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Montaigne's Essays

In Three Books. With Notes and Quotations. And an Account of The Author's Life ; With a short Character of the Author and Translator, by the late Marquis of Halifax; With the Addition of A Complete Table to each Volume

Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de

London, 1743

Chap. 6. That the Hour of Parley is dangerous.

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ting Fire to the Props to bury the besieged under the Ruins, he required the said *Henry* to come out to speak with him for his own Good; which the other accordingly doing, with three more in Company with him, and his own evident Ruin being made apparent to him, he conceived himself singularly obliged to his Enemy, to whose Discretion, after he and his Garrison had surrendered themselves, Fire being presently applied to the Mine, the Props no sooner began to fail but the Castle was immediately turned topsyturvy, no one Stone being left upon another. I could, and do, with great Facility, rely upon the Faith of another; but I should very unwillingly do it in such a Case, as it should thereby be judged that it was rather an Effect of my Despair and Want of Courage, than voluntary and out of Confidence and Security in the Faith of him with whom I had to do.



CHAP. VI.

That the Hour of Parley is dangerous.

I Saw, notwithstanding, lately at *Mussidan*, a Place not far from my House, that those who were driven out thence by our Army, and others of their Party, highly complained of Treachery, for that, during a Treaty of Accommodation, and in the very *interim* that their Deputies were treating, they were surprized and cut to Pieces: A Thing that, peradventure in another Age, might have had some Colour of foul Play; but (as I said before) the Practice of Arms in these Days is quite another Thing, and there is now no Confidence in an Enemy excusable, till after the last Seal of Obligation; and even then the Conqueror has enough to do to keep his Word; so hazardous a Thing it is to intrust the Observation of the Faith a Man has engaged to a Town that surrenders upon easy and favourable Conditions, to the Necessity, Avarice, and Licence of a victorious Army, and to give the Soldiers free Entrance into
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The Faith of Military Men very uncertain. it in the Heat of Blood. *Lucius Æmilius Regillus*, a Roman Prætor, having lost his Time in attempting to take the City of *Phocæa* by Force, by Reason of the singular Valour wherewith the Inhabitants defended themselves against him, conditioned at last to receive them as Friends to the People of *Rome*, and to enter the Town, as into a confederate City, without any Manner of Hostility; of which he also gave them all possible Assurance: But having for the greater Pomp brought his whole Army in with him, it was no more in his Power, with all the Endeavour he could use, to command his People: So that Avarice and Revenge despising and trampling under Foot both his Authority and all Military Discipline, he there at once saw his own Faith violated, and a considerable Part of the City sacked and ruined before his Face. *Cleomenes* was wont to say, *That what Mischief soever a Man could do his Enemy in Time of War was above Justice, and nothing accountable to it in the Sight of Gods and Men.* And according to this Principle, having concluded a Cessation with those of *Argos* for seven Days, the third Night after he fell upon them when they were all buried in Security and Sleep, and put them to the Sword; alledging for his Excuse, That there had no Nights been mentioned in the Truce: But the Gods punished his Perfidy. In a Time of Parley also, and that the Citizens were Intent upon their Capitulation, the City of *Cassilinum* was taken by Surprise, and that even in the Age of the justest Captains, and the best Discipline of the *Roman* Militia: For it is not said, that it is not lawful for us in Time and Place to make Advantage of our Enemies Want of Understanding, as well as their Want of Courage. And doubtless War has a great many Privileges that appear reasonable, even to the Prejudice of Reason. And therefore here the Rule fails, *Neminem id agere ut ex alterius prædetur inscitia**, *That no one should prey upon another's Folly.* But I am astonished at the great Liberty allowed by *Xenophon* in such Cases, and that both by Precept and the Example of several Exploits of his complete Gene-

* *Cicero de Offic. l. 3.*

ral. An Author of very great Authority, I confess in those Affairs, as being in his own Person both a great Captain and a Philosopher of the first Form of *Socrates's* Disciples; and yet I cannot consent to such a Measure of License as he dispenses in all Things and Places. Monsieur *d'Aubigny* having besieged *Capua*, and played a furious Battery against it, Signior *Fabricio Colonne*, Governor of the Town, having from a Bastion begun to parley, and his Soldiers in the mean Time being a little more remiss in their Guard, our People took Advantage of their Security, entered the Place at unawares, and put them all to the Sword. And of later Memory, at *Troy*, Signior *Juliano Romero* having played that Part of a Novice to go out to capitulate with the Constable, at his Return found his Place taken. But that we might not escape Scot-free, the Marquis of *Pescara* having laid Siege to *Genoa*, where Duke *Ottavio Fregosa* commanded under our Protection, and the Articles betwixt them being so far advanced, that it was looked upon as a done Thing, and upon the Point to be concluded, several *Spaniards* in the mean Time being slipped in under the Privilege of the Treaty, seized on the Gates, and made use of this Treachery as an absolute and fair Victory: And since at *Ligny* in *Barrois*, where the Count *de Brienne* commanded, the Emperor having in his own Person beleagured that Place, and *Bartheville*, the said Count's Lieutenant, going out to parley, while he was capitulating the Town was taken.

*Fu il vincer sempre maji laudabil cosa
Vinca. sio per fortuna, o per ingegno*.*

Fame ever does the Victor's Praises ring,
And Conquest ever was a glorious Thing,
Which Way foe'er the Conqu'ror purchas'd it,
Whether by Valour, Fortune, or by Wit;

say they: But the Philosopher *Chrysippus* was of another Opinion, wherein I also concur; for he was used to say, That those who run a Race, ought to employ all the Force they have in what they are about, and to run as fast as they can; but that it is by no Means fair in them to lay any

* *Ariosto, Cant. 15.*

Hand upon their Adversary to stop him, nor to set a Leg before him to throw him down. And yet more generous was the Answer of that Great *Alexander* to *Polypercon*, who persuaded him to take the Advantage of the Night's Obscurity to fall upon *Darius*; by no means (said he) it is not for such a Man as I am to steal a Victory, *Malo me fortunæ pœniteat, quam victoriæ pudeat**, I had rather repent me of my Fortune, than be ashamed of my Victory.

*Atque idem fugientem haud est dignatus Orodem
Sternere, nec jacta cæcum dare Cuspide vulnus :
Obvius, adversoque occurrit, seque viro vir
Contulit, haud furto melior, sed fortibus armis †.*

His Heart disdain'd to strike *Orodes* dead,
Or, unseen, basely wound him as he fled;
But gaining first his Front, wheels round, and there
Bravely oppos'd himself to his Career :
And fighting Man to Man, would let him see
His Valour scorn'd both Odds and Policy.



CH A P. VII.

That the Intention is Judge of our Actions.

TIS a Saying, *That Death discharges us of all our Obligations*. However, I know some who have taken it in another Sense. *Henry* the Seventh, King of *England*, articed with *Don Philip*, Son to *Maximilian* the Emperor, and Father to the Emperor *Charles* the Fifth, when he had him upon *English* Ground, that the said *Philip* should deliver up the Duke of *Suffolk* of the *White Rose*, his mortal Enemy, who was fled into the *Low Countries*, into his Hands; which *Philip* (not knowing how to evade it) accordingly promised to do, but upon Condition nevertheless, that *Henry* should attempt nothing against the Life of

* *Quint. Curt.* 1. 4. † *Virg. Æneid.* l. 10.