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**Travels into several remote nations of the world**

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**Swift, Jonathan**

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Chap. IV. The Houyhnhnms Notion of Truth and Falshood. The Author's Discourse disapproved by his Master. The Author gives a more particular Account of himself, and the Accidents of his Voyage.

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CHAP. IV.

*The Houyhnhnms Notion of Truth and Falshood. The Author's Discourse disapproved by his Master. The Author gives a more particular Account of himself, and the Accidents of his Voyage.*

MY Master heard me with great appearances of Uneasiness in his Countenance, because *doubting or not believing*, are so little known in this Country, that the Inhabitants cannot tell how to behave themselves under such Circumstances. And I remember in frequent Discourses with my Master concerning the Nature of Manhood, in other Parts of the World, having occa-

sion to talk of *Lying*, and *false Representation*, it was with much Difficulty that he comprehended what I meant, although he had otherwise a most acute Judgment. For he argued thus: That the use of Speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive Information of Facts; now if any one said the *Thing which was not*, those Ends were defeated; because I cannot properly be said to understand him, and I am so far from receiving Information, that he leaves me worse than in Ignorance, for I am led to believe a *Thing black* when it is *white*, and *short* when it is *long*. And these were all the Notions he had concerning that Faculty of *Lying*, so perfectly well understood among human Creatures.

To return from this Digression; when I asserted that the *Fabos* were the only governing Animals in my Country, which my Master said was altogether past his Conception, he desired to

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know whether we had *Houyhnhnms* among us, and what was their Employment : I told him, we had great Numbers, that in Summer they grazed in the Fields, and in Winter were kept in houses, with Hay and Oats, when *Yahoo-Servants* were employed to rub their Skins smooth, comb their Manes, pick their Feet, serve them with Food, and make their Beds. I understand you well, said my Master, it is now very plain, from all you have spoken, that whatever share of Reason the *Yahoos* pretended to, the *Houyhnhnms* are your Masters ; I heartily wish our *Yahoos* would be so tractable. I begged his Honour would pleased to excuse me from proceeding any farther, because I was very certain that the Account he expected from me would be highly displeasing. But he insisted in commanding me to let him know the best and the worst : I told him, he should be obeyed. I owned, that the *Houyhnhnms* among us, whom we called

led Horses, were the most generous and comely Animal we had, that they excelled in strength and swiftness; and when they belonged to Persons of Quality, employed in travelling, racing, or drawing Chariots, they were treated with much Kindness and Care, till they fell into Diseases, or became foun-dred in the Feet; and then they were sold, and used to all kind of Drudgery till they died; after which their Skins were stripped and sold for what they were worth, and their Bodies left to be devoured by Dogs and Birds of prey. But the common race of Horses had not so good fortune, being kept by Farmers and Carriers and other mean People, who put them to greater la-bour, and feed them worse. I describ-ed as well as I could, our way of ri-ding, the shape and use of a Bridle, a Saddle, a Spur, and a Whip, of Harness and Wheels. I added, that we fastned Plates of a certain hard substance cal-led Iron at the bottom of their Feet,

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to preserve their Hoofs from being broken by the stony ways on which we often travelled.

My Master, after some Expressions of great Indignation, wondered how we dared to venture upon a *Houyhnhnm's* back, for he was sure, that the meanest Servant in his House would be able to shake off the strongest *Tahoo*, or by lying down, and rouling on his back, squeeze the Brute to death. I answered, That our Horses were trained up from three our four Years old to the several uses we intended them for; That if any of them proved intolerably vicious, they were employed for Carriages; that they were severely beaten while they were young, for any mischievous tricks: That the Males, designed for common use of Riding or Draught, were generally *castrated* about two Years after their birth, to take down their Spirits, and make them more tame and gentle; that they were indeed sensible

sible of Rewards and Punishments; but his Honour would please to consider, that they had not the least tincture of Reason any more than the *Tahoos* in this Country.

It put me to the pains of many Circumlocutions to give my Master a right Idea of what I spoke; for their Language doth not abound in variety of Words, because their Wants and Passions are fewer than among us. But it is impossible to repeat his noble Resentment at our savage Treatment of the *Houyhnhnm* race, particularly after I had explained the manner and use of *castrating* Horses among us, to hinder them from propagating their kind, and to render them more servile. He said, if it were possible there could be any Country where *Tahoos* alone were endued with Reason, they certainly must be the governing Animal, because Reason will in time always prevail against brutal Strength. But, considering the

the Frame of our Bodies, and especially of mine, he thought no Creature of equal Bulk was so ill contrived, for employing that Reason in the common Office of Life; whereupon he desired to know, whether those among whom I lived, resembled me or the *Tahoos* of his Country. I assured him, that I was as well shaped as most of my Age: but the younger and the Females were much more soft and tender, and the Skins of the latter generally as white as Milk. He said, I differed indeed from other *Tahoos*, being much more cleanly, and not altogether so deformed, but in point of real Advantage, he thought I differed for the worse. That my Nails were of no Use either to my fore or hinder-feet: As to my Fore-feet he could not properly call them by that Name, for he never observed me to walk upon them; that they were too soft to bear the Ground; that I generally went with them uncovered, neither was the Covering I sometimes wore

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on them, of the same Shape, or so strong as that on my Feet behind. That I could not walk with any Security, for if either of my Hinder-feet slipped, I must inevitably fall. He then began to find fault with other Parts of my Body, the Flatness of my Face, the Prominence of my Nose, mine Eyes placed directly in the Front, so that I could not look on either side without turning my Head: That I was not able to feed myself, without lifting my Fore-feet to my Mouth: And therefore Nature had placed those Joynts to answer that Necessity. He knew not what could be the Use of those several Clefts and Divisions in my Feet behind, that these were too soft to bear the Hardness and Sharpness of Stones without a Covering made from the Skin of some other Brute; that my whole Body wanted a Fence against Heat and Cold, which I was forced to put on and off every Day with Tedium and Trouble. And lastly, that he observed every Animal in

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this Country naturally to abhor the *Yahoos*, whom the Weaker avoided, and the Stronger drove from them. So that supposing us to have the Gift of Reason, he could not see how it were possible to cure that natural Antipathy which every Creature discovered against us; nor consequently, how we could tame, and render them serviceable. However, he would (as he said) debate the Matter no farther, because he was more desirous to know my own Story, the Country where I was born, and the several Actions and Events of my Life before I came hither.

I ASSURED him, how extremely desirous I was, that he should be satisfied in every Point; but I doubted much, whether it would be possible for me to explain myself on several Subjects whereof his Honour could have no Conception, because I saw nothing in his Country to which I could resemble them. That however, I would do my best,  
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and strive to express myself by Similitudes, humbly desiring his Assistance when I wanted proper Words; which he was pleased to promise me.

I SAID, my Birth was of honest Parents in an Island called *England*, which was remote from this Country, as many Days Journey as the strongest of his Honour's Servants could travel in the Annual Course of the Sun. That I was bred a Surgeon, whose Trade is to cure Wounds and Hurts in the Body, got by Accident or Violence; that my Country was governed by a Female Man, whom we called *Queen*. That I left it to get Riches, whereby I might maintain myself and Family when I should return. That in my last Voyage I was Commander of the Ship, and had about fifty *Tahoos* under me, many of which died at Sea, and I was forced to supply them by others picked out from several Nations. That our Ship was twice in Danger of being sunk; the first time by a great

a great Storm, and the second, by striking against a Rock. Here my Master interposed, by asking me, how I could persuade Strangers out of different Countries to venture with me, after the Losses I had sustained, and the Hazards I had run. I said, they were Fellows of desperate Fortunes forced to fly from the Places of their Birth, on account of their Poverty or their Crimes. Some were undone by Law-suits; others spent all they had in Drinking, Whoring and Gaming; others fled for Treason; many for Murder, Theft, Poysoning, Robbery, Perjury, Forgery, Coining false Money, for committing Rapes or Sodomy, for flying from their Colours, or deserting to the Enemy, and most of them had broken Prison; none of these durst return to their Native Countries for fear of being hanged, or of starving in a Jail; and therefore were under a necessity of seeking a Livelihood in other Places.

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DURING this Discourse, my Master was pleased to interrupt me several times; I had made use of many Circumlocutions in describing to him the nature of the several Crimes, for which most of our Crew had been forced to fly their Country. This Labour took up several Days Conversation before he was able to comprehend me. He was wholly at a Loss to know what could be the Use or Necessity of practising those Vices. To clear up which I endeavoured to give him some Ideas of the Desire of Power and Riches, of the terrible Effects of Lust, Intemperance, Malice and Envy. All this I was forced to define and describe by putting of Cases, and making of Suppositions. After which, like one whose Imagination was struck with something never seen or heard of before, he would lift up his Eyes with Amazement and Indignation. Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a thousand other Things

Things had no Terms, wherein that Language could express them, which made the Difficulty almost insuperable to give my Master any Conception of what I meant. But being of an excellent Understanding much improved by Contemplation and Converse, he at last arrived at a competent Knowledge of what humane Nature in our Parts of the World is capable to perform, and desired I would give him some particular Account of that Land, which we call *Europe*, but especially of my own Country.



CHAP.