

Our Romping Van...

1. By Way of A Starter. I'll never forget Oscar Wilde when he visited the gold miners in New England, and had some lunch with them; he notes: 'The first course was **Whiskey**, the second course was **Whiskey**, and the third course was **Whiskey!**'

2. So with the **Major Elections in Europe.** Europe's President? ***Herman Van Rompuy***—a charming man, quite reminiscent of the famous Rip Van Winkle: as kind, as solicitous, as eager to please! As self-effacing. And then, **THE PRESIDENT SPOKE** his maiden speech: a most extraordinary address, I tell you! In his attempt to be blandly original, he started in **French** (though he is a Belgian-Flemish Prime Minister himself)! But overall, he turned out to be quite RipVanWinklerian: for he went on to pronounce his second paragraph in **impeccable English!** And to please his Belgian compatriots, he went on in **Dutch**, with his third. And then all over again—**FrenchEnglishDutch** for the next ten minutes or more. How very European, I exclaimed to myself in great admiration. But then, it slowly dawned on me that what one was left with, when all was said and done, was the Wildean paradox I had started with: What else is Europe but **LanguageLanguageLanguage?** Hamlet's '*words...*'

And after that **maiden multilingual speech, he simply vanished into thin air—no trace of him since November! No trace of him in Copenhagen either. So very shy, our **Ripping Van** man. I spotted him, with difficulty, in Lithuania... learning the language there I'm sure.**

3. A Piece of His Wisdom to Wind up With: He said, and that is his Electioneering Credo: **In a compromise, all parties involved come out equally victorious!** If you really believe that to the full, **YOU ARE A BORN EUROPEAN.** Thanks to this Fleming, we are now sure to see a lot more Copenhagen-type Resounding Compromises, worth the Guinness Book of Records! But over time, ***E pur si muove*** remains the supreme antidote to any such shilly-shallying.

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