**The Chaos**

**by Charivarius (Gerard Nolst Trenité)**

Dearest *creature* in *Creation*,  
Studying English pronunciation,

I will teach you in my verse  
Sounds like *corpse, corps, horse*, and *worse*.  
I will keep you, *Susy, busy*,  
Make your *head* with *heat* grow dizzy;  
*Tear* in eye, your dress you'll *tear*;  
So shall I! Oh, hear my *prayer*.  
  
*Pray*, console your loving poet,  
Make my coat look *new*, dear, *sew* it!  
Just compare *heart, beard*, and *heard*,  
*Dies* and *diet*, *lord* and *word*.  
*Sword* and *sward*, *retain* and *Britain*  
(Mind the latter, how it's written!)  
*Made* has not the sound of *bade*,  
*Say-said, pay-paid, laid*, but *plaid*.  
  
Now I surely will not *plague* you  
With such words as *vague* and *ague*,  
But be careful how you speak,  
Say *break, steak*, but *bleak* and *streak*.  
*Previous, precious, fuchsia, via;*

*Pipe, snipe, recipe* and *choir*,  
*Cloven, oven; how* and *low*;  
*Script, receipt; shoe, poem, toe*.  
  
Hear me say, *devoid* of trickery:  
*Daughter, laughter* and *Terpsichore,  
Typhoid; measles, topsails, aisles;  
Exiles, similes, reviles;  
Wholly, holly; signal, signing;  
Thames; examining, combining;  
Scholar, vicar,* and *cigar*,  
*Solar, mica, war*, and *far*.  
  
From "desire": *desirable--admirable* from "admire";  
*Lumber, plumber, bier*, but *brier*;  
*Chatham, brougham; renown* but *known,  
Knowledge; done*, but *gone* and *tone*,  
*One, anemone; Balmoral;  
Kitchen, lichen; laundry, laurel; Gertrude, German; wind* and *mind*;  
*Scene, Melpomene, mankind;  
  
Tortoise, turquoise, chamois*-leather,  
*Reading, Reading, heathen, heather*.  
This phonetic labyrinth  
Gives *moss, gross, brook, brooch, ninth, plinth.  
Billet* does not end like *ballet*;  
*Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;  
Blood* and *flood* are not like *food*,  
Nor is *mould* like *should* and *would*.

*Banquet* is not nearly *parquet*,  
Which is said to rhyme with "darky."  
*Viscous, viscount; load*and*broad*;  
*Toward*, to *forward*, to *reward*,  
And your pronunciation's OK.  
  
*Rounded, wounded; grieve* and *sieve*;  
*Friend* and *fiend*; *alive* and *live*.  
*Liberty, library; heave* and *heaven*;  
*Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven*,  
We say *hallowed*, but *allowed*;  
*People, leopard; towed*, but *vowed*.  
Mark the difference, moreover,  
Between *mover, plover, Dover*,  
  
*Leeches, breeches; wise, precise;  
Chalice* but *police* and *lice*.  
*Camel, constable, unstable;  
Principle, disciple; label;  
Petal, penal*, and *canal*;  
*Wait, surmise, plait, promise; pal.  
Suit, suite, ruin; circuit, conduit*  
Rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it."  
  
But it is not hard to tell  
Why it's *pall, mall*, but *Pall Mall*.  
*Muscle, muscular; gaol, iron;  
Timber, climber; bullion, lion,  
Worm* and *storm; chaise, chaos, chair;  
Senator, spectator, mayor*.  
*Ivy, privy, famous; clamour*  
And *enamour* rime with "hammer."  
  
*Pussy, hussy,* and *possess*,  
*Desert,* but *desert, address.  
Golf, wolf, countenance, lieutenants*  
Hoist in *lieu* of flags left pennants.  
*Courier, courtier, tomb, bomb, comb,  
Cow,* but *Cowper, some,* and *home*.  
"*Solder, soldier!* Blood is thicker,"  
Quoth he, "than *liqueur* or *liquor*,"  
  
Making, it is sad but true,  
In *bravado*, much *ado*.  
*Stranger* does not rhyme with *anger*,  
Neither does *devour* with *clangour*.  
*Pilot, pivot, gaunt,* but *aunt*,  
*Font, front, wont, want, grand*, and *grant*.  
*Arsenic, specific, scenic,  
Relic, rhetoric, hygienic.  
  
Gooseberry, goose,* and *close*, but *close,  
Paradise, rise, rose,* and *dose*.  
Say *inveigh, neigh,* but *inveigle,*  
Make the latter rhyme with *eagle*.  
Mind! *Meandering* but *mean*,  
*Valentine* and *magazine*.  
And I bet you, dear, a *penny*,  
You say *mani-(fold)* like *many*,  
  
Which is wrong. Say *rapier, pier,  
Tier* (one who *ties*), but *tier*.  
*Arch, archangel*; pray, does *erring*  
Rhyme with *herring* or with *stirring*?  
*Prison, bison, treasure trove,  
Treason, hover, cover, cove,  
Perseverance, severance. Ribald*  
Rhymes (but *piebald* doesn't) with *nibbled*.  
  
*Phaeton, paean, gnat, ghat, gnaw,  
Lien, psychic, shone, bone, pshaw*.  
Don't be *down*, my *own*, but *rough* it,  
And distinguish *buffet, buffet*;  
*Brood, stood, roof, rook, school, wool, boon,  
Worcester, Boleyn,* to impugn.  
Say in sounds correct and *sterling*  
*Hearse, hear, hearken, year* and *yearling*.  
*Evil, devil, mezzotint*,  
Mind the *Z*! (A gentle hint.)

Now you need not pay attention  
To such sounds as I don't mention,  
Sounds like *pores, pause, pours* and *paws*,  
Rhyming with the pronoun *yours*;  
Nor are proper names included,  
Though I often heard, as you did,  
Funny rhymes to *unicorn*,

Yes, you know them, *Vaughan* and *Strachan*.  
  
No, my maiden, coy and *comely*,  
I don't want to speak of *Cholmondeley*.  
No. Yet *Froude* compared with *proud*  
Is no better than *McLeod*.  
But mind *trivial* and *vial*,  
*Tripod, menial, denial,  
Troll* and *trolley, realm* and *ream*,  
*Schedule, mischief, schism*, and *scheme*.  
  
*Argil, gill, Argyll, gill. Surely*  
May be made to rhyme with *Raleigh*,  
But you're not supposed to say  
*Piquet* rhymes with *sobriquet*.  
Had this *invalid invalid*  
Worthless documents? How *pallid*,  
How *uncouth he, couchant, looked*,  
When for Portsmouth I had booked!  
  
*Zeus, Thebes, Thales, Aphrodite,  
Paramour, enamoured, flighty,  
Episodes, antipodes,  
Acquiesce*, and *obsequies*.  
Please don't monkey with the *geyser*,  
Don't peel 'taters with my *razor*,  
Rather say in accents pure:  
*Nature, stature* and *mature.  
  
Pious, impious, limb, climb, glumly,  
Worsted, worsted, crumbly, dumbly,  
Conquer, conquest, vase, phase, fan,  
Wan, sedan* and *artisan*.  
The *TH* will surely trouble you  
More than *R, CH* or *W*.  
Say then these phonetic gems:  
*Thomas, thyme, Theresa, Thames.  
  
Thompson, Chatham, Waltham, Streatham*,  
There are more but I forget 'em-  
Wait! I've got it: *Anthony*,  
Lighten your anxiety.  
The archaic word *albeit*  
Does not rhyme with *eight-you see it;  
With* and *forthwith*, one has voice,  
One has not, you make your choice.  
  
*Shoes, goes, does*. Now first say: *finger*;  
Then say: *singer, ginger, linger.  
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze* and *gauge*,  
*Marriage, foliage, mirage, age,  
Hero, heron, query, very,  
Parry, tarry fury, bury,  
Dost, lost, post*, and *doth, cloth, loth,  
Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath*.  
  
*Faugh, oppugnant*, keen *oppugners,  
Bowing, bowing, banjo-tuners  
Holm* you know, but *noes, canoes,  
Puisne, truism, use*, to *use*?  
Though the difference seems *little*,  
We say *actual*, but *victual*,  
*Seat, sweat, chaste, caste, Leigh, eight, height,  
Put, nut, granite*, and *unite*.  
  
*Reefer* does not rhyme with *deafer*,  
*Feoffer* does, and *zephyr, heifer.  
Dull, bull, Geoffrey, George, ate, late,  
Hint, pint, senate*, but *sedate.  
Gaelic, Arabic, pacific,  
Science, conscience, scientific;  
Tour*, but *our, dour, succour, four,  
Gas, alas*, and *Arkansas*.  
  
Say *manoeuvre, yacht* and *vomit*,  
Next *omit*, which differs *from it*  
*Bona fide, alibi  
Gyrate, dowry and awry.  
Sea, idea, guinea, area,  
Psalm, Maria*, but *malaria*.  
*Youth, south, southern, cleanse* and *clean,  
Doctrine, turpentine, marine*.  
  
Compare *alien* with *Italian*,  
*Dandelion* with *battalion*,  
*Rally* with *ally; yea, ye,  
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay*!  
Say *aver*, but *ever, fever,  
Neither, leisure, skein, receiver*.  
Never guess--it is not *safe*,  
We say *calves, valves, half*, but *Ralf*.  
  
*Starry, granary, canary,  
Crevice*, but *device*, and *eyrie,  
Face*, but *preface*, then *grimace*,  
*Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.  
Bass, large, target, gin, give, verging,  
Ought, oust, joust*, and *scour*, but *scourging*;  
*Ear*, but *earn*; and *ere* and *tear*  
Do not rhyme with *here* but *heir*.  
  
Mind the *O* of *off* and *often*  
Which may be pronounced as *orphan*,  
With the sound of *saw* and *sauce*;  
Also *soft, lost, cloth* and *cross*.  
*Pudding, puddle, putting. Putting*?  
Yes: at golf it rhymes with *shutting*.  
*Respite, spite, consent, resent.  
Liable*, but *Parliament*.  
  
*Seven* is right, but so is *even,  
Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen,  
Monkey, donkey, clerk* and *jerk*,  
*Asp, grasp, wasp, demesne, cork, work.  
A* of *valour, vapid vapour,  
S* of *news* (compare *newspaper*),  
*G* of *gibbet, gibbon, gist,  
I* of *antichrist* and *grist*,  
  
*Differ* like *diverse* and *divers*,  
*Rivers, strivers, shivers, fivers*.  
*Once*, but *nonce, toll, doll*, but *roll*,  
*Polish, Polish, poll* and *poll*.  
Pronunciation--think of *Psyche*!-  
Is a paling, stout and *spiky*.  
Won't it make you lose your wits  
Writing *groats* and saying *'grits'*?  
  
It's a dark abyss or tunnel  
Strewn with stones like *rowlock, gunwale,  
Islington*, and *Isle of Wight,  
Housewife, verdict* and *indict*.  
Don't you think so, reader, *rather*,  
Saying *lather, bather, father*?  
Finally, which rhymes with *enough,  
Though, through, bough, cough, hough,  
sough, tough*?  
*Hiccough* has the sound of 'cup' . . .   
My advice is: give it up!

*"The Chaos" by Dr. Gerard Nolst Trenité first appeared (in a shorter version) in an appendix to his textbook*Drop Your Foreign Accent*, published in 1920.*