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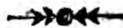




THE  
*Mouse-Trap Maker*  
AND THE  
INCOME TAX,  
A TALE,

Supposed, by Anticipation, to be written in the  
Year 2000;

WITH  
AN INTRODUCTORY ALLEGORY  
*Addressed to a Man in Office.*



BY  
HUMPHREY HOURGLASS.

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“ For whomsoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more  
“ Abundance ; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even  
“ that he hath.”

MATTHEW, Chap. XIII. Verse 12.

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# Introductory Allegory

TO

A MAN IN OFFICE.

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*My Lord, or Sir,*

FOR (such is the caprice of the times) I know not who may be in office when this little effort of my imagination issues from the press, permit me to relate to you a fable; the moral of which is too obvious to be mistaken, and your judgment must, as a great man, be too correct not to apply it.

JOHN TROT had a small portion of land, by the cultivation of which he maintained not only his family, but a numerous stock of domestic animals, for the support of whom it was fully adequate, although it needed the good husbandry of John to cultivate and apply it: all contributed a little to the manure, but chiefly was John assisted by his ASS; an animal of great strength and docility.



John fed him well; he worked hard, and the farm flourished. John grew rich; *quarrelled with his neighbours*; abridged his ass of his due proportion of thistles; took off his shoes to save expence; and laid additional burdens on his back. It was in vain that the poor animal remonstrated against the hard treatment of his master, or that he reasoned on the impolicy of measures which, in the event, must subvert the intention. "What I can do," said he, "I do cheerfully; but if you reduce my strength by hard fare, and lay double claims upon the exercise of it, I must sink, and your farm goes to ruin." John refused to listen; the ass *foundered* before, became *crippled* behind, and at length died of a *broken back*. The prediction of the poor oppressed animal was verified.—John's family and stock felt the loss of the *labourer*: some strayed away to *remote lands*, while others died; the hedges became broken; the barn fell to decay; and the fields yielded no increase.

*The effect of avarice is often the destruction of the avaricious!*

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THE  
*MOUSE-TRAP MAKER*

AND  
THE INCOME TAX,

*A TALE.*

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IT was in the nineteenth century, and the latter part of the reign of a king, the virtues of whose mind were perhaps never exceeded, and sometime before the commotions which it was the misfortune of those times to experience, but which the kind hand of Providence averted until Death had closed his eyes in peace, there lived in a sequestered nook of the island of Great Britain, or as it was *then* called, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, an honest Manufacturer of Mouse-traps, who by his industry, had managed to bring up fast

approaching to maturity, twelve lovely babes.

As the parent had been enlisted into the Mouse-trap making concern in compliance with the will of his father, although an avowed friend to liberty, and, if report says true, one who beheld every created being with philanthropy, commiserating even the reptile his principles forbid him to crush, he cautiously avoided bringing up any of the young Snares (for SNARE was his name) to his own employment, and had resolved, when time should have ripened them to a fit age, to send them to a place called London, (at that time the metropolis of the empire) in order to be initiated in some of the more eminent walks of commerce, whereby they might obtain subsistence without becoming accessory to the miseries of others.

The government of that day the learned reader knows, from the few written authorities that escaped the general wreck, was not so simple as it is at our present happy period; indeed it is impossible to conceive

a people free from perplexities, an abridgment of whose laws and ordinances would, as we are told, have loaded a waggon. In its origin, or original *constitution*, as the people then termed it, it was excellently contrived, but it somehow became unwieldy: its means were inadequate to its needs, and self-interest, in many instances, predominated over public good. But as I am writing the woes of the family of the Snares, and not a commentary on governments; and as the occurrences of the period I am speaking of are incorrectly handed down to us, I will not attempt to describe them, but proceed with the detail more immediately to my purpose.

It happened that a few years before the period I am writing of, the king's principal purveyor, then called *prime* minister, one PITT, had prevailed upon the general assembly of those whom the people appointed to manage for them, to pass a law to compel every maker of Mouse-traps to take out a licence, or in other words, pay for the royal

authority to manufacture that useful article.

What was the price of a diploma to practice this sublime art, neither tradition or any history now extant has handed down to us; it was, however, so much that poor Snare (as his family grew up, consumed more food, and required more cloth for a coat) found himself scarcely able to pay. The poor fellow worked hard, although he found it very difficult to buy wood and wire for his traps, both of which were *marked by royal authority*, and for which gracious act money, according to the size of the wire, was paid into the royal treasury.

The wars, we have all heard of, and what, according to the absurdity of the time, was considered the *necessary provision for the lazy relatives of dead men of merit*, drained the treasury, and the Mouse-trap licence was doubled. This was a fresh grievance to our manufacturer; but it was not all, for the purveyor projected and passed another law to compel not only a Mouse-trap Maker, but

every other man, to pay a portion of his gain into the royal coffer; a measure strongly opposed by a man then called (as I find from an old ballad pasted in the lid of a family chest) the friend of the people; but the purveyor succeeded: indeed he was in general sure of success in any measure he chose to adopt; for the surrounding herd knew the good things he had to bestow, and most of them surrendered at his nod. It happened, however, that the poor purveyor exclaimed "*Oh my Country!*" and died, and the man of the people came into place as an assistant purveyor. They now thought themselves blessed with the champion of their rights, and that all the virtues which had been the subject of the bold-featured oratory of this man were to be brought into practice;—that they should no longer be scrutinized by petty inquisitors, and compelled to expose their necessities to gratify the voluptuous ears of the ignorant upstart in authority. A recol-

harangues of the man of the people, vibrated a music in their ears delightful as it was delusive; for lo! it ended in the most jarring discords that ever was produced by ministerial conversion. He swallowed the honey that heretofore hung on his lips, and his tongue, like an arrow barbed for the purposes of laceration, wounded as it spoke. He ordained that the householder should seek refuge in a *first floor*, while the tenant of that place retired to the *second*, who in his turn was to be transferred to the *garret*, whose inhabitant should seek shelter in the *kitchen*, the resident of which was to be thrust into the cellar, while the lord of that dungeon-like abode might expose himself to the chilling blast, and by *turning out* avoid an inquiry into his *Income*; and, Oh cruel irony! that the people might be convinced of his sincerity, he *doubled* the tax he had before opposed. This was a death blow to the family of the Snares. Mr. Snare sunk under the pressure, or if the reader pleases, according to the language of our day,

the profligacy of the age in which he was permitted to *exist*: he was taken to a prison because he had eaten that for which he could not pay; for it was the law of those times, that if a man could not pay his debtor, he was torn from his family, shut up in a prison, deprived of the power of exercising any occupation whereby he might be useful to society, or procure the means of discharging his debt; and, after a time, restored to the world a miserable instance of idleness and profligacy, from the ill habits contracted in a prison, and from the ruins since discovered, we are led to believe prisons were very numerous in the island, and must have greatly contributed to corrupt the people it is supposed they were foolishly intended to reform. The mice now defied his skill, and his children did as those have done in all ages who have no friend to help them.

Mercy and kindness, which the great God of Nature has, in the worst of times, never suffered to be entirely extinct, lest his choicest



attributes should be totally lost on earth, in a few months restored the disconsolate Snare to the bosome of his family.

As he had not the means to buy the royal grant to make his traps, he made a few privately ; but such was the ingratitude of his customers, that they refused to pay for a commodity vended *contrary to law*.

At the appointed time, the inquisitors of the district called upon him for the king's share of the income arising from the sale of his traps, and his attendance was demanded at the hall of audience. Having waited two hours in the outer court, comfortably crowded amongst the pennyless rabble that came to pray relief from these *merciless mercenaries*, he was introduced, and the first interrogatory put to him (by a brute at the head of the inquisitional band, or *banditti*, if the reader pleases, with all the rudeness that insolence and self-important ignorance could suggest, either to distress the feelings of the indigent, or glut the bloated importance of a JACK IN

OFFICE) was "What he wanted there." He told his tale, as the reader has already collected it, to which he added, that it was sufficiently painful to be reduced to the necessity of declaring his situation, and that he trusted the commonly-received notions of civility would insure him a candid hearing; but it somehow happened that neither *civility* or *good manners* had that day taken a seat at the board: *rudeness* ruled, and ten questions, from as many different quarters, were proposed to the astonished Trap-monger at one instant. To answer them was nearly as difficult as to understand them; he therefore contented himself with a rational appeal to their feelings, as to the propriety of seeking from a man a tenth part of that which, husbanded according to the most rigid rules of œconomy, was *totally insufficient* to afford the support his family demanded. A rational appeal, however, produced no effect; for it was the logic of that period, that if a man had but a loaf sufficient to make a meal for

six persons, and, from necessity, eked it out so as to appease the cravings of twelve, the inquisitors insisted the royal share should remain untouched. They distressed his feelings by swearing him to answer impertinent questions in the presence of their collectors and lowest *harpies of office*: thus the boasted and SWORN *secrecy* of their institution became a mockery of the individual, and those necessities which should have reposed within his own afflicted bosom, must become secreted at the expence of a PERJURY or exposed to the sacrificing opinions of the illiterate and illiberal.

By this *august, merciless, and absurd* tribunal, the victim was condemned to pay a tenth part of an income engendered in the minds of his judges, but which, having no reality, even their sagacity could not force him to produce. The inquisition, however, was vigilant, and they laid rapacious hands on the tools of this poor merchant, already unimportant to him for want of the royal

authority ; still less useful to the great personage who then reigned, who, although said to have been a good mechanic, is not reported to have been skilled in making instruments to capture mice ; a circumstance somewhat extraordinary, as his palace was abominably infested with their kindred vermin—**RATS.**

Snare, in his day, had essentially served the government, by detecting a plan to subvert the royal power, and his effort was effectual. No little kindness was found to fit this service, and great benefits were perhaps reserved for services of less importance. He had danced attendance, and he had written to a great man for recompence, but that noble character wrote him for answer, “ He was very sorry he could not serve poor Snare **AT PRESENT,**” and begged the word **PRESENT** might not mislead him with any hopes of services in **FUTURE** :—such was the courtly delicacy of those days!!

But to return to the disconsolate family that an act of parliament, as *absurd* in its *purpose* as it was *rapacious* in its *principle*, had deprived

of the means of existence, under colour of that justice which scorned to be tempered with any ray of mercy, or directed in its channel by an investigation of facts.

The poverty of Mr. Snare was now emblazoned in aggravated characters; those who before sought his society, (for he had much merit beyond the mere capacity to manufacture a Mouse-trap) shunned his walks: Pity loudly proclaimed his wants; but relief sought no entrance at his habitation: a constitution naturally good became broken from disappointment and adverse fortune, and a vivacity which rendered him an entertaining companion (although he was a keen satirist), served, when cloathed in a threadbare coat, to bring on him reproach where he once enjoyed esteem; for few people, even in better times, chuse to entertain a ragged wit.

When the inmost recesses of the mind are touched with real affliction, its best qualities wear away; its energies cease; despair seizes on the hopeless victim; even the nearest rela-

tives of him on whom the world frowns lose their esteem : his judgment is disregarded as his calamities become conspicuous, and he who, in the season of sunshine, was esteemed the oracle of his friends, when nipt by the chilling frost of adversity, is disregarded, and he sinks—to rise no more ! It was thus with the subject of this little memoir, who, had he lived in these days, when rational liberty has its full enjoyment---when licentiousness is most criminal, if exercised by characters of high rank—when merit is rewarded, and integrity the passport to preferment, he would, probably, have met with better fortune.

And now gentle reader let me congratulate you on the present happy period. Little is known of the manners and customs of the time I have referred to : few records of that age have escaped destruction. Our ancestors, either from fear we should improve by the *virtues*, or be tainted with the *vices* of the nineteenth century, have destroyed all that were publicly known. Of our own happy days let us speak

with an enthusiasm that becomes a grateful and rational people, disdaining the jargon-like bigotry of the ancients, and scorning to revere a foundation of *wisdom*, when it becomes degraded by the superstructure of *folly, corruption, and contradiction*. Let us, without regard to former periods, hail, thrice hail, the day that has given to us a chief magistrate possessed of all the refinements appropriate to his elevated rank, free from the vices for which courts were anciently celebrated. Born and bred amongst us; accustomed to the manners of the people whose rights it is his duty to maintain, he has added to his education a familiarity with men and manners, that, while it awakens him to their *need*, dictates a remedy for their *wants*.

The exclusive education of a PRINCE teaches him he is a distinct *being*, and fits him for a *tyrant*: the general education of a MAN tells him he is equal by nature---superior only by fortune, and inculcates the duties of humanity. To feel for wants, a prince should

be familiar with their existence; nor is the maxim that "Kings can do no *wrong*," a pretext to warrant an apathy to their doing *right*, or redressing *wrongs* done by others.

It is our boast, that we do not admit laws which create vice in the *people*, but recognise no criminality in their breach by a PRINCE.

We derive no supplies from a source that *corrupts* the morals to support the state; we tax no instruments of diversion to raise supplies for government, that our laws render it criminal for the *common people* to use; because such conduct would be ridiculous, even if authorized by a precedent. Our aim is *consistency*, and TRUTH the ruling principle by which we are guided.

We are too numerous to exercise the general voice in our national concerns; each district has its agent;---cities, towns, and even hamlets, have their representatives: *depopulated and barren wastes* have none; because the adoption of such a system of mock representation would be a burlesque upon common



sense. Our representatives are paid, or at least reimbursed for their services; and should an instance be found where the delegate of the people barter the PUBLIC GOOD for his PRIVATE INTEREST, he is dismissed and degraded, as unfit to be trusted by that society whose rights he would sacrifice for his own aggrandizement.

If wars are less frequent with us than with the ancients, it is because we despise a precedent for doing evil. Our officers of state are doubly paid in the time of peace; for plenty blesses the land where the sword is sheathed.

In war, we reduce the establishment to supply the people's wants, because (properly apportioned) *there is abundance for all men*; hence corruption from its vilest source is unknown amongst us. We neither use *fast days* nor return solemn thanks for victories achieved by the loss of that blood which the Great Author of our existence forbids us to spill in wantonness; we encourage not that mockery of Christianity, *war-waging sermons*,

nor resort to the history of the Jewish wars for texts in support of a doctrine which the Christian code (the foundation of our belief) will not afford.

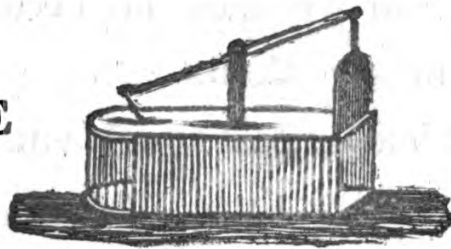
It is true we defend our rights, but it is equally so we seek no occasion to deprive other men of theirs.

They had, in past times, a maxim perpetually inculcated by their wisest philosophers, that men should “*do to others as they would be content others should do to them.*” They talked of hoping to be *forgiven* in proportion as they *forgave others*:---founded upon that still-unmutilated prayer of the Saviour of men, which we hope no time or age shall corrupt or destroy.

It is said, they preached morality in their houses of worship, while their prisons were full of persecuted individuals, at the instance of their wisest men and celebrated puritans ; in a word, they were a people of *theory*:--- *Practical* virtue belongs to us in a day which HUMPHREY blesses, that, from the

scraps he has accidentally collected, he is enabled, ere yet his HOURGLASS is run, to give to his own times the artless tale of the persecuted maker of a

**MOUSE**



**FINIS.**

---

W. Newman, Printer, Widegate Street.





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