

Servants: for, about and by

Xenophon, from *The Memorabilia: Recollections of Socrates*, III, xii, translated by H.G. Dakyns

A man had administered a severe whipping to the slave in attendance on him, and when Socrates asked: 'Why he was so wroth with his own serving-man?' excused himself on the ground that 'the fellow was a lazy, gourmandising, good-for-nothing dolt – fonder of money than of work'. To which Socrates: 'Did it ever strike you to consider which of the two in that case the more deserves a whipping – the master or the man?'

Xenophon, from *The Economist*, xii, translated by H.G. Dakyns

If the teacher sets but an ill example, the pupil can hardly learn to do the thing aright. And if the master's conduct is suggestive of laxity, how hardly shall his followers attain to carefulness! Or to put the matter concisely, 'like master like man'. I do not think I ever knew or heard tell of a bad master blessed with good servants. The converse I certainly have seen ere now, a good master and bad servants; but they were the sufferers, not he. No, he who would create a spirit of carefulness in others must have the skill himself to supervise the field of labour; to test, examine, scrutinise. He must be ready to requite where due the favour of a service well performed, nor hesitate to visit the penalty of their deserts upon those neglectful of their duty.

Aristotle, from *Politics* 1255b, translated by H. Rackham

And even from these considerations it is clear that the authority of a master over slaves is not the same as the authority of a magistrate in a republic, nor are all forms of government the same, as some assert. Republican government controls men who are by nature free, the master's authority men who are by nature slaves; and the government of a household is monarchy since every house is governed by a single ruler, whereas statesmanship is the government of men free and equal. The term 'master' therefore denotes the possession not of a certain branch of knowledge but of a certain character, and similarly also the terms 'slave' and 'freeman'. Yet there might be a science of mastership



and a slave's science – the latter being the sort of knowledge that used to be imparted by the professor at Syracuse for there used to be a man there who for a fee gave lessons to servants in their ordinary duties; and indeed there might be more advanced scientific study of such matters, for instance a science of cookery and the other such kinds of domestic service – for different servants have different functions, some more honorable and some more menial, and as the proverb says, 'Slave before slave and master before master'.

The slave's sciences then are all the various branches of domestic work; the master's science is the science of employing slaves – for the master's function consists not in acquiring slaves but in employing them. This science however is one of no particular importance or dignity: the master must know how to direct the tasks which the slave must know how to execute. Therefore all people rich enough to be able to avoid personal trouble have a steward who takes this office, while they themselves engage in politics or philosophy. The science of acquiring slaves is different both from their ownership and their direction – that is, the just acquiring of slaves, which is akin to the art of war or that of the chase. Let this then stand as our definition of slave and master.

Horace, *The Odes*, Book II, iv, translated by A.S. Kilne

Phocian Xanthis, don't be ashamed of love
for your serving-girl. Once before, Briseis
the Trojan slave with her snow-white skin stirred
angry Achilles:

and captive Tecmessa's loveliness troubled
her master Ajax, the son of Telamon:
and Agamemnon, in his mid-triumph, burned
for a stolen girl,

while the barbarian armies, defeated
in Greek victory, and the loss of Hector,
handed Troy to the weary Thesalians,
an easier prey.

You don't know your blond Phyllis hasn't parents
who are wealthy, and might grace their son-in-law.
Surely she's royally born, and grieves at her
cruel household gods.

Believe that the girl you love's not one who comes
from the wicked masses, that one so faithful

so averse to gain, couldn't be the child of
a shameful mother.

I'm unbiased in praising her arms and face,
and shapely ankles: reject all suspicion
of one whose swiftly vanishing life has known
its fortieth year.

From the prologue to a law emanated by the Council of Ten transferring authority over the domestic servants of Venice to the office of the censors, 1541, Archivio di Stato Venezia, Censori, busta I, capitulary dated 1541-1790, fols. 1r-v, translated by Dennis Romano

There are multiplying daily so many complaints to the heads of this council concerning the ill condition, the assemblies, and the gatherings that the boatmen and servants of this city continuously form and the ill words that they publicly use, beside their other insolent and dishonorable habits, showing no respect for noblemen and noblewomen, or for men and women citizens, or for other persons, and with the most evil example and little honor for the city, that if something is not done, their insolence will grow even greater as they see that it goes unpunished. This matter is of such importance that everyone recognizes that it must be entrusted to a magistracy that has the authority to expedite and put in place those ordinances that seem necessary.

Michel de Montaigne, from 'De Trois Commerces' ('Of Three Commerces'), in *Les Essais* III, ch. iii, 1595, translated by Charles Cotton

Yet do I very well discern that he who has the conveniences (I mean the essential conveniences) of life for his end, as I have, ought to fly these difficulties and delicacy of humour, as much as the plague. I should commend a soul of several stages, that knows both how to stretch and to slacken itself; that finds itself at ease in all conditions whither fortune leads it; that can discourse with a neighbour, of his building, his hunting, his quarrels; that can chat with a carpenter or a gardener with pleasure. I envy those who can render themselves familiar with the meanest of their followers, and talk with them in their own way; and dislike the advice of Plato, that men should always speak in a magisterial tone to their servants, whether men or women, without being sometimes facetious and familiar; for besides the reasons I have given, 'tis inhuman and unjust to set so great a value upon this pitiful prerogative of fortune, and the polities wherein less disparity is permitted betwixt masters and servants seem to me the most equitable. Others study

how to raise and elevate their minds; I, how to humble mine and to bring it low; 'tis only vicious in extension:

“Narras et genus Æaci,
Et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio
Quo Chium pretio cadum
Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,
Quo praeante domum, et quota,
Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces.”

[“You tell us long stories about the race of Aëacus, and the battles fought under sacred Ilium; but what to give for a cask of Chian wine, who shall prepare the warm bath, and in whose house, and when I may escape from the Pelignian cold, you do not tell us.” — Horace, *Od.*, iii. 19, 3]

William Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.1.42-43

Iago: We cannot all be masters, nor all masters cannot be truly followed.

William Shakespeare, sonnet 57

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your servant once adieu;
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are how happy you make those.
So true a fool is love that in your will,
Though you do any thing, he thinks no ill.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* 4.1, 150-163

So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness by your rule, should be imposed

upon his father that sent him: or if a servant, under his master's command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant's damnation: but this is not so: the king is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death, when they purpose their services.

Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 1605, translated by John Rutherford

... Day was dawning when Don Quixote quitted the inn, so happy, so gay, so exhilarated at finding himself now dubbed a knight, that his joy was like to burst his horse-girths. However, recalling the advice of his host as to the requisites he ought to carry with him, especially that referring to money and shirts, he determined to go home and provide himself with all, and also with a squire, for he reckoned upon securing a farm-labourer, a neighbour of his, a poor man with a family, but very well qualified for the office of squire to a knight. With this object he turned his horse's head towards his village, and Rocinante, thus reminded of his old quarters, stepped out so briskly that he hardly seemed to tread the earth.

He had not gone far, when out of a thicket on his right there seemed to come feeble cries as of some one in distress, and the instant he heard them he exclaimed, 'Thanks be to heaven for the favour it accords me, that it so soon offers me an opportunity of fulfilling the obligation I have undertaken, and gathering the fruit of my ambition. These cries, no doubt, come from some man or woman in want of help, and needing my aid and protection'; and wheeling, he turned Rocinante in the direction whence the cries seemed to proceed. He had gone but a few paces into the wood, when he saw a mare tied to an oak, and tied to another, and stripped from the waist upwards, a youth of about fifteen years of age, from whom the cries came. Nor were they without cause, for a lusty farmer was flogging him with a belt and following up every blow with scoldings and commands, repeating, 'Your mouth shut and your eyes open!' while the youth made answer, 'I won't do it again, master mine; by God's passion I won't do it again, and I'll take more care of the flock another time'.

Seeing what was going on, Don Quixote said in an angry voice, 'Discourteous knight, it ill becomes you to assail one who cannot defend himself; mount your steed and take your lance' (for there was a lance leaning against the oak to which the mare was tied), 'and I will make you know that you are behaving as a coward'. The farmer, seeing before him this figure in full armour brandishing a lance over his head, gave himself up for dead, and made answer meekly, 'Sir Knight, this youth that I am chastising is my servant, employed by me to watch a flock of sheep that I have hard by, and he is so careless that I lose one every day, and when I punish him for his carelessness

and knavery he says I do it out of niggardliness, to escape paying him the wages I owe him, and before God, and on my soul, he lies’.

‘Lies before me, base clown!’ said Don Quixote. ‘By the sun that shines on us I have a mind to run you through with this lance. Pay him at once without another word; if not, by the God that rules us I will make an end of you, and annihilate you on the spot; release him instantly’.

The farmer hung his head, and without a word untied his servant, of whom Don Quixote asked how much his master owed him.

He replied, nine months at seven reals a month. Don Quixote added it up, found that it came to sixty-three reals, and told the farmer to pay it down immediately, if he did not want to die for it.

The trembling clown replied that as he lived and by the oath he had sworn (though he had not sworn any) it was not so much; for there were to be taken into account and deducted three pairs of shoes he had given him, and a real for two blood-lettings when he was sick.

‘All that is very well’, said Don Quixote; ‘but let the shoes and the blood-lettings stand as a setoff against the blows you have given him without any cause; for if he spoiled the leather of the shoes you paid for, you have damaged that of his body, and if the barber took blood from him when he was sick, you have drawn it when he was sound; so on that score he owes you nothing’.

‘The difficulty is, Sir Knight, that I have no money here; let Andres come home with me, and I will pay him all, real by real’.

‘I go with him!’ said the youth. ‘Nay, God forbid! No, senor, not for the world; for once alone with me, he would ray me like a Saint Bartholomew’.

‘He will do nothing of the kind’, said Don Quixote; ‘I have only to command, and he will obey me; and as he has sworn to me by the order of knighthood which he has received, I leave him free, and I guarantee the payment’.

‘Consider what you are saying, senor’, said the youth; ‘this master of mine is not a knight, nor has he received any order of knighthood; for he is Juan Haldudo the Rich, of Quintanar’.

‘That matters little’, replied Don Quixote; ‘there may be Haldudos knights; moreover, everyone is the son of his works’.

‘That is true’, said Andres; ‘but this master of mine – of what works is he the son, when he refuses me the wages of my sweat and labour?’.

‘I do not refuse, brother Andres’, said the farmer, ‘be good enough to come along with me, and I swear by all the orders of knighthood there are in the world to pay you as I have agreed, real by real, and perfumed’.

‘For the perfumery I excuse you’, said Don Quixote; ‘give it to him in reals, and I shall be satisfied; and see that you do as you have sworn; if not, by the same oath I swear to come back and hunt you out and punish you; and I shall find you though you should lie closer than a lizard. And if you desire to know who it is lays this command upon you, that you be more firmly

bound to obey it, know that I am the valorous Don Quixote of La Mancha, the undoer of wrongs and injustices; and so, God be with you, and keep in mind what you have promised and sworn under those penalties that have been already declared to you’.

So saying, he gave Rocinante the spur and was soon out of reach. The farmer followed him with his eyes, and when he saw that he had cleared the wood and was no longer in sight, he turned to his boy Andres, and said, ‘Come here, my son, I want to pay you what I owe you, as that undoer of wrongs has commanded me’.

‘My oath on it’, said Andres, ‘your worship will be well advised to obey the command of that good knight – may he live a thousand years – for, as he is a valiant and just judge, by Roque, if you do not pay me, he will come back and do as he said’.

‘My oath on it, too’, said the farmer; ‘but as I have a strong affection for you, I want to add to the debt in order to add to the payment’; and seizing him by the arm, he tied him up again, and gave him such a flogging that he left him for dead.

‘Now, Master Andres’, said the farmer, ‘call on the undoer of wrongs; you will find he won’t undo that, though I am not sure that I have quite done with you, for I have a good mind to flay you alive’. But at last he untied him, and gave him leave to go look for his judge in order to put the sentence pronounced into execution.

Andres went off rather down in the mouth, swearing he would go to look for the valiant Don Quixote of La Mancha and tell him exactly what had happened, and that all would have to be repaid him sevenfold; but for all that, he went off weeping, while his master stood laughing.

William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, vii, 33, 1622

‘Of servants’ faithfulness in regard of their masters’, or mistresses’ bed-fellow’

So faithful ought servants be to their masters and mistresses, that if one of them should labour to use a servant in any manner of deceit to the other, the servant ought not to yield. As if a master should move his maid privily to take away jewels, plate, money, linen, or any such thing as is in her mistress’s custody. It skilleth not that the master hath the chiefest power over all the goods: a secret taking of them without the privity of the mistress in whose custody they are, is in the servant deceit, and a point of unfaithfulness. Much less ought any servants be moved by their mistresses privily to take away their master’s corn, wares, or any goods for her private use. Of the two this is the greater part of unfaithfulness.

If such deceit ought not to be used about any goods, much less about the body of master or mistress. As if a master should allure his maid to commit

folly with him, or a mistress her man, both their conscience to God, and also their faithfulness to their master or mistress should make them utterly to refuse it, and to give no place to any such temptation. *Joseph* is propounded as a pattern herein (Hen 39:7): and against the suggestion of his mistress he rendereth the two forenamed reasons: his conscience to God in these words, *how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* His faithfulness to his master in these, *He hath not kept back any thing for me but thee, how then &c.*

To this head may be referred servants' faithfulness in making known to their master the sin of his wife, and to their mistress the sin of her husband, especially if it be such a sin as may tend to the ruin of the family, and that by the knowledge thereof, the party that is not blinded and besotted with the sin, but rather free from it, may be a means to redress it. Thus *Nabal's* servants made known to *Abigail* the churlishness of *Nabal* towards *David's* servants (1 Sam. 25:14): by which means the mischief intended against the house was prevented. Thus if servants know that their master intend some mortal revenge against another, to tell his wife thereof in time, may be great faithfulness: or if they know their mistress hath appointed to go away privily from her husband, to tell him of it, is a part of faithfulness. This may be applied to other like cases.

The contrary is yielding to masters or mistresses in any point of deceit one against another: whereunto servants are too prone, because they think to be bolstered out by the authority of the party that setteth them in work to deceive. But no authority can be a warrant for any deceit, or wickedness.

Pepys Ballads 2.178 1671-1702? (English Broadside Ballad Archive ID: 20795)

The Chamberlain's Tragedy:

OR,

The Cook-Maid's Cruelty;

Being a true Account how she in the heat of Passion,

Murder'd her Fellow-servant (the Chamberlain) at an Inn, in the

Town of Andever. Tune, Bleeding Heart. Licens'd according to Order

You that have melting hearts to grieve,
This mournful Ditty pray receive,
'Tis of a bloody Tragedy,
Unheard of Matchless cruelty.

The which I shall in brief unfold,
Therefore dear People, pray behold,
The manner of this wicked deed,
It needs must make your hearts to bleed.

Two Servants in one house did dwell,
 At Andever, 'tis known full well;
 A Cook-maid and a Chamberlin,
 Now the relation I'll begin:

The one of them was most moross,
 The other was exceeding cross,
 So that with heat or passion they,
 Were still at parlance Day by Day.

They acted both, like Tygers wild,
 They never wou'd be reconcil'd
 By any admonition, no,
 Till passion prov'd their overthrow.

Behold it happen'd on a day
 The Chamberlin, he took his way
 Unto the fire-side, where she
 Was busie at her Cookery.

To make a Toast was his intent,
 But she his purpose wou'd prevent,
 With Knife in Hand, but still he cry'd,
 He valu'd not her haughty Pride.

This rais'd her passion more and more,
 So that at length she vow'd and swore,
 That she wou'd stick him to the Heart,
 If he did not the Room depart:

Quoth he, Are you so resolute,
 Is Blood the heat of your dispute?
 Yes, that it is, you Slave, quoth she,
 Be gone or I shall hang for thee.

The Chamberlin reply'd again,
 Your swelling words are all in vain;
 I do not fear you in the least
 And thus their passion still increas'd.

Quoth she, I'll not disputing stand,
 To him she ran with Knife in Hand
 And wounded him in woful case,
 Across his Head and down his Face.

The wreaking Blood began to run,
But still the Cook-maid had not done;
Till through his Ribs, she thrust the Knife,
And so bereav'd him of his Life.

When she beheld him on the floor,
In woful streams of wreaking gore;
She then bemoan'd her dismal state,
But this repentance come too late.

Thus having his destruction wrought,
Before a Justice, she was brought,
Who soon committed her to Goal,
Where she the Murder does bewail.

Often with Tears she does reply
Why did my passion rise so high,
As for to take his Life away,
Alas! this is a dismal Day?

How shall I answer for my crime,
Who gave him not a Minutes time;
To beg a Pardon for his Soul,
In sorrow I his Death condole:

I can expect no favour here,
Who was so cruel and severe,
That for a trifle I should be,
The auther of his Tragedy.

I needs must suffer for the same,
And leave this wretched World in shame;
But woe is me, that is not all,
His Blood does for just vengance call.

The time I have to live, I'll spend,
In making God my special friend,
That when this painful life I leave,
He may in love my Soul receive.

You Servants all both far anear,
That does my sad relation hear;
Labour to live in Love I pray,
Least passion should your Lives decay.

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), 15 January 1680, trial of Thomas Gold (t16800115-1)

Thomas Gold, Theft, subcategory Burglary, 15th January 1680

The first was Thomas Gold, who was Indicted, for that he in the Company of three more, did on the 17th of December last, break into the Dwelling-house of one Katherine Harris, in the Parish of Hornzie, in the County of Middlesex, from whence, after they had secured her, by almost smothering her and her Children with the Bed-clothes, they went into the next Chamber, and bound her Servant-Maid, who whilst they were effecting of it, took by the light of their Candle, particular notice of the now Prisoner, by reason of a blow on his Nose, and a blemish in his Eye. After they had by this means secured all pursuit, they Ransacked the House, and carried away 14 Pewter Dishes, 5 or 6 Plates, fourty shillings in Money, Table-Linnen, Childbed-Linnen, and other Cloathes to a considerable vallue rub'd off, after upon another exploit, the said Gold being Committed to New-Prison, the Prosecutor having notice of such a parties being there, brought her Maid to see if she knew him, who without pausing, singled him from amongst a dozen Prisoners, whereupon he was sent to Newgate. Upon his Trial he pleaded ignorance, and endeavoured to prove his place of residence that Night, but could not, therefore upon a full Evidence, he was brought in Guilty of Felony and Burglary.

[Gold, a 'notorious offender', was sentenced to death and hanged at Tyburn on 21st January 1679]

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), May 1681, trial of Margaret Luke (t16810520-13)

Margaret Luke, Killing, subcategory Murder, 20th May 1681.

Margaret Luke a Ministers Wife was Tryed upon an Indictment for Murther, committed on the body of Robert Edmunds, who was her Servant, caused by excessive beating, the which she did about the 20 of December last, from which time he languished till the 15 of May and then dyed; so that it being proved his excessive bruises occasioned and his Death, she was found Guilty of Man-Slaughter.

[Margaret Luke was condemned to death, but it is not known whether she was actually executed]

Old Bailey Proceedings Online (<www.oldbaileyonline.org>, version 6.0, accessed 17 December 2014), December 1683, trial of John Thurman Joan Witherington (t16831212-6)

John Thurman, Joan Witherington, Theft, subcategory Theft from a Specified Place, 12th December 1683

John Thurman, a Page to a Noble Man, and Joan Witherington, a Maid-servant in the same Family, were Indicted by John Thomas, another of their fellow-servants, for taking out of his Lodging-room, a Book valued at 15 Shillings, Five Guineys, and Five and twenty Pounds in Silver; But it appearing to be a malicious Prosecution, they were both acquitted.

Andrew Moreton [Daniel Defoe], *Every Body's Business is Nobody's Buisness*, 1725

... the fear of spoiling their clothes makes them afraid of household-work; so that in a little time we shall have none but chambermaids and nurserymaids; and of this let me give one instance; my family is composed of myself and sister, a man and a maid; and, being without the last, a young wench came to hire herself. The man was gone out, and my sister above stairs, so I opened the door myself; and this person presented herself to my view, dressed completely, more like a visitor than a servant-maid; she, not knowing me, asked for my sister; pray, madam, said I, be pleased to walk into the parlour, she shall wait on you presently. Accordingly I handed madam in, who took it very cordially. After some apology, I left her alone for a minute or two; while I, stupid wretch! ran up to my sister, and told her there was a gentlewoman below come to visit her. Dear brother, said she, don't leave her alone, go down and entertain her while I dress myself. Accordingly, down I went, and talked of indifferent affairs; meanwhile my sister dressed herself all over again, not being willing to be seen in an undress. At last she came down dressed as clean as her visitor; but how great was my surprise when I found my fine lady a common servant-wench. My sister understanding what she was, began to inquire what wages she expected? She modestly asked but eight pounds a year. The next question was, what work she could do to deserve such wages? to which she answered, she could clean a house, or dress a common family dinner. But cannot you wash, replied my sister, or get up linen? she answered in the negative, and said, she would undertake neither, nor would she go into a family that did not put out their linen to wash, and hire a charwoman to scour. She desired to see the house, and having carefully surveyed it, said, the work was too hard for her, nor could she undertake it. This put my sister beyond all patience, and me into the greatest admiration. Young woman, said she,

you have made a mistake, I want a housemaid, and you are a chambermaid. No, madam, replied she, I am not needlewoman enough for that. And yet you ask eight pounds a year, replied my sister. Yes, madam, said she, nor shall I bate a farthing. Then get you gone for a lazy impudent baggage, said I, you want to be a boarder not a servant; have you a fortune or estate that you dress at that rate? No, sir, said she, but I hope I may wear what I work for without offence. What you work, interrupted my sister, why you do not seem willing to undertake any work; you will not wash nor scour; you cannot dress a dinner for company; you are no needlewoman; and our little house of two rooms on a floor, is too much for you. For God's sake what can you do? Madam, replied she pertly; I know my business; and do not fear a service; there are more places than parish churches; if you wash at home, you should have a laundrymaid; if you give entertainments, you must have a cookmaid; if you have any needlework, you should have a chambermaid; and such a house as this is enough for a housemaid in all conscience. I was pleased at the wit, and astonished at the impudence of the girl, so dismissed her with thanks for her instructions, assuring her that when I kept four maids she should be housemaid if she pleased. Were a servant to do my business with cheerfulness, I should not grudge at five or six pounds per annum; nor would I be so unchristian to put more upon any one than they can bear; but to pray and pay too is the devil. It is very hard, that I must keep four servants or none. In great families, indeed, where many servants are required, those distinctions of chambermaid, housemaid, cookmaid, laundrymaid, nurserymaid, &c., are requisite, to the end that each may take her particular business, and many hands may make the work light; but for a private gentleman, of a small fortune, to be obliged to keep so many idle jades, when one might do the business, is intolerable, and matter of great grievance.

Jonathan Swift, *Directions to Servants in General; and in Particular to the Butler, Cook, Footman, Coachman, Groom, House-Steward, and Land-Steward, Porter, Dairy-Maid, Chamber-Maid, Nurse, Lanundress, House-Keeper, Tutoress, or Governess*, 1745

When you invite the neighbouring Servants to junket with you at home in an Evening, teach them a peculiar way of tapping or scraping at the Kitchen Window, which you may hear, but not your Master or Lady, whom you must take Care not to disturb or frighten at such unseasonable Hours.

Lay all Faults upon a Lap-Dog or favourite Cat, a Monkey, a Parrot, a Child, or on the Servant who was last turned off: By this Rule you will excuse yourself, do no Hurt to any Body else, and save your Master or Lady from the Trouble and Vexation of chiding.

When you want proper Instruments for any Work you are about, use all Expedients you can invent, rather than leave your Work undone. For Instance, if the Poker be out of the Way or broken, stir up the Fire with the Tongs; if the Tongs be not at Hand, use the Muzzle of the Bellows, the wrong End of the Fire Shovel, the Handle of the Fire Brush, the End of a Mop, or your Master's Cane. If you want Paper to singe a Fowl, tear the first Book you see about the House. Wipe your Shoes, for want of a Clout, with the Bottom of a Curtain, or a Damask Napkin. Strip your Livery Lace for Garters. If the Butler wants a Jordan, he may use the great Silver Cup.

There are several Ways of putting out Candles, and you ought to be instructed in them all: you may run the Candle End against the Wainscot, which puts the Snuff out immediately: You may lay it on the Floor, and tread the Snuff out with your Foot: You may hold it upside down until it is choked with its own Grease; or cram it into the Socket of the Candlestick: You may whirl it round in your Hand till it goes out: When you go to Bed, after you have made Water, you may dip the Candle End into the Chamber Pot: You may spit on your Finger and Thumb, and pinch the Snuff until it goes out: The Cook may run the Candle's Nose into the Meal Tub or the Groom into a Vessel of Oats, or a Lock of Hay, or a Heap of Litter: The House-maid may put out her Candle by running it against a Looking-glass, which nothing cleans so well as Candle Snuff: But the quickest and best of all Methods, is to blow it out with your Breath, which leaves the Candle clear and readier to be lighted.

There is nothing so pernicious in a Family as a Tell-Tale, against whom it must be the principal Business of you all to unite: Whatever Office he serves in, take all Opportunities to spoil the Business he is about, and to cross him in every Thing. For Instance, if the Butler be the Tell-Tale, break his Glasses whenever he leaves the Pantry Door open: or lock the Cat or the Mastiff in it, who will do as well: Mislays a Fork or a Spoon so as he may never find it. If it be the Cook, whenever she turns her Back, throw a Lump of Soot, or a Handful of Salt in the Pot, or smoking Coals into the Dripping-Pan, or daub the roast Meat with the Back of the Chimney, or hide the Key of the Jack. If a Footman be suspected, let the Cook daub the Back of his new Livery; or when he is going up with a Dish of Soup, let her follow him softly with a Ladle-full, and dribble it all the Way up Stairs to the Dining-room, and then let the House-maid make such a Noise, that her Lady may hear it: The Waitingmaid is very likely to be guilty of this Fault, in hopes to ingratiate herself. In this Case, the Laundress must be sure to tear her Smocks in the washing, and yet wash them but half; and, when she complains, tell all the House that she sweats so much, that her Flesh is so nasty, that she fouls a Smock more in one Hour than the Kitchen-maid doth in a Week.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G****, (*The History of the Swedish Countess of G**) 1748, translator unknown

Whilst we were passing out time in this manner, Sir R--- returned from his journey which he had made in vain; and it was high time for us to quit a place, where we could no longer live in secrecy: but before we were well prepared to set out for Holland, Sir R----'s servant happened do to die suddenly of a malignant fever. This honest man, finding his dissolution drawing nigh, in taking farewell of his master, presented him with 100 ducats. This money, said the faithful dying man, I have saved in your service my ever-honoured master, and by your liberality; and I am glad that I can return it to you again: for it is owing to your generosity, to your instructions, and to your good example, that I can die with pleasure and in tranquillity; and my only wish is, that you may have another servant, in whom you can confide. This shews, that even men of the meanest station may be cultivated to excellent advantage, provided we do not regard them as servants and slaves only, but as fellow-creatures who are committed to our care, and are born to the same general purposes with is.

Rev. Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, 1756-1759

'ST. ZITA, Virgin' (c. 1212 - April 27, 1278); patron saint of servant maids, canonized 1696)

ZITA lived for forty-eight years in the service of Fatinelli, a citizen of Lucca. During this time she rose each morning, while the household were asleep, to hear Mass, and then toiled incessantly till night came, doing the work of others as well as her own. Once Zita, absorbed in prayer, remained in church past the usual hour of her bread-making. She hastened home, reproaching herself with neglect of duty, and found the bread made and ready for the oven. She never doubted that her mistress or one of her servants had kneaded it, and going to them, thanked them; but they were astonished. No human being had made the bread. A delicious perfume rose from it, for angels had made it during her prayer. For years her master and mistress treated her as a mere drudge, while her fellow-servants, resenting her diligence as a reproach to themselves, insulted and struck her. Zita united these sufferings with those of Christ her Lord, never changing the sweet tone of her voice, nor forgetting her gentle and quiet ways. At length Fatinelli, seeing the success which attended her undertakings, gave her charge of his children and of the household. She dreaded this dignity more than the worst humiliation, but scrupulously fulfilled her trust. By her holy economy her master's goods were multiplied, while the poor were fed at his door. Gradually her unflinching patience conquered the jealousy of her fellow-servants, and she became their advocate with their hot-tempered master, who dared not

give way to his anger before Zita. In the end her prayer and toil sanctified the whole house, and drew down upon it the benediction of Heaven. She died in 1272, and in the moment of her death a bright star appearing above her attic showed that she had gained eternal rest.

Reflection – ‘What must I do to be saved?’ said a certain one in fear of damnation. ‘Work and pray, pray and work’, a voice replied, ‘and thou shalt be saved’. The whole life of St. Zita teaches us this truth.

Elizabeth Hands, *A Poem, on the Supposition of an Advertisement Appearing in a Morning Paper, of the Publication of a Volume of Poems, by a Servant-Maid*, 1789

The tea-kettle bubbled, the tea things were set,
 The candles were lighted, the ladies were met;
 The how d’ye’s were over, and entering bustle,
 The company seated, and silks ceased to rustle:
 The great Mrs. Consequence opened her fan,
 And thus the discourse in an instant began
 (All affected reserve and formality scorning):
 ‘I suppose you all saw in the paper this morning
 A volume of Poems advertised – ’tis said
 They’re produced by the pen of a poor servant-maid’.
 ‘A servant write verses!’ says Madam Du Bloom:
 ‘Pray what is the subjectd – a Mop, or a Broom?’
 ‘He, he, he,’ says Miss Flounce: ‘I suppose we shall see
 An ode on a Dishclout – what else can it be?’
 Says Miss Coquettilla, ‘Why, ladies, so tart?
 Perhaps Tom the footman has fired her heart;
 And she’ll tell us how charming he looks in new clothes,
 And how nimble his hand moves in brushing the shoes;
 Or how, the last time that he went to May Fair,
 He bought her some sweethearts of gingerbread ware’.
 ‘For my part I think’, says old Lady Marr-joy,
 ‘A servant might find herself other employ:
 Was she mine I’d employ her as long as ’twas light,
 And send her to bed without candle at night’.
 ‘Why so?’ says Miss Rhymer, displeased: ‘I protest
 ’Tis pity a genius should be so depressed!’
 ‘What ideas can such low-bred creatures conceive?’
 Says Mrs. Noworthy, and laughed in her sleeve.
 Says old Miss Prudella, ‘If servants can tell
 How to write to their mothers, to say they are well,

And read of a Sunday The Duty of Man,
 Which is more I believe than one half of them can;
 I think 'tis much properer they should rest there,
 Than be reaching at things so much out of their sphere'.
 Says old Mrs. Candour, 'I've now got a maid
 That's the plague of my life – a young gossiping jade;
 There's no end of the people that after her come,
 And whenever I'm out, she is never at home;
 I'd rather ten times she would sit down and write,
 Than gossip all over the town every night'.
 'Some whimsical trollop most like', says Miss Prim,
 'Has been scribbling of nonsense, just out of a whim,
 And, conscious it neither is witty nor pretty,
 Conceals her true name, and ascribes it to Betty'.
 'I once had a servant myself', says Miss Pines,
 'That wrote on a wedding some very good lines'.
 Says Mrs. Domestic, 'And when they were done,
 I can't see for my part what use they were on;
 Had she wrote a receipt, to've instructed you how
 To warm a cold breast of veal, like a ragout,
 Or to make cowslip wine, that would pass for Champagne,
 It might have been useful, again and again'.
 On the sofa was old Lady Pedigree placed;
 She owned that for poetry she had no taste,
 That the study of heraldry was more in fashion,
 And boasted she knew all the crests in the nation.
 Says Mrs. Routella, 'Tom, take out the urn,
 And stir up the fire, you see it don't burn'.
 The tea-things removed, and the tea-table gone,
 The card-tables brought, and the cards laid thereon,
 The ladies, ambitious for each other's crown,
 Like courtiers contending for honours, sat down.

From A.N. Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Petersburga v Moskvu (A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow)*, 1790, translated by Leo Weiner

[The following passage follows Radishchev's report of a conversation with a serf ploughing his master's fields on a Sunday]

Tremble, cruelhearted landlord! On the brow of each of your peasants I see your condemnation written.

While absorbed in these thoughts I happened to notice my servant, who was sitting up on the box in front of me, swaying from side to side. Suddenly

I felt a chill coursing through my veins, sending the blood to my head and mantling, my cheeks with a blush. I felt so ashamed of myself that I could scarcely keep from bursting into tears. 'In your anger', I said to myself, 'you denounce the proud master who wears out his peasant in the fields; but are you not doing the same or even worse yourself? What crime has your poor Petruschka committed that you should deny him sleep, the consolation for our miseries, and nature's greatest gift to the unfortunate? He gets pay, food, and clothing, and you never beat him with a whip or a cudgel. (O moderate man!) And you think that piece of bread and a scrap of cloth give you the right to treat your fellow human being as though he were a top, and you merely boast that you do not often whip it up while it is whirling, Do you know what is written in the fundamental law, in the heart of every man? He whom I strike has the right to strike me. Remember the day when Petruschka was drunk and did not come in time to dress you. Remember how you boxed his ear. If only he had then, although intoxicated, come to his senses and answered you as your question deserved! And who gave you power over him? The law. The law? And you dare to defile that sacred name. Miserable one!'

Tears gushed from my eyes, and while I was in this state the post nags brought me to the next station.

François de Chateaubriand, from *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem (Record of a Journey from Paris to Jerusalem)*, 1811, translated by A. S. Kline

I finally saw a boat coming towards us, in which I made out my Greek servant, accompanied by three monks. They recognized me in my French clothing, and waved their hands, in a kindly manner. They were soon on board. Although these monks were Spanish, and spoke an Italian which was hard to understand, we shook hands like true compatriots. I descended with them into the shallop; we entered the port through a convenient opening in the rocks, dangerous even for a caique. The shore Arabs walked through water up to their waists, in order to carry us on their shoulders. Rather an amusing scene took place: my servant was wearing a white greatcoat; white being the colour of distinction among the Arabs, they decided that my servant was the sheikh. They seized him, and carried him off in triumph despite his protestations while, dressed in my blue coat, I was borne away in obscurity, on the back of a ragged beggar.

Alessandro Manzoni, from *I promessi sposi (The Betrothed)*, 1827, translator unknown

Anxious to find himself in society that he could trust, he called aloud, 'Perpetua, Perpetua', advancing towards the little parlour where she was, doubtless, employed in preparing the table for his supper. Perpetua was, as the

reader must be aware, the housekeeper of Don Abbondio; an affectionate and faithful domestic, who knew how to obey or command as occasion served; to bear the grumbling and whims of her master at times, and at others to make him bear with hers. These were becoming every day more frequent; she had passed the age of forty in a single state; the consequences, *she* said, of having refused all the offers that had been made her; her *female friends* asserted that she had never found any one willing to take her.

‘Coming’, said Perpetua, as she set in its usual place on the little table the flask of Don Abbondio’s favourite wine, and moved slowly toward the parlour door: before she reached it he entered, with steps so disordered, looks so clouded, and a countenance so changed, that an eye less practised than that of Perpetua could have discovered at a glance that something unusual had befallen him.

‘Mercy on me! What is it ails my master?’

‘Nothing, nothing’, said Don Abbondio, as he sank upon his easy chair.

‘How, nothing! Would you have me believe that, looking as you do? Some dreadful accident has happened’.

‘Oh! for the love of Heaven! When I say nothing, it is either nothing, or something I cannot tell’.

‘That you cannot tell, not even to me? Who will take care of your health? Who will give you advice?’

‘Oh! peace, peace! Do not make matters worse. Give me a glass of my wine’.

‘And you will still pretend to me that nothing is the matter?’ said Perpetua, filling the glass, but retaining it in her hand, as if unwilling to present it except as the reward of confidence.

‘Give here, give here’, said Don Abbondio, taking the glass with an unsteady hand, and hastily swallowing its contents.

‘Would you oblige me then to go about, asking here and there what it is has happened to my master?’ said Perpetua, standing upright before him, with her hands on her sides, and looking him steadfastly in the face, as if to extract the secret from his eyes.

‘For the love of Heaven, do not worry me, do not kill me with your pother; this is a matter that concerns—concerns my life’.

‘Your life!’

‘My life’.

‘You know well, that, when you have frankly confided in me, I have never—’

‘Yes, forsooth, as when—’

Perpetua was sensible she had touched a false string; wherefore, changing suddenly her note, ‘My dear master’, said she, in a moving tone of voice, ‘I have always had a dutiful regard for you, and if I now wish to know this affair, it is from zeal, and a desire to assist you, to give you advice, to relieve your mind’.

The truth is, that Don Abbondio’s desire to disburden himself of his painful secret was as great as that of Perpetua to obtain a knowledge of it; so that,

after having repulsed, more and more feebly, her renewed assaults; after having made her swear many times that she would not breathe a syllable of it, he, with frequent pauses and exclamations, related his miserable adventure.

...

'Mercy upon me!' cried Perpetua, 'what a wretch! what a tyrant! Does he not fear God?'

'Will you be silent? or do you want to ruin me completely?'

'Oh! we are here alone, no one can hear us. But what will my poor master do?'

'See there now', said Don Abbondio, in a peevish tone, 'see the fine advice you give me. To ask of me, what I'll do? what I'll do? as if you were the one in difficulty, and it was for me to help you out!'

'Nay, I could give you my own poor opinion; but then—'

'But—but then, let us know it'.

'My opinion would be, that, as every one says our archbishop is a saint, a man of courage, and not to be frightened by an ugly phiz, and who will take pleasure in upholding a curate against one of these tyrants; I should say, and do say, that you had better write him a handsome letter, to inform him as how—'

'Will you be silent! will you be silent! Is this advice to offer a poor man? When I get a pistol bullet in my side—God preserve me!—will the archbishop take it out?'

'Ah! pistol bullets are not given away like sugarplums; and it were woful if those dogs should bite every time they bark. If a man knows how to show his teeth, and make himself feared, they hold him in respect: we should not have been brought to such a pass, if you had stood upon your rights. Now, all come to us (by your good leave) to—'

'Will you be silent?'

...

'Well, well, you'll think of it to-night; but in the meantime do not be the first to harm yourself; to destroy your own health: eat a mouthful'.

Charles Baudelaire, 'La servante au grand coeur dont vous étiez jalouse' ('The Kind-Hearted Servant of Whom You Were Jealous'), in *Les fleurs du mal*, 1857, translated by William Aggeler

The kind-hearted servant of whom you were jealous,
 Who sleeps her sleep beneath a humble plot of grass,
 We must by all means take her some flowers.
 The dead, ah! the poor dead suffer great pains,
 And when October, the pruner of old trees, blows
 His melancholy breath about their marble tombs,
 Surely they must think the living most ungrateful,
 To sleep, as they do, between warm, white sheets,
 While, devoured by gloomy reveries,

Without bedfellows, without pleasant causeries,
 Old, frozen skeletons, belabored by the worm,
 They feel the drip of winter's snow,
 The passing of the years; nor friends, nor family
 Replace the dead flowers that hang on their tombs.
 If, some evening, when the fire-log whistles and sings
 I saw her sit down calmly in the great armchair,
 If, on a cold, blue night in December,
 I found her ensconced in a corner of my room,
 Grave, having come from her eternal bed
 Maternally to watch over her grown-up child,
 What could I reply to that pious soul,
 Seeing tears fall from her hollow eyelids?

John Ruskin, 'Domestic Servants – Mastership' (letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 1865; repr. in E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, eds, *Works*, 1905, XVII, 518-519)

[This letter was written in response to an article lamenting the 'good old times', claiming that it is now 'a social fact, that the hardest thing in the world to find a good servant' and that this 'evil' could only be cured, 'by some general distress which will drive more people into seeking service, and so give employers a greater choice. At present the demand appears to exceed the supply. And servants are careless about losing their places through bad behaviour'.]

SIR, – You so seldom write nonsense, that you will, I am sure, pardon your friends for telling you when you do. Your article on servants to-day is nonsense. It is just as easy and as difficult now to get good servants as it ever was. You may have them, or you may have pines [pineapples] and peaches for the growing, or you may even buy them good, if you can persuade the good growers to spare you them off their walls; but you cannot get them by political economy and the law of supply and demand.

There are broadly two ways of making good servants; the first, a sound, wholesome, thorough-going slavery – which was the heathen way. And no bad one neither, provided you understand that to make real 'slaves' you must make yourself a real 'master' (which is not easy). The second is the Christian's way: 'who so delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at the last' [*Proverbs* xxix, 21]. And as few people want their servants to become their sons, this is not way to their liking. So that, neither having courage or self-discipline enough on the one hand to make themselves nobly dominant after the heathen fashion, nor tenderness or justice to make themselves nobly protective after the Christian, the present public thinks to

manufacture servants bodily out of powder and hay-stuffing – mentally by early instillation of Catechism and other mechanic-religious appliances – and economically, as you helplessly suggest, by the law of supply and demand, with such results as we all see, and most of us more or less feel, and shall feel daily more and more to our cost and selfish sorrow.

Sir, there is only one way to have good servants; that is to be worthy of being well-served. All nature and all humanity will serve a hood master, and treble against an ignoble one. And there is no surer test of the quality of a nation than the quality of its servants, for they are their masters' shadows and distort their faults in a flattened mimicry. A wise nation will have philosophers in its servants' hall; a knavish nation will have knaves there; and a kindly nation will have friends there. Only let it be remembered that 'kindness' means as with your child, so with your servants, not indulgence, but care. – I am, Sir, seeing that you usually write good sense, and 'serve' good causes, your servants to command,
J. Ruskin

Denmark Hill, Sept. 2

[On 6 September the *Telegraph* replied objecting that Ruskin had shown 'how to cook the cook when we catch her' but not how to catch her, and calling on him to forego 'eloquent maxims' and 'come down out of the clouds of theory'. More 'domestic correspondence' followed.]

Obituary of Helena Demuth, by Friedrich Engels, in *The People's Press*, 22 November 1890

By the death during the past week of Helena Demuth the Socialist party has lost a remarkable member. Born on New Year's Day, 1823 [In fact New Year's Eve 1820], of peasant parents, at St. Wendel, she came, at the age of 14, into the family of the von Westphalens of Trier. Jenny von Westphalen in 1843 became the wife of Karl Marx. From 1837 to the death of Mrs. Marx in 1881, with the exception of the first few months of the married life, the two women were constant companions. After the death of Mrs. Marx in December 1881, and of Marx on March 14th, 1883, Helena Demuth went to keep house for Frederick Engels. The leaders of the Socialist movement bore testimony to 'her strong common-sense, her absolute rectitude of character, her ceaseless thoughtfulness for others, her reliability, and the essential truthfulness of her nature'.

T.S. Eliot, 'Morning at the Window', in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,
And along the trampled edges of the street.

I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

T.S. Eliot, 'Aunt Helen', in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917

Miss Helen Slingsby was my maiden aunt,
And lived in a small house near a fashionable square
Cared for by servants to the number of four.
Now when she died there was silence in heaven
And silence at her end of the street.
The shutters were drawn and the undertaker wiped his feet –
He was aware that this sort of thing had occurred before.
The dogs were handsomely provided for,
But shortly afterwards the parrot died too.
The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece,
And the footman sat upon the dining-table
Holding the second housemaid on his knees –
Who had always been so careful while her mistress lived.

Bertolt Brecht, from *Kriegsfiibel (A War Primer)*, 1955, translated by Lee Baxandall

General, your tank is a powerful vehicle
It smashes down forests and crushes a hundred men.
But it has one defect:
It needs a driver.

General, your bomber is powerful.
It flies faster than a storm and carries more than an elephant.
But it has one defect:
It needs a mechanic.

General, man is very useful.
He can fly and he can kill.
But he has one defect:
He can think.