

**BREVIA; SHORT
ESSAYS AND
APHORISMS**

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Brevia; short essays and aphorisms by Anonymous

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NO time for it.—That seems to be the thing that we all fail to consider sufficiently in this brief life of ours. Now, if we had the length of life that the patriarchs enjoyed,—after we had learnt everything that was to be learnt, and had made a few discoveries of our own, and had arranged all our affairs most comfortably, there would then be time to spare for carrying on a good, wholesome feud with any of our neighbours, and for annoying the world generally by vexatious diplomacy and long wars. One could then afford to expend a trifle of time, say twenty or thirty years of our lives, in pleasures

of this kind. But with our present short period of existence, there is no time for indulging in these luxuries of mischief.



THERE is not greater nonsense talked about anything than about inconsistency. The truth is, no man ever is inconsistent. His utterances are inconsistent; but, did we know all about him, and about the circumstances which he has to encounter, we should not speak of the man as inconsistent.

A curious illustration of what I mean may be given in this way.

There shall be a father and a son advocating opposite views. The world says, How unlike are these two men; whereas the opposition of their views shows, perhaps, the similarity of their characters: if they agreed now, their ages and their experience of life being so different, it would be a proof of great dissimilarity of character.



WHEN the tourist goes over some old castle or palace, and his attention is arrested by horrible dungeons, torture-chambers,

and oubliettes, he wonders how, in former days, the inhabitants of that castle or palace could have slept comfortably, or revelled, or made love, having cognizance all the time of the horrors that were beneath them. But there is a similar thing everywhere—to wit, Belgravia and Bethnal Green. It is wonderful how completely people can ignore the existence of painful things that are very close to them.



PEOPLE occasionally contend that the sense of property is a thing that should be dulled rather than encouraged. But this is, in some respects, a mistake. If "Rich London" had a keen sense of property in "Poor London," there would be nothing which would have more effect in removing squalidity throughout the metropolis. Whereas, not only the sense of property, but even of neighbourhood, is greatly lost in this huge city.

The squire has a painful sense of property in some poor hovel that is on the outskirts of his estate, but which is his, and unpleasantly reminds him, as he rides by, of Mr. Drummond's saying, "that property has its duties as well as its rights."

ON sunny mornings in early summer, when the mind is most hopeful, and one is prone to take a favourable view of everything and of everybody, one may be disposed to enumerate eleven persons amongst one's friends, relations, and acquaintances, who, we think, might be entrusted with a whip if we ourselves were to be classed amongst the lower animals.

On the other hand, in November days, one cannot make out a list of more than five people who could be thus trusted. Probably the mean number is the right thing; and a man of large acquaintance may admit that there are eight persons whom he would not much fear if he were one of the lower animals, and whom he would allow to be entrusted with a whip.

Among the astounding things to be seen in this strange world, not the least astonishing is the fact of such immense power over himself, over the lower animals, and, to some extent, over all those who come near him, being entrusted to every man. And the word "man," in this case, certainly includes man, woman, and child.

If there are eight persons whom one would

trust with a whip to be used upon oneself, is there more than one upon earth whom one could trust to criticise our works or our actions ?

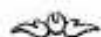


PREFACES are generally very little attended to: that is the reason why so many secrets are unintentionally betrayed. The man to whom a secret is told, remembers the secret because it is something amusing, or interesting, or scandalous; but he forgets the dull preface which preceded it, wherein he was admonished "to be sure not, for the world, to tell anybody what he was going to be told."

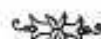


OUR life is a continual decadence of power. From one till three years old, we are Lord Paramount Baby. From three till about twenty-seven, we are subject to our superiors—parents, masters, college dons, senior counsel, rectors, and other authorities. From about the age of twenty-seven to the end of our lives we are ruled over by those who are facetiously called our inferiors—wives, sons, daughters, servants, clerks, deputies, and junior partners.

And this is the harshest rule of all, and often the most galling; for the cruelty of the weak to the strong, of the inferior to the superior, is often very great; and there is an irony about it which is very painful, though somewhat ludicrous.



WHEN a man in power asks for time to consider anything, it is generally in order that he may be able to consult his immediate inferior, without whose sanction he dares not assent to anything.



ANY one who is much talked of, must be much maligned. This seems to be a harsh conclusion; but when you consider how much more given men are to depreciate than to appreciate, you will acknowledge that there is some truth in the saying.



THE man at the head of the house can mar the pleasure of the household; but he cannot make it. That must rest with the woman, and it is her greatest privilege.

WE often suffer ourselves to be put out of all our bearings by some misfortune, not of the most serious kind, which certainly looks very black at the time, but which from its nature cannot be lasting. We are thus like ignorant hens that insist upon going to roost in mid-day because there is a brief transitory eclipse of the sun.



THE love of poetry seldom commences before the beard begins to make its appearance. Boys, honest fellows! generally pronounce all poetry to be, what in their language they call "bosh." The love of poetry is apt to fade away from most men much at the same time as the liking for sweets. Again, the love of poetry is inevitably checked and somewhat suppressed by the labours and anxieties of middle life. It thus appears, that, from careless boyhood up to careful old age, the poets have but a small portion of human existence for them to work upon. Why, therefore, should they often be so laboriously obscure?