

April Fools

advance of years, I shall wish to be excused from many of your more nocturnal gaieties. That desire I could not gratify were I still to hold the reins of responsibility. However, this is not an oration of farewell, so I will not longer emphasize the melancholy topick of mutability.

"The advice I would offer you this morning is, next to the duty of a regular course of chalybeate, the most important item in human happiness. My lords, ladies and gentlemen, never meddle with other people's business when it happens to concern the heart or the soul of a human creature. Do not, because you are older or because you have read more widely or because you have travelled across Europe or because you have dined with a Minister, or because you suffer from any of the numerous delusions of superiority, do not be too sure that you are competent to interfere with somebody who has enjoyed none of these accidental advantages. Admonish the erring child, warn the impetuous young woman, chide the libertine, reproach the gamester, set an example of continence to all the world, but abstain from direct interference; and if an unpleasant doom overwhelms the object of your interest, pray do not suppose that you would have been able to avert it. My lords, ladies and gentlemen, you are one and all the genteelst of companions, but so far as my theology has taken me, you are none of you gods or goddesses, except in the hyperbole of poetick dedications.

"You have already heard the announcement of your forthcoming entertainments; let me add to their number with a very cordial invitation to the Great House, next Tuesday week. Finally, let me add that during my tenure of office, I shall hope to make these personal encounters a very frequent delight to your obliged humble servant Horace Ripple. Oh, and pray let me assure you that my absence yesterday morning was in no way due to any desire on my part to celebrate the festival of the First of April. My lords, ladies and gentlemen, your very obedient."

With these words the Great little Man descended from his pedestal, and was presently in affable conversation with a number of men and women of rank and fashion.