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In Four Volumes

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Lucan.

THE *Americans* believe that all creatures have Souls, not only men and women, but brutes, vegetables, nay even the most inanimate things, as stocks and stones. They believe the same of all the works of art, as of knives, boats, looking-glasses: and that as any of these things perish, their Souls go into another world, which is inhabited by the Ghosts of men and women. For this reason they always place by the corpse of their dead friend a bow and arrows, that he may make use of the Souls of them in the other world, as he did of their wooden bodies in this. How absurd soever such an opinion as this may appear, our *European* Philosophers have maintained several notions altogether as improbable. Some of *Plato's* followers in particular, when they talk of the world of ideas, entertain us with substances and beings no less extravagant and chimerical. Many *Aristotelians* have likewise spoken as unintelligibly of their substantial forms. I shall only instance *Albertus Magnus*, who in his dissertation upon the loadstone observing that fire will destroy its magnetick virtues, tells us that he took particular notice of one as it lay glowing amidst an heap of burning coals, and that he perceived a certain blue vapour to arise from it, which he believed might be the *substantial Form*, that is, in our *West-Indian* phrase, the *Soul* of the load-stone.

There is a tradition among the *Americans*, that one of their countrymen descended in a vision to the great repository of Souls, or, as we call it here, to the other world; and that upon his return he gave his friends a distinct account of every thing he saw among those regions of the dead. A friend of mine, whom I have formerly mentioned, prevailed upon one of the interpreters of the *Indian* Kings, to enquire of them, if possible, what tradition they have among them of this matter: which, as well as he could learn by those many questions which he asked them at several times, was in substance as follows.

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The Visionary, whose name was *Marraton*, after having travelled for a long space under an hollow mountain, arrived at length on the confines of this world of Spirits; but could not enter it by reason of a thick forest made up of bushes, brambles, and pointed thorns, so perplexed and interwoven with one another, that it was impossible to find a passage through it. Whilst he was looking about for some track or path-way that might be worn in any part of it, he saw an huge Lion couched under the side of it, who kept his eye upon him in the same posture as when he watches for his prey. The *Indian* immediately started back, whilst the Lion rose with a spring, and leaped towards him. Being wholly destitute of all other weapons, he stooped down to take up an huge stone in his hand; but to his infinite surprize grasped nothing, and found the supposed stone to be only the apparition of one. If he was disappointed on this side, he was as much pleased on the other, when he found the Lion, which had seized on his left shoulder, had no power to hurt him and was only the Ghost of that ravenous creature which it appeared to be. He no sooner got rid of his impotent enemy, but he marched up to the wood, and after having surveyed it for some time, endeavoured to press into one part of it that was a little thinner than the rest; when again, to his great surprize, he found the bushes made no resistance, but that he walked through briars and brambles with the same ease as through the open air; and, in short, that the whole wood was nothing else but a wood of Shades. He immediately concluded, that this huge thicket of thorns and brakes was designed as a kind of fence or quick-set hedge to the Ghosts it inclosed; and that probably their soft substances might be torn by these subtle points and prickles, which were too weak to make any impressions in flesh and blood. With this thought he resolved to travel through this intricate wood; when by degrees he felt a gale of perfumes breathing upon him, that grew stronger and sweeter in proportion as he advanced. He had not proceeded much further when he observed the thorns and briars to end, and give place to a thousand beautiful green trees covered with blossoms of the finest scents and colours, that formed a wilderness of sweets, and were a kind of lining to those ragged scenes which he had before passed through. As he was coming out of this delightful part of the wood, and entering upon the plains it inclosed, he saw several horsemen rushing by him, and a little while after heard the cry of a pack of dogs. He had not listned long before he saw the apparition of a milk-white steed, with a young man on the back of it, advancing upon full stretch after the Souls of about an hundred beagles that were hunting

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down the ghost of an hare, which ran away before them with an unspeakable swiftness. As the man on the milk-white steed came by him, he looked upon him very attentively, and found him to be the young Prince *Nicharagua*, who died about half a year before, and, by reason of his great virtues, was at that time lamented over all the western parts of *America*.

He had no sooner got out of the wood, but he was entertained with such a landskip of flowry plains, green meadows, running streams, sunny hills, and shady vales, as were not to be represented by his own expressions, nor, as he said, by the conceptions of others. This happy region was peopled with innumerable swarms of Spirits, who applied themselves to exercises and diversions according as their fancies led them. Some of them were tossing the figure of a coit; others were pitching the shadow of a bar; others were breaking the apparition of a horse; and multitudes employing themselves upon ingenious handicrafts with the Souls of *departed Utensils*; for that is the name which in the *Indian* language they give their tools when they are burnt or broken. As he travelled through this delightful scene, he was very often tempted to pluck the flowers that rose every where about him in the greatest variety and profusion, having never seen several of them in his own country: but he quickly found that though they were objects of his sight, they were not liable to his touch. He at length came to the side of a great river, and being a good fisherman himself, stood upon the banks of it some time to look upon an Angler that had taken a great many shapes of fishes, which lay flouncing up and down by him.

I should have told my Reader, that this *Indian* had been formerly married to one of the greatest beauties of his country, by whom he had several children. This couple were so famous for their love and constancy to one another, that the *Indians* to this day, when they give a married man joy of his wife, wish that they may live together like *Marraton* and *Yaratilda*. *Marraton* had not stood long by the fisherman when he saw the shadow of his beloved *Yaratilda*, who had for some time fixed her eye upon him, before he discovered her. Her arms were stretched out towards him, floods of tears ran down her eyes; her looks, her hands, her voice called him over to her; and at the same time seemed to tell him that the river was unpassable. Who can describe the passion made up of joy, sorrow, love, desire, astonishment, that rose in the *Indian* upon the sight of his dear *Yaratilda*? he could express it by nothing but his tears, which ran like a river down his cheeks as he looked upon her. He had

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not stood in this posture long, before he plunged into the stream that lay before him; and finding it to be nothing but the phantom of a river, stalked on the bottom of it till he arose on the other side. At his approach *Taratilda* flew into his arms, whilst *Marraton* wished himself disencumbered of that body which kept her from his embraces. After many questions and endearments on both sides, she conducted him to a bower which she had dressed with her own hands with all the ornaments that could be met with in those blooming regions. She had made it gay beyond imagination, and was every day adding something new to it. As *Marraton* stood astonished at the unspeakable beauty of her habitation, and ravished with the fragrancy that came from every part of it, *Taratilda* told him that she was preparing this bower for his reception, as well knowing that his piety to his God, and his faithful dealing towards men, would certainly bring him to that happy place, whenever his life should be at an end. She then brought two of her children to him, who died some years before, and resided with her in the same delightful bower; advising him to breed up those others which were still with him in such a manner, that they might hereafter all of them meet together in this happy place.

This tradition tells us further, that he had afterwards a sight of those dismal habitations which are the portion of ill men after death; and mentions several molten seas of gold, in which were plunged the Souls of barbarous *Europeans*, who put to the sword so many thousands of poor *Indians* for the sake of that precious metal: But having already touched upon the chief points of this tradition, and exceeded the measure of my paper, I shall not give any further account of it.



Saturday,