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Richard Nugent, Editor]

THE WHOLE ART OF GOVERNMENT CONSISTS IN THE ART OF BEING HONEST.—JEFFERSON

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THE WAGS.

In a town which we call Middletown, because it was of the middle size, dwelt a worthy shop-keeper bearing the odd name of Jeremiah Wag. By dealing in all sorts of commodities, and steady attention to his business, he had managed to keep up his respectability, and doubtless would have considerably increased his store, but for the gradual increase of his family. For several years after his marriage, a new little Wag was ushered annually into the world; and though there had latterly been somewhat less of regularity, as many as ten small heads might be counted every evening in his back parlour. Jerry, the eldest boy, was, however, almost fourteen years of age, and therefore began to make himself useful, by carrying out small parcels and assisting behind the counter. All the rest were, to use their parent's phrase, 'dead stock,' and 'were eating their heads off' for, sooth to say, they were a jolly little set, and blessed with most excellent appetites. Such was the state of family matters at the time when our narrative commences.

Now, on the opposite side of the street, exactly facing the modest board on which Jeremiah's name was painted, with the usual announcement of certain commodities in which he dealt, was another board of a very different description. On it were emblazoned the arms of his Majesty, with the supporters, a lion and a unicorn, as the country folks said, 'a-fighting for the crown.'

The establishment indicated by this display, was upheld by a very different class of customers to that which patronised the shop. Two or three times in each day some private carriage or post-chaise would stop to change horses at the King's Arms, and occasionally a family took up their quarters there for the night, but the latter was a piece of good luck not often to be expected, as there were no lions to be seen in Middletown save the red rampant guardian on the sign-board.

It was hay-making time, and business was very 'slack' with the worthy Jeremiah; but he said that he did not care much about it, as the country folks were earning money, part of which he trusted would find its way into his till in due course. So, after rummaging about among his stock to see if he was 'out of anything,' he took his stand at the door, just to breathe a mouthful of fresh air. Titus Twist, the landlord, made his appearance at the same moment, in his own gateway, apparently with the same salubrious intent, and immediately beckoned to his neighbour to step across.

'Well, how are ye, Master Wag?' said he, when they met. 'Did you observe that green chariot that stands down in the yard there, and came in more than an hour ago?' Jeremiah answered in the negative. 'Well,' continued mine host, 'it belongs to one of the oddest, rummiest, little old gentlemen I ever clapped my eyes on. He's been asking me all sorts of questions, and seems mightily tickled with your name about all things. I think he's cracked. Howsoever, he's ordered dinner; but hush! here he comes.'

The little gentleman in question seemed between sixty and seventy, but excepting a certain sallowness of complexion, carried his years well, his motions being lively, and wearing a good humoured smile, as though habitual, on his countenance. His dress was plain, but good, and altogether becoming his apparent rank.

'I shall be back in a quarter of an hour,' said he to the landlord; 'I'm only going over the way to the shop to buy something,' and away he went, and of course was followed by Jeremiah, who, immediately on entering his own house, skipped nimbly behind the counter to wait upon his new customer.

After trying on some gloves, and purchasing a pair, the little strange gentleman looked round the shop, as though examining its contents to find something he wanted.

'Any thing else I can do for you, sir?' said Jeremiah. 'You sell almost every thing, I see Mr. Wag?' observed the old gentleman. 'Yes, Mr. Wag? Your name is Wag, I suppose?' 'Yes,

sir,' replied the shop-keeper, dryly. 'Wag, Wag, Wag!' repeated the stranger, briskly. 'Funny name! eh?' 'It was my father's before me,' observed Jeremiah, scarcely knowing what to think of the matter.

'Very good name!' continued the little gentleman, 'Like it very much. Got any children? Any little Wags, eh? Like to see 'em. Fond of children; little Wags in particular—he, he, he!' 'Much obliged to you for inquiring, sir,' replied the senior Wag; 'I've got just half a score, sorted sizes. That's the eldest!' and he pointed to young Jerry, whose lanky limbs were at the moment displayed, spread-eagle fashion, against the shelves, from the topmost of which he was reaching down some commodity for a customer.

'That's right. Bring 'em up to industry,' said the little gentleman. 'Well, I can't stay now, because my dinner's ready; but I see you sell Irish linen, and I want a piece for shirts; so, perhaps, you'll be so good as to look me out a good one and bring it over to me.'

'You may rely,' commenced Mr. Wag, but his new customer cut him short, by adding, 'I know that well enough,' as he briskly made his exit.

The industrious shop-keeper forthwith selected certain of his primest articles, folded them in a wrapper, and at the appointed time carried the whole across to the King's Arms.

He was immediately ushered into the presence of the eccentric elderly gentleman, who was seated alone behind a bottle of white and a bottle of red. 'Suppose you've dined, Master Wag?' said he, 'So, come! No, ceremony, sit down and take a glass of wine.'

'I'm very much obliged to you I'm sure sir,' replied Jeremiah; 'but I have just brought over half a dozen pieces of Irish linen for you to look at and choose.'

'Phoo, phoo!' quoth the small stranger, 'I don't want to see them. I know nothing about 'em. Leave all to you. Only meant to have had a piece; but as you have brought half a dozen, I may as well take 'em. 'Store's no sore,' they say. There's a fifty pound note!—Reckon 'em up, and see if this unusual change.'

Jeremiah stared at this unwholesome mode of dealing, stammered his thanks, and observed, that the goods would not amount half the money.

'So much the worse,' said the little gentleman. 'Must see if I can't buy something else in your line presently; but, sit down now; that's a good fellow! I want to have some talk with you.'

The bashful shopkeeper hereupon perched himself on the extreme front edge of a chair, at a respectful distance from the table; but was told to draw up closer by his hospitable entertainer. They then took up three or four glasses of wine together, and gradually Jeremiah found himself more at home, and scrupled not to reply to the odd stranger's questions respecting his family and occupations. And so they went on chatting till they appeared as two very old and intimate friends; for Mr. Wag was of an open, unsuspecting disposition, and talked as though he had no objection that all the world should know all about his affairs.

'Well, but, my dear Wag,' said the stranger, 'can't you tell what part of the country your father came from?'

'No, sir, I can't,' replied Jeremiah, 'he died when I was about eight years old, and the London merchant to whom he was clerk, put me to school, and after that apprenticed me to old Hick, who lived over the way where I do now. Well, there I served my time, and then married his daughter, and so came in for the business when he died; but I've increased it a pretty deal, and if I'd more capital, could make a snug thing of it by going into the wholesale, and serving village shops with grocery, and so on.'

'Why don't you try it?' asked the little gentleman.

'It won't do unless one has got the ready to go to market with,' replied Jeremiah, knowingly; 'and then one must be able to give credit, and ought to keep one's own wagon to carry out goods. No, no, it won't do. Many a man has made bad worse by getting out of his depth, and, as it is, thank God, I can live. The only thing that puzzles me now and then is, what I shall do with all the children.'

'Hark ye, my worthy Wag,' said the odd stranger, 'I have not got any children; so, if you'll let me pick among the lot, I don't care if I take two or three off your hands.'

'Sir!' exclaimed the astonished shopkeeper. 'I mean what I say,' replied the old gentleman, demurely. 'Take me with you. Introduce me to your wife and family, and let us all have a friendly cup of tea together in your back parlour. Don't stare, my good Wag; but fill your glass. I don't want to buy your little Wags, but I happen to have more of the 'ready,' as you call it, than I want; so I'll put them to school, or what you like. What say you?'

Jeremiah rubbed his eyes, as though doubtful if he were awake, and then uttered his thanks for such extraordinary kindness in the best way he was able; and, about an hour after, the whimsical little old rich gentleman was sitting by the side of Mrs. Wag, with a little curly-headed Wag on each knee, while the rest were playing

round, or gazing open-mouthed at the stranger with childish wonder.

By degrees all stiffness wore off; and, before the evening concluded, nothing could exceed the merriment of the whole party. The eccentric elderly gentleman had learned to call all the Wags by their names, and he played, and frolicked, and rolled upon the floor with the little people, in a style that made the parents suspect, with the landlord, that he must be 'cracked.'

However, at parting, he became more serious, and invited Jeremiah to come and breakfast with him in the morning, and to bring with him a copy of the names and birthdays of his children, as entered in the Family Bible.

Mr. and Mrs. Wag of course lay awake for an hour that night, talking over the strange incidents of the day, and perhaps building a few castles in the air, after the style of affectionate parents for their children.

On the following morning Jeremiah dressed himself in his Sunday suit, and repaired to fulfil his engagement. His new old friend received him in the most cordial manner, and they breakfasted together, chatting over family concerns as on the preceding day. When their repast was ended, the little gentleman read over the list of the young Wags, and smilingly observed, 'a jolly set of them! We must contrive to make them all good and happy Wags if we can, eh? Eldest, Jerry, almost fourteen—useful to you in business. That's right. Leave him there, eh? Next, Thomas, almost thirteen—fond of reading—told me so. A good school first, eh? Then three girls are running, Mary, Anne, and Fanny. Pack them off to a good school too. Never mind. Then comes William, eight—and Stephen, seven. Think I know where to place them—Just the right age. Perhaps can't do it at once, though. Humph. That's all I can take at present. The other three, Sarah, Henry, and Philip, too young. Well, my worthy Wag, you will learn about what I mean to do with them before long, and a friend of mine will call upon you some day to consult about the best way of increasing your business. Settle all in time. No more to say now but good-bye—eh? Paid the landlord's bill before breakfast, 'cause don't like to be kept waiting. Didn't mean to have stopped longer than to change horses when I came yesterday. Glad I have thought. Hope you won't be sorry. Halloa! waiter! is my carriage ready?' 'At the door sir,' shouted the landlord in reply. 'That's right!' exclaimed the extraordinary elderly gentleman. 'Good-bye, my worthy Wag! Remember me to Mrs. Wag, and give my love to all the little Wags. Ten besides yourselves! A dozen Wags in one family! Never expected to see such a sight as that! He, he, he! See it again, though, hope. Wag together, all of you, like a bundle of sticks, hope! And, laughing and uttering similar incoherent sentences alternately, he walked briskly along the passage to his carriage, into which he forthwith jumped, and, having repeated his valediction to the astounded shopkeeper, he ordered the postilion to drive on.

Thus Jeremiah was prevented from expressing his grateful feelings for such wonderful promises, and so stood gaping in silence till the carriage was out of sight.

'Why, you seem regularly 'mazed, neighbor,' exclaimed the landlord.

'Enough to make me,' replied Mr. Wag. 'If one-half what I've heard this morning should come true, I shall be a lucky fellow, that's all!'

'The old fellow's cracked,' observed Titus Twist. 'He's a gentleman, however, every inch of him, that I will say for him. Didn't make a word about nothing. All right. Used to good living, no doubt. More's the pity, as he's cracked. He certainly ought not to be allowed to travel without a servant as he does.'

'Well, observed Jeremiah, 'I don't know what to say or what to think about it; but, if he is cracked—humph! I don't know. It may be so. However, there's no harm done yet.'

'So he's been cramm'ing you eh?' said mine host, 'Made you a present of the moon perhaps? They do fancy strange things, and think themselves kings, and very rich in particular.'

The truth of this latter assertion made an impression upon our worthy shopkeeper, who communicated it to his wife; but she had taken a great fancy to the odd old gentleman, and was not to be shaken in her conviction that he would really be as good 'as his word.'

'Well,' observed her husband, 'time will show; and, at all events, it was no bad thing to sell six pieces of fine linen at once. We don't have such customers every day. However, the best thing we can do is, to keep our own secret; for, if the neighbours were to hear of it, we should never hear the last of it.'

Mrs. Wag agreed in the propriety of her spouse's suggestion; but, nevertheless, was unable to refrain from dropping hints to sundry gossips concerning her anticipations of coming good fortune; and the vagueness and mysterious importance of her manner created a sensation, and caused many strange surmises. Some decided that the Wags had been so imprudent as to purchase a whole lottery ticket, and blamed them accordingly; while others shook their heads, and hinted that, with so large a family,

it would be a very fortunate circumstance if Jeremiah could manage so as not to go back into the world; and, for their parts, they never liked to hear folks talk mysteriously about good luck; so, for a time, the stranger's visit appeared to have produced results somewhat the reverse of beneficial; but, at the end of a month, an elderly gentleman, dressed in black, entered the shop, and requested a private interview with Mr. Wag; and as the back parlour was full of little Wags then undergoing the ceremonies of ablution, combing, &c., he proposed that they should adjourn to the King's Arms.

When they were seated there, the stranger very deliberately proceeded to arrange a variety of papers upon the table in a business-like manner; and when his task was completed, apparently to his satisfaction, he smiled, rubbed his hands, and thus addressed the wondering shopkeeper.

'My name is Stephen Goodfellow. I am an Attorney, living in London, and there' (handing a card) 'is my address. You will probably guess who is my client, but my instructions are to conceal his name. Well, he has consulted with me as to the best mode of carrying your intention of increasing your business into effect, and I have, consequently, had interviews with certain commercial gentlemen, and ahem! the result is that as the thing must be done gradually, I have to present you, in the first place, with this order for a thousand pounds. You will then be so good as to sign this document, by reading which you will perceive that you cannot be called on for repayment before the expiration of three years. Ahem! don't interrupt me. That will do to begin with but, after a little while, as you must give credit, and some of your commodities, particularly grocery, amount to considerable sums, you may want more, so—ahem!—yes, this is the paper. You are to put your usual signature here; and, mark me, in six months from this day an account will be opened in your name with the London bankers, whose check-book I now present you with. They will have assets in their hands, and instructions to honour your drafts for any sum or sums not exceeding four thousand pounds. You understand?'

'I hear what you say sir,' stammered Jeremiah; 'but, really, I'm so astonished, that—'

'Well, well,' observed Mr. Goodfellow, smiling, 'it certainly is not an every-day transaction; but my respected client is a little eccentric, and we must allow him to do things in his own way. He has taken a fancy to you, that's clear; and when he takes any thing in hand, he doesn't mind trifles.'

'But so much!' exclaimed Mr. Wag. 'One thousand—four thousand—five thousand pounds. It is like a dream! Surely, sir, and he hesitated 'surely the gentleman can't be in—ahem!—in—his—right senses?'

'Sound as a bell,' replied the lawyer. 'I hope you may have as clear a head to carry on your new business. At present you are a little bewildered, that's plain enough, but no great marvel. However, my time is precious, so let me have your signature, and I'm off.'

He then placed the papers before Jeremiah, who, after a little more demur, and a great deal of trepidation, wrote his name twice, and received the money order and the banker's check-book. Mr. Goodfellow then ordered a chaise, and chatted familiarly till it was ready, when he shook Mr. Wag by the hand, wished him good luck, and departed.

'I told you so!' exclaimed Mrs. Wag, when her spouse related the morning's adventure.—'He seemed so fond of the children. I knew how it would be. But you should have asked his name. I wonder who he can be! Some great lord, no doubt. Well, bless him, I say! God bless him, whoever he is. Oh, Jerry! my dear Jerry Wag! I feel as if I was a-going to cry. How foolish! Well, I can't help it, and that's the truth; and the good housewife wiped her eyes, and then threw her arms round the neck of her dearly beloved Wag, who, albeit that he was unused to the melting mood, found his eyes suddenly grow dim, and so they performed a weeping duet together.

It is pleasant to record, that at the termination of this natural paroxysm, they neglected not to return thanks to the higher Power for the wonderful change that had taken place in their prospects.

Their subsequent task was to take counsel together; but that was a work requiring more of calmness than they possessed for the first few days. However, by degrees, as time rolled on the industrious couple made their arrangements and, at the end of six months, Mr. Wag had so increased his business, that it became advisable for him to have recourse to his London bankers. In the meanwhile, he had sent his son Tom and the three eldest girls to school, agreeably to the intimation of his unknown friend, which he considered as a command that he was in duty bound to comply with. Still it appeared very extraordinary that the very little elderly gentleman neither communicated with nor came to see them; but, as the whole affair was out of the common way, Jeremiah resolved industriously to avail himself of the advantages of his new position, as the best means of testifying his gratitude during his benefactor's absence.

Much marvelling, of course, there was in the town and neighbourhood at the steady increase in Mr. Wag's 'concern,' in spite of his verplain statement that a kind friend had advanced him a considerable sum.

'Who could that friend be?' was the puzzling question which no one could answer, but his unremitting attention to business, the punctuality of his payments, and other evidences of his prosperity, sufficed to ensure him general respect, though certain envious busy bodies would venture now and then to hint significantly that 'all is not gold that glistens.'

So matters went on pleasantly with the Wags till winter, when Tom and his three sisters came home for the holidays, and the latter assisted their mother in preparing for the festivities of the season.

(CONCLUSION NEXT WEEK.)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Message from the President of the United States to the two Houses of Congress, at the commencement of the second session of the Twenty-Sixth Congress.

Fellow Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

Our devout gratitude is due to the Supreme Being for having graciously continued to our beloved country, through the vicissitudes of another year, the invaluable blessings of health, plenty and peace. Seldom has this favored land been so generally exempted from the ravages of disease, or the labor of the husbandman more amply rewarded; and never before have our relations with other countries been placed on a more favorable basis than that which they so happily occupy at this critical juncture in the affairs of the world. A rigid and persevering abstinence from all interference with the domestic and political relations of other States, alike due to the genius and distinctive character of our Government and to the principles by which it is directed; a faithful observance, in the management of our foreign relations, of the practice of speaking plainly, dealing justly, and requiring truth and justice in return, as the best conservatives of the peace of nations; a strict impartiality in our manifestations of friendship, in the commercial privileges we concede, and those we require from others: these, accompanied by a disposition as prompt to maintain, in every emergency, our own rights, as we are from principle averse to the invasion of those of others, have given to our country and Government a standing in the great family of nations, of which we have just cause to be proud, and the advantages of which are experienced by our citizens throughout every portion of the earth to which their enterprising and adventurous spirit may carry them. Few, if any, remain insensible to the value of friendship, or ignorant of the terms on which it can be acquired, and by which it can alone be preserved.

A series of questions of long standing, difficult in their adjustment, and important in their consequences, in which the rights of our citizens and the honor of the country were deeply involved, have, in the course of a few years, (the most of them during the successful administration of my immediate predecessor,) been brought to a satisfactory conclusion; and the most important of those remaining are, I am happy to believe, in a fair way of being speedily and satisfactorily adjusted.

With all the Powers of the world our relations are those of honorable peace. Since your adjournment, nothing serious has occurred to interrupt or threaten this desired harmony. If clouds have lowered above the other hemisphere, they have not cast their portentous shadows upon our happy shores. Bound by no entangling alliances, yet linked by a common nature and interest with the other nations of mankind, our aspirations are for the preservation of peace, in whose solid and civilizing triumphs all may participate with a generous emulation. Yet it behooves us to be prepared for any event, and to be always ready to maintain those just and enlightened principles of national intercourse, for which this Government has ever contended. In the shock of contending empires, it is only by assuming a resolute bearing, and clothing themselves with defensive armor, that neutral nations can maintain their independent rights.

The excitement which grew out of the territorial controversy between the U. States and Great Britain having in a great measure subsided, it is hoped that a favorable period is approaching for its final settlement. Both Governments must now be convinced of the dangers with which the question is fraught; and it must be their desire, as it is their interest, that this perpetual cause of irritation should be removed as speedily as practicable.

In my last annual message you were informed that the proposition for a commission of exploration and survey promised by Great Britain had been received, and that a counterproject, including also a provision for the certain and final adjustment of the limits in dispute, was then before the British Government for its consideration. The answer of that Government, accompanied by additional propositions of its own, was received, through its minister here, since