

## Gulliver's Travels

(1726)

Lemuel Gulliver, the traveler, was a young man of Nottinghamshire, the third among five sons and recently apprenticed to a surgeon, Mr. James Bates. But he had always an interest in travel and prepared himself, in addition to his medical training, by studying navigation, mathematics, and two years of physics at Leyden. His master, Bates, then recommended him as a ship's surgeon on the *Swallow* where he served for three years on voyages to the Levant. Later, again under the influence of Bates, he undertook to settle in London and practice his profession. Accordingly he married Mrs. Mary Burton, second daughter of a hosier, who brought him a modest dowry. But his good master, Bates, dying within two years, left Lemuel with few friends, a fast-failing business, and a strong conscience which did not permit him to imitate the bad practice of others of his profession. He went back to sea and started his maritime career which was last for more than fifteen years.

Gulliver's Travels records the pretended four voyages of one Lemuel Gulliver, and his adventures in four astounding countries. The first voyage is in Lilliput. The shipwrecked Gulliver awakens in a strange land whose inhabitants twelve-times of his bulk, and he finds himself bound by slender bands and surrounded by hundreds of diminutive human beings of the Empire of Lilliput. Gulliver

gradually adjusts to their scale and vision; for while he decently refuses to enslave their enemy in Blefuscu, he rather proudly accepts the court of honor of being named a nardac. The Emperor, taller by almost the breath of a nail than the rest of his court, treats the navigator with great hospitality, although he removes Gulliver's scimitar, and pistols to a safe place. The diversions of the country are shown by the stranger giant. Candidates for important posts and high favor at court are want to procure their offices according to their skill in rope-dancing. Royal favor is shown to those who have the greatest skill in jumping over or creeping under a stick held parallel to the ground; that favor is indicated by the conferring of blue, red, and green silken threads. The two Lilliputian parties distinguish by the height of the heels on their shoes. High-heels are **most** friendly to the ancient constitution, but His Majesty now allows only low-heels in the administration. The cause of the war between Lilliput and Blefuscu is ancient; the old way for breaking eggs was to use the larger end; however, the present Majesty's grandfather once cut his finger in the operation; the monarch proclaimed that all subjects must thenceforth break their eggs at the smaller end. Finally in his staying in Lilliput, Gulliver is charged with high treason. The Emperor, however, refuses to put Gulliver to death. He rules that Gulliver should only lose his sight. Therefore Gulliver must finally flee to save his own life.

In his second voyage, to Brobdingnag, the proportions are reversed, and Gulliver finds himself a Lilliputian in the land of the giants. When Gulliver tells about his own people, their ambitions, wars, and conquests, the giants can only wonder that such great venom could exist in such little insects. Gulliver then leaves Brobdingnag in a strange way. Left alone one day in the third year of his visit, his box is picked up by an eagle, who then engaging in a fight with other birds, drops Gulliver into the sea. He is rescued by a ship, is glad to be among men of his own stature. Ultimately, Gulliver returns safely to his family in England.

Gulliver continues his third voyage in Laputa. Laputa is a flying island, held up in the air by loadstone, and the inhabitants are called Laputans. The floating island is circular, its bottom is adamant. In the center of the island is the astronomer's cave. Deep in the earth, where is found the loadstone upon which the fate of the island depends, this magnet is sustained by an axle which the weakest of hands could turn, by means of loadstone the island rises or falls according to its attracting or repelling the King's domains below. Gulliver, heartily weary of these people, goes to the metropolis of Lagado, where he encounters Lord Munodi, a man of taste and judgment, who must bow to the fashions for experiment and innovation. Here in Lagado Gulliver discovers that some parts of the cities and the

farms are in ruin. The reason for this was that impractical planners known as Projectors have visited these areas. The Projectors live in an academy which Gulliver visits, and he finds a great assortment of very impractical ventures being studied. Among his other adventures, Gulliver encounters the Struldbruggs, a special race blessed with immortality, or rather cursed with it, for they are not free of degeneration; instead of being oracles or wisdom, they soon descend into a bickering, avaricious, melancholy senility.

In the fourth voyage all that he has seen is made inescapable, and he moves from an insensitive complacency **to** an unthinking misanthropy, simply redirecting his pride from identification with his kind to hatred of them and **to a** new and impossible effort at identification with the Houyhnhnms. Here Gulliver is in the land of the Houyhnhnms in which horses, superior and intelligent creatures, are the ruling animals. While a frightful race, having the form appearance of men, but living in unspeakable degradation called Yahoos. However, in this land the kingdom's Assembly determines that Gulliver is a Yahoo and must either live with the uncivilized Yahoo or return to his own world. Gulliver then returns to England. At home, **his** disgust with his family is unconquerable and he buys two horses with which to converse. He abhors all yahoos, including his own family and also finds it difficult to associate with human creatures.

## **Jonathan Swift**

(1667-1745)

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin, of English parents, in November 30, 1667, some months after the death of his father. His mother was poor so that he compelled to accept aid from relatives grudgingly. He was educated at Kilkenny Grammar School, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he took a B.A. in 1686. After graduation the only position open to him was with a distant relatives, Sir William Temple, to whom Swift began his employment as his private secretary in Moor Park, Surrey.

Temple was a statesman and an excellent diplomatist, but he thought himself to be a great writer as well, and he entered into a literary controversy concerning the relative merits of the classic and modern literature. Swift's first notable work, The Battle of the Books, is a keen satire upon both parties in the controversy. Swift read and studied widely, and after his position with Temple grew unbearable, quarreled with his patron, took orders, and entered the little Church of England. Some years later he settled in the little church of Laracor, Ireland.

While at Laracor, he finished his Tale of a Tub, a satire on the various churches of the day, which was published in London with the Battle of the Books. The work brought him into notice as the most powerful satirist of the

age, and he soon gave up his church to enter then the strife of party politics.

His position with Temple won him the friendship of the Whigs. And between 1699 and 1710, Swift's reputation as political and religious essayist grew and he joined the circle of Whigs led by Addison. The Whigs had promised much to Swift, but had done little to him. Seeing himself unrewarded in his hopes for advancement, he allied himself, in 1710, with the Tories, a party with which he had closer sympathies. It was during this period too that Swift joined Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, Prior, and others in the Scriblerus Club, which satirized dullness in various literary works. And as a reward for his political services, Swift was named Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin, though he did not especially want. With the death of Queen Anne on August 1, 1714, the Tories lost power for more than forty years, and Swift was forced to remain in exile in Ireland for the rest of his life.

His retirement in Ireland was a source of unending bitterness to Swift. Nevertheless his conscience was tortured by the spectacle of the dreadful misery in which the Irish suffered at the hands of the English. About 1720, Swift began the series of pamphlets that established his reputation as an Irish patriot. In that year, he brought out Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture, in 1724-1725, the Drapier's Letter, which is famous in the

history of Ireland. And his other work in this period is A Modest Proposal (1729), and this known as one of Swift's savage and perfectly written satires. While occupied in behalf of the Irish people, Swift wrote and published his masterpiece, Gulliver's Travels. This is one of the very greatest satires in the world. Ostensibly the satire could have been taken as a burlesque of travels books, which for a long time were commonly filled with incredible adventures. But the bitterness of life grew slowly to insanity, and a frightful personal sorrow, of which he never spoke, reached its climax in the death of Esther Johnson, a beautiful woman, who had loved Swift ever since the two had met in Temple's household, and to whom he had written his Journal to Stella.

During the last years of his life a brain disease, of which he had shown frequent symptoms, fastened its terrible hold upon Swift, and he became by turns an idiot and a madman. On October 19, 1745 he died, and when his will was opened it was found that he had left all his property to found St. Patrick's Asylum for lunatics and incurables. It stands today as the most suggestive monument of his peculiar genius.