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TUDOR SCHOOL-BOY LIFE

THE DIALOGUES
OF
JUAN LUIS VIVES

TRANSLATED FOR THE FIRST TIME INTO ENGLISH
TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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MCMVIII

XXI

LUDUS CHARTARUM SEU FOLIORUM—Card-playing or Paper-games

Valdaura, Tamayus, Lupianus, Castellus, Manricus

This Dialogue has two parts: Exordium and the game. The Exordium is an introduction as to time (à tempore).

I. Introduction on the Weather

Val. What rough weather! How cold and cruel the heavens! how unfavourable the sun!

Tam. To what does this state of the heavens and the sun point?

Val. That we should not go out of the house.

Tam. But what are we to do in the house?

Val. Study by the lighted hearth, meditate, think on things—a course which might bring profit and sound morals to the mind.

Cast. This is indeed the chief thing to be done, nor ought anything to take precedence of it in a man's mind. But when a man's mind is wearied by intentness of application, how then shall he divert himself, especially in such weather as this?

Val. Some recreations of the mind suit some people; others, others. I indeed receive delight and recreation by card games.

Tam. And this kind of weather invites in that direction, so that we hide ourselves in a closely shut room, and guarded on every side from the wind and cold, with a shining hearth, and a table set with charts (i.e. maps).

Val. Alas! we have no charts.

Tam. I mean playing-cards.

Val. I should like that.

Tam. Then we want some money and stones (calculi) for reckoning.

Val. We don't need stones, if we have some very small coins.

Tam. I have none, except gold and larger silver coins.

Val. Change some for small money. Here, boy, take these coins of one, two, two-and-a-half, and three, stivers and get us tiny coins from the money-changer—single, two, three, farthing-pieces, not bigger money.

Tam. How these coins shine!

Val. Certainly, they are as yet new and unused.

Tam. Let us go to the games-emporium, where we shall find everything ready to hand.

Cast. It is not expedient, for we should have such a number of umpires. We might just as well play in the public street. It would be better to betake ourselves into your room, and invite a few of our friends, especially those likely to put us in good spirits.

Tam. Your chamber is more convenient for this, for in mine, we should be interrupted continually by the mother's maidservants, who are always seeking some dirty clothes in the women's chests.

Val. Let us go then into the dining-room.

Tam. So let it be. Let us go! Boy, fetch us here Franciscus Lupianus and Roderick Manricus and Zoilaster.

Val. Stay! By no means let us have Zoilaster, an angry man, given to quarrelling, a noisy calumniator, one who often raises fierce tragedies out of the smallest matters.

Cast. You certainly advise wisely, for if a young man of such views of recreation should mix himself in our company, then there would not be sport but grave strife. Bring, therefore, Rimosulus instead of him.

Val. No, not him, unless you wish whatever we do here, by way of sport, should be made known before sunset throughout the city.

Cast. Is he so good a herald?

Val. Yes, in making things known where no good is done by the knowledge. As to matters of good report, he is more religiously silent than the Eleusinian mysteries.

Tam. Then Lupianus and Manricus alone are to come.

Cast. They are first-rate companions.

Tam. And warn them to bring little coins with them, but whatsoever is of severity and earnestness let them leave at home with the crabbed Philoponus. Let them come, accompanied by jests, wit, and agreeableness.

Lup. Hail! most festive companions!

Tam. What is the meaning of that contraction of your brow? Smooth those wrinkles. Haven't you been advised to lay down all thoughts of literature in the abode of the Muses?

Lup. Our thoughts on literature are so illiterate that the Muses who are in their abode wouldn't own them.

Manr. All prosperity!

Val. Prosperity is doubtful, when you are called to the line of battle and to warfare, in which, indeed, kings will be present!

Tam. Be of good cheer! Money-purses, not necks, will be attacked.

Lup. The money-purse often is in place of a neck, and money in place of blood and spirit; as with those Carians, whose contempt of life is the pretext for kings to practise their madness on them.

Manr. I don't wish to be an actor in, but the spectator of, this play.

Tam. How so?

Manr. Because I am so very unfortunate; I always go away from playing, beaten and despoiled.

Tam. Do you know what dice-players say, in a proverb of theirs? "You should seek your toga where you lost it."

Manr. True, but there is the danger that, while I seek the lost toga, I shall lose both my tunic and shirt.

Tam. This indeed often happens, but he who risks nothing does not become rich.

Manr. This is the opinion of metal-diggers.

Tam. Also of the Janus in the middle of Antwerp.

II. The Playing—Drawing Lots

Val. It is quite right. We can only play four at a time. We are five. Let us cast lots as to who shall be the spectator of the others.

Manr. I will be the one, without any casting of lots.

Val. No such thing! Wrong should be done to none. No one's will, but chance, shall decide this. He to whom the first king falls in dealing, he shall sit as lazy spectator, and if any dispute shall arise, he shall be judge.

Lup. Here are two whole packs of cards; one is Spanish, the other French.

Val. The Spanish does not seem to be quite right.

Lup. How so?

Val. Since the tens are lacking.

Lup. They don't usually have them, as the French do. Cards, both Spanish and French, are divided into four suits, or families. The Spanish have gold coins, cups, sceptres, and swords. The French, hearts, diamonds, clubs, (little) ploughshares, otherwise called spades or arrow-points. There are in each suit—king, queen, knight; ones, twos, threes, fours, fives, sixes, sevens, eights, nines. The French also have tens. In the Spanish game, golden pieces and cups are used, but less preferably swords and sceptres. With the French, the higher numbers are always considered better.

Cast. What game shall we play?

Val. The game of Spanish Triumph, in which the dealer will retain for himself the last card as indication (of trumps) if it is a one or a picture.

Manr. Let us know now who shall be left out of the game!

Tam. You advise well. Pray deal the cards. This is yours, this is his, this for Lupianus. You are umpire.

Val. I would rather have you as umpire than as a fellow-player.

Lup. Nice words, I must say. Pray, why do you say so?

Val. Because in playing you are so cunning, and such a caviller. Then they say that you have a knack of arranging the cards as suits yourself.

Lup. My play has no deceit in it. But my activity seems to your lack of experience like imposture, as often is the case with the ignorant. However, how does Castellus please you, who, as soon as he has won a little money, leaves off playing?

Tam. This is rather shirking play than playing itself (*eludere est hoc, quam ludere*).

Val. That is a light evil enough. For if he should be beaten, he will fasten himself to the game like a nail in a beam.

Partners

Tam. We will play by twos, two against two. How shall we be partnered?

Val. I, indeed, knowing nothing of this game, will stick to you, Castellus, whom I understand to be most expert in the game.

Tam. Add also, most crafty in it.

Cast. There is no need of choosing. Lots must divide everything. Those who get the highest cards play against those with the lowest.

Val. So be it. Deal the cards!

Manr. As I wished, Castellus and I are on the same side. Valdaura and Tamayus are our opponents.

Val. Let us sit, as we are accustomed, crosswise. Give me that reclining chair, so that I may lose more peacefully.

Tam. Place the footstool. Let us sit down in our places. Draw for the lead.

Val. It is my lead. You deal, Castellus.

Modes of Distribution of Cards

Cast. How? from the left to the right, according to the Belgian custom? or, on the contrary, according to Spanish custom, from the right to the left?

Val. By the latter custom, since we are playing the Spanish game and have thrown out the tens.

Cast. Yes. How many cards do I give to each?

The Stake

Val. Nine. But what shall the stake be?

Manr. Three denarii each deal and a doubling of the stakes.

Cast. Wait, my Manricus, you are getting on too fast! That would not be play, but madness, where so much money would be risked. How could you have pleasure in the anxiety lest you should lose so much money? One denarius would be sufficient, and the increase shall be one-half up to five asses.

Val. You counsel rightly. For so we shall not play without stakes, which would be insipid, nor for what would grieve us, if we lost, for that is bitter.

Cast. Have you all nine cards? Hearts are trumps, and this queen is mine.

Val. What a happy omen that is! Certainly it is most true that the hearts of women ordinarily rule.

Cast. Leave off your reflections. Answer to this: I increase the stake!

The Contest

Val. I have a losing hand and haven't good sequences. I pass.

Tam. And I also. You deal, Manricus.

Val. What are you doing? You haven't shown the trump.

Manr. I will first count my cards, so as not to have more or less than nine.

Val. You have one too many.

Manr. I will place one aside.

Val. That is not the rule of the game. You ought to lose your turn of dealing, and pass it on to the next. Give me the cards!

Manr. I won't, since I haven't yet turned up the trump.

Val. Yes, you will. By God (per Deum)!

Cast. Get away! What has come into your mind, my Valdaura? You swear oaths on the slightest provocation, which would scarcely be fitting on the most important affairs.

Manr. What do you say, umpire?

Lup. I don't know really what should be done in this case.

Manr. See what a judge we have appointed over us—one who has no judgment—a leader without eyes.

Val. What, then, is to be done?

Manr. What, indeed, unless we send to Paris for some one to bring this matter of ours forward for a decree of the Senate.

Cast. Mix the cards, and deal again.

Tam. Oh! what a good hand I lose! I shall not have another like it to-day!

Cast. Shuffle well those cards and deal them more carefully, one by one.

Val. Again, I increase the stakes.

Tam. Didn't I predict that I shouldn't have such a chance in my hands again to-day? I am always most unfortunate. Why do I so much as even look at a game?

Cast. This, indeed, is not playing. It is afflicting ourselves. Is it recreating ourselves and refreshing our minds, to get worried like this? Play ought to be play, not torment.

Manr. Be a little patient; don't throw your cards away. You are getting into a panic!

Val. Then answer if you accept (the amount of the stake).

Manr. I accept, and increase it again.

Val. What! do you expect to put me to flight with your fierce words? I don't pass.

Manr. Declare, once for all, and be quick about it. Do you agree?

Val. Yes, and with the greatest pleasure. My mind prompts me to contest in such play for a still greater stake, but this will do amongst friends.

Tam. What! don't you count me amongst the living, so that you leave me out of consideration?

Cast. What, then, do you stake, you man of straw (faenee).

Tam. I, for my part, wish to increase the stake.

Manr. What do you say, Castellus?

Cast. At last you consult me, after you have increased the stake by your own arrangements. I should not dare, on my hand, to stake up to such an increase.

Val. Give a definite answer.

Cast. I haven't the grounds for doing so. Everything seems ambiguous and doubtful. Hence I answer hesitatingly, timidly, diffidently. Isn't this expressed sufficiently clearly?

Manr. Immortal God, what an abundance of words! The hail we lately had, did not fall so thickly! But, I beg, let us risk a little.

Cast. Let us make the attempt when you please, but don't expect a great stake from me.

Manr. But you will bring what assistance you can?

Cast. There is no need for you to advise me on that score.

Manr. We have been completely beaten!

Tam. We have won four denarii. Shuffle!

Val. I go five asses.

Cast. I don't know whether I shall pass, for I am sure to be beaten.

Tam. Five more!

Cast. What do you reply to this call?

Manr. What am I to say? I let it pass.

Cast. You lost the last game. Let me lose this in accordance with my own ideas. I know that I am of less skill, but I must hold out as long as I seem to have any strength.

Val. What, then, do you say? Do you refuse?

Cast. No, certainly. I agree.

Tam. Don't you know this Castellus, Valdaura? He plays a better game than you, but he is thus accustomed to lure on rash challengers into his net. Take care not to go on rashly, where you will be entangled in a net.

Val. God's faith! how could you guess that I had one last card left of this suit (natio)?

Cast. I knew all the cards.

Val. That is quite conceivable.

Cast. And that, too, without looking at them!

Val. Perhaps even from the backs?

Cast. You are too suspicious.

Val. You make me so, if you will excuse me saying so.

Tam. Let us examine if the backs of the cards have marks whereby they can be recognised.

End of the Game

Val. Let us, please, make an end of playing. This game worries me by all going so wrongly.

Cast. As you will. But perchance the fault is not in the game, but in your lack of skill, for you don't know how to direct your steps to victory, but you throw away your cards without any reason, as chance happens, thinking that it doesn't matter what you have played before, or might play later, what and in what place any card should be played.

Tam. Of all things there is satiety, and even of pleasures. I am now weary of sitting. Let us get up for a little time.

Lup. Take this lute and sing something to us.

Tam. What will you have?

Lup. A song on games.

Tam. A song of Vergil's?

Lup. Yes; or if you prefer one of Vives, the song he lately sang as he wandered along the wall-promenade of Bruges.

Val. With the voice of a goose.

Lup. But you sing it with a swan's voice!

Tam. This a god would do better, for the swan only sings as death urges him on.

Ludunt et pueri, ludunt juvenesque senesque
Ingenium, gravitas, cani, prudentia, ludus,
Denique mortalis sola virtute remota,
Quid nisi nugatrix, et vana est fabula, vita.

Val. I can assure you the song is well expressed, though it comes as it were from a dry old stick (ex spongia arida).

Lup. Does he compose a song with such great difficulty?

Val. Indeed he does. Whether it is because he writes poetry so rarely, or because he does not do it willingly, or because the inclination of his genius drives him into other regions.