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**The Island of Content: or,
A New Paradise Discovered (1709)**

[Anon]

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The Island of Content

Dear Friend,

Since my Golden Pills prov'd so acceptable a Present, and you are very importunate to be made acquainted with the State and Condition of our happy *Island of Content*, where such chearful Physick is alone administer'd in all Distempers; persuent to your Request, I have carefully improv'd some leisure Hours on purpose to oblige you, and have accordingly sent you an exact Account of the Situation of the Place, the Products of the Country, the Constitution of the Government; also the Customs and Manners of the merry Inhabitants of our musical Kingdom, that you may be the better sensible how far the Pleasures of Peace and Dulcitude of Harmony, exceed the noisy Surprizes of uncertain War, and the grinning Malice of domestick Discord. Therefore, that I may not weary out your Patience with a tedious Introduction, I shall treat you as a Friend, and, free of all Partiality to my native Country, let you into the Secret, without farther Preparation, *viz.*

Chap. I.

Of the Situation and Climate.

We are happily seated in a very moderate Climate, but suffering no Man to study the Heathenish Science of Astronomy, I cannot, according to the Rules of Art, pretend to acquaint you with the Degrees of our Latitude: And the Reasons why we think it not safe to suffer a Star-gazer among us, are, that they generally dwindle into Astrological Wiseakers, and by their lying Prophetesies, corrupt the Minds of the People, to the Disturbance of the Kingdom; therefore,

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when ever we catch any Person writing an Almanack, telling Fortunes, or pretending to predict what shall happen hereafter, we tye his Thumbs behind him with Coblers Ends, hang a Shoe-maker's Last about his Neck for a Sygil, and then flog him to Death with a Leathern Strap, without Mercy; for you must know we dread nothing so much as the Subversion of our Government, and the Change of our Constitution; for having a due Sense of our own Happiness, we are well assur'd, from the sad Experience of other Countries, that nothing but Misery would attend a Revolution. However, as to the comfortable Temperature of our happy Climate, we are such absolute Strangers to all manner of Extreame, that we never need Fire, in Winter, to warm our Fingers, or Water, in Summer, to cool our Wines, but enjoy, thro' the Circle of the whole Year, such a peaceful Serenity in all the Elements, that the Distillations of the Clouds are but gentle Dews, that give a lasting Fertility to the fragrant Earth, and only keep the Dust from rising, to the Injury of our Eyes, above its natural Centre; so that we are neither subject to be offended with Dirt, or incommoded with Dust, but always tread upon a verdent Carpet, fresh as a Bowling-Green after a soft Shower in the Month of *April*. As we have no Ice in the coldest of our Weather, to make the Ground deceitful, so have we no destructive Lightning, or surprizing Thunder, in the hottest of our Seasons, to make our Fears terrible; nor will the greatest of our Hurricanes, either in Spring or Autumn, extinguish the Flame of a Farthing Candle, tho' it be stuck lighted, during the whole Storm, upon the Weather-cock of a Steeple.

In short, we are always bless'd with such a comfortable Warmth, that a Man may lie safely between the Heavens and his Wife, and she between her Husband and the bare Ground, without the Danger of catching Cold, tho' it be in Winter: Nor should we have any Occasion for Cloths, not so much as a Fig-leave, did not Decency oblige us to wear Tiffany Apparel. So that from the Exuberance of Nature, and the Moderation of our Climate, some of our learned Commentators do prophanely assert, that this our Island is the very Paradise that *Adam* lost, but was restor'd lately to our Great Grand-fathers, as some deserving Branch of the old Gentleman's Family.

*Old Paradise is only lost to such
Who search too little, or offend too much,
But easily found by those who can descry
The Heav'nly Being with a righteous Eye.*

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Chap. II.

Of our Food and Delicacies

As to our Eatables, Nature is here so lavish of her Plenty, that we abound in Variety of Dainties, without human Labour; nor have we any Occasion to improve our Food by the Art of Cookery, for nothing can be added to make our luscious Fruits more wholesome, or more palatable.

As to our Bread, the principal Staff of Life, our fertile Ground is so over-run with delicious Potatoes, that we easily dig them up where ever we please, without the Assistance of any other Spade, that our fore Fingers; so that the only Labour we are at, is, to turn them out of the Ground, spread them upon the Surface, and there let them lie but half an Hour in the Sun-shine, and they'll be as well bak'd into crusty half-penny Rolls, as if they had been stopp'd up as long in a well-heated Oven; therefore our Poor here have no Occasion to run to Church for the Sake of the Penny Loaves, nor to dissent from it in Hopes of a better Maintenance, for we have no Bakers to plague them with long Tallies, or oppressive Work-houses to keep 'em to hard Fare, as well as hard Labour, for a parcel of rich Knaves to run away with the Profit of their Earnings, that the Saints in Authority over 'em may say long Graces to large Meals, and thank God for what the Devil has given them.

Pleasant Roots and Herbs are our common Food, from the Lord to the Beggar; by which abstemious sort of Living, we hold our Lusts in such an absolute Subjection, that there is not one Great Magistrate among us, that keeps a Harlot under his Lady's Nose, nor one smock-fac'd Flatterer in all our Dominions, that ever made himself a Great Man by committing Adultery; nor do we ever eat Flesh because we look upon it sinful to destroy one of God's Creatures for the Preservation of another; nor have we any Necessity to prompt us to it, indeed not so much as our own Luxury. As to all sorts of Hortelage, every Man has it in his Backside, as surely as a House of Office; nor can any Inhabitant take a Walk in his Garden, without great Caution, but Clusters of thumping Peaches, and over-grown Nectorals, swinging at the end of stragling Boughs, will be ready at each Step to knock his Teeth down his Throat, as if they were angry with their Owner, that he had not eaten 'em sooner. To be short, we abound with such vast Variety of delicious Products, that our Monkeys and

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Squirrels feed upon sweet Almonds, and our wild Hogs upon Mus-
 mellons and Pine-apples.

*If Brutes, thou in our happy Island dwell,
 Feed on such dainty Fruits, and live so well,
 What Blessings may be found by Human Race,
 Who thankfully possess so sweet a Place?*

Chap. III.

Of our Wines and potable Juices.

The outside of every Man's House is here a plentiful Vineyard, for Vines spring up as naturally under every Body's Windows, as Mush-rooms from the rotten Stump of an old Horse-black, and creep up our Walls over the Eaves of our Mansions, as commonly as Ivy grows round an Oak, or Houselick on the top of a Country Bog-house, insomuch that every Inhabitant, when he wants to drink, may squeeze his Grapes with his own Teeth, instead of a Wine-press; however, for Society's Sake, because we cannot be so free in our own Houses, we allow some Taverns, but to prevent Adulteration, we cut down all Apple-trees as fast as they spring up, lest the Purity of our Wines should be debas'd with Cyder; by which Means we keep our Vintners honest, our Juices wholesome, and the People healthful; yet, tho' our Liquors are plenty, and in the highest Perfection, we are a sober Nation, only for want of a large Excise to make it the Interest of our Government to connive at Drunkenness: So that indeed the Cheapness of our Wines, and the due Execution of our Laws against Vice, without the least Help of a Society of Reformation, makes Ebriety a Scandal. Notwithstanding our great Inclinations to Temperance and Chastity, yet the brightest Rainbow can have no Tincture in her mott'd Diversity, but what we can match with some excellent Liquor of the same Colour, yet we have no Brewers among us; for which Reason our capital Cities are never govern'd by Lord-Mayors and Aldermen. But above all other Potables, I have a certain Cordial Composition of my own, distill'd from the Rays of the Sun, *May-dew*, Moon-shine, and Honey-drops, that I prepare purposely for the speedy Suppression of all melancholly Vapours: Which excellent Cordial, I may say, without Flattery, surpasses all the Nectar in the Heavens, all the Wines upon Earth, and all the exalted Elements that mix between both to quench the scorching Drowth of thirsty *Phæbus*.

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Therefore, since you inform'd me, in your last Letter, what a pestilential Stupidity had unhappily over-run that flatulent part of the World wherein you are now resident, I have thought a true Recipe of so rich a *Nostrum* might be very welcome to a Brother Physician of your singular Pretensions; but must strictly enjoin you, by all the Bonds of Friendship, to lock it fast in your own Bosom, as a valuable Secret. If you happen to find, in your colder Climate, the Ingredients difficult to come by, or too expensive to turn to Account, then, instead of *May-dew*, you may use Pump-water; for the Rays of the Sun, Leaf-Gold; burnt Silver, in the room of Moon-shine; and the want of Honey-drops, supply with common Sugar; tho', whatever you do, be sure you observe the true Quantities according to my Recipe; for it ought to be a Maxim in Physick, *viz. Nulla veritas nulla virtus.*¹ When you have thus prepar'd it *secundum Artem*, pursuant to Instructions, for its singular Efficacy in all melancholly Distempers, I would have you call it, *Cheer-up*, a Name so applicable to so excellent a Cordial, that you cannot find a better in the whole *Nomen Clatura*, for one Thimble-full administer'd in due Season, that is, a little before the Paroxysm, will certainly cure any dull Fanatick of the Spirit of Contradiction, or the yawning Evil, and make him as merry Company for a whole Afternoon, over a Bottle, as a young Player, or a Mountebank; Merry *Andrew*;² also infallibly cures all heavy-hearted Sinners of the Spleen, Hypo, or Night-mare. Maids of the amorous Suspiration, Whores of prick'd Consciences, and Wives of the Vapours; and is so highly in Esteem among the merry Inhabitants of our peaceful Island, that it is publickly sold here, instead of Brandy, to make the People laugh.

*A cordial Dram, with Moderation us'd,
 Revives the Heart, but injures when abus'd.
 Enough, that happy Quantum, makes us glad;
 But with too much, we sottish grow, or mad.*

Chap. IV. Of our Apparel.

We abound in Spiders of several Sorts and Colours, but all so very large, that few of 'em appear less than an Ox's Bladder blown to its

¹ No virtue is possible without truth.

² A humorous physician of the reign of Henry VIII.

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full Extension, each carrying in his swelling Bag so much textable Matter, of a silky Nature, that he will not only spin, but weave as much Gause in a Day's Time, as would fill a *Scotch-man's* Pack, every one's Manufacture differing in Strength, Colour, and Substance, according to the Food, Magnitude, Variation, and Agility of the industrious Insect that happens to be the Weaver, which makes their excellent Work fit for sundry Uses; so that when any Body has a Mind to change their Apparel, it is but stepping into their Garden, and they may furnish themselves with a loose Mantle, (which is the fashionable Garment here worn) ready spun and wove, either suitable to their Youth, or agreeable to their Gravity. Therefore we have no Occasion here for Mercers and Drapers, to dun and plague our Quality, that they cannot sit easy in their own Parlours for fear of some Hawk-nos'd Citizen or other, with a long Bill, fifty Scrapes, and as many humble Beseech ye's, and all to know when he shall come next to go Home without his Money. Neither is any Person here distinguish'd by their Dress, because every Body has the Liberty, without the least Expence, of chusing such Apparel as shall best humour their own Fancy; for which Reason our very Women here are wholly innocent of Pride, not at all regarding superficial Ornaments, endeavouring only to excel each other in Vertue, Modesty, Eloquence, Musick, and such like Female Graces, that are Ornaments to the Mind, as well as to the Body. We have no Rising by five a Clock of a Sunday Morning, to get to Church by eleven; no borrowing Jewels upon a Ball-Night, to tempt the Butterflies to attack, the Honey-pot; no costly Dresses for new Intrigues, to the Wife's Scandal and the Husband's Ruin; no proud lascivious Lady to cry Foh at another, when herself is just going to commit Adultery. In short, our Women of all Degrees, tho' they are commonly beautiful, yet they are very chaste, notwithstanding their Garments, as well as those of the Men, are so very transparent, that, were not the principal Covering lin'd with Mulberry-leaves, the Scepter of *Priapus* and the *Mount of Venus* would be almost as visible through our Cobweb-Veils, as any other Indecency, through a pink'd Fan, or a wanton Eye through the Mask of a Harlot. Yet both Sexes deport themselves with such awful Modesty, that we behold each others Beauty with an innocent Admiration, without desiring to unfold the sacred Tiffany, 'till the Laws have granted us a mutual License to enjoy nuptial Felicity.

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*Bless'd is such Vertue, that can curb Desire,
 And free from Lust, sweet Beauty's Charms admire;
 Yet, when they're licens'd to enjoy the Same,
 Can fan their Love, but never cool their Flame.*

Chap. V.

Of the Inhabitants in general, and their Arts, Trades,
 and Occupations.

Of all Arts and Sciences amongst us, Physick and Musick are held the most venerable, and for these two Reasons: In the first Place, every Body's Life is so extremely happy, and all that conducts to human Felicity, so easily come by, that all Men are equally unwilling to resign so pleasing a Certainty, for a doubtful Futurity; so that if a melancholy Fume does but happen to eclipse the natural Chearfulness of any One's Temper, I am presently sent for, to administer some of my Golden Pills, and a Dose or two of my *Chear-up*, which either recovers them presently to their former Spriteliness, or if the Patient continues but one Hour after in a Fit of the Dumps, we certainly give him over as a dying Victim to the fatal Conqueror. Therefore the Dread of Melancholy, and the Fear of Death, makes them adore their Physicians as their Life's Safe-guard, and so much the more, because they have but three in the whole Island, Dr. *Diet*, Dr. *Quiet*, and Dr. *Merryman*: The first corrects the Patient's Food, and prescribes him Rules to eat by; the second lulls him to sleep by an emphatical Repetition of some drowsy Poetry of his own writing, which he always uses instead of Poppy-water; and when the Patient wakes, then my self administers a Dose of my Golden Pills, and a reviving Thimble-full of my Cordial *Chear-up*; and if these Methods will not raise his Spirits above the Depression of Melancholy, which is the only Distemper we are here subject to, then he must even follow the Steps of his Fore-fathers; for it is not in the Power of human Art to respite him from Eternity.

Secondly, The principal Reason why Musicians are as much worshipp'd as Owls among the *Egyptians*, is, that since all the Comforts of Life are handed to us by Nature, without the least Assistance of our own Labour, we have nothing else to do, besides Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping, but to fidle away our Time, sing, dance, laugh, and be merry: So that if a Man has but a tunable Neck upon

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any Instrument, tho' it be but the *Jews-trump*, he shall be as much respected and admir'd, if he does not want Entreaty, as ever *Tubal Cain* was for playing a Madigral upon his Cockle-shells. So that the only Artists that are valuable among us, next to Physicians, are Fiddlers, Pipers, Singers, Dancers, Rimers, and Punsters, tho' the last is forc'd to be a Lacquey to the former, by the Custom of the Country, and to carry the great Crowd, because we are all of an Opinion here, that Punning much better becomes a Fidler's Boy, than it does his Master.

We had a Theatre, and a Company of Comedians for a little Time, but they were always quarrelling about their Mistresses, or who should have most Wages; so we furnish'd 'em with a large Canow, and turn'd 'em out of the Island.

We have very few Handicrafts among us, besides those who make our Musical Instruments, and they grow such lazy Rogues, because they live in Clover, that we are often forc'd to put a Neck and a Bridge to one of my *Chear-up* Runlets, and string it up for a Treble Viol, and to make a homely Shift with a Bow and a Bladder to play our Thorough Bases on; yet, we are always as well pleas'd with our Musick, as you can be with the harmonious Neighings of your *Italian* Geldings; for whoever here finds the least Fault, or shews himself discontented upon any Occasion, immediately forfeits his Residence, and is banish'd the Island.

Our Dancing-masters have more Business among our young Ladies, than they can well turn their Toes to, tho' they never receive any Reward, above Thanks, for their Labour; for every thing here is so plenty without Money, that they need as little Pay as they can possibly deserve; but if any one, by Chance, be catch'd kissing a Scholar, he must patiently suffer his Heels to be par'd, that he may never dance afterwards, or else he must be forc'd in twenty four Hours to depart the Country; for it is wisely consider'd, that nothing can be a greater Interruption to the Content of Parents, than to have their Daughters debauch'd by those very Miscreants, who have the Confidence to undertake to teach them Breeding; nay, some are apt to think it carries along with it such a heinous Piece of Treachery, that a Man deserves to be gelt for.

*If, in strict Justice, a deceitful Friend
 Deserves a Jayl, that tricks me when I lend;
 What must be merit, who his Trust betrays,
 Deslow'rs my Child, and robs me of my Ease?*

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Chap. VI.

Of our Laws, and Methods for the Dispatch of
 Justice.

We have but one Court of Judicature, no Juries, and but one Judge, who has an absolute Power, without the Circumscription of any Law, to determine all Matters, *Coram Judice*, according to the best of his own Judgment, which he is bound to do upon the first Hearing, without any Delay. *Astrea* like, he is always blindfold when he sits upon the Bench, to prevent Corruption, that he may neither be affected with the Deportment of one Man, or offended with the homely Figure or clownish Behaviour of another, so as to be inclin'd to any manner of Partiality; nor does he ever hear with more than one Ear at a Time; for as soon as the Plaintiff begins to speak, he always stops the other, and reserves it for the Defendant. Every Person here is not only suffer'd, but under an inevitable Necessity of pleading his own Cause, for we have no such Things as old musty Customs, Precedents, or ancient intricate Rules, lock'd up in a barbarous obsolete Language, to puzzle Justice, delay Judgment, and make Right a Difficulty; for which Reason we have no Occasion for those nimble-tongu'd Divers into Querks and Quidities, call'd Lawyers: Tho', some Years since, our Court admitted of two Orators, one for the Plaintiff, and the other for the Defendant, but in a little Time they had like to have set the whole Island by the Ears; so that being found a Nuisance, One, who was the greatest Incendiary, was decently tuck'd up upon an o'd Crab-tree, and the other presently after dy'd for Fear; so that ever since the Inhabitants have been restor'd to their ancient Content, and every one has the Liberty in plain Words to exhibit his own Case, and his Witnesses the Priviledge of speaking freely, without being banter'd either out of the Truth, or out of their Senses; and that no Man, in any wise, should have the Advantage of his Adversary, we suffer no Learning above Writing and Reading, to be taught among us; by which Means we preserve our Peace, prevent the Growth of Blockheads, and defend our ancient Constitution from all manner of Innovations: Nor indeed is our Court of Judicature troubled with any Matters of Debt, because all Persons live so plentifully here, that no Man has Occasion to borrow any thing of his Neighbour: Nor have we any Disputes about Titles of Estates, because every Man has more than himself or his Family knows well what to do with; to that most of our Controversies are about the