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TOMLINSONIANA

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Tomlinsoniana

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton
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TOMLINSONIANA

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

**OR, THE POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS OF THE CELEBRATED AUGUSTUS
TOMLINSON, PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF – ADDRESSED TO HIS PUPILS, AND COMPRISING**

INTRODUCTION

Having lately been travelling in Germany, I spent some time at that University in which Augustus Tomlinson presided as Professor of Moral Philosophy. I found that that great man died, after a lingering illness, in the beginning of the year 1822, perfectly resigned to his fate, and conversing, even on his deathbed, on the divine mysteries of Ethical Philosophy. Notwithstanding the little peccadilloes to which I have alluded in the latter pages of “Paul Clifford,” and which his pupils deemed it advisable to hide from—

“The gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day,”

his memory was still held in a tender veneration. Perhaps, as in the case of the illustrious Burns, the faults of a great man endear to you his genius. In his latter days the PROFESSOR was accustomed to wear a light-green silk dressing-gown, and, as he was perfectly bald, a little black velvet cap; his small-clothes were pepper and salt. These interesting facts I learned from one of his pupils. His old age was consumed in lectures, in conversation, and in the composition of the little *morceaux* of wisdom we present to the public. In these essays and maxims, short as they are, he seems to have concentrated the wisdom of his industrious and honourable life. With great difficulty I procured from his executors the manuscripts which were then preparing for the German press. A valuable consideration induced those gentlemen to become philanthropic, and to consider the inestimable blessings they would confer upon this country by suffering me to give the following essays to the light, in their native and English dress, on the same day whereon they appear in Germany in the graces of foreign disguise.

At an age when, while Hypocrisy stalks, simpers, sidles, struts, and hobbles through the country, Truth also begins to watch her adversary in every movement, I cannot but think these lessons of Augustus Tomlinson peculiarly well-timed. I add them as a fitting Appendix to a Novel that may not inappropriately be termed a Treatise on Social Frauds; and if they contain within them that evidence of diligent attention and that principle of good in which the satire of Vice is only the germ of its detection, they may not, perchance, pass wholly unnoticed; nor be even condemned to that hasty reading in which the Indifference of to-day is but the prelude to the Forgetfulness of to-morrow.

MAXIMS ON THE POPULAR ART OF CHEATING,

ILLUSTRATED BY TEN CHARACTERS;

**BEING AN INTRODUCTION TO THAT NOBLE SCIENCE
BY WHICH EVERY MAN MAY BECOME HIS OWN ROGUE**

Set a thief to catch a thief.—Proverb.

I

Whenever you are about to utter something astonishingly false, always begin with, “It is an acknowledged fact,” etc. Sir Robert Filmer was a master of this method of writing. Thus, with what a solemn face that great man attempted to cheat! “It is a truth undeniable that there cannot be any multitude of men whatsoever, either great or small, etc., but that in the same multitude there is one man amongst them that in nature hath a right to be King of all the rest,—as being the next heir to Adam!”

II

When you want something from the public, throw the blame of the asking on the most sacred principle you can find. A common beggar can read you exquisite lessons on this the most important maxim in the art of popular cheating. “For the love of God, sir, a penny!”

III

Whenever on any matter, moral, sentimental, or political, you find yourself utterly ignorant, talk immediately of “The Laws of Nature.” As those laws are written nowhere,—[Locke]—they are known by nobody. Should any ask you how you happen to know such or such a doctrine as the dictate of Nature, clap your hand to your heart and say, “Here!”

IV

Yield to a man’s tastes, and he will yield to your interest.

V

When you talk to the half-wise, twaddle; when you talk to the ignorant, brag; when you talk to the sagacious, look very humble, and ask their opinion.

VI

Always bear in mind, my beloved pupils, that the means of livelihood depend not on the virtues, but the vices of others. The lawyer, the statesman, the hangman, the physician, are paid by our sins; nay, even the commoner professions—the tailor, the coachmaker, the upholsterer, the wine-merchant—draw their fortunes, if not their existence, from those smaller vices, our foibles. Vanity is the figure prefixed to the ciphers of Necessity. Wherefore, oh my beloved pupils! never mind what a man's virtues are; waste no time in learning them. Fasten at once on his infirmities. Do to the One as, were you an honest man, you would do to the Many. This is the way to be a rogue individually, as a lawyer is a rogue professionally. Knaves are like critics,—[Nullum simile est quod idem.—EDITOR.]—“flies that feed on the sore part, and would have nothing to live on were the body in health.”—[Tatler].

VII

Every man finds it desirable to have tears in his eyes at times,—one has a sympathy with humid lids. Providence hath beneficially provided for this want, and given to every man, in its divine forethought, misfortunes painful to recall. Hence, probably, those human calamities which the atheist rails against! Wherefore, when you are uttering some affecting sentiment to your intended dupe, think of the greatest misfortune you ever had in your life; habit will soon make the association of tears and that melancholy remembrance constantly felicitous. I knew, my dear pupils, a most intelligent Frenchman, who obtained a charming legacy from an old poet by repeating the bard's verses with streaming eyes. “How were you able to weep at will?” asked I (I was young then, my pupils). “Je pensois,” answered he, “a mon pauvre pere, qui est mort.” The union of sentiment with the ability of swindling made that Frenchman a most fascinating creature!

VIII

Never commit the error of the over-shrewd, and deem human nature worse than it is. Human nature is so damnably good that if it were not for human art, we knaves could not live. The primary elements of a man's mind do not sustain us; it is what he owes to “the pains taken with his education,” and “the blessings of civilized society!”

IX

Whenever you doubt, my pupils, whether your man be a quack or not, decide the point by seeing if your man be a positive asserter. Nothing indicates imposture like confidence. Volney saith well, “that the most celebrated of charlatans—[Mahomet]—and the boldest of tyrants begins his extraordinary tissue of lies by these words, “There is no doubt in this book!””

X

There is one way of cheating people peculiar to the British Isles, and which, my pupils, I earnestly recommend you to import hither,—cheating by subscription. People like to be plundered in company; dupery then grows into the spirit of party. Thus one quack very gravely requested persons to fit up a ship for him and send him round the world as its captain to make discoveries; and another patriotically suggested that L10,000 should be subscribed—for what?—to place him in parliament! Neither of these fellows could have screwed an individual out of a shilling had he asked him for it in

a corner; but a printed list, with “His Royal Highness” at the top, plays the devil with English guineas. A subscription for individuals may be considered a society for the ostentatious encouragement of idleness, impudence, beggary, imposture, and other public virtues!

XI

Whenever you read the life of a great man, I mean a man eminently successful, you will perceive all the qualities given to him are the qualities necessary even to a mediocre rogue. “He possessed,” saith the biographer, “the greatest address [namely, the faculty of wheedling]; the most admirable courage [namely, the faculty of bullying]; the most noble fortitude [namely, the faculty of bearing to be bullied]; the most singular versatility [namely, the faculty of saying one thing to one man, and its reverse to another]; and the most wonderful command over the mind of his contemporaries [namely, the faculty of victimizing their purses or seducing their actions].” Wherefore, if luck cast you in humble life, assiduously study the biographies of the great, in order to accomplish you as a rogue; if in the more elevated range of society, be thoroughly versed in the lives of the roguish: so shall you fit yourself to be eminent!

XII

The hypocrisy of virtue, my beloved pupils, is a little out of fashion nowadays; it is sometimes better to affect the hypocrisy of vice. Appear generously profligate, and swear with a hearty face that you do not pretend to be better than the generality of your neighbours. Sincerity is not less a covering than lying; a frieze great-coat wraps you as well as a Spanish cloak.

XIII

When you are about to execute some great plan, and to defraud a number of persons, let the first one or two of the allotted number be the cleverest, shrewdest fellows you can find. You have then a reference that will alone dupe the rest of the world. “That Mr. Lynx is satisfied,” will amply suffice to satisfy Mr. Mole of the honesty of your intentions! Nor are shrewd men the hardest to take in; they rely on their strength: invulnerable heroes are necessarily the bravest. Talk to them in a business-like manner, and refer your design at once to their lawyer. My friend John Shamberry was a model in this grand stroke of art. He swindled twelve people to the tune of some thousands, with no other trouble than it first cost him to swindle—whom do you think?—the Secretary to the Society for the Suppression of Swindling!

XIV

Divide your arts into two classes,—those which cost you little labour, those which cost much. The first,—flattery, attention, answering letters by return of post, walking across a street to oblige the man you intend to ruin; all these you must never neglect. The least man is worth gaining at a small cost. And besides, while you are serving yourself, you are also obtaining the character of civility, diligence, and good-nature. But the arts which cost you much labour—a long subservience to one testy individual; aping the semblance of a virtue, a quality, or a branch of learning which you do not possess, to a person difficult to blind,—all these never begin except for great ends, worth not only the loss of time, but the chance of detection. Great pains for small gains is the maxim of the miser. The rogue should have more *grandeur d’ame!*

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