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THE LEARNED PIG

1786

Anecdotes of the Learned Pig, with Notes, critical and explanatory, and Illustrations, By James Boswell, 1740-1795 and Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1741-1821.

ANECDOTES
OF THE
LEARNED PIG.

WITH
NOTES,
CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY,
AND
ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BOZZY, PIOZZI, &c. &c.

Epicuri de grege porcus.

LONDON:
Printed for T. HOOKHAM, New Bond Street.
M, DCC, LXXXVI.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor is indebted to mere accident for his acquaintance with the following sprightly performance; and, as it seemed to have been the Author's intention to have written notes, from several detached papers having reference to the text, the Editor has taken the liberty to introduce them as such, and add some trifling references by way of proof or illustration, which he hopes may not be deemed impertinent.

May 12, 1786.

A N E C D O T E S

OF THE

L E A R N E D P I G * .

THE great and learned Pig, of which it is our hap to speak, was produced in a sty belonging to an old Tory, bookfeller, in † *Moorfields*. At that time *Moorfields* was distinguished by rails which ‡ fluttered with party writings and libels of every sort; and it is remarkable that his mother, during her pregnancy, tore down from those rails, and fairly devoured one whole volume of *Filmer* and all *Sacheverell's* sermons at a meal; after which she was observed to grunt more and louder, and to lie longer in the sun, and deeper in the mire, than it had before been her custom to do. She was delivered of our Pig on the morning of the *tenth of June*. He was strong and bony, but of an inelegant form, and betrayed a very uncommon roughness in his squeak; and it was soon after remarked by the neighbours, that his trottings after his mother were made in § zig-zags, and not in straight lines as is usual with other pigs. After his mother, however, he resolutely trotted, and one morning, as ill fortune would have it, into a garden which had belonged to the great *Milton*, and was now in the possession of one of his daughters. Here he fed voraciously upon *white roses*, whilst his lady mother was busily employed in rooting up all the *red ones*. He was in this place seized by the owner, and so severely whipped, that he thought no other than that she was whipping him to death in preparation for a luxurious meal. Of this whipping he retained through life the highest repentment, and bore ever after the most inveterate hatred of the whole *Miltonic line*. On the fifth of November following he was taken up, without any warrant, by the rabble, for the uses of a *Whig feast*, and was very near being *roasted* at the same fire with the *Pope*, the *Devil*, and the *Pretender*; but this being discovered to be something *measly*, he was turned loose to be cured, as they deridingly said, by the ◊ *royal touch*. Of this event he retained the strongest sensibility, and considered ever after his fellow sufferers, the *Pope* and the *Pretender*, with great complacency, if not affection; but as to the other *party*, though exposed to the same

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difhonours, there was something in his horns and his tail which he could never be brought to endure. The touch already mentioned, though profanely sneered at by the *Whig rabble*, was soon afterwards in good earnest applied; but so great an obliquity of head had by this time taken place, that it could never be perfectly restored. Upon this memorable occasion there was placed about his neck a ribband of *true blue*, to which hung a silver coin, displaying royal lineaments of the *Stuart line*, making so strong an impression on his young fancy, that for that line he ever after retained the most # passionate regard. Thus decorated, he considered himself, and was considered by others, as a kind of ♦ *Tantony*, or *St. Anthony's Pig*, belonging to the Crown. Not long after this period he was heard one morning as he lay in the sun to grunt forth, portentously the following rhymes:

Gruntledum, gruntledum, gruntledum, squeak,
 I hope very soon to be able to speak;
 Through my griftly proboscis, I find, that I can
 Already cry *Ay* like a Parliament man:
 Like a maid I squeak, like a lover can whine,
 And snort like an Alderman laden with wine.
 Gruntledum, gruntledum, gruntledum, squeak,
 I hope very soon to be able to speak.

* "He was not at all offended, when, comparing all our acquaintance to some animal or other, we pitched upon the elephant for his resemblance, adding, that the proboscis of that creature was like his mind most exactly, strong to buffet even the tyger, and pliable to pick up even the pin."—Piozzi, p. 205.—N.B. For elephant our author probably read *pig*.

† We have sought for information concerning this fact, that the gentleman designated in the text was born in *Moorfields*, or that his father was a bookfeller there, which, however, we confess to have heard, but when or where we can by no means remember.

‡
 Cloath spice, line trunks, or flutt'ring in a row,
 Befringe the rails of *Bedlam* or *Soho*.

POPE'S IM. OF HORACE, Ep. I. B. 2.

§ "When in company where he was not free, or when engaged earnestly in conversation, he never gave way to such habits, which proves that they were not involuntary." I still, however, think, that these gestures were involuntary; for surely had not that been the case, he would have refrained them in the public streets.—Boswell's Tour, p. 9.

◇ The pretence of a miraculous power in the cure of the evil was the most extraordinary strain of that King-craft of which James the First so loudly boasted. No manly man, under the circumstances of the case, would have set up this pretence, or have expected any effect from it but that of public derision and contempt; but weak and credulous men take, perhaps, the best measure of human weakness and credulity, and so deep did this fraud strike its roots, that, authenticated as it was by the clergy, and annually certified by the surgeons and physicians of the royal household, it survived the civil war, was restored with Charles the Second, extended beyond the revolution, and was only extinguished by the act of settlement, which, taking the principles of the British government out of the clouds, placed them on the firm basis of the earth. The pretensions of Alexander were of a bolder and

more rational fort, and held to be fo important, that his fucceffors, who had no kindred intereft in the horns of Ammon, yet mingled them in their crowns and tiaras, till at laft the Roman Titans tumbled from their feats one after another thefe fictitious gods. The moft deceitful glimmer of divine claim feems to have had more influence on the mind of the perfon who feems to have been defignated in the text, than the moft folid principles of political right.

“I mentioned Lord Hailes as a man of anecdote—He was not pleafed with him for publifhing only fuch memorials as were unfavourable for the *Stuart* family.”—Bofwell’s Tour, p. 312.

◆ Tantony pigs were pigs who belonged formerly to the Convent of St. Anthony in the city. Collars were placed about their necks, infcribed *St. Anthony*. They fed all over the town, and out of refpect to the fathers of that convent, it was ufual for the paffengers to give them biscuits, and other things carried for that purpofe in their pockets. The pigs of courfe followed the paffengers in this expectation; and hence came the expreffion of one perfon’s following another like a Tantony pig.

This being publicly known, the neighbours now put on him a human coat, in which condition he appeared as if the *Hog in armour* had defcended from his fig-n-poft to mingle in fociety, and converfe with man. Nor did they ftop here, but ventured alfo to recommend him for a penfion to the great *minifterial hog*, though, for the prefent, however, without effect; for though it was evident enough that our learned Pig could fay *Ay*, yet it did not follow that he would be always difpofed to do fo. He was therefore turned loofe into the foil of this great town to fubfift as he could, where, *idling* and *rambling*, he picked up fometimes flowers, and fometimes thiftles, a great number of Greek and Hebrew roots, with an immenfe quantity of verbage of every fort *. It is for his honour that he routed in this rich compoft for years without giving any offence, except that, through refentment to the Miltonic line, he affociated rather too long with a very obfcene animal of the pig kind, called a † *Lauder*; and except, that he was taken fometimes with ftrange freaks, and fancied once that he faw fomething in the ‡ fhape of a found of a knocking; and excepting alfo his too fonorous gruntulations, and that long concatenation of foapy bubbles which ufually frothed from his mouth §. In the midft of thefe refearches he had one morning the good fortune to throw up this fentiment in rhyme:

Say, what is a Tory? A Tory is he
Who thinks kicking fhould pafs through every degree;
And that all political motion fhould go
From the toe to the bum, from the bum to the toe.
Then what is a ◇ Whig? A dog full of knavery,
A rafcal, a fcoundrel impatient of flavery,
A malignant, a thief;—then tell me if Whig
Be any more better than gruntledum pig?

* The perfon here defigned is allowed by the courtesy of the times to poffefs a nervous and elegant ftile; but fo unhappy is the writer of this note, that he

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can by no means concur in the general praise. He has a notion of Saxon simplicity, from which all departure, not enforced by necessity, and regulated by taste, assimilating, as much as may be, foreign words to the genius of the Saxon tongue, is to him intolerable. But the writer here spoken of was wholly deficient in taste, and appears to refer his English to some foreign standard chanting forth polysyllables, and tiring the ear with dull returns of the same cadences, for ever advancing like a post horse, two up and two down, and incapable of changing his pace, without throwing both himself and his rider in the dirt. But hack writers, like hack horses, find it for their ease to practise an uniform rate.

† *There is*, says a remarker on the life of Milton, *a high degree of prepollent probability that the letter in the Gentleman's Magazine for the month of August 1747, page 363 and 364, signed William Lauder, came from the amicable hand of the writer of that life.* I do not, however, believe that the writer of Milton's life was in the secret of Lauder's forgeries, the fact itself being of so extraordinary a nature, that it is not probable that any two persons, separately capable of committing it, should so fortuitously meet together; yet such was his malevolence towards Milton, that we must admit it to have greatly clouded his understanding. He undoubtedly wrote the preface and the postscript to Lauder's publication: in allusion to which, Doctor Douglas says, *that 'tis hoped, nay 'tis expected, that the the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out author of Lauder's preface and postscript, will no longer allow one to plume himself with his feathers, who appears so little to have deserved his assistance.* Lauder confesses his guilt in a letter to Doctor Douglas, and takes all the obloquy on himself; but in a subsequent letter he declares, that the penitential one was written for him by that very gentleman, who has since written the life of Milton, and makes some complaints of a breach of friendship, *in which he had placed the most implicit and unlimited confidence;* but as he never charged, that I know of, the writer of Milton's life with any participation in the forgery, we impute to him nothing but a strange malignity which darkened his understanding. It must be owned, however, that he cut off the wreck of Lauder with great management, as well as competent success. I remember that he boasts in his life of Milton of his having written a prologue to the Comus of Milton, for the benefit of one of his grand daughters. This, I suppose, he would pass for his benevolence; but he must excuse me; I am not so much the dupe of charity as to believe, that he who so brutally calumniates Milton, his father, mother, uncles, wives, and children, *and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line,* would be moved by any charitable disposition towards any descendant of Milton's, as being such. The fact, I believe, is, that, finding Milton reduced by the labours of his friend Lauder to a level with his wishes, he practised, in concurrence with Mr. Lauder, one further act of malice, and endeavoured to fix an obligation on Milton in the person of his granddaughter, conferred by his most inveterate foes as the effect of fatiated vengeance, converted into mingled pity and contempt. If there is any harshness in this note, let it be remembered, that it speaks of a man who, in the instance mentioned, let loose the most outrageous malignity against one, who, whatever political errors he might have imbibed in common with a great majority of the nation, was, however, as a private man, of so exemplary a virtue, as to do the highest honour to literary pursuit, and whose genius, as a poet, conferred celebrity on the nation itself, and in whose protection therefore we ought to have taken a greater share.

‡ The history of this knocking is curious; it forms such a drama of comedy, tragedy, and farce, from its first commencement in Cock Lane, passing through the solemn vaults of Clerkenwell, and then to Westminster Hall, as, I believe, never was exhibited in any other country; a drama wherein childishness and age, gravity, dignities, folly, fraud, superstition, and credulity, were all largely and confusedly thrown in to thicken the plot. That the person here designated should carry out of this scene any respectability of character, is a proof that either he must have possessed great intrinsic worth,

who could bear such large deductions, or that public opinion has ceased to be the test of merit, if any base metal can in this manner pass current for gold.

§ Our biographer should have told us also, that once he joined the train of fancy, and passing the limits of fact, entered by the Shakespearean gate into fairy land. But in an evil hour, "No favouring Sybil marked the devious way." Never was man or pig so astounded! and no wonder. He had stumbled unaccountably on the creations of sensibility, and found no corresponding emotions within; yet, unconscious of defect, he pretended a knowledge of the country, and even offered himself as an unerring guide; but not long; for, tired with the maze, he gave way, at length, to new adventurers, and fled as another Gulliver out of Lilliput, where he had only encumbered the land.

◇ "No man, however, was more jealously attached to his party; he not only loved a man the better, if he hated a *Whig*. Dear Bathurst, said he to me one day, was a man to my very heart's content; he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a *Whig*; he was a very good hater."—Piozzi's Memoirs, p. 83.

"*Pulteney* was as paltry a fellow as could be. He was a *Whig*, who pretended to be honest; and you know it is ridiculous for a *Whig* to pretend to be honest." Boswell's Journal, p. 424.

Talking of Granger—"The dog is a *Whig*: I do not like much to see a *Whig* in any dress; but I hate to see a *Whig* in a parson's gown."—*Ibid.* p. 312.

There needed no more; a pension was immediately hung about his neck, and the letters L. L. D. soon afterwards impressed on his rump *. And now who but our Pig? lying in the sun, cheek by jowl, by the great ministerial Hog, routing in the political foil, and throwing up daily the most delicious pig-nuts with his snout; nor did these discoveries rest wholly in himself; for the great Hog would sometimes let fall, from behind, certain rich, but often crude and ill-digested, materials, which were taken up in the Westphalian mode by our Pig, and delivered again better concocted to the many-headed beast: and hence we were taught, that Taxation was no Tyranny, and that a good American war was a very commodious and salutary thing. Great applause ensued, but not unattended with envy, there being at the time many snarlers who have said, and now say, that it were better if our Pig had been, before this period, well soured in the pickling tub, and that even the great ministerial Hog himself had been hung up for bacon. I decide nothing on these brawls; yet, having respect to a certain supposed dignity in our Pig, it may, perhaps, excite some wonder, that he, whose politics were of no older a date than his pension, and who had hitherto never routed out of the moral track, should all at once lend himself out in this manner, and make his conscience responsible for measures, of the principles or effects of which he must have been so incompetent a judge. But I answer in few words, that, like all other politicians, he had his propensities; that it was, perhaps, the nature of the animal, and that mingling his humours and his reason together, there might have been a competent sincerity in the case. But what shall we say to the indecency of his turning up the graves of *Pope* and † *Swift*, (for I speak not now of Milton) and goring them, Tories as they were, with so malicious a tooth? I answer, first, that they were not Tories. *Pope* placed

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his glory in moderation; and *Swift* was the renegade of one party, without being the convert of the other. But it was not *Whig* or *Tory*, I believe, which now moved our Pig: there are other instinctive enmities in the world. These men of real genius were satirists by profession, and the natural enemies of Pigf—"The fewer still I name," says Pope, "I hurt the more."—"Bond is but one, but Balaam is a score;" and again, "An hundred smart in *Timon* and in *Balaam*." And I believe that our Pig smarted in *Bentley*, *Tibbald*, and possibly in many others; the storm had but just patted before him, and he heard the arrowy shower still rattle in his ear, and was conscious, perhaps, that had he come forth a day sooner, he would have been placed in a distinguished, but, to him, a very unpleasant, niche in the Dunciad of *Pope*,

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"Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
"And the sad burden of some merry song."

* Our author dashes away from thing to thing with very little method or order. He might, however, have touched on the occupation of a schoolmaster, so honourable for a *pig*; in proof of which, we could have furnished him with the following document:

"At Edial, near Litchfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages by Samuel Johnson."

ADVERTISEMENT IN THE GENT. MAG. 1736, p. 428.

† "He seemed to me to have an unaccountable prejudice against Swift; for I once took the liberty to ask him, if Swift had personally offended him; and he told me, he had not."—Boswell's Tour, p. 38.

Where he insults therefore the mighty dead, his rage is at least natural; and when, to wound *Pope*, he suborns the tongue of a * kitchen wench, he preserves, however, a nice proportion between his end and his means, doing, with very singular propriety, the basest thing in, what must be allowed to be, the lowest way. But we abstain, we affect not gravity, we even forget his almost felonious attack upon Milton, and proceed. We have already noted the facility with which our learned Pig could say *Ay*. It was a great accomplishment; but he had also his defects. † No art, no instruction could ever bring him to make a tolerable bow, or indeed to practice any civil grimace whatever; and his highest approach, in this way, towards humanity, never went farther than to entitle him, from the most exquisite judge, to the character of a very *respectable Hottentot*: and hence he became at last to be considered as a very great ‡ *Bore*; under which disgrace he retired to a brewery in the Borough.—Happy retirement! for here he was fed with the freshest grains by the fair hand of a lady, who condescended to become the priestess of our Pig; a lady who had acquired the Greek language without losing her own, and whose manners and latinity were both equally pure. How great therefore must have been his grief, when he afterwards saw his fair provider melt away into the arms of a soft, but doubtless finewy Signor, and bathe herself, as it is yet her

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fortune to do, in the voluptuous warmths of Italy. But her's, however be the praise, that, composed of gentle passions, she conscientiously sacrificed, at thirty-eight, fortune, freedom, and England, only to legalize her delights. Never in any future period may she be repentant of her choice, but always find in the joys of harmony a compensation for the decays of love. From the fair hand of this lady our Pig was not only fed with the finest grains, but with the choicest green peas also, the earliest of the year—delicious food, as he himself confesses—for a § *Pig*. By her too was prepared for him the most inviting draff, which he swilled up at all hours with huge avidity and delight. But the lady had her humours; she grew tired of one thing, and fond of another; she sought, upon pressing inducements, the great rendezvous of Bath; and so the joys of the brewery had an end. Many were of opinion, (for who can please all,) that a certain distillery in the neighbourhood would have been a more apt and proper retreat for our Pig;—but there were difficulties; I enter not into domestic affairs; but whether there was any whiggism, or rivalry, or jealousy, or what else in the case, I know not; but certain it is, that Sir Joseph and he could never, as they ought, well pig together. During the happy period above mentioned, it came into the fancy of our Pig to journey into Scotland in the character of a travelling bear, with a ragged staff in his paws, and a ◇ monkey on his back. When he first obtained a pension, he had been very affectionately considered by the people of that country, and in a manner naturalized, and become one of them; but he discovered soon afterwards, and more particularly on this occasion, so much of the badger in his disposition, that they found great reason to complain of the strength and harshness of his jaw. On his return he resorted again to his beloved brewery, as yet profuse of grains and draff, where he grunted forth, as was his custom, many strange and singular things, faithfully now on record, pretending also to cure certain mental diseases by the medicinal qualities of his tongue; but its extreme roughness the sensibility of his patients could not bear. Enough has been said; the rest shall be left to Bozzy. Yet we will add, that with all his peculiarities, he had virtues and merits enough to make us heartily wish he were still in being:—But, alas, it is past, and he is now cutting up into junks, to be sold *pro bono publico* at nine different shops in retail.

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* Most of what can be told concerning his petty peculiarities was communicated by a female domestic of the Earl of Oxford, who knew him, perhaps, after the middle of life.—Johnson's Lives of the Poets, 8vo. vol. 4, p. 141.

† And yet certain it is that no pains was spared for this purpose; for "my mother (said he) was always telling me that I did not behave myself; that I should endeavour to learn behaviour, and fuch cant." Indeed his defect in this particular could not be overlooked by his most partial admirer; for "I suppose none (says she) who saw his odd manner of gesticulation, much blamed or wondered at the good lady's solicitude concerning her son's behaviour."—Piozzi's Memoirs of Johnson, p. 24 and 25.

‡ Cant words are usually begot in a cellar by *fun* upon *folly*: but the word *bore* and *boar* has another origin; it was begot on a sofa by *Madamoifelle Ennui* upon herself, and brought forth into the world in the midst of the ton. The roar and fury of the river Severn the people of the country call the *boar*. A female faint was reported miraculously to have shed tears: the fact was denied by a Madrid carpenter who had made the faint, "because (says he) she is not only composed of heart of oak, but if she had been at all disposed to weep, she must have wept when I *bored* an aperture with my largest augre in her rump." And thus teasing and vexation of every kind may be called a *bore*. A dun is a *bore*, and a sermon is a *bore*, and so forth; but the greatest of all possible *bores*, in whatever spelling, is a husband, a *bore* at night, a *bore* in the morning, and, in short, one general universal *bore*. Our author has used this fashionable word with the most perfect propriety, in a sense satisfying the very letter, as well as spirit of the word.

§ When we went into Wales together, and spent some time at Sir Robert Cotton's at Llewenny, one day at dinner I meant to please Mr. Johnson particularly with a dish of very young peas.—"Are not they charming?" said I to him, while he was eating them.—"Perhaps (said he) they would be so—to a Pig."—Piozzi, p. 63.

◇ This passage seems inexplicable. We have had resort to Bozz, but in vain: the staff, indeed, he readily acknowledged; but as to the other associate, or who, or what was meant, neither he nor we were able to discover.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Original page numbers are shown like this: [24].

Footnotes have been resequenced and moved from within paragraphs to natural breaks in paragraphs. We would ordinarily have moved the footnotes to the end of the book, but we did not wish to entirely deprive you of the ambience that readers of the original printed book enjoyed.

Original printed spelling and grammar are retained, with one exception: Page 3. "refeences" changed to "references".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ANECDOTES OF THE LEARNED PIG ***

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