as well as military duties, expressed to Lord Mansfield his apprehensions, that he would execute his office but ill in the former respect, and that his inexperience and ignorance of technical jurisprudence would prove a serious impediment to his efficient administration of justice. 'Make your mind perfectly easy,' said the great judge; 'trust to your native good sense in forming your opinions, but beware of attempting to state the grounds of your judgments. The judgment will probably be right—the argument infallibly wrong.'

This is a common case, especially with practical men, who rarely have either leisure or inclination to recall the workings of their own minds, or observe the intellectual process by which they have been conducted to any conclusion. By what they are prone to consider as a kind of instinct—if by chance they are philosophers, and delight in what old Wilson, the essayist, calls 'inkhorn terms,' they designate it 'intuition'—they arrive at a truth, but have no recollection whatever of the road they travelled to reach it, and are able neither to retrace their own steps nor indicate to another the way they came. The poet, in describing and contrasting the intellectual characteristics of the two sexes, attributes to the softer something of this instinct as a distinguishing mental peculiarity, and seems to consider it as somewhat analogous in its constitution to those animal senses by means of which the mind becomes cognisant of external objects, of their existence, their qualities, and their relations. In his view, the reasoning process is vitally and essentially distinct, as it is exercised by men and by women—

'Her rapid mind decides while his debates;
She *feels* a truth which he but calculates.'

And certainly this is a very pretty, very poetical, and very convenient way of accounting for a phenomenon that, if examined with common care, suggests a solution more accurate and complete, if not exactly so complimentary. In sober truth, a positive incapacity clearly to point out the precise manner in which a conviction has been formed, is one of the commonest of logical deficiencies, and no more to be ascribed exclusively to the softer sex, than it is an attribute of intellectual excellency in either.

When, in Euripides's beautiful play, the untranslatable *Hippolytus*, Phædra's nurse is made to conclude that certain men she refers to cannot be otherwise than lax in their morals, *because* they have finished the roofs of their houses in a very imperfect manner, her reasoning is inconsequential enough; but not more so than that of the renowned French chancellor, Michael L'Hôpital, who, when employed in negotiating a treaty between Charles IX. and our Elizabeth, insisted on the well-known line of the Latin poet—

'Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos,'

as a *reason* that Calais should not be returned to the English. The connection between the premises and the conclusion was not more real in one case than in the other. A learned member of

the medical profession, in an elaborate work on the climate and the people of Malta, enjoins on the invalid a participation in the amusements of cheerful society; and the propriety of his injunction few will be disposed to dispute: they may well, however, marvel at the *reason* he assigns for such sensible advice—that, so far as invalids are concerned, society has a direct tendency to promote cutaneous perspiration!

Cardinal de Retz severely reprehends the historians of his time for their pedantic affectation of explaining and accounting for every event they record—the motives that actuated this statesman, the reasons which prompted that policy, the wherefore it was this enterprise miscarried, or that undertaking brought to a successful issue. It would not be difficult to furnish a lengthy catalogue of the blunders historical writers have perpetrated through their overweening addiction to this folly. Let two instances here suffice: When the Roman Church, about the middle of the eleventh century, was endeavouring to insure the celibacy of its priesthood, the married clergy, who braved its censures and contemned its authority, became known as *Nicolaites*; which name, grave writers assure us, was given them in consequence of the active share Pope Nicholas II. had taken in punishing their contumacy and effecting their suppression. The notion that any sect or class of religionists should have borrowed its name from that of its most zealous opponent and indefatigable persecutor, is worthy only of those critics, so severely reprehended by Quintilian, who professed to discover the etymon of the Latin word *lucus*, a grove, in the substantive *lux*, light; and vindicated the derivation on the ground, that in groves darkness usually prevailed. The familiar expression of *lucus à non lucendo*, owes its birth to this striking manifestation of critical sagacity.

Again: a certain portion of the eastern and southern coast of England was, in early times, denominated 'the Saxon Shore'—*Littus Saxonicum*—and was, during the days of Roman supremacy, under the government of a military court enjoying the appellative of *Comes Littoris Saxonici*. Acute historical critics inform us, that this tract was so denominated in consequence of its being open to the aggressions of the Saxons; that, in short, it received its name from its occasional invaders, and not from its permanent inhabitants. The absurdity of this explanation is the greater, inasmuch as, on the other side of the Channel, there was a large district bearing precisely the same name, and settled entirely by adventurers, Saxon in birth or by descent. This, one would have thought, would have suggested to our English antiquaries a more probable explanation of the name than that they adopted. The people of Genoa have, or had, in speaking, a peculiar way of clipping or cutting short their syllables. Their Italian has never been considered pure. You must not go to maritime towns for purity of language, especially to such as have been long and extensively engaged in commercial pursuits. Labat, however, gives a special and peculiar reason for the fashion of mutilated speech in which, he declares, the Genoese indulge, telling us they call their superb city *Gena*, and not *Genoa*. He refers their 'chopping' pronunciation to their habitual economy—an economy distinctly traceable to their mercantile habits. 'Telle est leur économie,' he says, 'ils rognent tout jusqu'aux paroles.'

The old English law-writer, Bracton, desiring to account for the ancient doctrine of English law, that inheritances shall lineally descend, and never lineally ascend, finds a reason in the fact, that a bowl being trundled, runs down a hill and never up a hill; and Littleton, the first great writer on English real property-law, traces the origin of the phrase 'hotchpot'—a familiar legal term—to the archaic denomination of a pudding, in our English tongue. 'It seemeth,' he says, 'that this word, hotchpot, is in English a pudding; for in this pudding is not commonly put one thing alone, and therefore it behoveth, in this case, to put the lands given in frank-marriage,' &c. Erasmus used to say of lawyers, that of ignorant people, they were the most learned. Questionless they are not always sound logicians. When the clown in Hamlet disserts so learnedly on 'crowners' quest-law,' he is only parodying, and that closely, a scarcely less ludicrous judgment which had actually been pronounced, not long before, in the Court of Queen's Bench. Dr Clarke, the traveller, tells an amusing story to the purpose. According to him, the Turkish lawyers recognise as an offence what they style 'homicide by an intermediate cause'—an instance of which offence our traveller details in these words: 'A young

man, desperately in love with a girl of Stanchio—the ancient Cos, the birthplace of Hippocrates and Apelles, the lovely isle renowned for its lettuces and turpentine—eagerly sought to marry her. But his proposals were rejected. In consequence, he destroyed himself by poison. The Turkish police arrested the father of the obdurate fairy, and tried him for culpable homicide. "If the accused," they argued, with becoming gravity, "had not had a daughter, the deceased would not have fallen in love; consequently, he would not have been disappointed; consequently, he would not have died: but he (the accused) had a daughter, and the deceased had fallen in love," &c. &c. Upon all these counts he was called upon to pay the price of the young man's life; and this, being eighty piastres, was accordingly exacted.' When the amiable and gentle John Evelyn was in the Netherlands, a woman was pointed out to him who had had twenty-five husbands, and was then a widow; 'yet it could not be proved,' he says, that 'she had made any of her husbands away, though the suspicion had brought her several times to trouble.' However, the Dutch logicians made no difficulty of the matter; and arguing, from the number of the woman's husbands, that she could not be wholly innocent of their death, prohibited her from marrying again—which, her addiction to matrimony being considered, was perhaps, of all the 'troubles' she had undergone, by no means the least.

The logical faculty, which not only consists with the poetical, but is invariably and necessarily associated with it, whenever the latter exists in an advanced stage of development, is in no writer more conspicuous as an intellectual characteristic than in Schiller. In this respect he is not excelled even by Wordsworth himself; but Homer sometimes snoozes, and Schiller's reasoning is not always consequential: as, for instance, when he denies two compositions of Ovid—the *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*—to be genuine poetry, on the ground that they were the results not of inspiration, but of necessity; just as if poetry were not a thing to be judged of by itself; and as if one could not determine whether it were present or absent in a composition, without knowing to what influences the author was subjected at the time the composition was produced!

Rousseau, in one of his moods of bilious cynicism, falls foul of human reason altogether. No man despised it more in action; no one could more consistently decry it in speculation. In his opinion, the exercise of the reasoning powers is absolutely sinful—*l'homme qui raisonne est l'homme qui pèche*. Franklin, on the other hand, in a familiar tone of playful banter, vindicates its utility, alleging that it is mightily 'convenient to be a rational animal, who knows how to find or invent a plausible pretext for whatever it has an inclination to do.' Examples of this convenience abound. The Barbary Jews were rich and industrious, and, accordingly, their wealth provoke the cupidity of the indolent and avaricious Mussulmans. These latter, whenever a long drought had destroyed vegetation, and the strenuous prayers offered up in the mosques had proved unavailing for its removal, were accustomed to argue—and a mighty convenient argument it was—that it was the foul breath of the Jews that had offended Heaven, and rendered the pious petitions of the faithful of none effect. The remedy for the drought, then, who could doubt? The true believers drove the Jews out of their cities, and quietly confiscated their goods. Dryden, anxious to congratulate Charles II. on his 'happy restoration,' amidst a thousand fulsome compliments—all tending to shew that that prince was the author of blessings, not only to his own kingdoms, but to universal humanity—declares, that it was to Charles, and to him only, Spain was indebted for her magnificent colonial possessions in either hemisphere. Addressing the sovereign, his words are—

'Spain to your gift *alone* her Indies owes,
For what the powerful takes not, he bestows.'

A convenient fashion of reasoning truly: as convenient every whit as that of Daniel Burgess, a witty Presbyterian minister, devoted to the House of Brunswick and the principles of the Revolution, who was wont to affirm, as the reason the descendants of Jacob were called Israelites, and did not

receive the original name of their progenitor, that Heaven was unwilling they should bear a name in every way so odious as that of Jacobites.

Once more: it appears from Dr Tschudi's valuable and interesting work on South America, that in Peru rice is cheap, and servants both lazy and dirty. Now, the servants in Lima have a theory about rice. They consider it possesses certain qualities antagonistic to water, so that, after eating, to touch water would be seriously injurious to health; and thus does their frequent consumption of rice supply them with a most convenient reason or excuse for their habitual abstinence from an operation they detest—that of washing their hands.

Verily, they are mighty fine and convenient words, therefore and because.

DAVID'S LAST PICTURE

The whole population of the good city of Brussels was in a state of excitement. Talma, the great French tragedian, was that evening to close his engagement by appearing in his favourite character of Leonidas; and from an early hour in the morning, the doors of the theatre were beset with waiting crowds, extending to the very end of the large square in which it stood. It was evident that the building, spacious as it was, could not contain one-half of the eager expectants already assembled, and yet every moment brought a fresh accession to the number destined to be disappointed. The hero of this ovation, and the object of all this unusual excitement to the worthy and naturally phlegmatic beer-drinkers of old Brabant, was standing near a window in the White Cross Hotel, engaged most prosaically in shaving himself; and, from time to time, casting on the crowd, to which he was the magnet of attraction, the careless glance of a monarch become from habit almost insensible to the loyal enthusiasm of his subjects.

'So he will not come?' said the tragedian to an old friend who was with him. 'He is a cynical old fool; and yet, I assure you, my dear M. Lesec, that I had *Leonidas* got up expressly for him, thinking to tickle his old republican fancies, for to my mind it is as stupid a play as *Germanicus*, though I contrive to produce an effect with some of its high-sounding patriotic passages; and I thought the worthy David would have recognised his own picture vivified. But he will not come: he positively refused, you tell me. I might have known it. Age, exile, the memory of the past—all this has cut him up terribly: he is the David of the Consulate no longer.'

'I am just come from him,' answered Collector Lesec: 'he received me almost as Hermione receives Orestes in the fourth act of *Andromache*. To say the least of it, he was somewhat tart. "I never go to the theatre," he answered abruptly. "Tell my friend Talma, that I thank him for his kindness; but I always go to bed at nine. I should be very glad if he would come, before he left Brussels, and have a tankard and a smoke with me."'

'I see,' said Talma with a half-ironical smile, 'he is turned quite Flemish. Poor fellow! to what has he come?—to smoking tobacco, and losing all faith in art. Persecution does more harm than the guillotine,' added the tragedian in a tone of bitterness. 'There is a living death. David's exile has deprived us of many a *chef-d'œuvre*. I can forgive the Restoration for surrounding itself with nobodies, but it need not banish our men of talent: they are not to be found now-a-days in every corner. But enough. Another word, and we should be talking politics.'

Leonidas finished shaving like any other man; and then turned suddenly to his friend: 'I bet you ten napoleons,' said he, 'that David would have come to the play had I gone myself to him with the invitation! I intended it, but I had not time; these rehearsals kill me—I might as well be a galley-slave. However, I have about three-quarters of an hour to myself now, and I will go beard the old Roman in his stronghold. What say you to going with me?'

It would have been difficult to name a place to which M. Lesec would not have gone, to have the honour of being seen arm-in-arm with the great Talma; and in another half hour they were on their way across the Place de la Monnaie into the Rue Pierre Plate.

'Now for a storm!' said Lesec. 'We are in for it: so be prepared. I leave it all on your shoulders, noble sir, for I must keep clear of him.'

'Is he, then, so entirely changed?' exclaimed Talma, quickening his pace. 'Poor exile! unhappy genius! torn from thy native soil, to languish and die!'

The visitors soon reached the large, though somewhat dilapidated mansion of the celebrated artist; and after they had been reconnoitred through a small grating by an old female servant, they were ushered into a rather gloomy apartment, presenting a singular discrepancy between its antique decorations and modern furniture.

The illustrious exile came out of an adjoining apartment in his dressing-gown, and advanced towards them with a quick yet almost majestic step, though his form was slightly bent, apparently by age. To Talma's great surprise, David received him most cordially, even throwing away his usually inseparable companion, a long pipe, to grasp both his hands. 'Welcome, welcome, my old friend!' he said; 'you could not have come at a better time. I have not for many a day felt so happy, and the sight of you is a great addition.' And the old painter kept rubbing his hands, a token with him of exuberant satisfaction.

Talma looked at Lesec as much as to say: 'The devil is not quite so black as he is painted;' while the worthy collector only shrugged his shoulders, and lifted his eyebrows in pantomimic expression of his inability to comprehend such a sudden change in the atmosphere.

'You must promise to come and dine with me to-morrow,' continued the painter, accompanying his invitation with a smile, or rather a grin, for David's face was very much disfigured by a wen on his cheek, which also, by causing a twitching of the jaw, rendered his articulation indistinct.

'To my great regret, I am obliged to decline your invitation, my dear friend,' said Talma. 'This is my last night here, and I must set off for Paris to-morrow.'

'Set off to-morrow!'

'Positively. Michelet and Dumas have the whole management on their shoulders, and are pressing my return; and Lemercier is only waiting for me to read to us a sort of *Richard the Third*.'

'Nevertheless, you dine with me to-morrow. One day longer will not matter to them, and is a great matter to me. I suspect Lemercier's *Richard the Third* is cold enough to keep a little longer. I am to have my friend Girodet with me; so dine with us you must. It will make me grow young again, man, and bring back the happy meetings at Moliker's, near the gate of the Louvre.'

The illustrious exile accompanied this sentence with another of his grim smiles. The actor was deeply moved by it, for in that bitter smile he read how the artist pined for his country. 'I will stay with you, I will stay with you, dear David!' now eagerly cried Talma. 'For your sake, I will desert my post, and steal a holiday from my Paris friends; but it can only be on condition that you, too, will make a little sacrifice for me, and come this evening to see me in Leonidas.'

'Well, I don't care if I do,' answered the painter, whom the sight of one friend, and the expectation of seeing another, had made quite a different being from the David of the morning. 'Here goes for Leonidas; but, remember, I give you fair warning—I shall go to sleep. I have scarcely ever been in a theatre that I did not take a sound nap.'

'But when Talma plays, plaudits will keep you awake, M. David,' said the courtly M. Lesec; and this seasonable compliment obtained for him a smile, and an invitation for the next day, so flattering to his vanity that, even at the risk of compromising himself with the Prince of Orange, he unhesitatingly accepted.

That evening, between six and seven o'clock, the old French painter, a Baron of the Empire, entered the theatre in full dress, and with a new red ribbon in his button-hole; but, as if shrinking from notice, he took his seat at the back of the stage-box, reserved for him by his friend Talma, with M. Lesec by his side, prouder, more elated, more frizzled and befrilled, than if he had been appointed first-commissioner of finance. But notwithstanding all the care of the modest artist to preserve his incognito, it was soon whispered through the theatre that he was one of the audience; and it was not long before he was pointed out, when instantly the whole house stood up respectfully, and repeated cheers echoed from pit to vaulted roof. The prince himself was among the first to offer this tribute to the illustrious exile, who, confused, agitated, and scarcely able to restrain his tears, bowed to the audience rather awkwardly, as he whispered to M. Lesec: 'So, then, I am still remembered. I thought no one at Brussels cared whether I was dead or alive.'

Soon Talma appeared as Leonidas; and in his turn engrossed every eye, every thought of that vast assembly. A triple round of applause hailed every speech uttered by the generous Spartan. The painter of the Sabines, of Brutus, of the Horatii, of the Coronation, seemed to heed neither the noisy

acclamations nor the deep silence that succeeded each other. Mute, motionless, transfixed, he heard not the plaudits: it was not Talma he saw, not Talma he was listening to. He was at Thermopylæ by the side of Leonidas himself; ready to die with him and his three hundred heroes. Never had he been so deeply moved. He had talked of sleep, but he was as much alive, as eager, as animated, as if he were an actual sharer in the heroic devotedness that was the subject of the drama. For some moments after the curtain fell, he seemed equally absorbed; it was not till he was out of the theatre, and in the street, that he recovered sufficiently to speak; and then it was only to repeat every five minutes: 'What a noble talent it is! What a power he has had over me!'

A night of tranquil sleep, and dreams of bright happy days, closed an evening of such agreeable excitement to the poor exile; and so cheering was its effect upon him, that he was up the next morning before day, and his old servant, to her surprise, saw her usually gloomy and taciturn master looking almost gay while charging her to have breakfast ready, and to be sure that dinner was in every way befitting the honoured guests he expected.

'And are you going out, sir, and so early?' exclaimed the old woman; now, for the first time, perceiving that her master had his hat on and his cane in his hand.

'Yes, Dame Rebecca,' answered David, as he gained the outer gate. 'I have grown a great boy, and may be trusted to go alone.'

'But it is scarcely daylight yet. None of the shops are open.'

'I do not want to make any purchases.'

'Then, where in the world can you be going, sir, at this hour?'

'*Sacre bleu!*' returned the painter, losing all patience: 'could you not guess, you old fool, that I am going as far as the Flanders-gate to meet my old friend Girodet?'

'O that, indeed! But are you sure he will come that way? And did he tell you the exact time?'

'What matter, you old torment? Suppose I have to wait a few minutes for him, I can walk up and down, and it will be exercise for me, which, you know, Dr Fanchet has desired me to take. Go along in, and don't let the dinner be spoiled.' And the old man went on his way with an almost elastic step. Once more was he young, gay, happy. Was he not soon to see the friend dearer to him than all the world? But his eagerness had made him anticipate by two hours the usual time for the arrival of the diligence, and he was not made aware of his miscalculation till after he had been a good while pacing up and down the suburb leading to the Flanders-gate. The constant companion alike of his studio and his exile, his pipe, he had left behind him, forgotten in his hurry; so that he had no resource but to continue his solitary walk, the current of his happy thoughts flowing on, meanwhile, uninterrupted, save by an occasional greeting from labourers going to their work, or the countrywomen hastening, as much as their Flemish *embonpoint* would allow, to the city markets. When sauntering about alone, especially when waiting, we, like children, make the most of everything that can while away the time, or give even the semblance of being occupied: a flower-pot in a window, a parrot in a cage, nay, even an insect flying past, is an absolute gain to us. David felt it quite a fortunate chance when he suddenly caught sight of a sign-painter carrying on his work in the open air. Though evidently more of a whitewasher than a painter, yet, from the top of his ladder, he was flourishing his brush in a masterly style, and at times pausing and contemplating his work with as much complacency as Gros could have done his wonderful cupola of Sainte-Geneviève.

The painter of Napoleon passed the self-satisfied dauber twice, not without some admiring glances at the way in which he was plastering the background of his landscape with indigo, by way of making a sky. At top of the sign, now nearly finished, was traced, in large characters, 'Break of Day;' a precaution as indispensable to point out the artist's design, as the inscription, 'Dutch and Flemish Beer,' was to announce the articles dealt in by the owner of the house upon which this masterpiece was to figure.

'Here's a pretty fellow!' said the artist to himself; 'with as much knowledge of perspective as a carthorse; and yet, I doubt not, thinking himself a second Rubens. He brushes away as if he were

polishing a pair of boots. And what matter? Why should he not enjoy himself in his own way?' But when he passed the ladder for the third time, and saw a fresh layer of indigo putting over the first, his patience could hold out no longer, and he exclaimed, without stopping or even looking at the offender: 'There is too much blue!'

'Eh! Do you want anything, sir?' said the sign-painter; but he who had ventured the criticism was already at a distance.

Again, David passed by. Another glance at the 'Break of Day,' and another exclamation: 'Too much blue, you blockhead!' The insulted plasterer turned round to reconnoitre the speaker, and as if concluding, from his appearance, that he could be no very great connoisseur, he quietly set to work again, shrugging his shoulders in wonder how it could possibly be any business of his whether the sky was red, green, or blue. For the fourth time the unknown loungeur repeated his unwelcome criticism: 'Too much blue!'

The Brussels Wouvermans coloured, but said, in the subdued tone of a man wishing to conceal anger he cannot help feeling: 'The gentleman may not be aware that I am painting a sky.' By this time he had come down from the ladder, and was standing surveying his work with one eye closed, and at the proper distance from it to judge of its effect; and his look of evident exultation shewed that nothing could be more ill-timed than any depreciation of his labours.

'It is because I suppose you do want to paint a sky, that for that very reason I wished to give you this little piece of advice, and to tell you that there is too much blue in it.'

'And pray, Mr Amateur, when was there ever a sky seen without blue?'

'I am no amateur; but I tell you once more, that there is too much blue. And now do as you like; and if you do not think you have enough, you can put more.'

'This is entirely too bad!' cried the now exasperated sign-painter. 'You are an old fool, and know nothing of painting. I should like to see you make a sky without blue.'

'I do not say I am a good hand at a sky; but if I did set about it, there should be no blue.'

'A pretty job it would be!'

'It would look like something, at all events.'

'That is as much as to say mine is like nothing at all.'

'No indeed, for it is very like a dish of spinach, and very like a vile daub, or like anything else you please.'

'A dish of spinach! a vile daub!' cried the artist of Brabant in a rage. 'I, the pupil of Ruysdael—I, fourth cousin to Gerard Dow! and you pretend to know more of my art than I do—an art I have practised with such credit at Antwerp, Louvain, and Liege! A dish of spinach, indeed!' And by this time the fury of the insulted painter had increased to such a degree, that he seized David by the arm, and shaking him violently, added: 'Do you know, you old dotard, that my character has been long established? I have a red horse at Mechlin, a stag at Namur, and a Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle, that no one has ever seen without admiring!'

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