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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. 21. That the Profit of one Man is the Inconvenience of another.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53388](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53388)

cut myself short in my Writing only for want of Breath. I have neither Fancy nor Expression worth any thing, and am ignorant beyond a Child, of the Phrases, and even the very Words proper to express the most common Things, and for that Reason it is, that I have undertaken to say only what I can say, and have accommodated my Subjects to my Force. Should I take one to be my Guide, peradventure, I should not be able to keep Pace with him, and in the Precipitancy of my Career might deliver Things, which, upon better Thoughts, in my own Judgment, and according to Reason, would be criminal and punishable in the highest Degree. *Plutarch* would tell us of what he has delivered to the Light, that it is the Work of others, that his Examples are all, and every where exactly true, that they are useful to Posterity, and are presented with a Lustre that will light us the Way to Virtue, which was his Design; but it is not of so dangerous Consequence as in a medicinal Drug, whether an old Story be so, or so.



## C H A P. XXI.

*That the Profit of one Man is the Inconvenience of another.*

**D***Emades* the Athenian condemned one of his City whose Trade it was to sell the Necessaries for Funerall Ceremonies, upon Pretence that he demanded unreasonable Profit, and that that Profit could not accrue to him, but by the Death of a great Number of People. A Judgment that appears to be ill grounded, forasmuch as no Profit whatsoever could possibly be made but at the Expence of another, and that by the same Rule he should condemn all Manner of Gain of what Kind soever. The Merchant only thrives and grows rich by the Pride, Wantonness and Debauchery of Youth; the Husbandman by the Price and Scarcity of Grain; the Architect by the Ruin of Buildings; the Lawyers, and Officers of Justice, by Suits and Contentions of Men; nay, even the Honour and Office of Divines are derived

derived from our Death and Vices; a Physician takes no Pleasure in the Health even of his Friends, says the ancient comical *Greek*; nor a Soldier in the Peace of his Country; and so of the rest. And, which is yet worse, let every one but dive into his own Bosom, and he will find his private Wishes spring, and his secret Hopes grow up at another's Expence. Upon which Consideration it comes into my Head, that Nature does not in this swerve from her general Polity; for Physicians hold, that the Birth, Nourishment, and Encrease of every Thing is the Corruption and Dissolution of another.

*Nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit,  
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante\*.*

For what from it's own Confines chang'd doth pass,  
Is fraight the Death of what before it was.



## C H A P. XXII.

*Of Custom, and that we should not easily change  
a Law received.*

**H**E seems to me to have had a right and true Apprehension of the Power of Custom, who first invented the Story of a Country-woman; who having accustomed herself to play with, and carry a young Calf in her Arms, and daily continuing to do so as it grew up, obtained this by Custom, that when grown to be a great Ox, she was still able to bear it. For, in Truth, Custom is a violent and treacherous School-Mistress. She, by little and little, slyly and unperceived, slips in the Foot of her Authority, but having by this gentle and humble Beginning, with the Benefit of Time, fixed and established it, she then unmarks a furious and tyrannick Countenance, against which we have no more the Courage, or the Power so much as to lift up

\* *Lucret. l. 2.*