

14th November 2020

Bored

**“Society is now one polished horde,
Formed of two mighty tribes, the *Bores* and the *Bored*.”**

Lord Byron, Don Juan

I hope I've never inhabited the first of Byron's "mighty tribes" and been a bore. If I ever become a member, please let me know. However, over the weeks, I *have* found myself among the ranks of *The Bored*. Indeed, several recent conversations indicate that, because of the intractable nature of the Covid-19 restrictions, the mighty tribe of *The Bored* is expanding rapidly.

When the West Indian batsman, Brian Lara, had scored a remarkable 501 not out in 1994, a world record in first-class cricket, the English legend, Denis Compton, is reported to have remarked: "I couldn't bat for the length of time required to score 500. I'd get bored and fall over." It's not that *I'm* in danger of falling over. It's just that I've become ever conscious of the tedium that's around me. Boredom gets to me from time to time.

In his 1947 novel *La Peste* (The Plague), Albert Camus tells the story of a plague sweeping the French Algerian city of Oran. One of the characters, Dr Rieux, visits an "asthmatic Spaniard" and finds his patient sitting up in bed counting dried peas between two pans. The old man, a dry-goods dealer by occupation, had decided at the age of 50 that he'd done enough work for his lifetime. So he took to his bed and never left it. He couldn't bear the sight of a watch, but he tracked time with his peas, transferring them from one pan to another at a carefully regulated speed. "Every fifteen pans," he said, "it's feeding time. What could be simpler?"

What a tedious way to spend your day! But bored? It didn't appear so, for the peas and the pans, the rhythm and the counting, did their job for this asthmatic Spaniard. It's not my way, that's for sure, and I've not yet taken to my bed and dispensed with clocks and watches! But I *am* reminded that I need to keep active, to have routines, as well as making sure I have variety in my life. I need to be energised in whatever way I can.

I may still occasionally join the throng Byron calls *The Bored*, but I don't want to stay with *this* mighty tribe for too long.

A prayer for today

Lord, when I'm dispirited, show me signs of new life and purpose. Amen.

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