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Travels into several remote nations of the world

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Swift, Jonathan

London, 1726

Chap. II. The Author conducted by a Houyhnhnm to his House. The House described. The Author's Reception. The Food of the Houyhnhnms. The Author in distress for want of Meat, is at last relieved. His ...

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C H A P. II.

The Author conducted by a Houyhnhnm to his House. The House described. The Author's Reception. The Food of the Houyhnhnms. The Author in Distress for Want of Meat, is at last relieved. His Manner of feeding in this Country.

HAVING travelled about three Miles, we came to a long kind of Building, made of Timber, stuck in the Ground, and wattled across; the Roof was low, and covered with Straw. I now began to be a little comforted, and took out some Toys, which Travellers usually carry for Presents to the Savage *Indians* of *America* and other Parts,

Parts, in hopes the People of the House would be thereby encouraged to receive me kindly. The Horse made me a sign to go in first; it was a large Room with a smooth Clay Floor, and a Rack and Manger extending the whole length on one side. There were three Nags, and two Mares, not eating, but some of them sitting down upon their Hams, which I very much wondered at; but wondered more to see the rest employed in domestick Business. They seemed but ordinary Cattle, however, this confirmed my first Opinion, that a People who could so far civilize brute Animals, must needs excel in Wisdom all the Nations of the World. The Gray came in just after, and thereby prevented any ill Treatment, which the others might have given me. He neighed to them several times in a style of Authority, and received Answers.

BEYOND this Room there were three others, reaching the length of the House,

House, to which you passed through three Doors opposite to each other, in the manner of a Vista; we went through the second Room towards the third, here the Gray walked in first, beckoning me to attend: I waited in the second Room, and got ready my Presents, for the Master and Mistress of the House: They were two Knives, three Bracelets of false Pearl, a small Lookin-glass and a Bead Necklace. The Horse neighed three or four times, and I waited to hear some Answers in a human Voice, but I observed no other returns, than in the same Dialect, only one or two a little shriller than his. I began to think that this House must belong to some person of great Note among them, because there appeared so much Ceremony before I could gain Admittance. But, that a Man of Quality should be served all by Horses, was beyond my Comprehension. I feared my Brain was disturbed by my Sufferings and Misfortunes: I roused myself

self, and looked about me in the Room where I was left alone; this was furnished like the first, only after a more elegant manner. I rubbed my Eyes often, but the same Objects still occurred. I pinched my Arms and Sides, to awake myself, hoping I might be in a Dream. I then absolutely concluded, that all these Appearances could be nothing else but Necromancy and Magick. But I had no time to pursue these Reflections; for the grey Horse came to the door, and made me a sign to follow him into the third Room, where I saw a very comely Mare, together with a Colt and Fole, sitting upon their Haunches, upon Matts of straw, not unartfully made, and perfectly neat and clean.

THE Mare, soon after my Entrance, rose from her Matt, and coming up close, after having nicely observed my Hands and Face, gave me a most contemptuous Look; then turning to the Horse,

Horse, I heard the Word *Taboo* often repeated betwixt them ; the meaning of which word I could not then comprehend, although it were the first I had learned to pronounce ; but I was soon better informed, to my everlasting Mortification : For the Horse beckening to me with his Head, and repeating the word *Hbuun, Hbuun*, as he did upon the Road, which I understood was to attend him, led me out into a kind of Court, where was another Building at some distance from the House. Here we enter'd, and I saw three of these detestable Creatures, whom I first met after my landing, feeding upon Roots, and the flesh of some Animals, which I afterwards found to be that of Asses and Dogs, and now and then a Cow dead by Accident or Disease. They were all tyed by the Neck with strong Wyths, fastened to a Beam ; they held their Food between the claws of their Fore-feet, and tore it with their Teeth.

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THE Master Horse ordered a fore-
rel Nag, one of his Servants, to untie
the largest of these Animals, and take
him into the Yard. The Beast and I
were brought close together; and our
Countenances diligently compared, both
by Master and Servant, who thereupon
repeated several times the word *Tahoo*.
My Horror and Astonishment are not
to be described, when I observed, in
this abominable Animal, a perfect hu-
man Figure; the Face of it indeed
was flat and broad, the Nose depref-
fed, the Lips large, and the Mouth
wide. But these differences are com-
mon to all savage Nations, where the
Lineaments of the Countenance are di-
storted by the Natives suffering their
Infants to lie grovelling on the Earth,
or by carrying them on their backs,
nuzzling with their Face against the
Mother's Shoulders. The Fore-feet of
the *Tahoo* differed from my Hands in
nothing else but the length of the
nails,

nails, the coarseness and brownness of the Palms, and the hairiness on the Backs. There was the same resemblance between our Feet, with the same difference, which I knew very well, tho' the Horses did not, because of my Shoes and Stockings; the same in every part of our Bodies, except as to Hairiness and Colour, which I have already described.

THE great Difficulty that seemed to stick with the two Horses, was, to see the rest of my Body so very different from that of a *Tahoo*, for which I was obliged to my Cloaths, whereof they had no conception: The forrel Nag offered me a Root, which he held (after their manner, as we shall describe in its proper place) between his Hoof and Pastern; I took it in my Hand, and having smelt it, returned it to him again as civilly as I could. He brought out of the *Tahoo's* Kennel a piece of *As's* Flesh, but it smelt so offensively

that

that I turned from it with loathing; he then threw it to the *Yaboo*, by whom it was greedily devoured. He afterwards shewed me a Whisp of Hay, and a Fetlock full of Oats; but I shook my Head, to signify, that neither of these were Food for me. And indeed, I now apprehended, that I must absolutely starve, if I did not get to some of my own Species: For as to those filthy *Yaboos*, although there were few greater Lovers of Mankind at that time than myself; yet I confess I never saw any sensitive Being so detestable on all accounts; and the more I came near them, the more hateful they grew, while I staid in that Country. This the Master Horse observed by my Behaviour, and therefore sent the *Yaboo* back to his Kennel. He then put his Fore-hoof to his Mouth, at which I was much surprized, although he did it with Ease, and with a Motion that appeared perfectly natural, and made other signs to know what I would eat;

Vol. II.

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but I could not return him such an Answer as he was able to apprehend; and if he had understood me, I did not see how it was possible to contrive any way for finding myself Nourishment. While we were thus engaged, I observed a Cow passing by, whereupon I pointed to her, and expressed a Desire to let me go and milk her. This had its Effect; for he led me back into the House, and ordered a Mare-servant to open a Room, where a good store of Milk lay in earthen and wooden Vessels, after a very orderly and cleanly manner. She gave me a large Bowl full, of which I drank very heartily, and found myself well refreshed.

ABOUT Noon I saw coming towards the House a kind of Vehicle drawn like a Sledge, by four *Yaboo's*. There was in it an old Steed, who seemed to be of Quality, he alighted with his Hind-feet forward, having by Accident got a Hurt in his left Fore-foot. He came

to dine with our Horse, who received him with great Civility. They dined in the best Room, and had Oats boiled in Milk for the second Course, which the old Horse eat warm, but the rest cold. Their Mangers were placed circular in the middle of the Room, and divided into several Partitions, round which they sate on their Haunches upon Bosses of Straw. In the middle was a large Rack with Angles answering to every partition of the Manger. So that each Horse and Mare eat their own Hay, and their own Mash of Oats and Milk, with much Decency and Regularity. The Behaviour of the young Colt and Fole appeared very modest, and that of the Master and Mistres extremely chearful and complaisant to their Guest. The Gray ordered me to stand by him, and much Discourse passed between him and his Friend concerning me, as I found by the Stranger's often looking on me, and

the frequent Repetition of the Word
Taboo.

I HAPPENED to wear my Gloves, which the Master Gray observing, seemed perplexed, discovering signs of Wonder what I had done to my Fore-feet; he put his Hoof three or four times to them, as if he would signify, that I should reduce them to their former Shape, which I presently did, pulling off both my Gloves, and putting them into my Pocket. This occasioned farther Talk, and I saw the Company was pleased with my Behaviour, whereof I soon found the good Effects. I was ordered to speak the few Words I understood, and while they were at Dinner, the Master taught me the Names for Oats, Milk, Fire, Water, and some others; which I could readily pronounce after him, having from my Youth a great Facility in learning Languages.

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WHEN Dinner was done, the Master Horse took me aside, and by signs and Wonders made me understand the Concern that he was in, that I had nothing to eat. Oats in their Tongue are called *Hlunnb*. This Word I pronounced two or three times; for although I had refused them at first, yet upon second Thoughts I considered that I could contrive to make of them a kind of Bread, which might be sufficient with Milk, to keep me alive, till I could make my Escape to some other Country, and to Creatures of my own Species. The Horse immediately ordered a white Mare-servant of his Family to bring me a good Quantity of Oats in a sort of wooden Tray. These I heated before the Fire as well as I could, and rubbed them till the Husks came off, which I made a shift to winnow from the Grain; I ground and beat them between two Stones, then took Water, and made them into a Paste or Cake,

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which I toasted at the Fire, and eat warm with Milk. It was at first a very insipid Dyet, though common enough in many parts of *Europe*, but grew tolerable by Time; and having been often reduced to hard Fare in my life, this was not the first Experiment I had made how easily Nature is satisfied. And I cannot but observe, that I never had one hour's Sickness, while I staid in this Island. 'Tis true, I sometimes made a shift to catch a Rabbet, or Bird, by Springes made of *Tahoos* Hairs, and I often gathered wholesome Herbs, which I boiled, or eat as Salades with my Bread, and now and then, for a Rarity, I made a little Butter, and drank the Whey. I was at first at a great loss for Salt; but Custom soon reconciled the want of it; and I am confident that the frequent use of Salt among us, is an effect of Luxury, and was first introduced only as a Provocative to drink; except where it is necessary for preserving of Flesh in long Voyages,

Voyages, or in Places remote from great Markets. For we observe no Animal to be fond of it but Man: And as to myself, when I left this Country, it was a great while before I could endure the Taste of it in any thing that I eat.

THIS is enough to say upon the subject of my Dyet, wherewith other Travellers fill their Books, as if the Readers were personally concerned, whether we fare well or ill. However, it was necessary to mention this matter, lest the World should think it impossible that I could find Sustainance for three Years in such a Country, and among such Inhabitants.

WHEN it grew towards Evening, the Master Horse ordered a Place for me to lodge in; it was but six yards from the House, and separated from the Stable of the *Taboos*. Here I got some Straw, and covering myself with

my own Cloaths, slept very sound. But I was in a short Time better accommodated, as the Reader shall know hereafter, when I come to treat more particularly about my way of living.



CHAP.