

The Labyrinth of The World and the paradise of the heart

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I

ON THE CAUSES OF THIS MY PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE WORLD

WHEN I had attained that age at which the difference between good and bad begins to appear to the human understanding, I saw how different are the ranks, conditions, occupations of men, the works and endeavours at which they toil ; and it seemed most necessary to me to consider what group of men I should join, and with what matters I should occupy my life.

(The Fickleness of the Mind.)

. Thinking much and often on this matter, and weighing it diligently in my mind, I came to the decision that that fashion of life which contained least of cares and violence, and most comfort, peace, and cheerfulness pleased me most.

. But then, again, it seemed to me difficult to know which and what was my vocation, and I knew not of whom to seek counsel ; nor did I greatly wish to consult anyone on this matter, thinking that each one would praise to me his own walk in life. Neither did I dare to grasp anything hastily, for I feared that I might not choose aright.

. Yet, I confess, I secretly began to grasp first at one thing, then another, then a third, but each one I speedily abandoned, for I remarked (as it seemed to me) something of hardship and vanity in each. Meanwhile, I feared that my fickleness would bring me to shame. And I knew not what to do.

. Thus yearning and turning the matter in solitude in my mind, I came to this decision that I should first behold all earthly things that are under the sun, and then only, having wisely compared one thing with another, choose a course of life, and obtain in some fashion the things necessary for leading a quiet life in the world. The more I thought the matter over, the more this matter pleased me.

II

THE PILGRIM OBTAINS IMPUTENCE AS A GUIDE

AND then I came out of my solitude—and began to look around, thinking how and whence to begin my voyage. At that very instant there appeared one coming, I knew not whence. His gait was active, his sight skilful, his speech quick, so that it seemed to me that his feet, his eyes, his tongue, all possessed great agility. He stepped up to me, and asked whence I came and whither I proposed to go ? I said that I had left my home, and decided to wander through the world and obtain some experience.

(The World a Labyrinth.)

. This pleased him well, and he said, “ But where hast thou a guide ?” I answered, “ I have none. I trust to God and to my eyes, that they will not lead me astray.” “ Thou wilt not succeed,” said he. “ Hast thou heard of the labyrinth of Crete ?” “ I have heard somewhat,” I answered. He then replied, “ It was a wonder of the world, a building consisting of so many

chambers, closets, and corridors, that he who entered it without a guide walked and blundered through it in every direction, and never found the way out. But this was nothing compared to the way in which the labyrinth of this world is fashioned, particularly in these times. I do not, believe me, counsel a prudent man to enter it alone."

(Description of One who was insolent.)

. "But where, then, shall I seek such a guide?" I asked. He answered: "I am able to guide those who wish to see and learn somewhat, and to show them where everything is; therefore, indeed, did I come to meet thee." Wondering, I said: "Who art thou, my friend?" He answered: "My name is Searchall, and I have the by-name of Impudence. I wander through the whole world, peep into all corners, inquire about the words and deeds of all men, see everything that is visible, spy out and discover everything that is secret; generally, nothing can befall without me. It is my duty to survey everything; and if thou comest with me, I shall lead thee to many secret places, whereto thou wouldst never have found thy way."

. Hearing such speech, I begin to rejoice in my mind at having found such a guide, and beg him not to shun the labour of conducting me through the world. He answered: "As I have gladly served others in this matter, so will I gladly aid you also." And seizing my hand, "Let us go," he said, and we went; and I said: "Well, now will I gladly see what the ways of the world are, and also whether it contains that on which a man may safely rely." Hearing this, my companion stopped and said: "Friend, if thou art starting on this voyage with the purpose, not of seeing our things with pleasure, but of passing judgment on them according to thine own understanding, I do not know if Her Majesty our Queen will be pleased with this."

(Vanity, the Queen of the World.)

. "And who, then, is your Queen?" I said. He answered: "She who directs the whole world and its ways from the beginning. She is called Wisdom, though some wiseacres call her Vanity. I therefore warn thee in time, when we shall go there and look round, do not cavil; then wouldst thou draw some evil upon thyself, even though I be close to thee."

III

FALSEHOOD JOINS THEM

THUS, whilst he talks with me, behold someone steals up to us, a man or a woman (for he was wondrously muffled up, and something that seemed like mist surrounded him).

"Impudence," he said, "whither dost thou hurry with this man?" "I am leading him into the world," he replied. "He wishes to behold it."

. "And why without me?" the other again said. "Thou knowest that it is thy duty to conduct the pilgrims, mine to show them where things are. For it is not the wish of Her Majesty the Queen that anyone who enters her kingdom should himself interpret what he hears and sees according to his pleasure, or cavil too much. Rather doth she wish that all things that exist and their purposes be told him, and that he should content himself with that."

Impudence answered: "As if anyone could be so insolent as not to remain with the others; but this one, meseems, will require a bit." "It is well; let us go forward." Then he joined us, and we went on.

(*The Ways of Falsehood in the Word.*)

. I, however, thought in my mind : “ Would God that I had not been led here ! These are deliberating about some bit for my mouth.” And I say to this, my new companion : “ Friend, take it not amiss ; gladly would I know thy name also.” He answered : “ I am the interpreter of Wisdom, the queen of the world, and I have the duty to teach all how they can understand the things of the world. Therefore I place in the minds of all, old and young, noble and of mean birth, ignorant and learned, all that belongs to true, worldly wisdom, and I lead them to joy and merriment, for without me even kings, princes, and the proudest men would be in strange anxiety, and would spend their time on earth mournfully.”

. On this I said : “ Fortunately has God granted me thee as a guide, dear friend, if this is true. For I have set out for the world for the purpose of seeking what is safest and most gratifying in it, and then relying on it. Having now in thee so trusty a councillor, I shall easily be able to choose well.” “ Do not doubt this,” he said, “ for though in our kingdom thou wilt find everything most finely ordered and most gay, yet is it ever true that some professions and trades have more convenience and freedom than others. Thou wilt be able to choose from everything that which thou wishest. I will explain to thee everything as it is.” I said : “ By what name do men call thee ?” He answered : “ My name is Falsehood.”

IV

THE PILGRIM RECEIVES A BRIDLE AND SPECTACLES

HEARING this, I was terrified, and thought within myself : “ Alas, for my sins have I obtained such companions ! That first one (thus my mind devised) spoke of some sort of bridle ; the other one is called Falsehood. His queen he calls Vanity (though I think he imprudently blabbed this out) ; but what is this ?”

. And whilst I thus continue silently and with downcast eyes, and my feet move on some-what reluctantly, Searchall says : “ What, thou fickle one ; methinks thou wishest to go back !” And before I could answer he threw a bridle over my neck, and suddenly a bit slipped into my mouth. “ Now wilt thou,” he said, “ go obediently to the spot for which thou hast started ?”
(*The Bridle of Vanity.*)

. And I look at this bridle, and behold it was stitched together out of straps of pertness, and the bit was made out of the iron of obstinacy ; and I understood that I should now no longer behold the world freely as before, but that I should be drawn on forcibly by the inconstancy and disconsolateness of my mind.

(*The Spectacles of Falsehood.*)

. Then my companion on the other side said : “ And I give thee these spectacles, through which thou wilt henceforth look on the world,” and he thrust on my nose spectacles, through which I immediately see everything differently than before. They certainly had this power (as I afterwards often experienced), that to him who saw through them distant things appeared near, near things distant ; small things large, and large things small ; ugly things beautiful, and beautiful things ugly ; the white black, and the black white, and so forth. And I well understood that he should be called Falsehood who knew how to fashion such spectacles and place them on men.

(The Spectacles are made of Illusion and Custom.)

. Now these spectacles, as I afterwards understood, were fashioned out of the glass of Illusion, and the rims which they were set in were of that horn which is named Custom.

. But, fortunately for me, he had put them on me somewhat crookedly, so that they did not press closely on my eyes, and by raising my head and gazing upward I was still able clearly to see things in their natural way. I rejoiced over this, and said within myself :
“ Though you have closed my mouth and covered my eyes, yet I trust in my God that you will not take from me my mind and my reason. I will go on, and I wonder what then this world is which the Lady Vanity wishes us to see, but not to see with our own eyes.”

V

THE PILGRIM VIEWS THE WORLD FROM ON HIGH

(There is Nothing beyond the World.)

WHILE I am thus reflecting, behold, we find ourselves (I know not how) on a very high tower, and it seemed to me that I was immediately under the clouds. Gazing down from here, I see on the earth a town seemingly fine and beautiful, and very broad, but I could in every direction perceive its boundaries and limits. And it was built in the shape of a circle, and provided with walls and ramparts ; and instead of a ditch there was a dark, deep valley, which, as it seemed to me, had neither banks nor bottom. For only above the city was there light ; everywhere around it there was sheer darkness.

(The Situation of the World.)

. Now I saw that the city itself was divided into countless streets, squares, houses, bigger and smaller buildings ; and it was crowded with people as if with insects. To the east I saw a kind of gateway, from which a narrow street led to another gate that looked westward. From the second gate only one entered into the various streets of the city. I counted six principal streets all running from east to west side by side, and in the centre of them there was a large, round square or market-place ; behind it there stood to the west, on a rocky, abrupt hillock, a high and splendid castle, at which almost all the inhabitants of the town gazed.

(The Gate of Entrance and the Gate of Separation.)

. And my guide, Impudence, said to me : “ Here, pilgrim, thou hast this dear world which thou wast so desirous to behold. I have, therefore, first led thee to this height that thou mayest gaze on the whole world, and understand its order. That eastern gate is the gate of life, through which all pass who come to live in the world. That second gate is the gate of separation, whence each person, according to the lot he draws, betakes himself to this or that calling.

(The Conditions of Life are divided into Six Orders.)

. “ The streets, then, which thou beholdest are the various estates, orders, and avocations which men choose. Thou seest six principal streets. In this one to the south those who belong to the state of domestic life reside—parents, children, and servants. In the next street live the tradesmen and all who are busied in commerce. In that third street, which is nearest the market-place, live the learned men, who are employed on the works of the mind. On the other side, again, is the order of the clergy, by means of whom others avoid practising religion.

Behind them is the order of the magistrates and rulers of the world. At last, to the north, we find the order of knighthood, which is employed in all the arts of war. And oh, how noble this is ! These beget all ; these feed all ; these teach all ; these pray for all ; these judge all and preserve them from disorders ; these fight for all ; and all these serve each other, and all have equal rights.

(The Castle of Fortune. The Market-place and the Castle of the World.)

. “ Then that castle to the west is Arx Fortunæ, the castle of Fortune, in which chosen people live, who there enjoy riches, pleasure, and glory. The central market-place is for all ; for here men of all classes meet, and discuss what is necessary. In the middle of the market-place is, as it were, the centre of everything—that is the residence of Wisdom, the queen of the world.”

(The Beginning of the Confusion.)

. And this good order pleased me, and I began to praise God that He had so nobly divided the estates of men. But what pleased me not was that I saw that these streets were broken through in many places, so that sometimes one ran into another, and this seemed to me a token that confusion an error might easily happen. Also when I looked at the roundness of the globe, I clearly saw that it moved and turned as in a circle, so that I feared lest I should become giddy. For when I cast my eyes here and there, I saw that in every direction every-thing swarmed with men. When I inclined my ears, everything was full of knocking, stamp-ing, scrubbing, whispering, and screaming.

(There was Deceit also.)

. And my interpreter, Falsehood, said : “ Thou seest, dear friend, how delightful this world is, and how everything in it is noble ; and that, even when thou viewest it from afar. What, then, wilt thou say later when thou beholdest it clearly with its delight. And to whom would it not be pleasant to be in the world ? ” I said, “ Viewed from a distance, it pleases me ; I know not how it will be later.” “ Well, in every way,” he said ; “ only trust me, and we will go hence.”

(The Fashion of the Life of Childhood.)

Impudence said : “ Wait, I will also show him that spot to which we shall not come afterwards. Look, then, backwards towards sunrise ; dost thou not see that something crawlth through that dark gate and creepeth towards us ? ” “ I see it,” I said. And he again : “ These are people who—whence they themselves know not—have newly arrived in the world ; neither do they as yet know that they are human beings ; therefore darkness is around them, and naught but moaning and crying. But while they go along this street, grey light and dawn slowly come to them, till they come to that gate beneath us. Let us go on and see what is doing there.”

VI

FATE DISTRIBUTES VOCATIONS

(Fate, the Gate of Life.)

AND we go downward by a dark winding staircase, and behold, before the door there was a wide hall full of young folk, and on the right side there sat a fierce-looking, old man, [1] who in his hand held a large copper urn, and I saw that all those who came through the gate of life stepped up to him, and each one put his hand into the urn and drew from it a tablet on which

something was written. Then each one of them went down one of the streets, some running and shouting for joy, while others crept along slowly, looked around them, groaned and lamented.

(The Callings are distributed.)

. And I step near and looked at the tablets of some of them, and I see that one had drawn the word : Rule ! another : Serve ! another : Command ! another : Obey ! another : Write ! another : Plough ! yet another : Learn ! another : Dig ! another : Judge ! another : Fight ! and so forth. Impudence says to me : “ Here vocations and work are distributed, and according to this distribution each one has to fulfil his task in the world. He, however, who apportions the lots is called Fate, and from him must everyone who enters the world receive his instructions.”

(The Pilgrim begs first to be allowed to behold Everything.)

. Meanwhile, Falsehood nudged me at the other side, thus indicating that I also should stretch forth my hand. I begged not to be obliged to choose any one lot directly without first examining it, and entrust myself blindly to fortune. But I was told that without the knowledge and the permission of the lord regent, Fate, this could not be. Then stepping up to him, I modestly brought forward my request, saying that I had arrived with the intention of seeing everything for myself, and then only choosing what pleased me.

(The Pilgrim receives the Permission.)

He answered : “ Oh, son, thou seest that others do not thus ; what is given or offered them they take. However, as thou desirest this, it is well.” Then he wrote on a scrap of paper : “ Speculare” (that is, “ look around you,” or “ inquire”), gave it me, and left me.

VII

THE PILGRIM BEHOLDS THE MARKET-PLACE OF THE WORLD

(He sees the Diversity of Men.)

AND my guide says to me : “ As thou hast to see everything, let us first go to the market-place.” And he leads me forth. And behold I see countless multitudes as a mist. For there were there people from the whole world, of every language and nation, of every age, growth, sex, estate, class, and profession. When first gazing at them, I see how strangely they sway to and fro, like the swarming of bees, and, indeed, far more wondrous.

(The Various Characters and Gestures of Men.)

. For some walked, some ran, some rode, some stood, some sat, some rose up, some again reclined, some turned in various directions ; some were alone, others in larger or smaller troops. Their dress and appearance varied much ; some were stark naked, and had wondrous gestures. When some met one another there was various juggling with hands, mouth, knees, and otherwise ; saluting and bowing, and other foolish ways. And my guide says to me : “ Here hast thou that noble human race, that delightful creation, which has been granted sense and immortality. How it bears on it the image of the infinite God, and the like-ness to Him, that wilt thou recognise by the variety of His creations. As in a looking-glass wilt thou see the worth of this thy human race.”

(Hypocrisy in All.)

. I then look at them more carefully, and see directly that everyone in the crowd, when walking among the others, wore a mask on his face ; but on going away, when he was alone, or among his equals, he pulled it off, and when he had to go among the throng, he again fastened it on. And I ask what this means. The guide answered : “ That, my dear son, is worldly prudence, so that each man may not show to all what he is. Alone in his home a man may be as he is, but before others it is befitting that he appear affable, and that he assume a mien.” Then the desire befell me more carefully to watch how these people might be without this dissembling covering.

(Their Wondrous Deformities.)

. And looking attentively at this, I see that both in their face and in their bodies all are in various ways deformed. Almost all were pimpled, mangy, or leprous ; and besides, this one had a pig’s lip, another teeth as a dog, another the horns of an ox, another donkey’s ears, another eyes of a basilisk, another the brush of a fox, another the claws of a wolf. Some did I see with a peacock’s neck stretched out on high ; others with the bristling crest of a lapwing ; others with horses’ hoofs, and so forth ; mostly, however, they had the similitude of apes. [2] And I am frightened, and say : “ Nay, here, meseems, I see monsters !” “ What, froward one” (the guide said), “ thou speakest of monsters,” and he threatened me with his fist. “ Look but well through thy spectacles, and thou wilt see that they are men.” But some of those who were passing heard that I had called them monsters, stood still and growled at me, and even threatened me, as if they would attack me. Then having understood that to reason here was vain, I became silent, and thought within myself : “ If they will be human beings, let them be so ; but as for me, what I see, I see.” I then feared that my guide would press down my spectacles more firmly and mislead me ; therefore did I decide to be silent, and rather quietly to behold these fine things of which I had seen the beginning. I then gaze again, and I see how artfully some handled these masks, quickly removing them and then again putting them on, so that they were able to give themselves a different mien, whenever they saw that this was to their advantage. And then I already began somewhat to understand the course of the world, but I was silent.

(General Misunderstanding among all Men.)

. I also observe and hear that they talked among themselves in various languages, so that they mostly did not understand or answer each other, or they answered on something different from what had been said, each one differently. Wherever a large crowd gathered, almost all spoke, each one listening to himself and none to the others, although they plucked at one another to attract attention. But it happened not thus ; rather was there brawling and scuffling. And I exclaim : “ In the name of God, are we then in Babel ? Here each one sings his own song. [3] Could there be greater confusion ?”

(They occupy Themselves with Useless Matters.)

. Hardly anyone there was idle ; all were employed in some kind of work ; but these works—and this I never should have believed—were nothing but childish games, and at least were useless exertion. Some, indeed, collected sweepings and divided them amongst them-selves ; some hurried here and there with timber and stones, or dragged them up with a wind-lass, and then again dropped them ; some dug up earth, and conveyed or carried it from place to place ; the others occupied themselves with little bells, looking- glasses, alembics, rattles, and other playthings ; others also played with their own shadow, measuring, and pursuing it, and catching at it ; and all this so vigorously that many groaned and sweated, and some, indeed,

also injured themselves. And almost everywhere there were certain officers who ordered and measured out these labours with great heartiness, and with no less heartiness the others obeyed them. Wondering, I said, "Alas! Oh, wherefore does man exist, if he employs the sharpness of his heavenly talents for such vain and evil endeavours?" "Why vain?" said the interpreter. "Cannot one then see here, as in a looking-glass, how men accomplish everything by means of their talents? One does this, another that." "But all," I said, "work at such useless things, which are not adequate to their glorious eminence." Do not cavil too much," he again said. "They are not yet in heaven, and in the world they must employ themselves with worldly matters. Thou wilt see in how orderly a fashion everything is done among them."

(Fearful Disorder.)

. Then looking again, I see that nothing more disorderly could have been imagined; for when one laboured at a thing, and exerted himself, another, approaching him, meddled with the matter; thence quarrels, scuffles, fights. Then they reconciled themselves, and after a while fought again. Sometimes several laid hold of one thing; then again they all left it, and ran off in different directions. Those, indeed, who were under the power of the officers and inspectors more or less kept to that which was appointed to them, for they were forced to do so. Yet here also I saw much confusion. Some broke away from their appointed places, and ran away; others contradicted the overseers, being unwilling to do what was ordered them; others attacked them with cudgels and robbed; indeed, everything, was disorderly. But as all this had to be called order, I dared not say anything.

(Everything full of Scandal and Evil Example.)

. I also perceived other disorder, blindness, and folly. The whole of this market-place was — as were also the streets afterwards — full of holes, pits, and ravines, also of timber and stones, that lay about in every direction, and of other things. No one, however, put anything away, repaired it, or put it in proper order. On the contrary, they walked on unawares, so that first one, then another, knocked against something, fell, and either was killed or knocked down, and my heart quivered, beholding this. But among them, none took notice of this; indeed, when anyone fell they laughed at him. Then seeing a stalk, or the trunk of a tree, or a hole over which some blindly blundered, I began to caution them, but nobody heeded. Some laughed at me, others reviled me, others wanted to beat me. Some fell and did not rise again; others rose again, and then again fell head over heels on the top of one another. Of weals and bruises everyone had enough, but they nowise heeded them, so that I could not but wonder at this their dulness, which counted their own falls and wounds for so little; while when one offended another, that one immediately rose in arms and warred with him.

(The Fickleness and Unsteadiness of Mankind in all Matters.)

. I also perceived among men great delight in novelties and changes with regard to clothing, building, speech, gait, and other matters. Some, I saw, who did nothing but change their attire, wearing sometimes this, sometimes that manner of clothing; others imagined a new fashion of building, and after a while destroyed it again. While working they seized now this thing, now that, and then again abandoned it, seemingly through inconstancy. For if one died because of the burden under which he laboured or if he abandoned it, then immediately others were found who disputed it, squabbled and fought about it in a wondrous fashion. Among them all there was none who spoke, or did something, or erected an edifice, without the others laughing at it, misrepresenting it, destroying it. One fashioned a thing with vast labour and expense, finding in it great pleasure, then another, approaching him, overturned,

destroyed, and injured it, so that I saw that never in the world a man made a thing without another injuring it. Some, indeed, did not wait for others ; they themselves destroyed their own works, so that I wondered at their fickleness and their vain endeavours.

(Their Pride and Presumption.)

. I also saw that many walked on high pattens ; others made themselves stilts (so that, raised above all, they could view everything from above), and thus did they strut about. But the higher one was the more easily was he upset, or others (from jealousy, I presume), tripped up his feet ; this happened to many, and they drew the laughter of all on them. Of such instances saw I many.

(Death, which miserably destroyeth All)

. At last I saw Death stalking about everywhere among them, and she was provided with a sharp scythe, and with a bow and arrows, and with a loud voice she exhorted all to remember that they were mortal ; but none listened to her call. Each one was none the less intent on his folly and his misdeeds. Then seizing these arrows, she threw them at the people in every direction, and struck down this or that one from among them, young or old, poor or rich, learned or unlearned, without distinction, so that they fell down. He who was struck down screamed, shrieked, and roared ; those who were walking near ran a little farther off, and soon again took no notice. Some coming near gazed at the wounded man, who was rattling in the throat, and when he contracted his feet and ceased breathing, they called each other together, sang round him, ate, drank, and shouted, [4] and some somewhat mocked at this. Then they seized the dead man and threw him over the boundaries into that gloomy pit which surrounds the world, and returning thence they again revelled ; but none escaped Death, though they diligently endeavoured not to heed her, even when she closely brushed against them.

(Various Diseases.)

. I then saw that not all whom she (Death) struck fell dead to the ground ; some she merely wounded, lamed, blinded, deafened, or stunned. Some after their wound swelled out like a blister, others dried up as a splinter, others trembled like an aspen-leaf, and so forth. Thus did a larger number of men walk to and fro wounded, and with rotting and soured limbs, than there were healthy people.

(Help against this is vainly sought.)

. And I saw many running to and fro who sold plasters, ointments, waters, as remedies for these wounds. And all bought these things from them, exulting thereon and defying Death. But she heeded not, and indeed struck down and overthrew even these venders them-selves. And it was a mournful spectacle for me to behold how pitiably, how suddenly, and by what manifold deaths a creature destined to immortality perisheth. I also found, in particular, that when one was most ready for life, gathered his friends together, made plans for his future life, built houses, scraped money together, and otherwise strove for his own welfare, then the arrow of Death struck him and made an end to everything, and he who had prepared for himself a dwelling in the world was very often torn away from it and his goods became useless ; then another succeeded him, and the same fate befell him, and so equally the third, the tenth, the hundredth. But when I saw that none would understand the uncertainty of life, and take it to heart—indeed, that though standing close to the abyss of death they behaved as if they were certain of immortality (and it is marvellous that my heart did not burst from grief)—then I desired to raise my voice to exhort and beg them to open their eyes, and to behold

Death preparing her arrows, and in some fashion to strive to escape them. But I understood that as Death herself could, by her constant cries and her incessant appearance before them in her terrible shape, achieve nothing, my feeble speech would indeed be fruitless. I then said in a low voice : “ It is for ever pitiful before God that we miserable mortals should for our misfortune be so blind.” The interpreter answered me : “ My good man, would it then be wisdom to torment ourselves by thinking of death ? Just because everyone knows he cannot escape her, it is better not to heed her, but to look at one’s own goods, and to be of a cheerful mind. If she comes, she comes. In some hours everything will be at an end, and perhaps even in an instant. Why, therefore, should, because some die, the others cease to be merry ? For in the place of each one how many again are born.” To this I said : “ If wisdom consists in this, then I understand it amiss,” and then I was silent.

(Men are themselves the Causes of their Diseases and Death.)

. But I will not conceal this, that when I beheld the countless number of Death’s arrows, it came into my mind : “ Whence, then, does Death take that mass of arrows, that she never exhausts them ?” And I look, and behold quite clearly that she had no arrows at all, but only a bow ; the arrows she took from the people, each one from that person whom she intended to strike. And I observed that these people themselves trimmed and prepared these arrows, some even pertly and audaciously carried them to her, so that it was sufficient for her to take the arrows from them and to shoot them in the heart. And I cried : “ Now I see that it is true : ‘ Et mortis faber est quilibet ipse suæ.’” I already see that no one dies who had not by his greediness, intemperance, frowardness, lastly by his indiscretion, brought on himself abscesses, boils, outer or inner wounds (for these are the arrows of Death). But while I thus carefully gaze on Death, and the way she seized the people, Falsehood pulls me away and says : “ Wherefore, foolish one, dost thou look rather at the dead than at the living ? When one dies, then it is over with him ; but strive thou to live !”

VIII

THE PILGRIM BEHOLDS THE STATE OF MATRIMONY

(The Preparation to this State is toilsome and anxious.)

And they lead me forward, and bring me to a street where, they said, married people lived, and they said also that the fashion of this delightful life would be pleasing unto me. And behold, there was a gate which, as they said, was called Betrothment ; in front of it there was a wide square, in which crowds of people of both sexes walked about, and each one looked into the eyes of the other ; and not only this, but they also looked at one another’s ears, nose, teeth, neck, tongue, hands, feet, and other limbs ; also did each measure the other—how tall, how broad, how stout, or how slender he was. Then one approached another, and then again stepped apart from him, examining him now in front, now from the back, now from the right side, now from the left, and observing everything that he beheld of him. Each one particularly examined (and this I saw most frequently) the bags, purses, and pouches of the other, measuring and weighing how long, how broad, how full, how heavy, or how light they were. Sometimes several men pointed to one woman, and then none took her. One man drove another away, and they quarrelled, struggled, and fought ; murders also did I here behold. Then one man pushed another away, and was himself again pushed away ; some, after driving others away, then ran away themselves. Yet another man, not lingering to examine, seized her who was nearest, and the couple lead each other hand-in-hand through the gate. Seeing much fooling of this fashion, I asked : “ What, then, are these people doing ?” The interpreter answered : “ They are those who would gladly enter the street of Matrimony ; but as no one is

allowed to pass through yonder gate alone, but only in pairs, each one must choose himself a companion. Therefore is this choosing done here, and everyone seeks what is convenient to him ; he who finds it goes, as you see, to the gate with his companion." " And could not this choosing be done in a somewhat easier fashion ?" I said. " How mightily toilsome this is !" He answered : " This is not labour, but pleasure. Dost thou not see how merrily they bear themselves ; how they laugh, how they exult. No fashion of life, believe me, is merrier than this one." Then I look, and see that some indeed laughed and exulted ; but I see others also who hang down their heads dolefully, turn round, drag each other backwards and forwards, then again retreat ; they grieve, do not sleep or eat, and even become mad. And I say : " What of these ? He answered : " This also is pleasure." " Be it so," I said ; " let us proceed and see what befalls farther on."

(Great Uncertainty as to how they should sit together.)

. Then forcing our way through the crowd, we arrive at the gate itself ; and lo ! before we entered it, we behold a balance suspended, which was provided with two baskets as scales, and round it stood the crowd. And they placed each of these couples in the baskets opposite one another, and watched whether the balance was even ; and in various fashions they descended, then separated, shook the scales, and then again steadied them. Then only when they had sufficiently weighed them they allowed them to pass through the gate. But not all fared equally well. For some fell through the basket, were derided, and had to troop away with shame, and took themselves off ; they even crammed a hood or sack over the ears of some, and made merry at their expense. And seeing this, I asked : " What, then, is done here ?" The answer was : " This is done that the betrothment may be safe ; for if the scales show that they are even and equal, they are, as you see, allowed to enter this state of matrimony ; if it is otherwise, they separate." " And what, then, do they here consider as equality ?" I said, " for indeed I see that the balance proves some to be equal in age, estate, and in every fashion, and yet they allow one of the two to fall through the basket. Others, on the other hand, who are most unequal they place together—old men and young girls, young men and old women, One stands upright, and the other bends downward, and yet they say that they may be joined ; how is this ?" He answered : " Thou dost not see everything. It is true that some old man or old woman may not be worth a pound of tow, [] yet if they have either a fat pouch or a hat before which other hats are lowered, or something similar (for all these things are weighed in the scales), the matter does not stand as it appears to your judgment."

(The Fashion in which they sit together is unalterable.)

3. Entering after those whom they allowed to pass, I see at the gate men who seemed smiths ; these clasp on each couple awful fetters, and only when fettered allow them to pass. Many people were present at this fettering who (as they said) were invited for the purpose of being witnesses. These played and sang before them, and bade them be of good cheer. But watching carefully, I remarked that they did not fasten up these fetters with a padlock as with other prisoners, but that they immediately forged, welded, soldered them together, so that, as long as their lives in this world lasted, they could not unbuckle them or tear them off. This frightened me, and I said : " Oh, most cruel captivity ! if anyone once enters it, for all eternity he has no hope of recovering his liberty." The interpreter answered : "
 4. Certainly this of all human bonds is the most rigid ; but the sweetness of this state is such that man gladly passes under the yoke ; thou wilt see for thyself what a delightful life it is." "Let us then go among them, that I may see," I said.

^ A proverbial expression in Bohemia.

(There is little Pleasure even when Marriage is most successful.)

. We then enter the street, and behold, there was a host of people all in couples, but many, as it seemed to me, most unequally joined, big ones with small ones, handsome ones with ugly ones, young ones with old ones, and so forth. And examining carefully what they were doing, and in what the sweetness of this state consisted, I see that they look at each other, speak to one another, and some- times one caressed and also kissed the other. “ Here you see,” said the interpreter to me, “ what a pure thing wedlock is, when it is successful.” “ Then this,” said I, “ is the summa of all ?” “ Certainly,” he said. And I again, “ Then there is indeed but little pleasure ; and whether it is worth such fetters, I know not.”

(The Misery and Worry of all Married People generally.)

. I now look further about me among them, and witness how much toil and anxiety the wretched people had. They mostly had children around them, who were attached to them by bridles ; these screamed, squalled, stank, soiled themselves, groaned, and died, and I am silent as regards the pain, the tears, the dangers to the lives of their mothers, with which they entered into the world. If a child grew up there was twofold trouble with it ; one was to hold it back by means of the bridle, the other to drive it on by means of the spur ; and often the children, suffering neither bridle nor spur, made wondrous mischievous endeavours, causing to their parents weariness and tears. But if they allowed them to act according to their will or tore themselves away from them, shame and death herethrough befell the parents. And marking this, I began to ad- monish some of the people, both parents and children, warning the former against foolish love for their children and too great forbearance with them, whilst I admonished the latter to be somewhat more virtuous. But I achieved little beyond this, that they looked at me peevishly, threw jests at me, and some even menaced to kill me. And when I saw some who were sterile I declared them happy ; but they also complained and lamented that their life was joyless. Thus, then, did I understand that both to have and not to have offspring is misery. Also had almost each couple with them and around them stranger folk to serve them and theirs ; they often had to bestow more care on these than on themselves and their family, and besides had to suffer much discomfort through them. Also were there here, as in that market-place, many implements and stumbling-blocks, wood, stones, and pits ; when one stumbled, he tripped up the other also, fell and injured the other also ; the other, unable to leave him, had equally with him to whimper, cry, and suffer pain. Thus did I understand that everyone in this state, instead of one care, anxiety, danger, has to suffer as many cares, anxieties, dangers as there are people to whom he is tied. And this state pleased me not.

(The awful Tragedy of luckless Marriage.)

. While I was then gazing at some of these in the crowd, I beheld a tragedy. Two were joined together who were assuredly not of one will ; one wanted to go this way, the other that ; then they quarrelled, disputed, wrangled. One complained to the passers-by of this, the other of that ; and then when there was nobody to arbitrate between them, they attacked one another, and cuffed and cudgelled each other in an ugly fashion. If some one reconciled them, after a while they quarrelled again. Some for a long time disputed in words whether they should go to the right or to the left, and as each obstinately insisted on what he wished, one with all his might flung himself in the direction he wished to go, and the other also in the opposite direction. Then there was a struggle and a mournful spectacle who would overcome the other ; sometimes the man triumphed and dragged the woman after him, although she caught at the ground, the grass, or whatever she could ; sometimes the man had to follow the woman, and the others laughed at this. But this seemed to me a matter worthy rather of pity than of

laughter ; particularly when I saw that during this torment some shed tears, groaned, wrung their hands heaven-ward, declaring that they wished by means of gold and silver to redeem themselves from this bond. And I said to my interpreter : “ Can no help, then, be granted them ? Can they not be untied and set free from one another, they who cannot be reconciled ?” “ That cannot be,” he said ; “ as long as they live they must continue thus.” “ Oh, this cruel bondage and slavery ! This is indeed worse than death !” And he again : “ Why, then, did they not previously reflect more wisely ? They deserve their fate ; let them continue in their dissensions.”

(Voluntary Slavery.)

. Then I gaze, and lo ! Death, with her arrows, strikes down some and overthrows them, and immediately the fetters of each of them were loosened. And I wished them joy of this, thinking that they also would wish themselves joy, and be heartily glad of this relief. But behold, almost every one of them began to cry and lament in a fashion that hardly ever I had heard in the world, wringing their hands and complaining of their misfortunes. Of those whom I had before seen living peaceably together, I understood that one really grieved for the death of the other. I thought, however, that they only dissembled thus before the people. I vowed that they would repent their error, and teach others to beware of these bonds. But these, before I had time to observe, wiped their eyes again, ran outside, and returned afresh in new fetters. And I said with wrath : “ Oh, ye monsters ! ye are unworthy of pity ;” and to my guide : “ Let us from hence ; I find in this state more of vanity than anything else.”

(The Pilgrim also receives Fetters.)

. Meanwhile (for I must not be silent as regards my own adventures), while we are returning to the gate of separation, and though my intention is further to look on the world, my guides, both Impudence and Falsehood, begin strongly to urge me to try myself, also, the state of matrimony ; thus would I better understand it. I replied that I was young, that the examples I had seen terrified me, that I had not yet beheld everything in the world, and so forth. But this availed not ; they induced me to go on to the scales, as it were in sport, and then into bonds, and I proceeded as one of four who were joined together ; they also added to our party a number of others (they said it was that they should be my servants, and for the sake of modesty) ; so that, gasping and groaning, I could hardly drag them along with me. Then suddenly a tempest came down, with lightning, thunder, and a terrible fall of hail ; and all those around me dispersed, except those who were joined to me. With these I hurry into a corner, but Death, with her arrows, strikes down my three companions, so that, mournfully solitary and stunned by horror, I knew not what to do. My guides said that this was a favourable moment, and that I could now easily flee. And I said : “ Why, then, did you me to come here ?” They answered that there was no time for disputing ; rather should I flee. And thus did I hurry away.

(The Pilgrim’s Judgment on the State of Matrimony.)

. And having escaped thence, I yet do not know what I should say about this state, whether it affords more pleasure when it is successful (which I presume would have been the case with me), or more woe from various causes. That only I remember that both without it and within it there is much anxiety, and even when it is successful, the sweet is mixed with the bitter.

[1] “ Ad eandem portam vir quidam senex astabat, aliquid quasi innuens virorum turbac nobis haud intelligentibus quid id esset. . . . Hic autem senex quem stantem videtis et habentem altera manu chartam ... is angelus est qui præcepta dat ei qui tendit ad hunc mundum. . . .

Et etiam ostendit viam quam si succedat salvus in ea evadit.”—
“ Tabula Cebetis,” Edition of Leyden, 1640.

[2] Compare with this : “ At bottom they are all respectable, pompous horse-faces, and self-opinionated donkey-muzzles, and lop-eared, low-browed dog-sculls, and fatted swine-snouts, and sometimes dull, brutal bull-fronts as well.”—Ibsen, “When we Dead awaken.”

[3] A proverbial expression in Bohemian.

[4] It is perhaps scarcely necessary to mention that Komensky here alludes sarcastically to the feasting at funerals that was particularly prevalent in his time.

The labyrinth of the world and the paradise of the heart (1901)

Author : Comenius, Johann Amos, 1592-1670 ; Lützow, Franz Heinrich Hieronymus
Valentin, Graf von, 1849-1916

Publisher : New York, E.P. Dutton & co.

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : Internet Archive

Book contributor : Princeton Theological Seminary Library

Collection : Princeton; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/labyrinthofworld00come>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org

June 14 2013