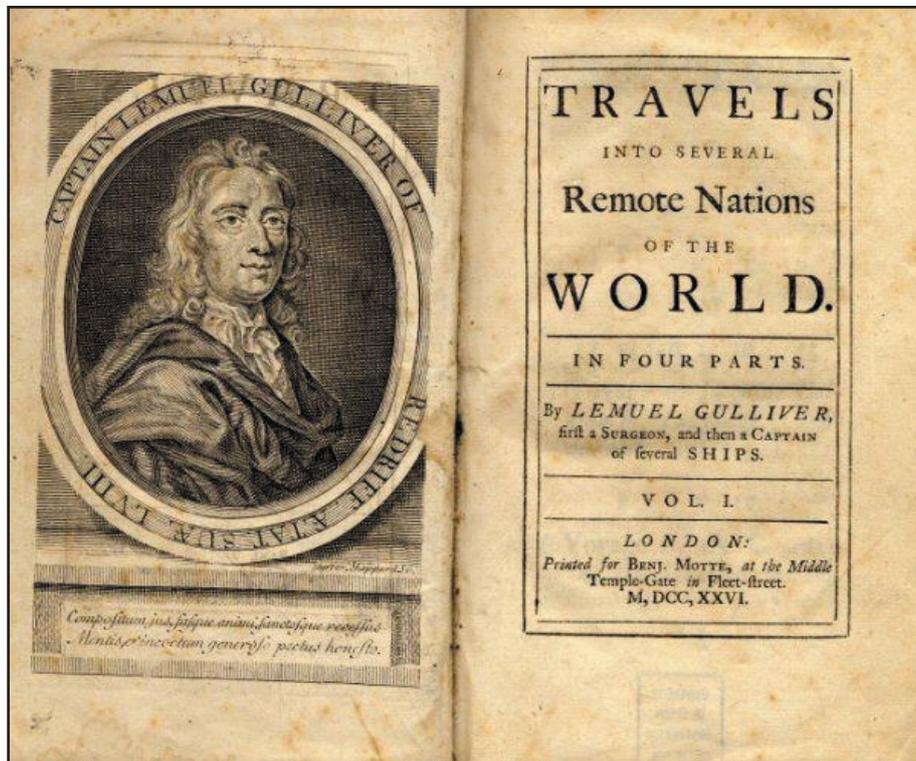


FOREWORD



The first edition of Swift's Gulliver's Travels published by Benjamin Motte in 1726

Scientific publication has a twofold mission. Once it is the outcome of any scientific research disseminating the results achieved. On the other hand it may provide a basis for scientific qualification. If the yield of the scientific activity is manifested in the means and the way of publication, this yield has to be measured, evaluated and marketed. The higher is the rank of the journal it is published in, and the broader is the sphere of dissemination, the higher will be the reputation of the scientist. Since the beginning of the history of the human race grading or qualification has been a most essential institution of any society. In favour of a more successful ranking, criteria have always been improved. Also, as a result of this perpetual improvement of the qualification methodology, systems became more and more sophisticated.

Jonathan Swift the dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin wrote his evergreen social pamphlet titled "Gulliver's travels into several nations of the World". In a systematic assessment he criticized most fields of failures and deviations within the human society. He was presenting a detailed description of the qualification process done by the emperor of Lilliput, an imaginary country which is one of the scenes of the novel.

"There is likewise another diversion, which is only shown before the emperor and empress, and first minister, upon particular occasions. The emperor lays on the table three fine silken threads of six inches long; one is blue, the other red, and the third green. These threads are proposed as prizes for those persons whom the emperor has a mind to distinguish by a peculiar

mark of his favour. The ceremony is performed in his majesty's great chamber of state, where the candidates are to undergo a trial of dexterity very different from the former, and such as I have not observed the least resemblance of in any other country of the new or old world. The emperor holds a stick in his hands, both ends parallel to the horizon, while the candidates advancing, one by one, sometimes leap over the stick, sometimes creep under it, backward and forward, several times, according as the stick is advanced or depressed. Sometimes the emperor holds one end of the stick, and his first minister the other; sometimes the minister has it entirely to himself. Whoever performs his part with most agility, and holds out the longest in leaping and creeping, is rewarded with the blue-coloured silk; the red is given to the next, and the green to the third, which they all wear girt twice round about the middle; and you see few great persons about this court who are not adorned with one of these girdles."

What is the message of this short description? Maybe two postulates can be derived from that. One is the humorous introduction to the qualification system that depends on the ever changing requirements of the process. The other is a really tragic conclusion. It suggests that the qualification process serves the compliance to the criteria dictated by the person in charge rather than providing a chance to evaluate the person's contribution to the society.

This is the point where we may return to the field of scientific publication. This journal, Columella, provides a forum for scientific publications in the field of agricultural and environmental sciences. Columella is a newborn periodical having yet no considerable records in the world of scientific journals. However it is the journal of one of the most ambitious agricultural faculties of Hungary with a mission to disseminate novel research results in favour of creating a better world.

Thanks to the authors of the present issue, and also thanks to the readers who may read, use and broadcast the scientific information compiled. Hope to welcome them as future authors as well.

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