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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. 8. Of the Affection of Fathers to their Children.

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#### MONTAIGNE'S Esfays.

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Nations being very warlike, have given the Preheminence to that of the Virtues which was most familiar to them, and which they thought of the most worthy Character. Just as our Passion and the severish Solicitude we have of the Chastity of Women, makes saying a good Woman, a Woman of Worth, and a Woman of Honour and Virtue, to signify no more but a chaste Woman: As if to oblige her to that one Duty, we were indifferent as to all the rest; and gave them the Reins to all other Faults whatever, to compound for that one of Incontinence.



#### CHAP. VIII.

Of the Affection of Fathers to their Children.

#### To Madam D'ESTISSAC.

Adam, if the Strangeness and Novelty of my Sub-VI ject, which generally give Value to Things, do not fave me, I shall never come off with Honour from this foolish Attempt: But 'tis fo fantastick, and carries a Faceso unlike the common Custom, that the Oddness of it may, perhaps, make it pass. 'Tis a Melancholick Humour, and confequently an Humour very much an Enemy to my natural Complexion, engendred by the Pensiveness of the Solitude, into which, for some Years past, I have retir'd myself, that first put into my Head this idle Fancy of Writing: Wherein, finding myfelf totally unprovided and empty of other Matters, I presented myself to myself, for Argument and Subject. 'Tis the only Book in the World of its Kind, and of a wild extravagant Defign; there is nothing worth Remark but the Extravagancy in this Affair: For in a Subject fo vain and frivolous, the best Workman in the World could not have given it a Form fit to recommend it to any Manner of Esteem.

Now, Madam, being to draw my own Picture to the Life, I should have omitted the only graceful Feature, had I not represented in it the Honour I have ever paid to your

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rour its; Merits; which I have purpofely chosen to fay in the Beginning of this Chapter, by reason, that among the many excellent Qualities you are Mistress of, the tender Love you have shewn to your Children, worthily holds one of the chief Places. Whoever shall know at what Age Monsieur d'Estissac, your Husband, lest you a Widow, the great and honourable Matches have fince been offer'd to you, as many as to any Lady of your Condition in France; the Constancy and Steadiness wherein you have liv'd fo many Years, and wherewith you have gone thro' fo many sharp Difficulties; the Charge and Conduct of their Affairs who have perfecuted you in every Corner of the Kingdom, and who yet are not wary of tormenting you; and the happy Direction you have given in all this, either by your fingle Prudence, or good Fortune, will eafily conclude with me, that we have not fo lively an Example as your's of Maternal Affection in our Times. I praise God, Madam, that it has been fo well employ'd; for the great Hopes that Monfieur d' Eftisfac, the Son, gives of himself, are sufficient Assurances that when he comes to Age, you will reap from him all the Obedience and Gratitude of a very good Man. But forafmuch as by reason of his tender Years he has not been capable of taking notice of those numberless Offices of Kindness which he has receiv'd from you; I will take care,

if these Papers ever happen to fall into his Hands, when I shall neither have Mouth nor Speech left to deliver it to him, that he shall receive a true Account of those Things from me, which shall be more effectually manifested to him by their own Effects, and by which he will understand, that there is not a Gentleman in France who stands more indebted to a Mother's Care; and that he cannot for the Future

The Affection of Parents towards their Children greater than that of Children towards them, and why.

give a better, nor more certain Testimony of himself, of his own Worth and Virtue, than by acknowledging you

for that excellent Mother you are.

If there be any Law truly natural, that is to fay, any Instinct that is feen univerfally, and perpetually imprinted in both Beafts and Men (which is not without Controverfy) I can then fay, that in my Opinion, next to the Care every Animal has of his own Preservation, and to avoid

#### Montaigne's Esfays.

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that which may hurt him, the Affection that the Begetter bears to his Off-spring, holds the Second Place in this Lift. And feeing that Nature feems to have recommended it to us, having Regard to the Extension and Propagation of the fuccessive Piece of this Machine: 'Tis no Wonder, on the contrary, that of Children towards their Parents is not to great. To which we may add this other Aristotelian Consideration, That he who confers a Benefit on any one, love him better than he is below'd by him again: And that every Artificer is fonder of his Work, than, if that Work had Sense, it would be of the Artificer; by reason, that is dear to us to be, and to be confifts in Moving and Action: Therefore every one has, in fome fort, a Being in his Work. Whoever confers a Benefit, exercises a fair and honest Action; who receives it, exercises the Utile only. Now the Utile is much less amiable than the Honestum: The Honest tum is stable and permanent, supplying him who has doneit with a continual Gratification. The Utile lofes itfelf, eafly flides away, and the Memory of it is neither fo fresh, not fo pleafing. Those Things are dearest to us that have coll us most, and giving is more chargeable than receiving Since it has pleas'd God to endue us with some Capacity weighing and confidering Things, to the End we may not, like Brutes, be fervilely subjected and enflav'd by the Law common to both; but that we should by Judgment and a voluntary Liberty apply ourselves to them : We ought, in deed fometimes, to yield to the simple Authority of Na ture, but not fuffer ourselves to be tyrannically hurry'd away and transported by her; fince Reason alone should have the Conduct of our Inclinations. I, for my Part, have a strange Disgust to those Inclinations that are started in us, without the Meditation and Direction of the Judgment. As upon the Subject I am speaking of, I cannot entertain that Passion of dandling and caressing an Infant scarcely born, having, as yet, neither Motion of Soul, nor Shape of Body distinguishable, by which they can render themselves amiable; and have not willingly suffer'd them to be nurs'd near me: A true and regular Affection ought, to fpring and increase with the Knowledge they give us of themselves, and then if they are worthy of it, natural Propens walking Hand in Hand with Reason, to cherish them with a truly Paternal Love; and to judge and difcern alloit

Of Paternal Affection.

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they be otherwise, still submitting ourselves to Reason, notwithstanding the Inclinations of Nature. It is often quite otherwise, and most commonly we find ourselves more taken with the Play and puerile Simplicity of our Children, than we are afterwards with their compleat Actions; as if we had lov'd them for our Sport, like Monkies, and not as Men. And some there are, who are very liberal in buying them Balls to play withal, who are very close handed for the least necessary Expence when they come to Age: Nay, to fuch Degree, that it looks as if the Jealoufy of feeing them appear in, and enjoy the World, when we are about to leave it, renders us more niggardly and stingy towards them. It vexes us, that they tread upon our Heels, as if to folicit us to go out; and if this be to be fear'd, fince the Order of Things will have it fo, that they cannot, to fpeak the Truth, be nor live, but at the Expence of our Being and Life, we should never meddle with getting Children. For my Part, I think it Cruelty and Injustice not to receive them into the Share and Society of our Goods, and not to make them Partakers in the Intelligence of our Domestick Affairs, when they are capable, and not to lessen and contract our own Expences, to make the more room for theirs, seeing we begat them to that Effect. 'Tis unjust, that an old Fellow, deaf, lame, and half dead, should, alone, in a Corner of the Chimney, enjoy the Goods that were fufficient for the Maintenance and Advancement of many Children, and to fuffer them in the mean time to lose their best Years, for want of Means to put themselves in Publick Service, and the Knowledge of Men. A Man by this Means drives them to desperate Courses, and to seek out by any Means, how unjust or dishonourable soever, to provide for their own Support. As I have, in my Time, feen feveral Young Men, of good Extraction, fo addicted to Stealing, that no Correction could cure them of it. I know one, of a very good Family, to whom at the Request of a Brother of his, a very honest and brave Gentleman, I once spoke upon this Account; who made answer, and confess'd to me roundly, that he had been put upon this dirty Practice, by the Severity and Avarice of his Father: But that he was now so accustom'd to it, he could not leave it. At which Time he was trapp'd stealing a Lady's Rings, being come into her Chamber as she was dressing, with

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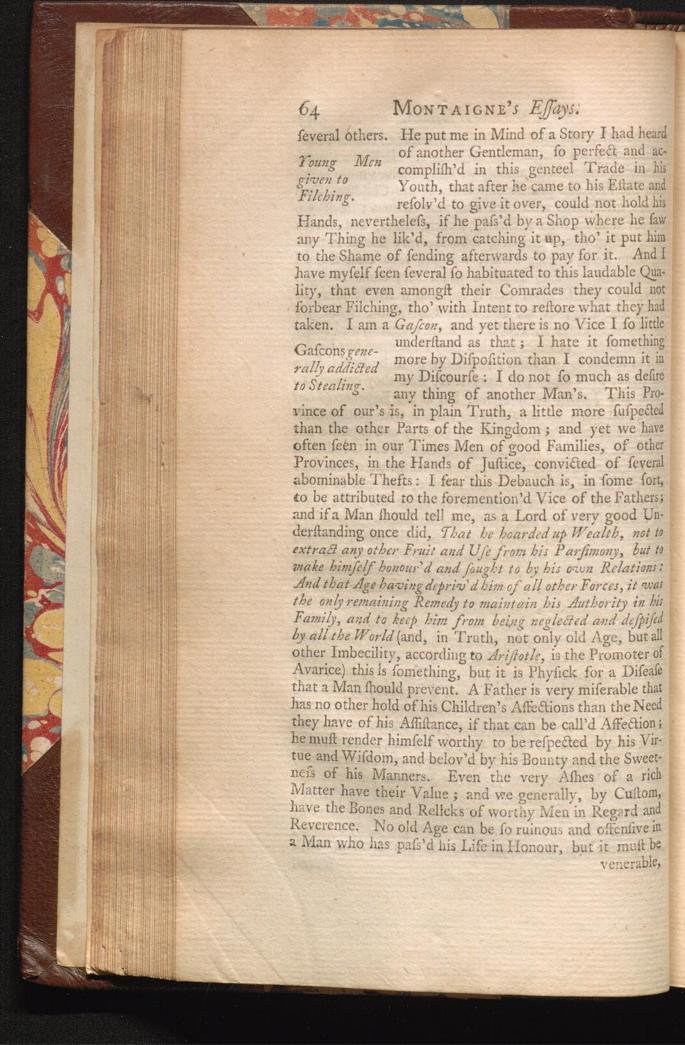
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Of Paternal Affection.

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venerable, especially to his Children; the Soul of whom he must have train'd up to their Duty by Reason not by Necessity and the Need they have of him, nor by Roughness and Force.

Qui imperium credat esse gravius aut stabilius Vi quod sit, quam illud quod amicitia adjungitur\*.

And he does mainly vary from my Sense, Who thinks the Empire gain'd by Violence More absolute and durable than that Which Gentleness and Friendship do create.

I condemn all Violence in the Education of a tender Soul, that is defign'd for Honour and Liberty. There is, I know not what of Servile in Rigour and Restraint; and I am of Opinion, that what is not to be done by Reason, Prudence and Address, is never to be effected by Force. I myself was brought up after that Manner, and they tell me, that, in all my first Age, I never felt the Rod but twice, and then very eafily. I have practis'd the same Method with my Children, who most of them dy'd at Nurse; but Leonora, my only Daughter, is arriv'd to the Age of Six Years and upward, without other Correction for her Childish Faults (her Mother's Indulgence easily concurring) than Words only, and those very gentle. In which kind of Proceeding, tho' my End and Expectation should be both frustrated, there are other Causes enough to lay the Fault on, without blaming my Discipline, which I know to be natural and just; and I should in this have yet been more religious towards the Males, as born to less Subjection and more free; and I should have made it my Business to fwell their Hearts with Ingenuity and Freedom. I have never observ'd other Effects of Whipping, unless to render them more cowardly, or more wilful and obstinate. Do we defire to be belov'd of our Children? Will we remove from them all Occasion of Wishing our Death? (tho' no Occasion of so horrid a Wish can either be just or excusable, Nullum scelus rationem babet) Let us reasonably accommodate their Lives with what is in our Power. In order to

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this, we should not marry so young, that our Age shall in a Manner be confounded with theirs; for this Inconvenience plunges us into many very great Difficulties : I fay, the Gentry of the Nation, who are of a Condition wherein they have little to do, and live upon their Revenues only: For in other Conditions, where Life is dedicated to Profit, the Plurality and Numbers of Children is an Increase to good Husbandry, and they are so many new Tools and Infiruments wherewith to grow rich. I marry'd at Three and Thirty Years of Age, and agree in the Opinion of Thirty Five, which is faid to be that of Ariffotle. Plato will have no body marry before Thirty; but he has reason to laugh at those who undertake the Work of Marriage after Five and Fifty, and condemn their Offspring as unworthy of Aliment and Life. Thales gave to this the trueft Limits, who young, and being importun'd by his Mother to marry, answer'd, That it was too foon; and being grown in Years, and urg'd again, That it was too late. A Man The Use of must deny Opportunity to every importunate Action. The ancient Gauls look'd upon Women enerit as a very horrid Thing, for a Man to have vates young Society with a Woman before twenty Men.

the Men, who design'd themselves for War, the keeping their Virginity till well grown in Years, forasmuch as Courage is abated and diverted by the Use of Women.

Ma hor congiunta à giovinetta sposa, Lieto homai, de figli era invilito Negli affetti di padre, & di marito \*.

But now being marry'd to a fair young Wife, He's quite fall'n off from his old Course of Life: His Mettle is grown rusty, and his Care His Wife and Children do betwixt them share.

Muleasses, King of Tunis, he whom the Emperor Charles V. restor'd to the Kingdom, reproach'd the Memory of his Father Mahomet with the Frequentation of Women, styling him Loose, Esseminate, and a Getter of Children. The Greek History observes of Jecus, the Tarentine, of

\* Taffo Can. 10.

Chry/o

Of Paternal Affection.

67 Chryso, Astiplus, Diopompus, and others, that to keep their Bodies in order for the Olympick Games, and fuch like Exercises, they deny'd themselves, during that Preparation, all Commerce with Venus. In a certain Country of the Spanish Indies, Men were not admitted to marry till after Forty Years of Age, and yet the Girls were allow'd to go to't at Ten. 'Tis not time for a Gentleman of Five and Thirty Years old, to give place to his Son who is Twenty; he being himfelf in a Condition to ferve both in the Camp, and Court of his Prince, has himself need of all his Equipage; and yet doubtless ought to allow his Son a Share, but not so great a one, as wholly to disfurnish himself; and for such a one, the Saying, that Fathers have ordinarily in their Mouths, That they will not put off their Cloaths before they go to Bed, is proper enough: But a Father worn out with Age and Infirmities, and depriv'd by his Weakness and Want of Health of the common Society of Men, wrongs himself and his, to rake together a great Mass of useless Treasure. He has liv'd long enough, if he be wife, to have a Mind to strip himself to go to Red; not to his very Shirt, I confess, but to that, and a good warm Night-gown: The remaining Pomps of which he has no further use, he ought voluntarily to furrender to those to whom by the Order of Nature they belong. 'Tis Reason he should refer the use of those Things to them, feeing that Nature has reduc'd him to fuch a State, that he cannot enjoy them himfelf: Otherwise there is doubtless ill Nature and Envy in the Cafe. The greatest Act of the Emperor Charles V. was, that in Imitation of some of the Ancients of his own Quality, confessing it but Reason to strip ourselves when our Cloaths encumber and grow too heavy for us; and to lie down when our Legs begin to fail us; he refign'd his Dignity, Grandeur, and Power to his Son, when he found the Vigour and Steadiness in the Conduct of his Affairs to fail in himself, with the Glory he had therein acquir'd.

> Solve senescentem mature sanus sequum, ne Peccet ad extremum ridendus, & ilia ducat \*.

> > \* Hor. lib. 1. Ep. 1.

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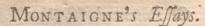
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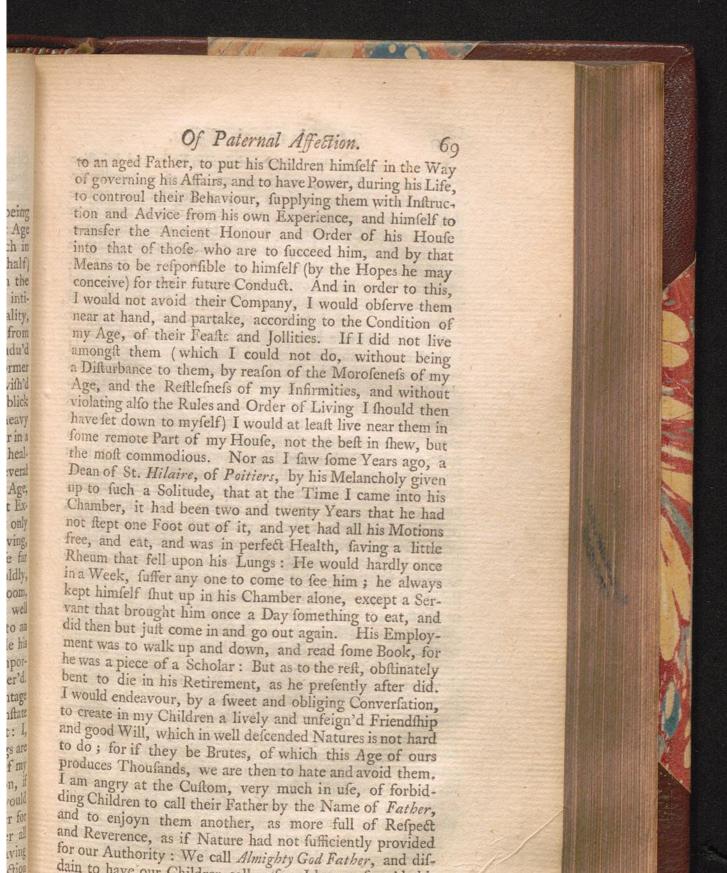
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The old worn Courfer in good Time dismiss, Lest failing in the Lists, Spectators his.

This Fault of not perceiving betimes, and not being fensible of the Feebleness and extreme Alteration that Age naturally brings both upon the Body and Mind (which in my Opinion is equal, if the Soul is no more than the half has loft the Reputation of most of the great Men in the World. I have known in my Time, and have been intimately acquainted with some Persons of very great Quality, whom a Man might eafily discern so manifestly fall'n from that former Sufficiency, I was fure they were once endu'd with by the Reputation they had acquir'd in their former Years, that I could heartily, for their own Sakes, have wish'd them at Home at their Ease, discharg'd from those Publick Military Employments, which were now grown too heavy for their Shoulders. I have formerly been very familiar in 1 Gentleman's House, a Widower, and very old, the' healthy and chearful enough: This Gentleman had feveral Daughters to marry, and a Son, already of a ripe Age, which brought upon him many Visits, and a great Expence; neither of which did very well pleafe him, not only out of confideration of Frugality; but yet more, for having by reason of his Age, enter'd into a Course of Life far differing from ours. I told him one Day a little boldly, as I us'd to do, that he would do better to give us room and to leave his principal House (for he had but that well fituated and furnish'd) to his Son, and retire himself to a Estate he had hard by, where no body would trouble his Repose, seeing he could not otherwise avoid being importun'd by us, the Condition of his Children confider'd He took my Advice afterwards, and found an Advantage by fo doing: I do not mean that a Man should so instate them, as not to referve to himself a Liberty to recant: 4 who am now arriv'd to the Age wherein fuch Things are fit to be done, would refign to them the Enjoyment of my House and Goods, but with a Power of Revocation, they should give me Cause to alter my Mind; I would leave to them the Use, they being no longer proper to me, and of the General Authority and Power over all would referve as much as I thought good to myfelf: Having always thought, that it must needs be a great Satisfaction



dain to have our Children call us fo; I have reform'd this F 3

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### MONTAIGNE'S Effays.

70 Error in my Family. And as it is also Folly and Injustice to deprive Children, when grown up, of a Familiarity with their Father, and to carry a fcornful and austere Countenance toward them, thinking by that to keep them in Awe and Obedience; so it is but a very idle Force, that, instead of producing the Effect defign'd, renders Fathers diffaftful; and, which is worfe, ridiculous to their own Children: They have Youth and Vigour in Possession, and confequently the Breath and Favour of the World, and therefore receive these sierce and tyrannical Looks (mere Scare-Crows) of a Man without Blood, either in his Heart or Veins, with Mockery and Contempt. Tho' I could make myfelf fear'd, I had yet much rather make myfelf belov'd. There are fo many Sorts of Defects in old Age, lo much Impotency, and it is so liable to Contempt, that the best Purchase a Man can make, is the Kindness and Affection of his own Family: Command and Fear are no more his Weapons: Such a one I have known, who having been very infolent in his Youth, when he came to be old, tho he might have liv'd at his full Ease and had his Judgment as entire as ever, would yet torment himself and others; strike, rant, swear and curse; the most tempestuous Master in France: Fretting himfelf with unnecessary Suspicion and Vigilancy; and all this Rumble and Clutter, but to make his Family cheat him the fooner and the more; of his Barn, his Kitchen, Cellar, nay, and his very Purfe too, others had the greatest Use and Share, while he keeps his Keys in his Bosom, much more carefully than his Eyes: Whilst he hugs himself with the Frugality of the pitiful Pittance of a wretched niggardly Table, every thing goes to Wrack and Ruin in every Corner his House, in Play, Drink, all Sorts of Profusion; making Sports in their Junkets with his vain Anger and fruitles Parlimony. Every one is a Centinel against him, and by accident any wretched Fellow that serves him is a another Humour, and will not join with the rest, he ! prefently render'd suspected to him, a Bait which old Age very easily bites at of itself. How often has this Gentleman boasted to me, in how great Awe he kept his Family, and how exact an Obedience and Reverence they paid him How clearly did this Man fee into his own Affairs!

Ille

Ille solus nescit omnia \*.

I do not know any one that can muster more Parts, both natural and acquir'd, proper to maintain fuch a Dominion, than he; yet he is fall'n from it like a Child. For this Reason it is, that I have pick'd him out amongst feveral others that I know of the same Humour, for the greatest Example. It were Matter sufficient for a Question in the Schools, Whether he is better thus or otherwise? In his Presence all submit to and bow before him, and give fo much way to his Vanity, that no body ever refilts him; he has his Belly-full of Cringe, and all Postures of Fear, Submission and Respect. Does he turn away a Servant? He packs up his Bundle, and is gone; but 'tis no further than just out of his Sight: The Pace of old Age is so slow, and the Scene is fo weak and troubled, that he will live and do his old Office in the fame House a Year together, without being perceiv'd. And after a fit Interval of Time, Letters are pretended to come a great way off, from I know not where, very humble, fuppliant, and full of Promifes of Amendment; by Virtue of which he is again receiv'd into Favour. Does Monsieur make any Bargain, or fend away any Dispatch that does not please? 'Tis suppress'd, and Causes afterwards forg'd to excuse the want of Execution in the one, or Answer in the other. No strange Letters are first brought to him; he never sees any, but those that feem fit for his Knowledge: If by Accident they fall first into his own Hand, being us'd to trust some body to read them to him, he reads extempore what he thinks fit, and very often makes fuch a one ask him Pardon, who abuses and rails at him in his Letter. Finally, he sees nothing but by an Image prepar'd and defign'd before-hand, and the most satisfactory they can invent, not to rouse and awake his ill Humour and Choler. I have under different Forms, feen enough of long and constant OEconomy to just the same Effect. Women, especially the perverse and elder Sort, are evermore addicted to cross their Husbands: They lay hold with both Hands on all Occasions to contradict and oppose them, and the first Excuse serves for a plenary Justification. I have feen a Wife who has grolly

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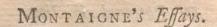
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purloin'd from her Husband, that, as she told her Confesfor, the might distribute the more liberal Alms: Let who will trust to that Religious Dispensation. No Management of Affairs feems to them of fufficient Dignity, if proceeding from the Husband's Assent; they must usurp either by Infolence or Cunning, and always injuriously, or elfe it has not the Grace of that Authority they defire: When, as in the Case I am speaking of, 'tis against a poor old Man, and for the Children, that they make use of this Title to ferve their Passion with Glory; and, as in a common Servitude, easily monopolize against his Government and Dominion. If they be Males grown up, and flourishing, they presently corrupt, either by Force or Favour, both Steward, Receivers, and all the Rout. Such as have neither, Wife nor Son, do not fo eafily fall into this Misfortune; when they do, it is more cruelly and undefervedly. Cato the elder, in his Time, faid, So many Servants, fo many Enemies. Confider then, whether, according to the vall difference betwixt the Purity of the Age he liv'd in, and the Corruption of this of ours, he does not feem to advertife us, that Wife, Son, and Servant, are fo many Enemies to us? 'Tis well for old Age, that it is always accompany'd with Stupidity, Ignorance, and a Facility of being deceiv'd; for should we see how we are us'd, and would not acquiesce, what would become of us? especially in such

The Author feems to bint that the Judges were young Men themselves.

an Age as this, where the very Judges who are to determine, are usually partial to the Young, in any Caufe that comes before them. In case that the Discovery of this Cheat escape me, I cannot at least fail to discern that I am very fit to be cheated; and can a Man ever enough speak the Va-

lue of a Friend, in comparison with these civil Tyes? The very Image of it which I fee fo pure and uncorrupted in Beafts, how religiously do I respect it? If others deceive me, yet I do not at least deceive myself, in thinking I am able to defend myself from them, or in breaking my Brains to make myself so? I protect myself from fuch Treasons in my own Bosom, not by an unquiet and tumultuary Curiofity, but rather by Mirth and Refolution. When I hear talk of any one's Condition, I never trouble myself to think of him, I presently turn my Eyes upon myself,

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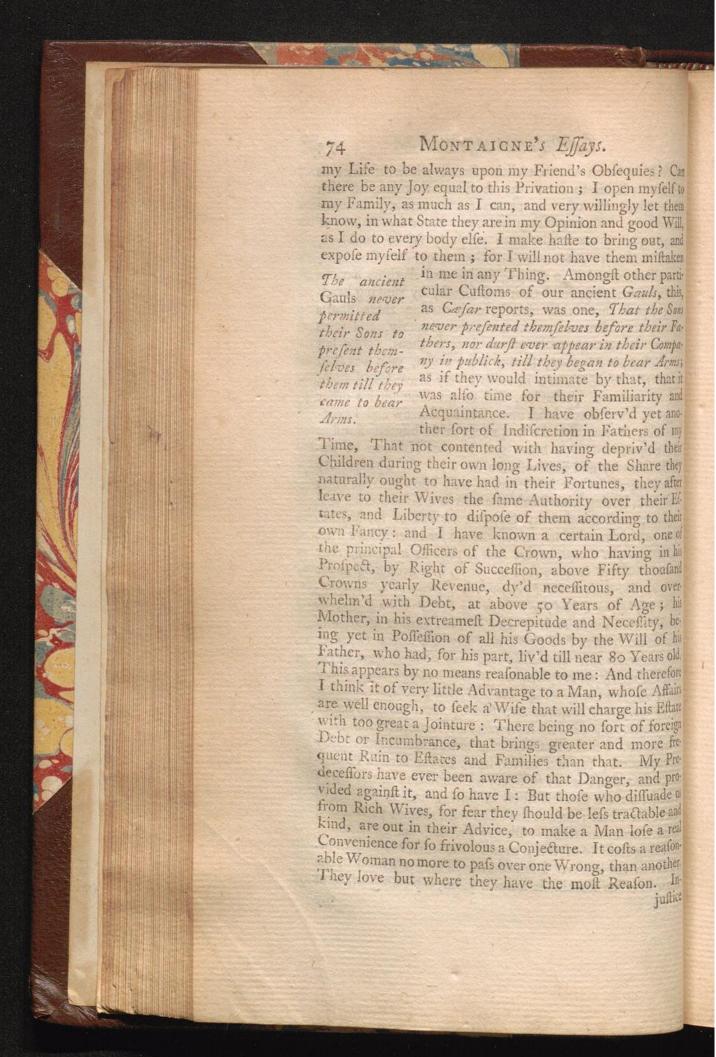
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myself, to see in what Condition I am; whatever concerns another relates to me; the Accident that has befallen him, gives me caution, rouzes me to turn my Defence that Way. We every Day and every Hour fay Things of another, that we might more properly fay of ourselves, could we but revert our Observations to our own Concerns, as well as extend it to others. And feveral Authors have in this manner prejudic'd their own Caufe, by running headlong upon those they attack, and darting those Shafts against their Enemies, that are more properly, and with greater Advantage to be return'd upon them. The last Mareschal de Monluck, having lost his Son, who was slain at the Isle of Maderas; in truth a very brave Gentleman, and of great Expectation, did to me amongst his other Regrets, very much infift upon what a Sorrow and Heartbreaking it was, that he had never made himfelf familiar and acquainted with him; and by that Humour of Fatherly Gravity and Sourness, to have lost the Opportunity of having an Infight into, and of well knowing, his Son; as also of letting him know the extreme Affection he had for him, and the worthy Opinion he had of his Virtue. That poor Man, said he, never saw in me other than a stern and disdainful Countenance, and is gone in a Belief, that I neither knew how to love or esteem him according to his Desert. For whom did I reserve the Discovery of that singular Affection I had for him in my Soul? Was it not he himself who ought to have had all the Pleasure of it, and all the Obligation? I forc'd and wrack'd myself to put on and maintain this vain Disguise, and have by that means depriv'd myself of the Pleasure of his Conversation, and, I doubt, in some measure of his Affection; which could not but be very cold towards me, having never other from me than Austerity; nor felt other than a tyrannical Manner of Proceeding. I find this Complaint to be rational and rightly apprehended; for as I myself know by too certain Experience, that there is not fo sweet a Consolation in the loss of Friends, as the Consciousness of having had no Reserve of Secret for them; and to have had with them a perfect and entire Communication. Oh my Friend! am I the better for being fenfible of this; or am I the worse? I am doubtless much the better. I am comforted and honour'd in the Sorrow for his Death. Is it not a pious, a pleafing Office of



justice allures them, as the Honour of their virtuous Actions does the good; and the more Riches they bring with them, they are thereby fo much the more gentle and fweet-natur'd; as Women who are fair, are more inclin'd, and proud to be chafte. 'Tis reasonable to leave the Administration of Affairs to the Mothers during the Minority of the Children; but the Father has brought them up very ill, if he cannot hope, that when they come to Maturity, they will have more Wisdom and Dexterity in the Management of Affairs than his Wife, confidering the ordinary Weakness of the Sex. It were notwithstanding, to say the Truth, more against Nature, to make the Mothers depend upon the Discretion of their Children: They ought to be plentifully provided for, to maintain themselves according to their Quality and Age, by reason that Necessity is much more indecent and insupportable to them, than to Men; and therefore the Son is rather to be cut short, than the Mother. In general, the most judicious Distribution of our Goods, when we come to die, is, in my Opinion, to let them be distributed according to the Custom of the Country. The Laws have confider'd it better than we know how to do, and 'tis better to let them fail in their Election, than rashly to run the Hazard of miscarrying in ours. Neither are they properly ours, fince, by a civil Prescription, and without us, they are all judg'd to certain Succeffors. And altho' we have fome Liberty beyond that, yet I think we ought not, without great and manifest Cause, to take away that from one, which his Fortune has allotted him, and to which the Publick Equity gives him Title; and that it is against Reason to abuse this Liberty, in making it ferve our own frivolous and private Fancies. My Destiny has been kind to me, in not furnishing me with Occasions to tempt and divert my Affection from the common and legitimate Institution. I see well enough, with whom 'tis Time loft, to employ a long Diligence of good Offices: a Word ill taken obliterates ten Years Merit; and he is happy, who is in a Condition to oil their Good Will at this last Passage. The last Action carries it: Not the best, and most frequent Offices, but the most recent and prefent to the Work. These are People that play with their Wills, as with Apples and Rods, to gratify or chastile every Action of those, that pretend to an Interest in them. 'Tis

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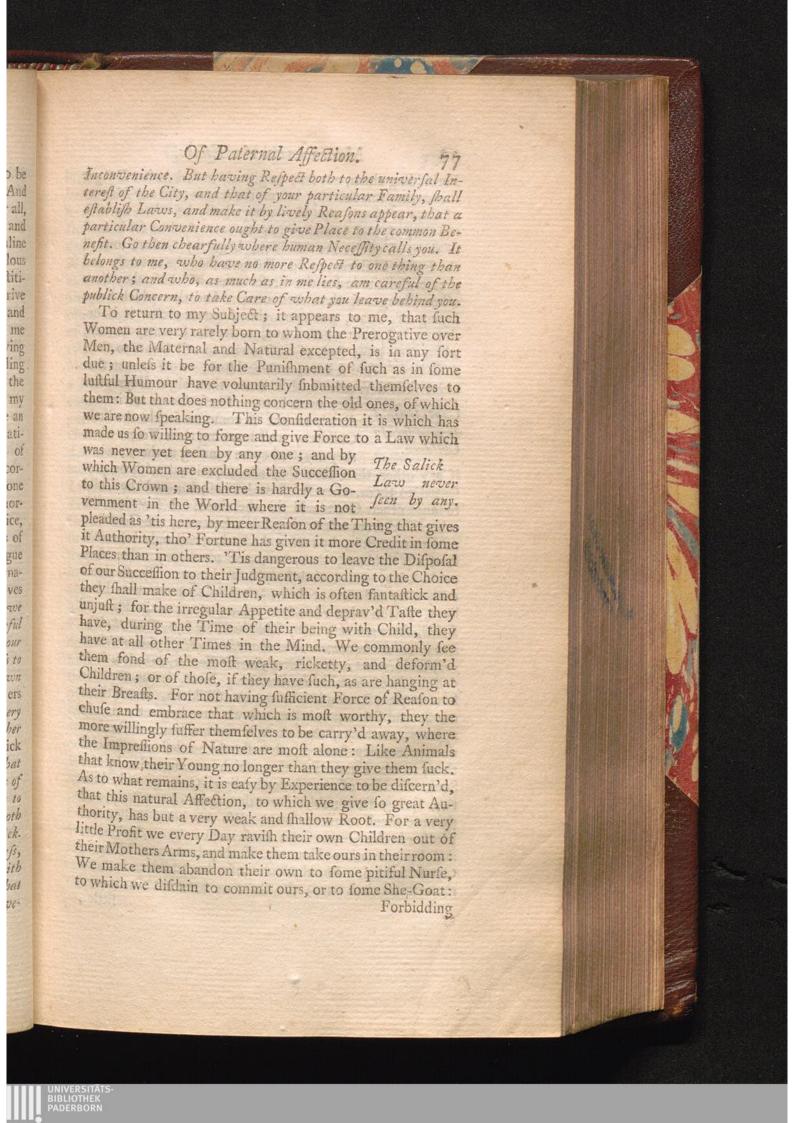
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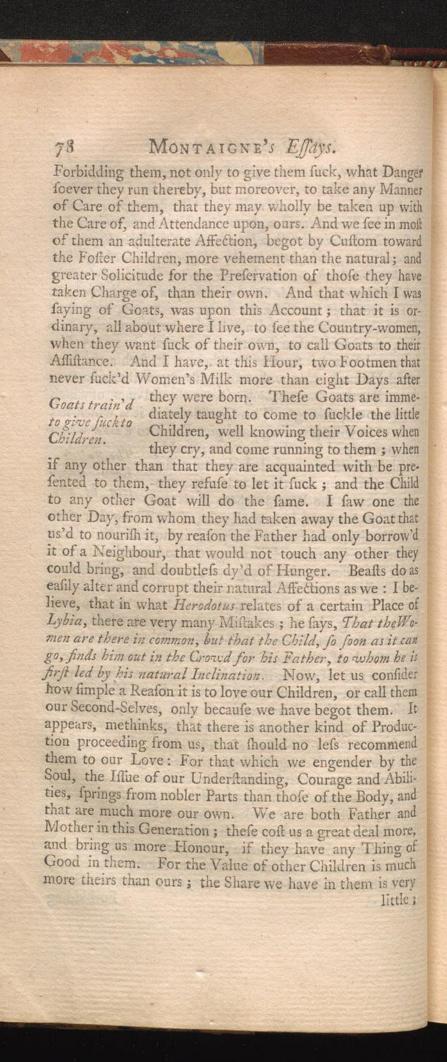
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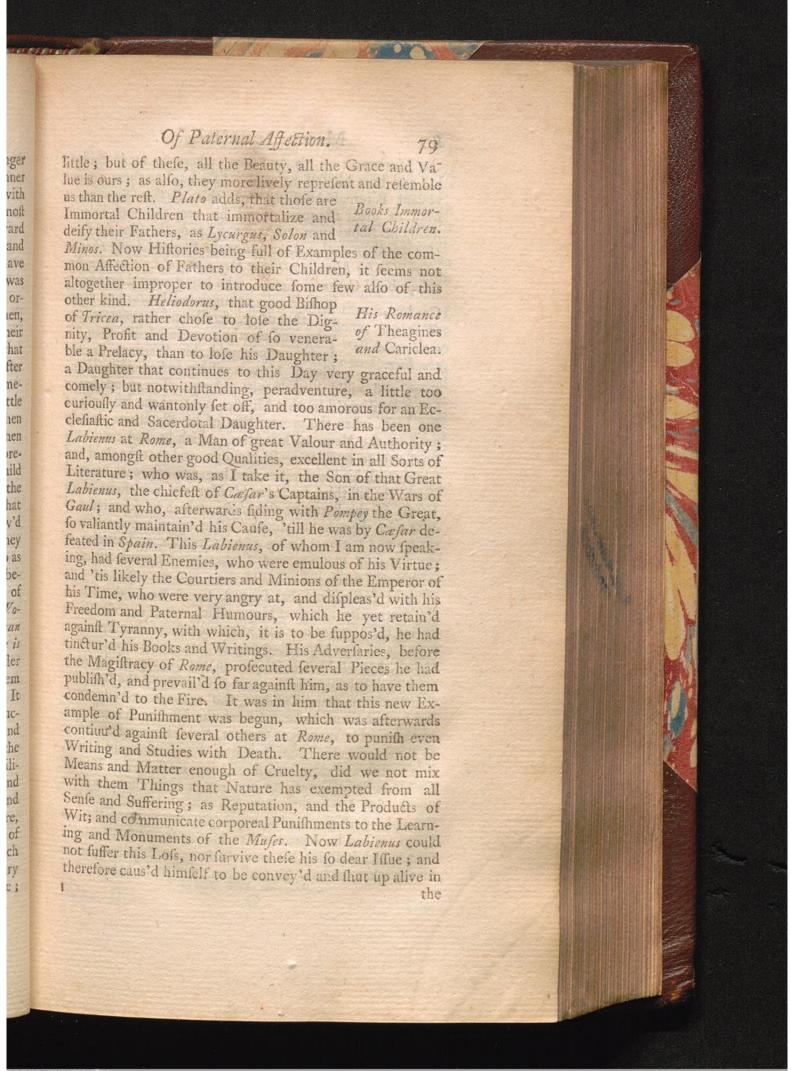
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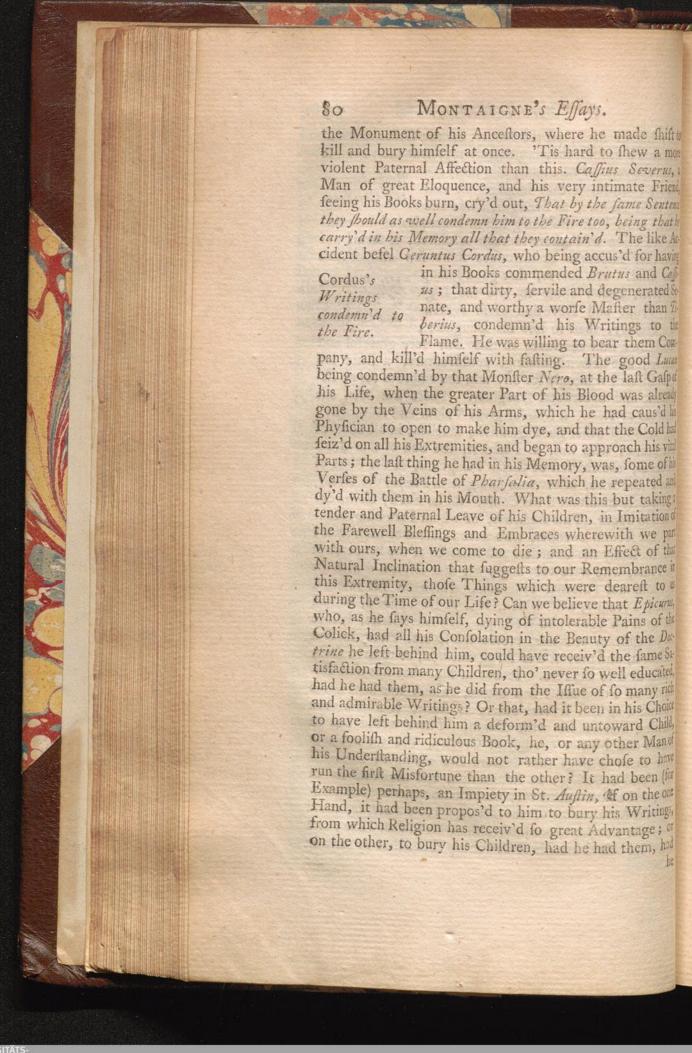
## 76 Montaigne's Essays.

'Tis a Thing of two great Weight and Consequence to be fo tumbled and toss'd, and alter'd every Moment: And wherein the wife Men of the World determine once for all, having therein, above all Things, a Regard to Reason, and is what is publickly observ'd. We also lay these Masculine Substitutions too much to Heart, proposing a ridiculous Eternity to our Names. We are, moreover, too superstitious in the vain Conjectures of Futurity, which we derive from those little Observations we make of the Words and Actions of Children. Perhaps, they might have done me an Injuffice, in dispossessing me of my Right, for having been the most dull and heavy, the most slow and unwilling at my Book, not of all my Brothers only, but of all the Boys in the whole Province: Whether about learning my Leffon, or any bodily Exercise. 'Tis a Folly to make an extraordinary Election upon the Credit of these Divinations, wherein we are so often deceiv'd. If the Rule of Primogeniture were to be violated, and the Definies corrected in the Choice they have made of our Heirs, one might more plaufibly do it, upon the Account of some enormous personal Deformity; a constant and incorrigible Vice, in the Opinion of us French, who are great Admirers of Beauty, of important Prejudice. The pleafant Dialogue betwixt Plato's Legislator and his Citizens, will be an Ornament to this Place. What, faid they, feeling themselves about to die, may we not dispose of our own to ruhom we please? Good God, what Cruelty! That it shall not be lawful for us, according as we have been ferv'd and attended in our Sickness, in old Age, and other Affairs, to give more or less to those whom we have found most diligent about us, at our own Fancy and Discretion! To which the Legislator answers thus: My Friends, who are now, without Question, very Soon to die, it is hard for you, in the Condition you are, either to know your felves, or what is yours, according to the Delphick Inscription. I, who make the Laws, am of Opinion, that you neither are yourselves your own, neither is that yours of which you are possess'd. Both your Goods and you belong to your Families, as well those past as those to come; but yet, both your Family and Goods do much more appertain to the Publick. Wherefore, left any Flatterer in your Age, or in your Sickness, or any Passion of your own, should unseasonably prevail with you to make an unjust Will, I shall take Care to prevent that Inconve









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he not rather chose to bury his Children? And I know not whether I had not much rather have begot a very beautiful one, thro' my Society with the Muses, than by laying with my Wife. To this, such as it is, what I give it, I give it absolutely and irrevocably, as Men do to their bodily Children. That little I have done for it, is no more at my own Disposal. It may know many things that are gone from me, and from me keep that which I have not retain'd: And that, as a Stranger, I might borrow thence, should I stand in need. If I am wifer than my Book, it is richer than I. There are few Men addicted to Poetry, who would not be much prouder to be Father to the Æneid, than to the handsomest and best made Youth of Rome, and that would not much better bear the Loss of the one than the other. For, according to Aristotle, the Poet, of all Sorts of Artificers, is fondest of his Work. 'Tis hard to believe, that Epaminondas, who boasted, that in Lieu of all Posterity, he left two Daughters behind him, which would one Day do their Father Honour (meaning the two Victories he obtain'd over the Lacedæmonians) would willingly have confented to exchange those for the most beautiful Creature of all Greece: Or that Alexander, or Cafar, ever wish'd to be depriv'd of the Grandeur of their glorious Exploits in War, for the Conveniency of Children and Heirs, how perfect and accomplish'd foever. Nay, I make no great Question, whether Phidias, or any other excellent Statuary, would be fo folicitous of the Prefervation and Continuance of his Natural Children, as he would be of a rare Statue, which with long Labour and Study, he had perfected according to Art. And to those furious and irregular Passions that have sometimes slam'd in Fathers towards their own Daughters, and in Mothers towards their own Sons; the like is also found in this other Sort of Parentry: Witness what is related of Pygmalion, who having made the Statue of a Woman of fingular Beauty, fell fo passionately in love with this Work of his, that the Gods, in Favour of his Passion, must inspire it with Life.

Tentatum mollescit ebur, positoque rigore, Subsidit digitis \*.

Vol. II. \* Ovid. Met. lib. 10.

The

### MONTAIGNE'S Effays.

82

The tempted Ivory pliant grows, and now, Under his wanton Touch, does yield and bow.



#### CHAP. IX.

Of the Arms of the Parthians.

IS an ill Cuftom, and a little unmanly, which the Gentlemen of our Time have got, not to put on their Armour, but just upon the point of the most extreme Necessity; and to lay it by again as soon as ever there's any Shew of the Danger being a little over; from whence many Diforders arife: For every one builling and running to his Arms, just when he should go to charge, has he Cuirass to buckle on, when his Companions are already put to rout. Our Ancestors were wont to give their Head peice, Launce and Gauntlet to carry, but never put of their other Pieces fo long as there was any Work to be done Our Troops are now cumber'd and render'd unlightly with the Clutter of Baggage and Servants, that cannot no from their Masters by reason they carry their Arms. In Livius, speaking of our Nation, Intolerantissima Labor Corpora vix Arma Humeris gerebant \*. Their Bodies wer so impatient of Labour, that they could scarce endure wear their Arms. Many Nations do yet, and did ancient go to War without defensive Arms; or such, at least, were of very little Proof.

Tegmina queis Capitum raptus de Subere Cortex †.

For Helmets they their Temples only bind With a light Skull, made of the Cork-tree Rind.

Alexander, the most adventurous Captain that ever w very feldom wore Armour; and fuch amongst us as light it, do not by that much harm the main Concern; for we see some kill'd for want of it, there are few less who the Lumber of Armour helps to destroy, either by be

\* Liv. lib. 5. + Aneid, lib. 6.