

Gulliver's Travels, J. Swift

Part I: *A voyage in Lilliput*, Chapter IV.

...For,' said he [the Emperor of Lilliput], 'as flourishing a condition as we may appear to be in to foreigners, we labour under two mighty evils: a violent faction at home, and the danger of an invasion, by a most potent enemy, from abroad.

As to the first, you are to understand, that for about seventy moons past there have been **two struggling parties in this empire, under the names of *Tramecksan* and *Slamecksan***, from the high and low heels of their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves. It is alleged, indeed, that the high heels are most agreeable to our ancient constitution; but, however this be, his majesty has determined to make use only of low heels in the administration of the government, and all offices in the gift of the crown, as you cannot but observe; and particularly that his majesty's imperial heels are lower at least by a *drurr* than any of his court (*drurr* is a measure about the fourteenth part of an inch). The animosities between these two parties run so high, that they will neither eat, nor drink, nor talk with each other. We compute the *Tramecksan*, or High-Heels, to exceed us in number; but the power is wholly on our side. We apprehend his imperial highness, the heir to the crown, to have some tendency towards the High-Heels; at least we can plainly discover that one of his heels is higher than the other, which gives him a hobble in his gait.

Now, in the midst of these intestine disquiets, **we are threatened with an invasion from the island of *Blefuscu*, which is the other great empire of the universe, almost as large and powerful as this of his majesty**. For as to what we have heard you affirm, that there are other kingdoms and states in the world inhabited by human creatures as large as yourself, our philosophers are in much doubt, and would rather conjecture that you dropped from the moon, or one of the stars; because it is certain, that a hundred mortals of your bulk would in a short time destroy all the fruits and cattle of his majesty's dominions: besides, our histories of six thousand moons make no mention of any other regions than the two great empires of *Lilliput* and *Blefuscu*. **Which two mighty powers have, as I was going to tell you, been engaged in a most obstinate war for six-and-thirty moons past. It began upon the following occasion. It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking eggs**, before we eat them, was upon the larger end; but **his present Majesty's grandfather**, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers. Whereupon the emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law, that our Histories tell us, there have been six rebellions raised on that account; wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown.

These civil commotions were constantly fomented by the monarchs of **Blefuscus**; and when they were quelled, **the exiles always fled for refuge to that empire**. It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death, rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy: but the books of the *Big-endians* have been long forbidden, and the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments. [...]. Now, the *Big-endian* exiles have found so much credit in the emperor of *Blefuscus's* court, and so much private assistance and encouragement from their party here at home, that a bloody war has been carried on between the two empires for six-and-thirty moons, with various success; during which time we have lost forty capital ships, and a much a greater number of smaller vessels, together with thirty thousand of our best seamen and soldiers; and the damage received by the enemy is reckoned to be somewhat greater than ours. However, they have now equipped a numerous fleet, and are just preparing to make a descent upon us; and his imperial majesty, placing great confidence in your valour and strength, has commanded me to lay this account of his affairs before you.'

I desired the secretary to present my humble duty to the emperor; and to let him know, 'that I thought it would not become me, who was a foreigner, to interfere with parties; but I was ready, with the hazard of my life, to defend his person and state against all invaders.'

Focus on the elements in bold: in your opinion what do they refer to?

- the two struggling **parties** in this empire (*Tramecksan* and *Slamecksan*)?
- "the other great empire" of **Blefuscus**?
- "the primitive **way of breaking eggs**"?
- his present Majesty's grandfather (who gave origin to a new practice of breaking eggs)?