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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. 28. To Madam de Grammont, Countess of Guisson.

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ESSAYS

OF

Michael Seig^r. de Montaigne.

BOOK I. PART II.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Nine and twenty Sonnets of Estienne de la Boëtie, to Madam de Grammont, Countess of Guiffon.



ADAM, I offer your Ladyship nothing of mine, either because it is already yours, or because I find nothing in my Writings worthy of you: But I have a great Desire that these Verses, into what Part of the World soever they may travel, may carry your Name in the Front, for the

Honour will accrue to them, by having the great *Corsifanda de Andonis* for their safe Conduct: I conceive this Present, Madam, so much the more proper for you, both by Reason there are few Ladies in *France*, who are so good Judges of Poetry, and make so good Use of it as you

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do;

do; as also that there is none who can give it that Spirit and Life your Ladyship does, by that incomparable Voice Nature has added to your other Perfections; you will find, Madam, that these Verses deserve your Esteem, and will, I dare say, concur with me in this, that *Gascony* never yielded more Invention, finer Expression, or any that more evidently shew themselves to have flowed from a masterly Hand: Be not jealous then that you have but the Remainder of what I published some Years since, under the Name of *Monsieur de Foix*, your brave Kinsman; for certainly these have something in them more spritely and luxuriant, as being writ in a greener Youth, and enflamed with that noble Ardour which I will tell your Ladyship in your Ear. The other were writ since, when he was a Suitor in the Honour of his Wife, already relishing I know not what matrimonial Coldness: And for my Part, I am of the same Opinion with those who hold, that Poesy appears no where so gay, as in a wanton and irregular Subject.

These nine and twenty Sonnets that were inserted here, are since printed with his other Works.



CHAP. XXIX.

Of Moderation.

AS if we had an infectious Touch, we, by our Manner of Handling, corrupt Things that in themselves are laudable and good: We may grasp Virtue so hard, 'till it becomes vicious, if we embrace it too streight, and with too violent a Desire. Those who say, there is never any Excess in Virtue, forasmuch as it is no Virtue, when it once becomes Excess, only play upon Words.

*Insani sapiens nomen ferat, æquus iniqui,
Ultra quam satis est, virtutem si petat ipsam*.*

* *Horace l. 1. Epist. 6.*