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# 1.

THE CONTENTS  
OF  
Monsieur De La Bruyere's  
CHARACTERS

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# 3.

I [*Note: Borrow'd borrowed*] the subject matter of this Book from the Publick , and I now restore what it lent me . . Indeed having [*Note: finish'd finished*] the whole Work , with the utmost regard to Truth that I was capable of 'tis but just I should make it Restitution . The World may here view the picture I have drawn of it from Nature , and if I have hit on any defects (which it agrees with me to be such) , it may at leisure correct them. This is what a Man ought chiefly to propose to himself in Writing , tho he can't always be sure of success.

However, as long as Men distaste Vice so little as they do, we should never give over reproaching them. [*Note: : .]* They would perhaps be worse, were it not for censure and reproof , which makes Writing and Preaching of absolute necessity. The Orator and Writer can't stifle the joy they feel when they are applauded, but they ought to blush in themselves, if they aim at nothing more than praise , by their Discourses or Writings. Besides, that the most certain and least equivocal approbation , is the change of Manners in their Readers or Hearers [*Note: : .]*

We should neither write nor speak but for Instruction ; yet we may lawfully rejoyce, if we at the same time please those to whom we address, and by this means make the Truths we should advance, the more insinuating, and the better [*Note: receiv'd received*]

When any thoughts or reflections slide into a Book , which have neither fire, turn, nor vivacity agreeable to the rest, tho they seem at first to be admitted for variety, to divert our Minds , and render them more attentive on what is to follow, but otherwise are not proper, sensible, or accommodated to the capacity of the People (eliminate comma)(whom we must by no means neglect) both the Reader and the Author ought to condemn [*Note: 'em them*]

This is one Rule [*Note: : .]* There's another, which my particular Interest obliges me to request may not be forgot, that is, always to have my Title in view, and to think, as often as this Book is read, that I describe the Characters, or Manners of the Age [*Note: , .]* For tho I frequently take [*Note: 'em them*] from the court of France , and Men of my own Nation , yet they cannot be [*Note: confin'd confined*] to any one court or country , without losing a great deal of the compass and usefulness of my Book , and destroying the design of the Work , which is to paint Mankind in general, as the order of the chapters , and a certain insensible connexion, which the reflexions that compose them, have one with another, do plainly demonstrate.

After this so necessary a precaution, the consequences of which 'tis easie enough for any body to penetrate, I must protest against all chagrin , complaint , malicious interpretation , false application and censure ; against the insipid Railliers , and the ill-meaning Readers .

Men ought to know how to Read , and then hold their tongues , or else to be able to relate what they have read, and nothing more or less than what they have read. [Note: ; .] Which if they are sometimes able to do, 'tis not enough, unless they have the Will to do it.

Without these conditions , which an exact and scrupulous Author has a right to require of some People , as the only recompence of his Labour , I question whether he ought to continue Writing , if he prefers his private satisfaction to the publick good , and a zeal for promoting Truth .

I confess, from the year 1690 and before the publishing the 5th Edition , I was divided between an impatience , to give my Book another figure , and a better form , by new Characters , and a fear left some People should say [Note: , :] Will these Characters never be finisht? shall we never see any thing else from this Author ?

On one side, several Men of good sense told me, the matter is solid, useful, pleasant, inexhaustible; live long, and treat on't without interruptions as long as you live: What can you do better?

The follies of Mankind will every year furnish you with a Volume . While others, with a great deal of Reason , made me apprehend the capriciousness of the multitude , and the levity of the People , (with whom, however, I have good cause to be content.)

These were always suggesting to me, that for these thirty years past, few have read with any other intent, than for the sake of reading, and that to amuse the World , there ought to be new chapters and a new title [Note: , .] That this humour of indifference had [Note: fill'd filled] the shops , and stockt the age with piles of dull and tedious Books , without stile or meaning , rules or order , contrary to Decency or Manners , written in haste, read with precipitation, and only read for their novelty . They added farther, if I could not enlarge a sensible Book , I had best sit still, and do nothing.

I in some measure took both their advices , as opposite as they [Note: seem'd seemed] to be, and [Note: observ'd observed] a medium which disagreed with neither. I did not scruple to add some new remarks , to those which already had doubled the bulk of the first edition of my Book , but that the Publick might not be [Note: oblig'd obliged] to read over what was done before, to come at what has been added since, and that they might immediately find out what they would only read, I took care to distinguish the second augmentation by a greater mark, and the first by a less, as well to shew the progress of my Characters , as to guide the Reader in the choice he might be willing to make.

And lest he should be afraid that I [Note: shou'd should] never have done with these Additions , I added to all my exactness, the sincere promise to venture on nothing more of this kind. If any one accuses me with breaking my word, by adding in the three ensuing Editions a great many new Remarks , I confess ingenuously I had not the power to suppress 'em.

He may perceive, by mingling what was new with what was old, without any mark of distinction, I did not so much endeavour to entertain the World with novelties , as to deliver down to Posterity , a Book of Manners , more pure, regular and compleat.

To conclude, what I have written are not [Note: design'ed designed] for maxims; those are like Laws in Morality , and I have neither Genius nor Authority sufficient to qualifie me for a Legislator . I know well enough, I have offended against the custom of writing Maxims , which are [Note: deliver'd deliveredd] in short and concise terms , like the manner of Oracles .

Some of my Remarks are of this kind, others are more extended. We think of things differently, and we express 'em in a turn altogether as different: By a sentence , an argument , a metaphor , or some other figure , a parallel , a simple comparison, by a story at length, or a single passage , by a description or a picture , from whence proceeds the length or shortness of my Reflections .

Those who write Maxims , would be thought infallible; on the contrary, I allow any body to say of me, my Remarks are not always good, provided he will himself make better.