

The Sermon Of The Merry Vicar Of Meudon

Honore de Balzac

When, for the last time, came Master Francis Rabelais, to the court of King Henry the Second of the name, it was in that winter when the will of nature compelled him to quit for ever his fleshly garb, and live forever in his writings resplendent with that good philosophy to which we shall always be obliged to return. The good man had, at that time, counted as nearly as possible seventy flights of the swallow. His Homeric head was but scantily ornamented with hair, but his beard was still perfect in its flowing majesty; there was still an air of spring-time in his quiet smile, and wisdom on his ample brow. He was a fine old man according to the statement of those who had the happiness to gaze upon his face, to which Socrates and Aristophanes, formerly enemies, but then become friends, contributed their features. Hearing his last hours tinkling in his ears he determined to go and pay his respects to the king of France, because he was having just at that time arrived in his castle of Tournelles, the good man's house being situated in the gardens of St Paul, was not a stone's throw distant from the court. He soon found himself in the presence of Queen Catherine, Madame Diana, whom she received from motives of policy, the king, the constable, the cardinals of Lorraine and Bellay, Messieurs de Guise, the Sieur de Birague, and other Italians, who at that time stood well at court in consequence of the king's protection; the admiral, Montgomery, the officers of the household, and certain poets, such as Melin de St. Gelay, Philibert de l'Orme, and the Sieur Brantome.

Perceiving the good man, the king, who knew his wit, said to him, with a smile, after a short conversation--

"Hast thou ever delivered a sermon to thy parishioners of Meudon?"

Master Rabelais, thinking that the king was joking, since he had never troubled himself further about his post than to collect the revenues accruing from it, replied--

"Sire, my listeners are in every place, and my sermon heard throughout Christendom."

Then glancing at all the courtiers, who, with the exception of Messieurs du Bellay and Chatillon, considered him to be nothing but a learned merry-andrew, while he was really the king of all wits, and a far better king than he whose crown only the courtiers venerate, there came into the good man's head the malicious idea to philosophically pump over their heads, just as it pleased Gargantua to give the Parisians a bath from the turrets of Notre Dame, so he added--

"If you are in a good humour, sire, I can regale you with a capital little sermon, always appropriate, and which I have kept under the tympanum of my left ear in order to deliver it in a fit place, by way of an aulic parable."

"Gentlemen," said the king, "Master Francis Rabelais has the floor of the court, and our salvation is concerned in his speech. Be silent, I pray you, and give heed; he is fruitful in evangelical drolleries."

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"Sire," said the good vicar, "I commence."

All the courtiers became silent, and arranged themselves into a circle, pliant as osiers before the father of Pantagruel who unfolded to them the following tale, in words the illustrious eloquence of which it is impossible to equal. But since this tale has only been verbally handed down to us, the author will be pardoned if he write after his own fashion.

"In his old age Gargantua took to strange habits, which greatly astonished his household, but the which he was forgiven since he was seven hundred and four years old, in spite of the statement of St. Clement of Alexandria in his Stromates, which makes out that at this time he was a quarter of a day less, which matters little to us. Now this paternal master, seeing that everything was going wrong in his house, and that every one was fleecing him, conceived a great fear that he would in his last moments be stripped of everything, and resolved to invent a more perfect system of management in his domains, and he did well. In a cellar of Gargantuan abode he hid away a fine heap of red wheat, beside twenty jars of mustard and several delicacies, such as plums and Tourainian rolls, articles of a dessert, Olivet cheese, goat cheese, and others, well known between Langeais and Loches, pots of butter, hare pasties, preserved ducks, pigs' trotters in bran, boatloads and pots full of crushed peas, pretty little pots of Orleans quince preserve, hogsheads of lampreys, measures of green sauce, river game, such as francolins, teal, sheldrake, heron, and flamingo, all preserved in sea-salt, dried raisins, tongues smoked in the manner invented by Happe-Mousche, his celebrated ancestor, and sweetstuff for Garga-melle on feast days; and a thousand other things which are detailed in the records of the Ripuary laws and in certain folios of the Capitularies, Pragmatics, royal establishments, ordinances and institutions of the period. To be brief, the good man, putting his spectacles on his nose or his nose in his spectacles, looked about for a fine flying dragon or unicorn to whom the guard of this precious treasure could be committed. With this thought in his head he strolled about the gardens. He did not desire a Coquecigrue, because the Egyptians were afraid of them, as it appeared in the Hieroglyphics. He dismissed the idea of engaging the legions of Caucquemarres, because emperors disliked them and also the Romans according to that sulky fellow Tacitus. He rejected the Pechrocholiars in council assembled, the Magi, the Druids, the legion or Papimania, and the Massorets, who grew like quelch-grass and overran all the land, as he had been told by his son, Pantagruel, on his return from his journey. The good man calling to mind old stories, had no confidence in any race, and if it had been permissible would have implored the Creator for a new one, but not daring to trouble Him about such trifles, did not know whom to choose, and was thinking that his wealth would be a great trouble to him, when he met in his path a pretty little shrew-mouse of the noble race of shrew-mice, who bear all gules on an azure ground. By the gods! be sure that it was a splendid animal, with the finest tail of the whole family, and was strutting about in the sun like a brave shrew-mouse. It was proud of having been in this world since the Deluge, according to letters- patent of indisputable nobility, registered by the parliament of the universe, since it appears from the Ecumenical Inquiry a shrew-mouse was in Noah's Ark." Here Master Alcofribas raised his cap slightly, and said, reverently, "It was Noah, my lords, who planted the vine, and first had the honour of getting drunk upon the juice of its fruit."

"For it is certain," he continued, "that a shrew-mouse was in the vessel from which we all came; but the men have made bad marriages; not so the mice, because they are more jealous of their coat of arms than any other animals, and would not receive a field-mouse among them, even though he had the especial gift of being able to convert grains of sand to fine

fresh hazelnuts. This fine gentlemanly character so pleased the good Gargantua, that he decided to give the post of watching his granaries to the shrew-mouse, with the most ample of powers--of justice, comittimus, missi dominici, clergy, men-at-arms, and all. The shrew-mouse promised faithfully to accomplish his task, and to do his duty as a loyal beast, on condition that he lived on a heap of grain, which Gargantua thought perfectly fair. The shrew-mouse began to caper about in his domain as happy as a prince who is happy, reconnoitering his immense empire of mustard, countries of sugar, provinces of ham, duchies of raisins, counties of chitterlings, and baronies of all sorts, scrambling on to the heap of grain and frisking his tail against everything. To be brief, everywhere was the shrew-mouse received with honour by the pots, which kept a respectful silence, except two golden tankards, which knocked against each other like the bells of a church ringing a tocsin, at which he was much pleased, and thanked them, right and left, by a nod of the head, while promenading in the rays of the sun, which were illuminating his domain. Therein so splendidly did the brown colour of his hair shine forth, that one would have thought him a northern king in his sable furs. After his twists, turns, jumps and capers, he munched two grains of corn, sat upon the heap like a king in full court, and fancied himself the most illustrious of shrew-mice. At this moment they came from their accustomed holes the gentlemen of the night-prowling court, who scamper with their little feet across the floors; these gentlemen being the rats, mice, and other gnawing, thieving, and crafty animals, of whom the citizens and housewives complain. When they saw the shrew-mouse they took fright, and all remained shyly at the threshold of their dens. Among these common people, in spite of the danger, one old infidel of the trotting, nibbling race of mice, advanced a little, and putting his nose in the air, had the courage to stare my lord shrew-mouse full in the face, although the latter was proudly squatted upon his rump, with his tail in the air; and he came to the conclusion that he was a devil, from whom nothing but scratches were to be gained. And from these facts, Gargantua, in order that the high authority of his lieutenant might be universally known by all of the shrew-mice, cats, weasels, martins, field-mice, mice, rats, and other bad characters of the same kidney, had lightly dipped his muzzle, pointed as a larding pin, in oil of musk, which all shrew-mice have since inherited, because this one, in spite of the sage advice of Gargantua, rubbed himself against others of his breed. From this sprang the troubles in the Muzaraignia of which I will give you a good account in an historical book when I get an opportunity.

"Then an old mouse, or rat--the rabbis of Talmud have not yet agreed concerning the species--perceiving by this perfume that this shrew-mouse was appointed to guard the grain of Gargantua, and had been sprinkled with virtues, invested with full powers, and armed at all points, was alarmed lest he should no longer be able to live, according to the custom of mice, upon the meats, morsels, crusts, crumbs, leavings, bits, atoms, and fragments of this Canaan of rats. In this dilemma the good mouse, artful as an old courtier who had lived under two regencies and three kings, resolved to try the mettle of the shrew-mouse, and devote himself to the salvation of the jaws of his race. This would have been a laudable thing in a man, but it was far more so in a mouse, belonging to a tribe who live for themselves alone, barefacedly and shamelessly, and in order to gratify themselves would defile a consecrated wafer, gnaw a priest's stole without shame, and would drink out of a Communion cup, caring nothing for God. The mouse advanced with many a bow and scrape, and the shrew-mouse let him advance rather near--for, to tell the truth, these animals are naturally short-sighted. Then this Curtius of nibblers made his little speech, not the jargon of common mice, but in the polite language of shrew-mice:--'My lord, I have heard with much concern of your glorious family, of which I am one of the most devoted slaves. I

know the legend of your ancestors, who were thought much of by the ancient Egyptians, who held them in great veneration, and adored them like other sacred birds. Nevertheless, your fur robe is so royally perfumed, and its colour is so splendiferously tanned, that I am doubtful if I recognise you as belonging to this race, since I have never seen any of them so gloriously attired. However you have swallowed the grain after the antique fashion. Your proboscis is a proboscis of sapience; you have kicked like a learned shrew-mouse; but if you are a true shrew-mouse, you should have in I know not what part of your ear--I know not what special auditorial channel, which I know not, what wonderful door, closes I know not how, and I know not with what movements, by your secret commands to give you, I know not why, licence not to listen to I know not what things, which would be displeasing to you, on account of the special and peculiar perfection of your faculty of hearing everything, which would often pain you."

"True,' said the shrew-mouse, 'the door has just fallen. I hear nothing!"

"Ah, I see,' said the old rogue.

"And he made for the pile of corn, from which he commenced to take his store for the winter.

"Did you hear anything?' asked he.

"I hear the pit-a-pat of my heart.'

"Kouick!' cried all the mice; 'we shall be able to hoodwink him.'

"The shrew-mouse, fancying that he had met with a faithful vassal, opened the trap of his musical orifice, and heard the noise of the grain going towards the hole. Then, without having recourse to forfeiture, the justice of commissaries, he sprang upon the old mouse and squeezed him to death. Glorious death! for the hero died in the thick of the grain, and was canonised as a martyr. The shrew-mouse took him by the ears and placed him on the door the granary, after the fashion of the Ottoman Porte, where my good Panurge was within an ace of being spitted. At the cries of the dying wretch the rats, mice, and others made for their holes in great haste. When the night had fallen they came to the cellar, convoked for the purpose of holding a council to consider public affairs; to which meeting, in virtue of the Papyrian and other laws, their lawful wives were admitted. The rats wished to pass before the mice, and serious quarrels about precedence nearly spoiled everything; but a big rat gave his arm to a mouse, and the gaffer rats and gammer mice being paired off in the same way, all were soon seated on their rumps, tails in air, muzzles stretched, whiskers stiff, and their eyes brilliant as those of a falcon. Then commenced a deliberation, which finished up with insults and a confusion worthy of an ecumenical council of holy fathers. One said this and another said that, and a cat passing by took fright and ran away, hearing these strange noises: 'Bou, bou, grou, ou, ou, houic, houic, briff, briffnac, nac, nac, fouix, fouix, trr, trr, trr, trr, za, za, zaaa, brr, brr, raaa, ra, ra, ra, fouix!' so well blended together in a babel of sound, that a council at the Hotel de Ville could not have made a greater hubbub. During this tempest a little mouse, who was not old enough to enter parliament, thrust through a chink her inquiring snout, the hair on which was as downy as that of all mice, too downy to be caught. As the tumult increased, by degrees her body followed her nose, until she came to the hoop of a cask, against which she so dextrously

squatted that she might have been mistaken for a work of art carved in antique bas-relief. Lifting his eyes to heaven to implore a remedy for the misfortunes of the state, an old rat perceived this pretty mouse, so gentle and shapely, and declared that the State might be saved by her. All the muzzles turned to this Lady of Good Help, became silent, and agreed to let her loose upon the shrew-mouse, and in spite of the anger of certain envious mice, she was triumphantly marched around the cellar, where, seeing her walk mincingly, mechanically move her tail, shake her cunning little head, twitch her diaphanous ears, and lick with her little red tongue the hairs just sprouting on her cheeks, the old rats fell in love with her and wagged their wrinkled, white-whiskered jaws with delight at the sight of her, as did formerly the old men of Troy, admiring the lovely Helen, returning from her bath. Then the maiden was conducted to the granary, with instructions to make a conquest of the shrew-mouse's heart, and save the fine red grain, as did formerly the fair Hebrew, Esther, for the chosen people, with the Emperor Ahasuerus, as is written in the master-book, for Bible comes from the Greek word biblos, as if to say the only book. The mouse promised to deliver the granaries, for by a lucky chance she was the queen of mice, a fair, plump, pretty little mouse, the most delicate little lady that ever scampered merrily across the floors, scratched between the walls, and gave utterance to little cries of joy at finding nuts, meal, and crumbs of bread in her path; a true fay, pretty and playful, with an eye clear as crystal, a little head, sleek skin, amorous body, rosy feet, and velvet tail--a high born mouse and a polished speaker with a natural love of bed and idleness--a merry mouse, more cunning than an old Doctor of Sorbonne fed on parchment, lively, white bellied, streaked on the back, with sweet moulded breasts, pearl-white teeth, and of a frank open nature--in fact, a true king's morsel."

This portraiture was so bold--the mouse appearing to have been the living image of Madame Diana, then present--that the courtiers stood aghast. Queen Catherine smiled, but the king was in no laughing humour. But Rabelais went on without paying any attention to the winks of the Cardinal Bellay and de Chatillon, who were terrified for the good man.

"The pretty mouse," said he, continuing, "did not beat long about the bush, and from the first moment that she trotted before the shrew-mouse, she had enslaved him for ever by her coquetries, affectations, friskings, provocations, little refusals, piercing glances, and wiles of a maiden who desires yet dares not, amorous oglings, little caresses, preparatory tricks, pride of a mouse who knows her value, laughings and squeakings, triflings and other endearments, feminine, treacherous and captivating ways, all traps which are abundantly used by the females of all nations. When, after many wriggings, smacks in the face, nose lickings, gallantries of amorous shrew-mice, frowns, sighs, serenades, titbits, suppers and dinners on the pile of corn, and other attentions, the superintendent overcame the scruples of his beautiful mistress, he became the slave of this incestuous and illicit love, and the mouse, leading her lord by the snout, became queen of everything, nibbled his cheese, ate the sweets, and foraged everywhere. This the shrew-mouse permitted to the empress of his heart, although he was ill at ease, having broken his oath made to Gargantua, and betrayed the confidence placed in him. Pursuing her advantage with the pertinacity of a woman, one night they were joking together, the mouse remembered the dear old fellow her father, and desiring that he should make his meals off the grain, she threatened to leave her lover cold and lonely in his domain if he did not allow her to indulge her filial piety. In the twinkling of a mouse's eye he had granted letters patent, sealed with a green seal, with tags of crimson silk, to his wench's father, so that the Gargantuan palace was open to him at all hours, and he was at liberty see his good, virtuous daughter, kiss her on the forehead, and eat his fill,

but always in a corner. Then there arrived a venerable old rat, weighing about twenty- five ounces, with a white tail, marching like the president of a Court of Justice, wagging his head, and followed by fifteen or twenty nephews, all with teeth as sharp as saws, who demonstrated to the shrew-mouse by little speeches and questions of all kinds that they, his relations, would soon be loyally attached to him, and would help him to count the things committed to his charge, arrange and ticket them, in order that when Gargantua came to visit them he would find everything in perfect order. There was an air of truth about these promises. The poor shrew-mouse was, however, in spite of this speech, troubled by ideas from on high, and serious pricking of shrew-mousian conscience. Seeing that he turned up his nose at everything, went about slowly and with a careworn face, one morning the mouse who was pregnant by him, conceived the idea of calming his doubts and easing his mind by a Sorbonnical consultation, and sent for the doctors of his tribe. During the day she introduced to him one, Sieur Evegault, who had just stepped out of a cheese where he lived in perfect abstinence, an old confessor of high degree, a merry fellow of good appearance, with a fine black skin, firm as a rock, and slightly tonsured on the head by the pat of a cat's claw. He was a grave rat, with a monastical paunch, having much studied scientific authorities by nibbling at their works in parchments, papers, books and volumes of which certain fragments had remained upon his grey beard. In honour of and great reverence for his great virtue and wisdom, and his modest life, he was accompanied by a black troop of black rats, all bringing with them pretty little mice, their sweethearts, for not having adopted the canons of the council of Chesil, it was lawful for them to have respectable women for concubines. These beneficed rats, being arranged in two lines, you might have fancied them a procession of the university authorities going to Lendit. And they all began to sniff the victuals.

"When the ceremony of placing them all was complete, the old cardinal of the rats lifted up his voice, and in a good rat-latin oration pointed out to the guardian of the grain that no one but God was superior to him; and that to God alone he owed obedience, and he entertained him with many fine phrases, stuffed with evangelical quotations, to disturb the principal and fog his flock; in fact, fine argument interlarded with much sound sense. The discourse finished with a peroration full of high sounding words in honour of shrew-mice, among whom his hearer was the most illustrious and best beneath the sun; and this oration considerably bewildered the keeper of the granary.

"This good gentleman's head was thoroughly turned, and he installed this fine speaking rat and his tribe in his manor, where night and day his praises and little songs in his honour were sung, not forgetting his lady, whose little paw was kissed and little tail was sniffed at by all. Finally, the mistress, knowing that certain young rats were still fasting, determined to finish her work. Then she kissed her lord tenderly, loading him with love, and performing those little endearing antics of which one alone was sufficient to send a beast to perdition; and said to the shrew-mouse that he wasted the precious time due to their love by travelling about, that he was always going here or there, and that she never had her proper share of him; that when she wanted his society, he was on the leads chasing the cats, and that she wished him always to be ready to her hand like a lance, and kind as a bird. Then in her great grief she tore out a grey hair, declaring herself, weepingly, to be the most wretched little mouse in the world. The shrew-mouse pointed out to her that she was the mistress of everything, and wished to resist, but after the lady had shed a torrent of tears he implored a truce and considered her request. Then instantly drying her tears, and giving him her paw to kiss, she advised him to arm some soldiers, trusty and tried rats, old warriors, who would go

the rounds to keep watch. Everything was thus wisely arranged. The shrew-mouse had the rest of the day to dance, play, and amuse himself, listen to the roundelays and ballads which the poets composed in his honour, play the lute and the mandore, make acrostics, eat, drink and be merry. One day his mistress having just risen from her confinement, after having given birth to the sweetest little mouse-sorex or sorex-mouse, I know not what name was given to this mongrel food of love, whom you may be sure, the gentlemen in the long robe would manage to legitimise" (the constable of Montmorency, who had married his son to a legitimised bastard of the king's, here put his hand to his sword and clutched the handle fiercely), "a grand feast was given in the granaries, to which no court festival or gala could be compared, not even that of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In every corner mice were making merry. Everywhere there were dances, concerts, banquets, sarabands, music, joyous songs, and epithalamia. The rats had broken open the pots, and uncovered the jars, lapped the gallipots, and unpacked the stores. The mustard was strewn over the place, the hams were mangled and the corn scattered. Everything was rolling, tumbling, and falling about the floor, and the little rats dabbled in puddles of green sauce, the mice navigated oceans of sweetmeats, and the old folks carried off the pasties. There were mice astride salt tongues. Field-mice were swimming in the pots, and the most cunning of them were carrying the corn into their private holes, profiting by the confusion to make ample provision for themselves. No one passed the quince confection of Orleans without saluting it with one nibble, and oftener with two. It was like a Roman carnival. In short, anyone with a sharp ear might have heard the frizzling frying- pans, the cries and clamours of the kitchens, the crackling of their furnaces, the noise of the turnspits, the creaking of baskets, the haste of the confectioners, the click of the meat-jacks, and the noise of the little feet scampering thick as hail over the floor. It was a bustling wedding-feast, where people come and go, footmen, stablemen, cooks, musicians, buffoons, where everyone pays compliments and makes a noise. In short, so great was the delight that they kept up a general wagging of the head to celebrate this eventful night. But suddenly there was heard the horrible foot-fall of Gargantua, who was ascending the stairs of his house to visit the granaries, and made the planks, the beams, and everything else tremble. Certain old rats asked each other what might mean this seignorial footstep, with which they were unacquainted, and some of them decamped, and they did well, for the lord and master entered suddenly. Perceiving the confusion these gentleman had made, seeing his preserves eaten, his mustard unpacked, and everything dirtied and scratched about, he put his feet upon these lively vermin without giving them time to squeak, and thus spoiled their best clothes, satins, pearls, velvets, and rubbish, and upset the feast."

"And what became of the shrew-mouse?" said the king, waking from his reverie.

"Ah, sire!" replied Rabelais, "herein we see the injustice of the Gargantuan tribe. He was put to death, but being a gentleman he was beheaded. That was ill done, for he had been betrayed."

"You go rather far, my good man," said the king.

"No sire," replied Rabelais, "but rather high. Have you not sunk the crown beneath the pulpit? You asked me for a sermon; I have given you one which is gospel."

"My fine vicar," said Madame Diana, in his ear, "suppose I were spiteful?"

"Madame," said Rabelais, "was it not well then of me to warn the king, your master, against the queen's Italians, who are as plentiful here as cockchafers?"

"Poor preacher," said Cardinal Odet, in his ear, "go to another country."

"Ah! monsieur," replied the old fellow, "ere long I shall be in another land."

"God's truth! Mr. Scribbler," said the constable (whose son, as everyone knows, had treacherously deserted Mademoiselle de Piennes, to whom he was betrothed, to espouse Diana of France, daughter of the mistress of certain high personages and of the king), "who made thee so bold as to slander persons of quality? Ah, wretched poet, you like to raise yourself high; well then, I promise to put you in a good high place."

"We shall all go there, my lord constable," replied the old man: "but if you are friendly to the state and to the king you will thank me for having warned him against the hordes of Lorraine, who are evils that will devour everything."

"My good man," whispered Cardinal Charles of Lorraine, "if you need a few gold crowns to publish your fifth book of Pantagruel you can come to me for them, because you have put the case clearly to the enemy, who has bewitched the king, and also to her pack."

"Well, gentlemen," said the king, "what do you think of the sermon?"

"Sire," said Mellin de Saint-Gelais, seeing that all were well pleased, "I had never heard a better Pantagruelian prognostication. Much do we owe to him who made these leonine verses in the Abbey of Theleme:--

"Cy vous entrez, qui le saint Evangile
En sens agile annoncez, quoy qu'on gronde,
Ceans aurez une refuge et bastile,
Contre l'hostile erreur qui tant postille
Par son faux style empoisonner le monde."

["Should ye who enter here profess in jubilation
Our gospel of elation, then suffer dolts to curse!
Here refuge shall ye find, and sure circumvallation
Against the protestation of those whose delectation
Brings false abomination to blight the universe."]

All the courtiers having applauded their companion, each one complimented Rabelais, who took his departure accompanied with great honour by the king's pages, who, by express command held torches before him.

Some persons have charged Francis Rabelais, the imperial honour of our land, with spiteful tricks and apish pranks, unworthy of his Homeric philosophy, of this prince of wisdom of this fatherly centre, from which have issued since the rising of his subterranean light a good number of marvellous works. Out upon those who would defile this divine head! All their life long may they find grit between their teeth, those who have ignored his good and moderate nourishment.

Dear drinker of pure water, faithful servant or monachal abstinence, wisest of wise men, how would thy sides ache with laughter, how wouldst thou chuckle, if thou couldst come again for a little while to Chinon, and read the idiotic mouthings, and the maniacal babble of the fools who have interpreted, commentated, torn, disgraced, misunderstood, betrayed, defiled, adulterated and meddled with thy peerless book. As many dogs as Panurge found busy with his lady's robe at church, so many two-legged academic puppies have busied themselves with befouling the high marble pyramid in which is cemented for ever the seed of all fantastic and comic inventions, besides magnificent instruction in all things. Although rare are the pilgrims who have the breath to follow thy bark in its sublime peregrination through the ocean of ideas, methods, varieties, religions, wisdom, and human trickeries, at least their worship is unalloyed, pure, and unadulterated, and thine omnipotence, omniscience, and omni-language are by them bravely recognised. Therefore has a poor son of our merry Touraine here been anxious, however unworthily, to do thee homage by magnifying thine image, and glorifying the works of eternal memory, so cherished by those who love the concentrative works wherein the universal moral is contained, wherein are found, pressed like sardines in their boxes, philosophical ideas on every subject, science, art and eloquence, as well as theatrical mummeries.

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