VOLTAIRE

Candide, Zadig

and Selected Stories

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women who swept the palace after having enjoyed the favors of a princess more beautiful than the mistresses of the caliph, and at being at the service of all the bourgeois of Bagdad after having ruled over all the genii; but Mesrour did not have the eye that sees the bad side of things.

Memory's Adventure

THE THINKING HUMAN RACE, that is to say at most the hundred-thousandth part of the human race, had long believed, or at least had often repeated, that we had ideas only through our senses, and that memory is the only instrument by which we can put two ideas and two words together.

That is why Jupiter, representing nature, was in love with Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, from the first moment he saw her; and of this marriage were born the nine Muses, who were the inventors of all the arts.

This dogma, on which all our knowledge is founded, was universally accepted, and even the Nonsober\(^1\) embraced it as soon as it was born, although it was a truth.

Some time later along came an arguer,\(^2\) half geometrician, half chimerical, who argued against the five senses and against memory; and he said to the small numbers of the thinking human race:

"You have been wrong up to now, for your senses are useless; for ideas are inborn in you before any of your senses can act, for you had all the necessary notions when you came into the world; you knew everything without having sensed anything; all your ideas, born with you, were present to your intelligence, named soul, without the help of memory. That memory of yours is good for nothing."

The Nonsober condemned this proposition, not because it was ridiculous, but because it was new; however, when later on an Englishman\(^3\) had set himself to prove, and even at length, that there were no innate ideas, that nothing was more necessary than the five senses, that memory helped greatly to

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1 Non-sober: anagram of Sorbonne.*
2 Descartes.
3 Locke.
retain the things received by the five senses, the Nonsober condemned her own sentiments, because they had become those of an Englishman. Consequently she ordered the human race henceforth to believe in innate ideas and no longer to believe in the five senses and the memory. The human race, instead of obeying, laughed at the Nonsober, who flew into such a rage that she tried to have a philosopher burned. For this philosopher had said that it is impossible to have a complete idea of a cheese unless you have seen and eaten one; and the villain even dared put forth the idea that men and women would never have been able to work in tapestry if they had not had needles, and fingers to thread them with.

The Liloists joined with the Nonsober for the first time in their life; and the Sejanists, mortal enemies of the Liloists, united with them for a moment. They called to their aid the ancient Dicasterics, who were great philosophers; and all together, before they died, they proscribed memory and the five senses, and the author who had said something good about these six things.

A horse happened to be present at the judgment which these gentlemen pronounced, although he was not of the same species and there were several differences between him and them such as that of height, voice, smoothness of coat, and ears; this horse, I say, who had sense as well as senses, spoke to Pegasus about it one day in my stable; and Pegasus went and told this story to the Muses with his usual vivacity.

The Muses, who for a hundred years had singularly favored the country, long barbarous, where this scene was taking place, were extremely scandalized; they tenderly loved Memory, or Mnemosyne, their mother, to whom these nine daughters are obligated for everything they know. The ingratitude of men irritated them. They did not compose a satire against the ancient Dicasterics, the Liloists, the Sejanists, and the Nonsober, because satires correct no one, irritate fools, and make them even more wicked. They imagined a way to enlighten them while punishing them. Men had blasphemed memory; the Muses deprived them of this gift of the gods so that they might learn once and for all what it is like to be without its aid.

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4 Anagram of Loyolists: Jesuits. The Sejanists just below are the Jansenists; the Dicasterics, members of the dicastery, the Parlement of Paris.

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5 The mark of a doctor of the Sorbonne.*
feel their wrath; so they besought their mother to return to
these blasphemers the memory that she had taken from them.
Mnemosyne came down into this region of contraries in which
she had been so rashly insulted, and spoke to them in these
words:

"Imbeciles, I forgive you; but this time remember that with-
out the senses there is no memory, and without memory there
is no mind."

The Dicasterics thanked her rather dryly, and decreed that
they would address remonstrances to her. The Sejanists put
this whole adventure in their gazette; it was noted that they
were not yet cured. The Lioloists started up a court intrigue
about it. Doctor Coger, quite dumbfounded by the adventure
and understanding nothing about it, pronounced to his eighth-
grade schoolboys this fine axiom: *Non magis musis quam
hominibus infensa est ista quae vocatur memoria.*

6 "She who is called Memory is no more inimical to muses
than to men." This is a parody of the subject proposed in 1772 by
the University of Paris, of which Coger was rector, for the prize
in Latin eloquence: "Non magis Deo quam regibus infensa est ista
quae vocatur hodie philosophia." Voltaire was convinced that
Coger meant *minus* instead of *magis.*