

PART I

Bryson's *Management of the Estate*:
English translation

Note: for ease of reading the translation of Bryson is here given free of footnotes and other information relevant to the edition of the text. The annotated English can be found in Part v parallel to the Arabic.

Paragraph numbers in round brackets refer to those of Martin Plessner's 1928 edition.

Words or phrases in round brackets are additions to help the sense. Square brackets are used to enclose transliterated Arabic words or indicate a lacuna.

*In the Name of God the Merciful, the
 Compassionate, Who is My Aid:
 The Book of Bryson, On the Man's Management
 of his Estate*

(1) He says that the business of the estate comprises four aspects: first, property; second, servants; third, the woman; and fourth, the child.

(2) *PROPERTY*

The Creator – He is Blessed and Sublime! – placed in man the faculties he needs for the sustenance of his body and his well-being. At the same time He made him wanting, mutable, and ceasing; and because of this man stood in need of replacing and restoring what was dissolved from him. (3) I mean by the term ‘faculties’ (i) the faculty which each one of his body parts uses to derive from food what is similar to it, in the quantity in which it needs it; (ii) the faculty which changes and converts the foodstuff so that it becomes similar to the body part that is to be nourished by it: thus if what is to be nourished by it is flesh, it becomes flesh, if it is bone, it becomes bone, and if it is nerve, it becomes nerve; (4) (iii) the faculty which retains in the body part what has been attracted to (the body part) while it remains fluid and until it becomes solid and is joined to (the body part); (iv) the faculty which expels from each one of the body parts the residue which remains from this nourishment as waste; this is material unrelated to the nature (of the body part) and (the body part) has no power to convert or transform it into its nature; (v) the faculty which causes (his body) to grow and develop until it increases in height, breadth, and volume in correspondence with its parts.

(5) If all of these faculties were placed in man, and many others along with them which he uses for the management of his body, I say that there are two things in him upon which his subsistence depends; but one of them causes the destruction and dissipation of the other. (6) For (man) subsists by heat and moisture, and it is in the nature of heat to dissipate and destroy moisture. For this reason it is impossible for him to remain in a single state. Rather, he undergoes continuous and permanent dissolution. On account

of this he needs to replace what is dissolved from him by movement, and the replacement is the foodstuff which nourishes him. (7) If, in this situation, the body were homogeneous, its need would be for one type of nourishment. But since its constituents are different, it accordingly needs foods of different types and flavours. All (foodstuffs) come from plants or animals because food for each thing comes from what is closest to it, and there is nothing closer to the nature of man's body than animals and plants.

(8) Plants and animals need various types of crafts in order to come into existence and reach completion after they have come to exist. Plants need sowing or planting, then watering and cultivating, and so on, to ensure their usefulness is complete. (9) Animals need feeding, protecting, and sheltering, and similar things which are beneficial (for them). (10) For the collection and preparation of foods and for processing what man and animals subsist on, there is a need of many other different crafts. In man has been placed a faculty for discovering every craft and a faculty for learning it. But owing to the brevity of his life, it is impossible for one person to discover and learn (each of them) because the discovery of one craft and the learning of it will make him too busy to discover the rest of the crafts and learn them. (11) Although he has the potential to learn many of them, he does not have the potential to learn all of them. But for the management of his life a man needs all the crafts.

(12) The crafts, moreover, are connected to each other. For example, the builder who needs the carpenter, the carpenter who needs the craft of the blacksmiths, the blacksmiths' craft which needs the craft of the miners, and this craft (needs the craft of) the builder. (13) So each one of the crafts, even if complete in itself, needs another, in the way the parts of a chain need each other, and if one of the crafts is removed, the rest of the crafts cease to exist as a result of its removal. (14) And since each man needed for managing the affairs (of his life) a variety of things to feed himself with and to cover himself with, and for this purpose was in need of all the crafts; and (since) it was impossible for one man to be expert in all of them, all people needed one another for managing their lives, and for this reason people needed to form cities and live together in them to help each other with the crafts.

(15) People, then, had a need of each other but the occasion of each person's need was usually not the occasion of his associate's need. The amount of what they needed was not equivalent. Nor was it an easy matter for the value [*qīma*] of every item to be known in comparison with every (other) item, nor the level of its price [*thaman*] in comparison with the price (of the other

item), nor the level of recompense [*ujra*] for anything put to use compared with the recompense for every other item. (16) There was therefore a need of something one could use to price all items and know the value of one in relation to another. So, whenever a man needed something that was for sale or something for use, he could pay the value [*qīma*] of this item with this substance, which set a price on things and fixed it. (17) Unless it was set like this, there would be a man with one of the products an associate of his needed – oil, wheat, etc. – while the associate had other products; and it would not happen, when the first needed what the second had, that the second needed what the first had, so barter could take place between them. (18) Even if there were to be agreement between them concerning each one's need of what was in the possession of his associate, it would not happen that there would be agreement between them that the first needed something in the possession of the second for a value [*qīma*] equal in amount to the second's need of what was in the possession of the first. In this case a disagreement would arise between them, and either each one of them would abandon his associate when he could obtain no satisfaction of his need; (19) or they would barter, but then one of them would look for complete satisfaction of his need from another seller. In addition, one would need to know the amount of value [*qīma*] of the part of each one of the products in which people find benefit, e.g. honey, butter, wheat, and of other, different products in accordance with the diversity of the products and the difference between them in value [*qīma*]. (20) Even if one knew this on one occasion, one would need to know it on other occasions, whenever the situation of one of these products changed owing to greater or lesser availability on the market, the level of people's need of it, or their lack of need of it, or of excessive amounts of it at different periods, and people's use of each product at any time.

The above holds true also for the crafts.

(21) For this reason, then, people coined gold, silver, and copper and by this means they set prices for all items. They established this convention so that a man could obtain what he needed at the time of his need. (22) So, someone who possessed something and wanted to replace with it something that had gone out of his possession, or to spend it, and so on, would have no difficulty. Whoever has possession of these substances we have named becomes, as it were, one who has possession of all the products he needs. Hence there was a need for these objects to make life good.

(23) We shall now explain the best way to manage wealth, and we say that the student of this must study three topics: the acquisition of property, its preservation, and its expenditure.

(24) *ACQUISITION*

It is necessary to be aware of three failings: wrongdoing, outrage, baseness. (25) Wrongdoing consists, for example, in giving short weight, not filling the measure, practising deception in the account, evading the truth, alleging untruth, and similar things which consist of grave offences, put a stop to acquisition, interrupt the flow of exchange, and lead to exclusion. (26) This is because the spread of a bad reputation turns people doing business away from a person of such ill repute and leads anyone who has suffered at his hands to inform others about him. The result is that both those who have traded with him and those who have not stay away from him. Consequently, if he renounces such behaviour, his renunciation brings no advantage because of the matter which is being talked about concerning him and for which he is notorious.

(27) Outrage consists of insulting and slapping and things like that, which some people tolerate to get something from persons who practise such (behaviour).

(28) Baseness is when a man abandons the craft his ancestors and relations have been practising, though he is not unable to do it, for a more dishonourable craft – like the man whose ancestors and relations were generals or governors of provinces but gives up pursuing this (way of life), though he is capable of it, and reduces himself to singing and piping and such like.

(29) We are not saying that a man whose ancestors were in a dishonourable craft and remains in it is affected by baseness as a result, or that he is doing something that should attract blame. Rather, we say that he is to be praised because he is content with his lot and does not exceed his limitations.

(30) Indeed, if every man were obliged to seek a craft superior to the one his father bequeathed him, the consequence would be for all people to aim at one craft, the highest of the crafts. (31) This would have the result of abolishing the other crafts, and the very craft they aimed at would also disappear because it is only completed by means of the other crafts. For all of them are connected to each other, as we have explained above.

This, then, is what one must consider under the heading of acquisition.

(32) *PRESERVATION*

Five considerations are required here. The first is that what a man expends should not be greater than what he acquires. For when he does this, it is not long before his property is consumed. (33) Second, that what he expends

should not equal what he acquires. Rather, he will ensure he has a surplus of possessions against the possibility of an accident, a disaster, or commercial losses. Also, it is right that a portion of his expenditure should go towards his capital. (34) The condition of a man who does this resembles the condition of the body when it is developing and growing. The condition of a man whose expenditure equals his gains resembles the condition of someone whose development is now over and whose growth has stopped. The condition of a man who expends more than he acquires resembles the condition of very old bodies which are constantly in want and are being taken over by decay. (35) For the body that is undergoing development and growth takes in more nourishment than is dissolved from it, while the body that has reached its peak takes in as much nourishment as is dissolved, and the body which has now reached decrepitude takes in less nourishment than is dissipated from it. Just as the body which has reached decrepitude is close to death, in the same way capital will quickly be exhausted when more is taken from it than added to it.

(36) The third consideration required for the preservation of wealth is that a man should not undertake something he is incapable of sustaining. For example, the man who invests his money in a landed estate [*day'a*] he is unable to develop, or in scattered estates [*diyā'*] which it is impossible for him to attend to because there is no one to appoint to maintain them, or who acquires livestock the expenditure on which exceeds the amount of his remaining funds. (37) The condition of one who does this resembles the condition of the greedy man who eats something he cannot digest. Just as someone who eats something he cannot digest does not receive any nourishment from it, but often it passes out of him, and along with it he then expels from his body something that does him harm when it is expelled – in the same way, when someone ventures on the acquisition of something beyond his capacity, there is an immediate risk that not only the profit will be lost, but his capital will also disappear.

(38) The fourth consideration required for the preservation of wealth is that the man should not invest his money in anything that is slow to leave his hands. This is the case with an item that is little in demand on account of the fact that the general population does without it, like the gemstones which nobody needs except kings, or the scholarly books which only scholars demand. (39) The fifth consideration required for the preservation of wealth is that the man should be quick to sell his merchandise but slow to sell his real estate (*aqārāt*), even if his profit from the former is small while his profit from the latter is large.

(40) *EXPENDITURE OF WEALTH*

One must be aware of five failings: sordidness, meanness, profligacy, extravagance, and bad management. (41) Sordidness consists in holding back from spending on the categories of the Good, such as supporting relations, benefiting friends and clients, and charity to the needy, as far as he can and is capable. (42) Meanness consists of restricting essential items such as his family's [*'iyāl*] food and things for their welfare. (43) Profligacy consists of being engrossed in lusts and pleasures. (44) Extravagance consists in a man overstepping the expectations of his class in regard to his food or the clothing he might wear due to a desire to show off. (45) Bad management is when the man fails to apportion his expenditure equally among all the things that need it by spending in every area as is justified. For if he does not do this, but is profligate in one and cuts back in another, his affairs will be out of step with each other. (Bad management is also) when he cannot get an item at the moment he needs it.

(46) The sordid man is undone because he does not know the Good and the excellence it contains. (47) The mean man is undone because he does not appreciate (his) obligation and the want caused by his neglect. (48) The profligate is undone because of his preference for pleasure over correct judgement. The sordid and the mean types are detested by people because they represent an aspect of wrongdoing, and the mean man particularly, for he is the more unjust of the two. The profligate man is rebuked and detested: someone people detest and rebuke will get no advantage by associating with them, and if he does not associate with people, he is already numbered among the dead. (49) But the condition of the man of extravagance is worse, because the sordid and mean types, though people detest them both, are at least in the situation of making a profit by preserving their wealth; while the profligate, though rebuked, makes a profit from savouring his pleasures; but the extravagant man has no wealth to preserve and no pleasure to savour. (50) Worst of all is the condition of the man who is a bad manager, for he is in fact undone because he understands neither the amounts of expenditure nor the occasions for it.

(51) Someone who recognizes the categories of the Good and desires them also recognizes the categories of obligatory duty and makes them incumbent upon himself. He is economical in spending on his pleasures and does not transgress the normal behaviour of his class. He knows the amounts justified by each category of his needs, and he spends on it according to the value of its claim. He is not excessive in one category and then obliged to be restrictive in another. (52) He understands the times when each thing is needed.

He does not obtain something early before the time when it is needed so it deteriorates or perishes before it is needed, nor does he delay (obtaining) a thing till the time of its need has passed when obtaining it is now worthless or hard for him and he can only find it at a high price. So long as a man perseveres with what he must do and what he must leave, then he will be associated with noble-mindedness, liberality, affluence, beneficence, moderation, freedom, and excellence in his conduct and manner of life. (53) If someone is like this, his revenue or the profit from his wealth sustain his expenditure on the well-being of his body and on the provisioning of his family [*'iyāl*]. Over and above this, he has a surplus which he spends in part on supporting his relations, friends, and clients, in part on his poor and his beggars, (54) and in part he saves so he may call on its aid against the vicissitudes of his destiny. He must not demand more than this, since the demand for more is avarice. Indeed, this is the limit which the free man must not transgress: if he does, he will (certainly) be associated with avarice.

This is the situation with wealth and the management of its acquisition, preservation, and disbursement.

(55) *SLAVES AND SERVANTS*

The need for slaves and servants on estates [*manāzil*] is like the need for a multitude of people in cities; we have already explained the reason why people need to form cities and live together in them. (56) Slaves are of three (sorts): the slave 'by (the institution of) servitude', the slave 'by appetite', and the slave 'by nature'. (i) The slave 'by (the institution of) servitude' is one on whom the law has imposed slavery. (ii) The slave 'by appetite' is one who cannot control himself because he is dominated by his appetites and feelings. One who is like this is a bad slave and a bad person and is good for nothing. (57) (iii) The slave 'by nature' has a strong body and endures toil. He has no discernment in himself (between good and bad), and there is no sign of intelligence in him except to the extent that he is obedient to another, but without getting to the point of being able to manage himself. In his nature he is close to the beasts, which men dispose of as they wish. One who is like this, even if he is free, is still a slave, and the best thing for him is to have a master to manage him.

(58) The slave and the slaves are needed for a variety of things. Some of them are wanted for managing the estate [*manzil*], others are wanted for serving and ministering, while others are wanted for rough labours. So, when a man wants to purchase a servant, he must inspect him. If he already combines slavery 'by (the institution of) servitude' with slavery 'by appetite', one

must not proceed to purchase him nor expect to break him in, even if one is keen to. (59) Whoever buys a slave in this condition has bought a slave who has another for a master, and this being so he is not his slave except in title. For if a person cannot control himself, someone else is even less likely to control him. (60) If the servant is free in nature, strong in spirit and lithe in body, he is someone who may be entrusted with management and custody. If he is free in nature, his mind is gentle and docile, and his body is pure, he is someone who may be entrusted with serving and with ministering. If he is a slave 'by nature', he is entrusted with labours which require force and endurance.

(61) Slaves resemble the limbs of the body, the actions of which the man has in his control. Those entrusted with the custody and the management of the estate fulfil the role of the senses because it is through the senses that one knows what is harmful and removes it, and what is beneficial and attracts it. Those entrusted with serving resemble the hands because it is with them that one succeeds in fetching something useful for the body. Those entrusted with labours resemble the legs because upon them rests the whole of the body and its weight. (62) Therefore the man must protect his servants as he protects his limbs, and this involves thinking about them in two ways: first, the species which unites him with them; second, what they have suffered. If he thinks about their species, he realizes that they are people just like him, and capable of understanding what he understands, of thinking about what he thinks about, of desiring what he desires, and of hating what he hates. (63) When he deals with them in this manner, in addition to the virtue which accrues to him in his heart, he acquires affection from one whose ownership has been assigned to him. When he thinks of what they have suffered, he realizes that if he suffered something like it, he would prefer to be assigned a master who would be gentle to him and treat him with kindness.

(64) If the servant makes mistakes, the master should ignore him the first time and correct him the second time. Correcting him should initially be done with censure, warning, and admonishment; if he does it again, with anger; if he persists, with blows. (65) He should not punish him for an offence he committed in ignorance and unintentionally. But he must not neglect to punish him for an offence he committed out of badness and wickedness. If the servant does wrong, he should only be punished as the (master's) son is punished when he does something similar wrong. For this is the best thing for both the servant and the son.

(66) One must designate periods of rest for the slaves. For if the slave is made to perform task after task and burdened with labour after labour and has no rest, he will become too weary for work, even if he is eager to do it. Rest renews the body and makes work attractive to (the body's) possessor.