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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

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Chap. 24. Of Pedantry.

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C H A P. XXIV.

Of Pedantry.

I Was often, when a Boy, wonderfully concern'd to see in the *Italian* Farces a *Pedant* always brought in for the Fool of the Play, and that the Title of *Magister* was in no greater Reverence amongst us; for being deliver'd up to their Tuition, what could I do less than to be jealous of their Honour and Reputation? I sought, I confess, to excuse them by the natural Incompatibility betwixt the vulgar Sort, and Men of a finer Thread, both in Judgment and Knowledge, forasmuch as they go a quite contrary Way to one another: But in this, the Thing I most stumbled at was, that the bravest Men were those who most despis'd them; witness our famous Poet *Du Bellay*,

Mais je hay par sur tout un sçavoir pedantesque *.

But of all Sorts of Learning, that
Of the Pedant I most do hate.

And they us'd to do so in former Times; for *Plutarch* says that *Græcian* and *Scholar* were Names of Reproach and Contempt amongst the *Romans*. But since, with the better Experience of Age, I find they had very great Reason to do so, and that *magis magnos Clericos non sunt magis magnos sapientes* †. *The greatest Clerks are not the wisest Men*. But whence it should come to pass, that a Mind enrich'd with the Knowledge of so many Things should not become more quick and spritely, and that a gross and vulgar Understanding should yet inhabit there, without correcting and improving itself, where all the Discourses and Judgments of the greatest Wits the World ever had are collected and stor'd up, I am yet to seek. To admit so many strange Conceptions, so great and so high Fancies, it is necessary,

* *Du Bellay*.

† *Rabelais*.

(as a young Lady, and one of the greatest Princesses of the Kingdom, said once to me) that a Man's own be crowded, and squeez'd together into a less Compass, to make Room for the other. I should be apt to conclude, that as Plants are suffocated and drown'd with too much Nourishment, and Lamps with too much Oil, so is the active Part of the Understanding with too much Study and Matter, which being embarras'd and confounded with the Diversity of Things, is depriv'd of the Force and Power to disengage itself; and that by the Pressure of this Weight, it is bow'd, subjected, and rendred of no Use. But it is quite otherwise, for a Soul stretches and dilates itself proportionably as it fills. And in the Examples of elder Times we see, quite contrary, Men very proper for publick Business, great Captains, and great Statesmen, very learned withal; whereas the Philosophers, a Sort of Men retir'd from all publick Affairs, have been sometimes also despis'd, and render'd contemptible by the comical Liberty of their own Times; their Opinions and Singularity of Manners making them appear, to Men of another Method of Living, ridiculous and absurd. Would you make them Judges of a Controversy of common Right, or of the Actions of Men? They are ready to take it upon them, and straight begin to examine, if he has Life, if he has Motion, if Man be any other than an Ox? What it is to do, and to suffer? And what Animals, Law, and Justice are? Do they speak of the Magistrates? 'Tis with a rude, irreverent, and indecent Liberty. Do they hear a Prince, or a King commended for his Virtue? They make no more of him than of a Shepherd, Goatherd, or Neatherd; a lazy *Corydon*, that busies himself only about milking and shearing his Herds and Flocks, and that after the rudest Manner. Do you repute any Man the greater for being Lord of two thousand Acres of Land? They laugh at such a pitiful Pittance, as laying Claim themselves to the whole World for their Possession. Do you boast of your Nobility and Blood, being descended from seven rich successive Ancestors? They will look upon you with an Eye of Contempt, as Men who have not a right Idea of the universal Image of Nature, and that do not consider how many Predecessors every one of us has had, Rich, Poor, Kings, Slaves, *Greeks* and *Barbarians*. And though you were the fiftieth Descent from *Hercules*, they

look upon it as a great Vanity, so highly to value this, which is only a Gift of Fortune. And even thus did the vulgar Sort of Men nauseate them, as Men ignorant of the Beginning of Things, where all Things were common, accusing them of Presumption and Insolence. But this *Platonick* Picture is far different from that these Pedants are presented by: For those were envied for raising themselves above the common Sort of Men, for despising the ordinary Actions and Offices of Life, for having assumed a particular and inimitable Way of living, and for using a certain Method of Bombast and obsolete Language, quite different from the ordinary Way of Speaking: But these are contemn'd for being as much below the usual Form, as incapable of publick Employment, for leading a Life, and conforming themselves to the mean and vile Manners of the Vulgar. *Odi homines, ignava opera, Philosophica Sententia* *. *I hate Men who talk like Philosophers, but do worse than the most slothful of Men.* For what concerns those true Philosophers, I must needs say, that if they were great in Science, they were yet much greater in Action. And, as it is said of the Geometrician of *Syracuse* †, who having been disturb'd from his Contemplation, to put some of his Skill in Practice for the Defence of his Country, that he suddenly set on Foot dreadful and prodigious Engines, and that wrought Effects beyond all human Expectation; himself notwithstanding disdain'd his own handy-work, thinking in this he had play'd the Mechanick, and violated the Dignity of his Art, of which these Performances of his, (though so highly cry'd up by the publick Voice) he accounted but trivial Experiments, and inferior Models: So they, whenever they have been put upon the Proof of Action, have been seen to fly to so high a Pitch, as made it very well appear, their Souls were strangely elevated, and enrich'd with the Knowledge of Things. But some of them seeing the Reins of Government in the Hands of ignorant and unskilful Men, have avoided all Places and Interest in the Management of Affairs; and he who demanded of *Crates*, How long it was necessary to philosophize, receiv'd this Answer, 'Till our Armies (said he) are no more commanded by Fools and

* *Pa. uvius.*† *Archimedes.*

Coxcombs. *Heracitus* resign'd the Royalty to his Brother; and to the *Ephesians*, who reproach'd him that he spent his Time in playing with Boys before the Temple; *Is it not better*, said he, *to do so than to sit at the Helm of Affairs in your Company?* Others having their Imagination advanc'd above the Thoughts of the World and Fortune, have look'd upon the Tribunals of Justice, and even the Thrones of Kings, with an Eye of Contempt and Scorn; insomuch that *Empedocles* refus'd the Royalty that the *Agrigentines* offer'd to him. *Thales*, once inveighing in Discourse against the Pains and Care Men put themselves to to become rich, was answer'd by one in the Company, that he did like the Fox, who found Fault with what he could not obtain. Whereupon he had a Mind, for the Jest's Sake, to shew them the contrary; and having upon this Occasion for once made a Muster of all his Wits, wholly to employ them in the Service of Profit, he set a Traffick on Foot, which in one Year brought him in greater Riches than the most experienced in that Trade could, with all their Industry, have raked together in the whole Course of their Lives. That which *Aristotle* reports of some who said of him, *Anaxagoras*, and others of their Profession, that they were wise but not prudent, in not applying their Study to more profitable Things (though I do not well digest this nice Distinction) will not however serve to excuse my pedantick Sort of Men; for to see the low and necessitous Fortune wherewith they are content, we have rather Reason to pronounce that they are neither wise nor prudent. But letting this first Reason alone, I think it better to say, that this Inconvenience proceeds from their applying themselves the wrong Way to the Study of Sciences; and that after the Manner we are instructed, it is no Wonder if neither the Scholars nor the Masters become, though more learned, ever the wiser, or more fit for Business. In plain Truth, the Cares and Expence our Parents are at in our Education point at nothing, but to furnish our Heads with Knowledge; but not a Word of Judgment and Virtue. Cry out of one that passes by, to the People, O! what a learned; and of another, O! what a good Man goes there! They will not fail to turn their Eyes, and address their Respect to the former. There should then be a third Crier, O the Puppies and Coxcombs!

Does such a one understand *Greek*? Is he a Critick in *Latin*? Is he a Poet? Or does he only pretend to Professe? But whether he be grown better or more discreet, which are Qualities of greater Value and Concern, those are never enquir'd into; whereas, we should rather examine who is *better learned, than who is more learned*. We only toil and labour to stuff the Memory, and in the mean time leave the Conscience and the Understanding unfurnish'd and void. And, like Birds who fly Abroad, to forage for Grain, bring it home in their Beak, without tasting it themselves, to feed their Young; so our Pedants go picking Knowledge here and there, out of several Authors, and hold it at the Tongue's End, only to spit out, and distribute it amongst their Pupils. And here I cannot but smile to think how I have paid myself in shewing the Foppery of this kind of Learning, who myself am so manifest an Example; for, do I not the same Thing throughout almost this whole Treatise? I go here and there, culling out of several Books the Sentences that best please me, not to keep them (for I have no Memory to retain them in) but to transplant them into this; where, to say the Truth, they are no more mine, than in their first Places. We are, I conceive, knowing only in present Knowledge, and not at all in what is past, no more than in that which is to come. But the worst of it is, their Scholars and Pupils are no better nourish'd by this kind of Inspiration; it makes no deeper Impression upon them, than the other, but passes from Hand to Hand, only to make a Shew, to be tolerable Company, and to tell pretty Stories, like a Counterfeit Coin in Counters, of no other Use nor Value, but to reckon with, or to set up at Cards. *Apud alios loqui didicerunt, non ipse secum. Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum**; they have learn'd to speak from others, not from themselves. Speaking is not so necessary as Governing. Nature, to shew that there is nothing barbarous where she has the sole Command, does oftentimes, in Nations where Art has the least to do, cause Productions of Wit, such as may rival the greatest Effects of Art whatever. As in Relation to what I am now speaking of, the *Gaf*.

* *Senec. Epist. 105.*

con Proverb, derived from a Corn-pipe, is very quaint and subtle, *Bouba prou bouba, mas a remuda lous dits qu'em.* You may blow till your Eyes start out; but if once you offer to stir your Fingers, you will be at the End of your Lesson. We can say, Cicero says thus: that these were the Manners of *Plato*; and that these are the very Words of *Aristotle*: But what do we say ourselves that is our own? What do we do? What do we judge? A Parrot would say as much as that. And this kind of Talking puts me in Mind of that rich Gentleman of *Rome*, who had been solicitous, with very great Expence, to procure Men that were excellent in all Sorts of Science, whom he had always attending his Person, to the End, that when amongst his Friends, any Occasion fell out of speaking of any Subject whatsoever, they might supply his Place, and be ready to prompt him, one with a Sentence of *Seneca*, another with a Verse of *Homer*, and so forth, every one according to his Talent; and he fancied this Knowledge to be his own, because in the Heads of those who lived upon his Bounty: As they also do, whose Learning consists in having noble Libraries. I know one, who, when I question him about his Reading, he presently calls for a Book to shew me, and dare not venture to tell me so much, as that he has Piles in his Posteriors, till first he has consulted his Dictionary, what Piles and Posteriors are. We take other Men's Knowledge and Opinions upon Truth, which is an idle and superficial Learning: We must make it our own. We are in this very like him, who having Need of Fire, went to a Neighbour's House to fetch it; and finding a very good one there, sat down to warm himself, without remembering to carry any with him Home. What Good does it do us to have the Stomach full of Meat, if it does not digest and be incorporated with us, if it does not nourish and support us? Can we imagine that *Lucullus*, whom Letters, without any Manner of Experience, made so great and so exact a Leader, learn'd to be so after this perfunctory Manner? We suffer ourselves to lean and rely so very strongly upon the Arm of another, that by so doing we prejudice our own Strength and Vigour. Would I fortify myself against the Fear of Death? It must be at the Expence of *Seneca*: Would I extract Consolation for myself, or my Friend?

Friend? I borrow it from him, or *Cicero*; whereas I might have found it in myself, had I been trained up to make Use of my own Reason. I have no Taste for this relative, mendicant, and precarious Understanding; for though we could become learned by other Men's Reading, I am sure a Man can never be wise, but by his own Wisdom.

Μισῶ σοφιστὴν ὅστις ἐχ' αὐτῷ σοφός*.

Who in his own Concern's not wise,
I that Man's Wisdom do despise:

From whence *Ennius*, *Nequidquam sapere sapientem, qui sibi sibi prodesse non quiret* †; That wise Man knows nothing, who cannot profit himself by his Wisdom. *Non enim paranda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est* ‡; For Wisdom is not only to be acquired, but enjoyed. *Dionysius* laughed at the *Grammarians*, who cudgelled their Brains to enquire into the Miseries of *Ulysses*, and were ignorant of their own; at *Musicians*, who were so exact in tuning their Instruments, and never tuned their Manners; and at *Orators*, who studied to declare what was Justice, but never took Care to do it. If the Mind be not better disposed, if the Judgment be no better settled, I had much rather my Scholar had spent his Time at Tennis, for at least his Body would by that Means be in better Exercise and Breath. Do but observe him when he comes back from School, after fifteen or sixteen Years that he has been there, there is nothing so awkward and maladroit, so unfit for Company or Employment; and all that you shall find he has got, is, that his *Latin* and *Greek* have only made him a greater and more conceited Coxcomb than when he went from home. He should bring his Soul replete with good Literature, and he brings it only swelled and puffed up with vain and empty Shreds and Snatches of Learning: He has really nothing more in him than he had before. These Pedants of ours, as *Plato* says of the *Sophists*, their Cousin-Germans are, of all Men living, they who most pretend to be useful to Mankind, and who, alone, of all Men, not only do not better, and improve what is committed to them, as a Car-

* *Proverb. Lamb.*

† *Cicero Epist. 6. l. 7. ex Ennio.*

‡ *Cicero de Finib. l. 1.*

pen-ter or a Mason would do, but make them much worse, and make them pay for being made so to boot. If the Rule which *Protagoras* proposed to his Pupils were followed, either that they should give him his own Demand, or declare upon Oath in the Temple how much they valued the Profit they had received under his Tuition, and accordingly satisfy him; our Pedagogues would find themselves basely gravelled, especially if they were to be judged by the Testimony of my Experience. Our vulgar *Perigordin Patois* does pleasantly call them, Pretenders to Learning, *Lettreferits*, as a Man should say, Letter-marked; a Man on whom Letters have been stamped by the Blow of a Mallet; and, in Truth, for the most Part, they appear to have a soft Place in their Skulls, and to be deprived even of common Sense. For you see the Husband-man and the Cobler go simply and honestly about their Business, speaking only of what they know and understand; whereas these Fellows, to make Parade and to get Opinion, mustering this ridiculous Knowledge of theirs, that swims and floats in the Superficies of the Brain, are perpetually perplexing and entangling themselves in their own Nonsense. They speak fine Words sometimes, 'tis true, but let some body that is wiser apply them. They are wonderfully well acquainted with *Galen*, but not at all with the Disease of the Patient; they have already stunned you with a long riddle-row of Laws, but understand nothing of the Case in Hand; they have the Theories of all Things, let who will put them in Practice. I have sat by, when a Friend of mine, in my own House, for Sport Sake, has with one of these Fellows counterfeited a canting Galimatias, patched up of several Expressions without Head or Tail, saving, that he now and then interlarded here and there some Terms that had Relation to their Dispute, and held the Coxcomb in Play a whole Afternoon together, who, all the while, thought he had answered pertinently and learnedly to all his Objections. And yet this was a Man of Letters and Reputation, and no worse than one of the long Robe.

*Vos O patricius sanguis quos vivere par est
Occipiti cæco, posticæ occurrite sanæ*.*

* *Perfius, Sat. 1.*

O you

O you Patrician Bloods, whose Laws commend
To have your Heads from Retrospection blind,
Take this poor Counsel of a faithful Friend,
Beware of having a *Caldeſe* behind.

Whoſeever ſhall narrowly pry into, and thoroughly ſift this Sort of People, wherewith the World is ſo peſtered, will, as I have done, find that, for the moſt Part, they neither underſtand others, nor themſelves; and that their Memories are full enough, 'tis true, but the Judgment totally void and empty; ſome excepted, whoſe own Nature has of itſelf formed them into better Faſhion. As I have obſerved for Example in *Adrianus Turnebus*, who having never made other Profeſſion, than that of mere Learning only, and in that, in my Opinion, the greateſt Man that has been theſe thouſand Years, had nothing at all in him of the Pedant, but the Wearing of his Gown, and a little exterior Behaviour, that could not be civilized to the Garb, which are nothing: I hate our People, who can worſe endure a pedantick Model than an ill-contrived Mind, and by the Leg a Man makes, by his Behaviour, and even by the very Shape of his Boots, will pretend to tell what Sort of Man he is. For within all this, there was not a more illuſtrious and polite Soul living upon Earth. I have often purpoſely put him upon Arguments quite wide of his Profeſſion, wherein I found he had ſo clear an Inſight, ſo quick an Apprehenſion, and ſo ſolid a Judgment, that a Man would have thought he had never practiſed any other Thing but Arms, and been all his Life employ'd in Affairs of State. And theſe are great and vigorous Natures;

————— *Queis arte benigna,
Et melior luto finxit præcordia Titan* *.

————— With greater Art whoſe Mind
The Sun has made of Clay much more refin'd;

that can keep themſelves upright in Deſiance of a pedantick Education. But it is not enough that our Education does not ſpoil us; it muſt moreover alter us for the better. Some

* *Juven. Sat. 14.*

of our Parliaments when they are to admit Officers, examine only their Talent of Learning; to which some of the others also add, the Trial of Understanding, by asking their Judgment of some Case in Law, of which the latter, methinks, proceeds with the better Method: For, although both are necessary, and that it is very requisite they should be defective in neither; yet, in Truth, Knowledge is not so absolutely necessary as Judgment, and the last may make Shift without the other, but the other never without this. For as the *Greek Verse* says,

Ἔδδεν ἢ μάθνομος ἢ μὴ νῦν ἀδελφῆ*.

Learning is nothing worth, if Wit
And Understanding be not join'd with it.

To what Use serves Learning, if the Understanding be away? Would to God, that, for the Good of our Judicature, those Societies were as well furnished with Understanding and Conscience, as they are with Knowledge. *Non Vitæ, sed Scholæ dicimus †; we do not study for the Service of our future Life, but only for the present Use of the School.* Whereas we are not to tie Learning to the Soul, but to work and incorporate them together; not to tincture it only, but to give it a thorough and perfect Dye; but, if it will not take Colour, and meliorate it's imperfect State, we should, without Doubt, do much better in letting it alone. Learning is a dangerous Weapon, and very likely to wound it's Master, if put into an aukward and unskilful Hand: *Ut fuerit melius non didicisse, so that it were better never to have learned at all.* And this, perhaps, is the Reason why neither we, nor indeed Christian Religion, require much Learning in Women; and that *Francis, Duke of Britany,* Son of *John the Fifth* (one being talking with him about his Marriage with *Isabella, the Daughter of Scotland,* and adding that she was homely bred, and without any Manner of Learning) made Answer, That he liked her the better, and that a Woman was wise enough, if she could distinguish her Husband's Shirt and his Doublet. So that it is not so great a Wonder as some People make of it, that our Ancestors had Letters in no greater Esteem, and that

* *Menander in Gnom.*

† *Sen. Epist. 106.*

even

even to this Day, they are but rarely met with in the Privy-Councils of Princes: If this End and Design of acquiring Riches (which is the only Thing we propose to ourselves, by the Means of Law, Physick, Pedantry, and even Divinity itself) did not uphold and keep them in Credit, you would, without Doubt, see them as poor and unregarded as ever. And what Loss would it be if they neither instruct us to think well, nor to do well. *Postquam docti prodierunt, boni desunt;* after once they become learned, they cease to be good. All other Knowledge is hurtful to him, who has not the Science of Honesty and Good-nature. But the Reason I glanced upon but now, may it not also proceed from hence, that our Study, having almost no other Aim but Profit, fewer of those, who by Nature are born to Offices and Employments, rather of Glory than Gain, addict themselves to Letters; or for so little a while (being taken from their Studies before they can come to have any Taste of them, to a Profession that has nothing to do with Books) that there commonly remain no other to apply themselves wholly to learning, but People of mean Condition, who in that only study to live, and have Preferment only in their Prospect; and by such People, whose Souls are both by Nature and Education, and domestick Example, of the basest Metal and Allay, the Fruits of Knowledge are not only immaturely gathered, but ill digested, and delivered to their Pupils quite another Thing from what they should be. For it is not the proper Business of Knowledge to enlighten a Soul that is dark of itself; nor to make a blind Man to see. Her Business is not to find a Man Eyes, but to guide, govern, and direct his Steps, provided he has found Feet and straight Legs to go upon. Knowledge is an excellent Drug, but no Drug has Virtue enough to preserve itself from Corruption and Decay, if the Vessel be tainted and impure wherein it is put to keep. Such a one may have a Sight clear and good enough, who looks askint, and consequently sees what is good, but does not follow it, and sees Knowledge, but makes no Use of it. *Plato's* principal Institution in his Republick, is to fit his Citizens with Employments suitable to their Nature. Nature can do all, and does all. Cripples are very unfit for Exercises of the Body, and lame Souls for Exercises of the Mind. Degenerate and vulgar Souls are unworthy

worthy of Philosophy. If we see a Shoe-maker with his Shoes out at the Toes, we say, 'tis no Wonder; for, commonly, none go worse shod than their Wives and they. In like Manner, Experience does often present us a Physician worse physicked, a Divine worse reformed, and frequently a Scholar of less Sufficiency than another. *Aristotle* of *Chios* had anciently Reason to say, that Philosophers did their Auditories harm, forasmuch as most of the Souls of those that heard them were not capable of making any Benefit of their Instructions, and if they did not apply them to good, would certainly apply them to ill: *ἀσώτως, ex Aristippi, acerbos ex Zenonis Schola exire**. They grew effeminate Prodigals from the School of *Aristippus*, and Churls and Cynicks from that of *Zeno*. In that excellent Institution that *Xenophon* attributes to the *Persians*, we find, that they taught their Children Virtue, as other Nations do Letters. *Plato* tells us, that the eldest Son in their Royal Succession was thus brought up; as soon as he was born he was delivered, not to Women, but to Eunuchs of the greatest Authority about their Kings for their Virtue, whose Charge it was to keep his Body healthful and in good Plight; and after he came to seven Years of Age, to teach him to ride, and to go a hunting; when he arrived at fourteen, he was transferred into the Hands of four Men, the most noted of the Kingdom for Wisdom, Justice, Temperance and Valour; of which Number the first was to instruct him in Religion, the second to be always upright and sincere, the third to subdue his Appetites and Desires, and the fourth to despise all Danger. 'Tis a Thing worthy of very great Consideration, that in that excellent, and, in Truth, for it's Perfection, prodigious Form of civil Government set down by *Lycurgus*, though solicitous of the Education of Children, as a thing of the greatest Concern, and even in the very Seat of the Muses, he should make so little Mention of Learning; as if their generous Youths disdaining all other Subjection, but that of Virtue only, ought to be supplied, instead of Tutors to read to them Arts and Sciences, with such Masters, as should only instruct them in Valour, Prudence and Justice. An

* *Cicero de Nat. Deor. l. 2.*

Example that *Plato* has followed in his Laws; the Manner of whose Discipline was to propound to them Questions upon the Judgment of Men, and of their Actions; and if they commended or condemned this or that Person, or Fact, they were to give a Reason for so doing: By which Means, they at once sharpened their Understanding, and became skillful in the Laws. *Mandane*, in *Xenophon*, asking her Son *Cyrus* how he would do to learn Justice, and the other Virtues amongst the *Medes*, having left all his Masters behind him in *Persia*? He made Answer, that he had learned those Things long since; that his Master had often made him a Judge of the Differences among his School-Fellows, and had one Day whip'd him for giving a wrong Sentence; and thus it was: A great Boy in the School, having a little short Cassock, by Force took a longer from another that was not so tall as he, and gave him his own in Exchange; whereupon I being appointed Judge of the Controverly, gave Judgment, that I thought it best either of them should keep the Coat he had, for that they were both better fitted with that of one another, than with their own: Upon which, my Master told me I had done ill, in that I had only considered the Fitness and Decency of the Garments, whereas I ought to have considered the Justice of the Thing, which requires, that no one should have any Thing forcibly taken from him that is his own. But it seems, poor *Cyrus* was whip'd for his Pains, as we are in our Villages for forgetting the first Aorist of *τοῦτι*. My Pedant must make me a very learned Oration, *in genere demonstrativo*, before he can persuade me, that his School is like unto that. They knew how to go the readiest Way to Work: And seeing that Science, when most rightly applied and best understood, can do no more but teach us Prudence, moral Honesty, and Resolution; they thought fit to initiate their Children with the Knowledge of Effects, and to instruct them, not by Hear-say and by Rote, but by the Experiment of Action, in lively forming and moulding them; not only by Words and Precepts, but chiefly Works and Examples; to the End, it might not be a Knowledge of the Mind only, but a Complexion and a Habit; and not an Acquisition, but a natural Possession. One asking, to this Purpose, *Agefilaus*, what he thought most proper for Boys to learn? What they ought to do when

when they come to be Men, said he. It is therefore no Wonder, if such an Institution has produc'd such admirable Effects. They us'd to go, 'tis said, in the other Cities of Greece, to enquire out Rhetoricians, Painters, and Musick-masters; but in *Lacedæmon*, Legislators, Magistrates, and Generals of Armies, at *Athens* they learn'd to speak well, and here to do well; there to disingage themselves from a sophistical Argument, and to unravel Syllogisms; here to evade the Baits and Allurements of Pleasure, and with a noble Courage and Resolution to confute and conquer the Menaces of Fortune and Death; those cudgell'd their Brains about Words, these made it their Business to enquire into Things; there was an eternal Babble of the Tongue, here a continual Exercise of the Soul. And therefore it is nothing strange, if, when *Antipater* demanded of them fifty Children for Hostages, they made Answer, quite contrary to what we should do, That they would rather give him twice as many full grown Men, so much did they value the Loss of their Country's Education. When *Agefilaus* courted *Xenophon* to send his Children to *Sparta* to be bred, It is not, said he, there to learn Logick or Rhetorick, but to be instructed in the noblest of all Sciences, namely, the Science to obey and to command. It is very pleasant to see *Socrates*, after his Manner, rallying *Hippias*, who recounts to him what a World of Money he has got, especially in certain little Villages of *Sicily*, by teaching School, and that he got never a Penny at *Sparta*. What a sottish and stupid People (says *Socrates*) are they, without Sense or Understanding, that make no Account either of Grammar, or Poetry, and only busy themselves in studying the Genealogies and Successions of their Kings, the Foundations, Rises, and Declensions of States, and such Tales of a Tub! After which, having made *Hippias* particularly to acknowledge the Excellency of their Form of publick Administration, and the Felicity and Virtue of their private Life, he leaves him to guess at the Conclusion he makes of the Inutilities of his pedantick Arts. Examples have demonstrated unto us, that in military Affairs, and all others of the like active Nature, the Study of Sciences does more soften and enervate the Courages of Men, than any way fortify and incite them. The most potent Empire that at this Day appears to be in the whole World, is that of

the *Turks*, a People equally inclin'd to the Estimation of Arms, and the Contempt of Letters. I find *Rome* was more valiant before she grew so learned; and the most warlike Nations at this Time in Being, are the most ignorant; of which the *Scythians*, *Parthians*, and the great *Tamerlane*, may serve for sufficient Proof. When the *Goths* over-ran *Greece*, the only Thing that preserv'd all the Libraries from the Fire, was, that some one possess'd them with an Opinion, that they were to leave this kind of Furniture entire to the Enemy, as being most proper to divert them from the Exercise of Arms, and to fix them to a lazy and sedentary Life. When our King *Charles* the Eighth, almost without striking a Blow, saw himself possess'd of the Kingdom of *Naples*, and a considerable Part of *Tuscany*, the Nobility about him attributed this unexpected Facility of Conquest to this, that the Princes and Nobles of *Italy* more studied to render themselves ingenious and learned, than vigorous and warlike.



C H A P. XXV.

Of the Education of Children. To Madam Diana of Foix, Countess of Gurfon.

I Never yet saw that Father, but, let his Son be never so decrepid or deform'd, would notwithstanding own him: Nevertheless, if he were not totally besotted, and blinded with his paternal Affection, that he did not well enough discern his Defects: Notwithstanding all Defaults, he is still his. Just so do I, I see better than any other, that all I write are but the idle Whimsies of a Man that has only nibbled upon the outward Crust of Science in his Nonage, and only retain'd a general and formless Image of them, who has got a little Snatch of every Thing, and nothing of the whole *a la mode de France*; For I know in general, that there is such a Thing as Physick, a Knowledge in the Laws, four Parts in Mathematicks, and, in Part, what all these
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