The Metaphysical Sectarian

By

Samuel Butler



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HE was in Logick a great Critick, Profoundly skill'd in Analytick. He could distinguish, and divide A Hair 'twixt South and South-West side: On either which he would dispute, Confute, change hands, and still confute. He'd undertake to prove by force Of Argument, a Man's no Horse. He'd prove a Buzard is no Fowl, And that a Lord may be an Owl; A Calf an Alderman, a Goose a Justice, And Rooks Committee-men and Trustees. He'd run in Debt by Disputation, And pay with Ratiocination. All this by Syllogism, true In Mood and Figure, he would do.

For Rhetorick, he could not ope His mouth, but out there flew a Trope: And when he hapned to break off I'th middle of his speech, or cough, H'had hard words, ready to shew why, And tell what Rules he did it by. Else when with greatest Art he spoke, You'd think he talk'd like other folk. For all a Rhetoricians Rules Teach nothing but to name his Tools. His ordinary Rate of Speech In loftiness of sound was rich, A Babylonish dialect, Which learned Pedants much affect. It was a parti-colour'd dress Of patch'd and pyball'd Languages: 'Twas English cut on Greek and Latin, Like Fustian heretofore on Sattin. It had an odd promiscuous Tone, As if h' had talk'd three parts in one. Which made some think when he did gabble, Th' had heard three Labourers of Babel; Or Cerberus himself pronounce A Leash of Languages at once. This he as volubly would vent, As if his stock would ne'r be spent. And truly to support that charge He had supplies as vast and large.

For he could coyn or counterfeit New words with little or no wit: Words so debas'd and hard, no stone Was hard enough to touch them on. And when with hasty noise he spoke 'em, The Ignorant for currant took 'em, That had the Orator who once Did fill his Mouth with Pebble stones When he harangu'd, but known his Phrase, He would have us'd no other ways.

In Mathematicks he was greater Then Tycho Brahe, or Erra Pater: For he by Geometrick scale Could take the size of Pots of Ale; Resolve by Signes and Tangents straight, If Bread or Butter wanted weight; And wisely tell what hour o'th day The Clock does strike, by Algebra.

Beside he was a shrewd Philosopher; And had read every Text and gloss over: What e're the crabbed'st Author hath He understood b'implicit Faith, What ever Sceptick could inquere for; For every why he had a wherefore: Knew more then forty of them do, As far as words and terms could go. All which he understood by Rote, And as occasion serv'd, would quote; No matter whether right or wrong: They might be either said or sung. His Notions fitted things so well, That which was which he could not tell: But oftentimes mistook the one For th'other, as Great Clerks have done. He could reduce all things to Acts And knew their Natures by Abstracts, Where Entity and Quiddity The Ghosts of defunct Bodies flie; Where Truth in Person does appear, Like words congeal'd in Northern Air. He knew what's what, and that's as high As Metaphysick wit can fly. In School Divinity as able As he that hight Irrefragable; Profound in all the Nominal

And real ways beyond them all, And with as delicate a Hand Could twist as tough a Rope of Sand, And weave fine Cobwebs, fit for skull That's empty when the Moon is full; Such as take Lodgings in a Head That's to be lett unfurnished. He could raise Scruples dark and nice, And after solve 'em in a trice: As if Divinity had catch'd The Itch, of purpose to be scratch'd; Or, like a Mountebank, did wound And stab her self with doubts profound, Onely to shew with how small pain The sores of faith are cur'd again; Although by woful proof we find, They always leave a Scar behind. He knew the Seat of Paradise, Could tell in what degree it lies: And, as he was dispos'd, could prove it, Below the Moon, or else above it: What Adam dreamt of when his Bride Came from her Closet in his side: Whether the Devil tempted her By a High Dutch Interpreter: If either of them had a Navel; Who first made Musick malleable: Whether the Serpent at the fall Had cloven Feet, or none at all, All this without a Gloss or Comment, He would unriddle in a moment In proper terms, such as men smatter When they throw out and miss the matter.

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