



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

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. 48. Of managed Horses.

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

Thing else we do, and that she engages our very Reason and Arguments in her Uncertainty and Confusion. We argue rashly and adventurously, says *Timæus* in *Plato*, by Reason that, as well as ourselves, our Discourses have great Participation with the Temerity of Chance.



C H A P. XLVIII.

Of Horses dressed to the Manage, called Destriers.

I AM now become a *Grammarian*; I, who never learned any Language but by rote, and who do not yet know *Adjective*, *Conjunctive*, or *Ablative*, think I have read, that the *Romans* had a Sort of Horses by them called *Funales*, or *Dextrarios*, which were either Led-Horses, or Horses laid in at several Stages to be taken fresh upon Occasion; and thence it is, that we call our Horses of Service, *Destriers*: And our *Romances* commonly use the Phrase of *Destrier* for *Accompagner*, to accompany. They also called these Horses *Defultorios Equos*, which were taught to run full Speed Side by Side, without Bridle or Saddle, so as that the *Roman* Gentlemen armed at all Pieces, would shift and throw themselves from the one to the other. The *Numidian* Men at Arms had always a Led-Horse in one Hand, besides that they rode upon, to change in the Heat of Battle: *Quibus, Defultorum in modum, binos trabentibus equos, inter acerrimam sæpe pugnam in recentam equum ex fesso armatis, transultare, mos erat. Tanta velocitas ipsis, tamque docile equorum genus**. Whose Custom it was, leading along two Horses, after the Manner of the *Defultorum*, armed as they were, in the Heat of Fight, to vault from a tired Horse to a fresh one; so active were the Men, and the Horses so docile. There are many Horses trained up to help their Riders, so as to run upon any one that appears with a drawn Sword, to fall

* *Liv. l. 23.*

both with Mouth and Heels upon any that front or oppose them : But it oft falls out, that they do more Harm to their Friends than their Enemies, considering that you cannot loose them from their Hold, to reduce them again into Order, when they are once engaged and grappled; by which Means you remain at the Mercy of their senseless Quarrel. It happened very ill to *Artibius*, General of the *Persian* Army, fighting Man to Man with *Oneslus*, King of *Salamis*, to be mounted upon a Horfe taught after this Manner, it being the Occasion of his Death; the 'Squire of *Oneslus* cleaving him down with a Scythe betwixt the Shoulders, as the Horfe was reared up upon his Master. And what the *Italians* report, That in the Battle of *Fornoua*, King *Charles's* Horfe, with Kicks and Plunges, disengag'd his Master from the Enemy that pressed upon him, without which he had been slain, sounds odly, and he ran a very great Hazard, and came strangely off, if it be true. The *Mamalukes* made their Boast, that they had the most ready Horfes of any Cavalry in the World; that by Nature and Custom they were taught to know and distinguish the Enemy they were to fall foul upon with Mouth and Heels, according to a Word or Sign given : As also to gather up with their Teeth, Darts and Lances scattered upon the Field, and present them to their Riders, as they should have Occasion to use them. 'Tis said both of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, that, amongst other excellent Qualities they were Masters of, they were both excellent Horfe-Men, and particularly of *Cæsar*, that in his Youth, being mounted on the bare Back, without Saddle or Bridle, he could make him run, stop, and turn, and perform all his Airs, with his Hands behind him. As Nature designed to make of his Person, and of *Alexander*, two Miracles of Military Art, so we may say, she had done her utmost to arm them after an extraordinary Manner : For every one knows, that *Alexander's* Horfe, *Bucephalus*, had a Head inclining to the Shape of a Bull, that he would suffer himself to be mounted and governed by none but his Master, and that he was so honoured after his Death, as to have a City erected to his Name. *Cæsar* had also another, that had Fore-feet like the Hands of a Man, his Hoof being divided in the Form of Fingers, and likewise was not to be ridden by any but

Cæsar himself; who, after his Death, dedicated his Statue to the Goddess *Venus*. I do not willingly alight when I am once on Horse-back; for it is the Place where, whether well or sick, I find myself most at Ease. *Plato* recommends it for Health; and also *Pliny* says, it is good for the Stomach and the Joints. We read in *Xenophon*, a Law, forbidding any one, who was Master of a Horse, to travel on Foot. *Trogus* and *Justinus* say, That the *Partians* were wont to perform all Offices and Ceremonies, not only in War, but also all Affairs, whether publick or private, make Bargains, confer, entertain, take the Air, and all on Horse-back; and that the greatest Distinction betwixt Freemen and Slaves amongst them, was, that the one rode on Horse-back, and the other went on Foot: An Institution of which King *Cyrus* was the Founder. There are several Examples in the *Roman History* (and *Suetonius* more particularly observes it in *Cæsar*) of Captains, who, in pressing Occasions, commanded their Cavalry to alight, both by that Means to take from them all Hopes of Flight, as also for the Advantage they hoped for in this Sort of Flight. *Quo haud dubie superat Romanus: Wherein the Romans did, unquestionably, excel:* So says *Livy**; however, the first Thing they did to prevent the Mutinies and Insurrections of Nations of late Conquest, was to take from them their Arms and Horses: And therefore it is that we so often meet in *Cæsar*; *Arma proferri, jumenta produci, obsides dari jubet*†: He commanded the Arms to be produced, the Horses brought out, and Hostages to be given. The *Grand Seignior*, to this Day, suffers not a *Christian* or a *Jew* to keep a Horse of his own throughout his Empire. Our Ancestors, at the Time they had War with the *English*, in all their greatest Engagements and pitch'd Battles, fought for the most Part on Foot, that they might have nothing but their own Force, Courage, and Constancy to trust to, in a Quarrel of so great Concern as Life and Honour. You stake (whatever *Chrysantes* in *Xenophon* says to the contrary) your Valour and your Fortune, upon that of your Horse; his Wound or Death brings your Person into the same Danger;

* *Liv. l. 3.*† *Cæsar's Com.*

his Fear or Fury shall make you be reputed rash or cowardly; if he have an ill Mouth, or will not answer to the Spur, your Honour must answer it: And therefore I do not think it strange, that those Battles I spoke of before were more firm and furious than those that are fought on Horse-back.

—*Cedebant pariter, pariterque ruebant
Victores victique, neque his fuga nota, neque illis*.*

They charg'd together, and did so retreat
The Victors, and the vanquished; nor yet
The Knack of running was unto the one,
Or to the other of the Parties known.

Their Battles were much better disputed: Now-a-days there are nothing but Routs; *Primus clamor, atque impetus rem decernit*: The first Shout, or the first Charge, puts an End to the Business: And the Arms we choose to make Use of in so great a Hazard, should be as much as possible at our own Command: Wherefore I should advise to choose them of the shortest Sort, and such of which we are able to give the best Account. A Man may repose more Confidence in a Sword he holds in his Hand, than in a Bullet he discharges out of a Pistol, wherein there must be a Concurrence of several Executions, to make it perform it's Office, the Powder, the Stone, and the Wheel, if any of which fail, it at least endangers your Fortune: A Man strikes much surer than the Air directs him.

*Et quo ferre velint permittere vulnera ventis,
Ensis habet vires, & gens quæcunque virorum est
Bella gerit gladiis †.*

— Par off with Bows

They shoot, and where it lists the Wind bestows
Their Wounds; but Fight of Sword does Strength require,
All manly Nations the Sword-Fight desire †.

* *Virg. Æneid. lib. 10.*

† *Lucan. l. 8.*

‡ Mr. May's Transf.

But of that Weapon I shall speak more fully, when I come to compare the Arms of the Ancients with those of modern Use, though by the Way, the Astonishment of the Ear abated, which every one grows familiar with in a little Time. I look upon it as a Weapon of very little Execution, and hope we shall one Day lay it aside. That missile Weapon which the *Italians* formerly made Use of both with Fire and without, was much more terrible: They called a certain Kind of *Javelin* armed at the Point with an Iron three Foot long, that it might pierce through and through an armed Man, *Phalarica*, which they sometimes in Field-service darted by Hand: Sometimes from several Sorts of Engines for the Defence of beleagured Places: The Shaft whereof being rolled round with Flax, Wax, Rosin, Oil, and other combustible Matter, took Fire in it's Flight, and lighting upon the Body of a Man, or his Target, took away all the Use of Arms and Limbs. And yet coming to close fight, I should think they should also endamage the Assailant, and that the Camp being as it were planted with these Flaming *Truncheons*, should produce a common Inconvenience to the whole Crowd.

— *Magnum stridens contorta Phalarica venit,
Fulminis acta modo* —*.

— The Comet like *Phalarica* does fly,
With a huge Noise like Lightning through the Sky.

They had moreover other Devices which Custom made them perfect in (which will seem incredible to us who have not seen them) by which they supply'd the Effects of our Powder and Shot. They darted their Piles with so great Violence, as oft-times transfix'd two Targets, and two armed Men at once, and pinned them together. Neither was the Effect of their Slings less certain of Execution, or of shorter Carriage: *Saxis globosis funda, mare apertum incessantes; coronas modici circuli magno ex intervallo loci asueti trajicere; non capita modo hostium vulnerabant, sed quem*

* *Virg. Æneid. 9.*

*locum destinassent**: Culling round Stones from the Shore for their Slings: And with them practising at a great Distance to throw through a Circle of very small Circumference, they would not only wound an Enemy in the Head, but hit any other Part at Pleasure. Their Pieces of Battery had not only the Execution, but the Thunder of our Cannon also: *Ad ictus mœnium cum terribili sonitu editos, pavor & trepidatio cœpit*†: At the Battery of the Walls, which is performed with a dreadful Noise, the Defendants began to fear and tremble within. The Gauls, our Kinsmen in Asia, abominated these treacherous missile Arms, it being their Use to fight with greater Bravery Hand to Hand. *Non tam patentibus plagis moventur, ubi latior, quam altior plaga est, etiam gloriosius se pugnare putant; iidem quum aculeus sagittæ aut glandis abditæ introrsus tenui vulnere in speciem urit; tum in rabiem & pudorem tam parva perire pestes versi, prosternunt corpora humi*‡: They are not so much concerned at large Wounds; when a Wound is wider than deep, they think they have fought with greater Glory: But when they find themselves tormented within, under the Aspect of a slight Wound, with the Point of a Dart, or some concealed glandulous Body, then transported with Fury and Shame, to perish by so small and contemptible an Officer of Death, they fall to the Ground; an Expression of something very like a Musket-Shot. The ten thousand Greeks in their long and famous Retreat, met with a Nation who very much galled them with great and strong Bows, carrying Arrows so long, that taking them up one might return them back like a Dart, and with them pierce a Buckler, and an armed Man through and through. The Engines of *Dyonisus's* Invention at *Syracuse*, to shoot vast massy Darts, and Stones of a prodigious Greatness with so great Impetuosity, and at so great a Distance, came very near to our modern Inventions. But in this Discourse of Horses and Horsemanship, we are not to forget the pleasant Posture of one *Maistre Pierre Pol*, a Doctor of Divinity, upon his Mule, whom *Mensstrelet* reports always to have rid aside through the Streets of *Paris* like a Woman. He

* *Liv. l. 38.*† *Id. Ibid.*‡ *Id. Ibid.*

says also elsewhere, that the *Gascons* had terrible Horses, that would wheel, and make the *Pirouette* in their full Speed, which the *French*, *Piccards*, *Dutch*, and *Brabanters* looked upon as a Miracle, having never seen the like before; which are his very Words. *Cæsar* speaking of the *Swedes*, in the Charges they make on Horse-back, says he, they often throw themselves off to fight on Foot, having taught their Horses not to stir in the mean Time from the Place, to which they presently run again upon Occasion; and according to their Custom nothing is so unmanly and so base as to use Saddles or Pads, and they despise such as make Use of those Conveniencies: Infomuch that being but a very few in Number, they fear not to attack a great many. That which I have formerly wondered at, to see a Horse made to perform all his Airs with a Switch only, and the Reins upon his Neck, was common with the *Massilians*, who rid their Horses without Saddle or Bridle.

*Et gens quæ nudo residens Massilia dorso,
Ora levi flectit, frænorum nescia virga,
Et Numidæ infræni cingunt* *.

Massilians who on the bare Backs do ride,
And with a Switch, not knowing Bridle's Guide
The manag'd Steed, and fierce *Numidians* too
That use no Rein, begirt us round.

*Equi sine frænis deformis ipse cursus, ridiga cervice, & exten-
to capite currentium †: The Career of a Horse without a
Bridle must needs be ungrateful, his Neck being extended
stiff, and his Nose thrust out.* King *Alphonso*, he who
first instituted the Order *des Chevaliers de la Bande*, or *de
l'Escherpe* in Spain, amongst other Rules of the Order gave
them this, That they should never ride Mule or Mulet, up-
on Penalty of a Mark of Silver; which I had lately out of
Guevara's Letters, which whoever gave them the Title of
golden Epistles, had another Kind of Opinion of them

* *Æneid.* l. 4.

† *Liv.* l. 35.

than

than I have, and perhaps saw more in them than I do. The Courtier says, that till his Time it was a Disgrace to a Gentleman to ride one of those Creatures: But the *Abyssines* on the contrary, as they are nearer advanc'd to the Person of *Preflor John*, do affect to be mounted upon large Mules, for the greater Dignity and Grandeur. *Xenophon* tells us, that the *Assyrians* were fain to keep their Horses fetter'd in the Stable, they were so fierce and vicious: And that it required so much Time to loose and harness them, that to avoid any Disorder this tedious Preparation might bring upon them, in case of Surprise, they never sat down in their Camp, till it was first well fortified with Ditches and Rampiers. His *Cyrus*, who was so great a Master in all manner of Horse Service, kept his Horses to their Ordinary, and never suffer'd them to have any Thing to eat till first they had earn'd it by the Sweat of some kind of Exercise. The *Scythians*, when in the Field, and in Scarcity of Provisions, us'd to let their Horses Blood, which they drank and sustain'd themselves by that Diet.

Venit & epoto Sarmata pastus equo.*

The *Scythian* also comes without Remorse,
Having before quast up his bleeding Horse.

Those of *Crotta* being besieg'd by *Metellus*, were in so great Necessity for Drink, that they were fain to quench their Thirst with their Horses Urine: And to shew how much better cheap, the *Turkish* Armies support themselves than our *European* Forces, 'tis said, that besides that the Soldiers drink nothing but Water and eat nothing but Rice and Salt Flesh pulveriz'd (of which every one may easily carry about with him a Month's Provision) they know how to feed upon the Blood of their Horses, as well as the *Muscovite* and *Tartar*, and salt it for their Use. These new discover'd People of the *Indies*, when the *Spaniards* first land-ed amongst them, had so great an Opinion both of the Men and Horses, that they look'd upon the first as Gods,

* *Mart. l. 2.*

and

and the other Animals ennobled above their Nature. Inſo-
 much that after they were ſubdu'd, coming to ſue for Peace,
 and to bring them Gold and Proviſions, they fail'd not to
 preſent the ſame to the Horſes, with the ſame kind of
 Harangue to them, which they had made to the other;
 interpreting their Neighing for a Language of Truce and
 Friendſhip. In theſe nearer *Indies*, to ride upon an Ele-
 phant was the firſt Place of Honour, the ſecond to ride in a
 Coach with four Horſes, the third to ride upon a Camel,
 and the laſt to be carried, or drawn by one Horſe only.
 Some one of our late Writers tells us, that he has been in a
 Country in thoſe Parts, where they ride upon Oxen with
 Pads, Stirrups, and Bridles, and very much at their Eaſe.
Quintus Fabius Maximus Rutilianus, in a Battle with the
Sannites, ſeeing his Cavalry, after three or four Charges,
 had fail'd of breaking into the Enemies main Body, took
 this Courſe to make them unbridle all their Horſes; ſo that
 having nothing to check their Career, they might through
 Weapons and Men, open the Way for his Foot, who by
 that Means gave them a bloody Deſeat. The ſame Com-
 mand was given by *Quintus Fulvius Flaccus* againſt the *Cel-
 tiberians*: *Id cum majore vi equorum facietis, ſi effrænatos
 in hoſtes equos immittatis; quod sæpe Romanos equites cum laude
 feciſſe memoriæ proditum eſt. Detractiſque frænis bis ultro
 citroque cum magna ſrage hoſtium, infractis omnibus haſtis,
 tranſcurrerunt* *. You will do your Buſineſs with greater
 Advantage of your Horſes Strength, if you ſpur them un-
 bridled upon the Enemy, as it is recorded the Roman Horſe
 to their great Glory have often done. And their Bits
 being pull'd off without breaking a Launce, to have charg'd
 through and through, with great Slaughtering of the Enemy:
 The Duke of *Muſcovy* was anciently oblig'd to pay this
 Reverence to the *Tartars*, that when they ſent any Em-
 baſſy to him, he went out to meet the Embaſſadors on
 Foot, and preſented them with a Mazer, or Goblet of
 Mare's Milk (a Beverage of greateſt Eſteem among them)
 and ſo great, that if in drinking, a Drop fell by Chance
 upon the Horſe's Main, they thought themſelves indispen-

* *Liv. l. 40.*

fably bound to lick it off with their Tongue: The Army that *Bajazet* had sent into *Russia*, was overwhelm'd with so dreadful a Tempest of Snow, that to shelter, and preserve themselves from starving, many ript up, and embowell'd their Horses, to creep into their Bellies, and enjoy the Benefit of that vital Heat. *Bajazet*, after that furious Battle wherein he was overthrown by *Tamerlane*, was in a hopeful Way of securing his own Person by the Fleetness of an *Arabian* Mare he had under him, had he not been constrain'd to let her drink her Fill at the Ford of a River in his Way, which render'd her so heavy and indispos'd, that he was afterwards easily overtaken by those that pursu'd him: They say indeed that to let a Horse stale takes him off his Mettle, but I should rather have thought that drinking would have refresh'd her, and reviv'd her Spirits: *Craesus* marching his Army through certain Furzs, near *Sardis*, met with an infinite Number of Serpents, which the Horses devoured with great Appetite, and which *Herodotus* says was a Prodigy of ominous Portent to his Affairs. We call a Horse *Cheval entier*, that has his Main, Ears, and other Parts entire, and no other will pass Miter. The *Lacedæmonians* having defeated the *Athenians* in *Sicily*, returning triumphant from the Victory into the City of *Syracusa*, amongst other Insolencies, caus'd all the Horses they had taken to be shorn, and led in Triumph. *Alexander* fought with a Nation call'd *Dææ*; a People whose Discipline it was to march two and two together, arm'd on Horse-back to the War, and being in Fight one always alighted, and so they fought one while on Horse-back and another on Foot, one after another by Turns. I do not think that for graceful Riding, any Nation in the World excels the *French*; though a good Horseman, according to our Way of speaking, seems rather to respect the Courage of the Man than his Horsemanship and Address in riding, Of all that ever I saw the most knowing in that Art, that had the best Seat, and the best Method in breaking Horses, was *Monsieur de Carnevalet*, who served our King *Henry* the Second: I have seen a Man ride with both his Feet upon the Saddle, take off the Saddle, and at his Return take it up again, refit, and remount it, riding all the while full Speed: Having gallop'd over a Bonnet, make at it
very

very good Shots, backward with his Bow, take up any thing from the Ground, setting one Foot down, and the other in the Stirrup; with twenty other Apes-tricks, which he got his living by. There has been seen, in my Time, at *Constantinople*, two Men upon an Horse, who in the Height of his Speed would throw themselves off, and into the Saddle again by Turn, and one who bridled and saddled his Horse with nothing but his Teeth. Another who betwixt two Horses, one Foot upon one Saddle, and another upon the other, carrying another upon his Shoulders; would ride full Career, the other standing bolt upright upon him, making very good Shots with his Bow. Several who would ride full Speed with their Heels upwards, and their Hands upon the Saddle betwixt several *Scymiters*, with the Points upward fix'd in the Harness. When I was a Boy, the Prince of *Salmona*, riding a rough Horse at *Naples* to all his Airs, held Reals under his Knees and Toes; as if they had been nail'd there, to shew the Firmness of his Seat.



C H A P. XLIX.

Of Ancient Customs.

I Should willingly pardon our People for admitting no other Pattern, or Rule of Perfection, than their own peculiar Manners, and Customs. It being a common Vice, not of the Vulgar only, but almost of all Men, to walk in the beaten Road their Ancestors have trod before them: I am content when they see *Fabricius* or *Lælius*, that they look upon their Countenance and Behaviour as barbarous, seeing they are neither clothed nor fashion'd according to our Mode. But I find Fault with their Singularity, when it arrives to that Degree of Indiscretion, as to suffer themselves to be so impos'd upon by Authority of the present Custom, as every Month to alter their Opinion, if Custom so require, and that they should so vary their Judgment in their own particular Concern: When they wore the Belly-pieces of
their