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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

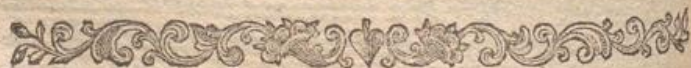
Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de

London, 1743

Chap. 22. Of Posts.

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to the Conqueror a very bloody and entire Victory. Dying, he caused himself to be carried and hurried from Place to Place where most Need was; and Passing thro' the Files encouraged the Captains and Soldiers one after another. But a Corner of his Battle being broken, he was not to be held from mounting on Horseback with his Sword in his Hand. He did his utmost to break from those about him, and to rush into the thickest of the Battle, they all the while with-holding him, some by the Bridle, some by his Robe, and others by his Stirrups. This last Effort totally overwhelmed the little Life he had left, they again lay him upon his Bed; but coming to himself again, and starting out of his Swoon, all other Faculties failing to give his People Notice that they were to conceal his Death (the most necessary Command he had then to give, that his Soldiers might not be discourag'd with the News) he expos'd with his Finger upon his Mouth the ordinary Sign of keeping Silence. Who ever liv'd so long and so far in Death? Who ever died more like a Man? The most extreme Degree of entertaining Death, and the most natural, is to look upon it not only without Astonishment, but without Care, continuing the wonted Course of Life even into it. As *Cato* did, who entertain'd himself in Study, and went to Sleep, having a violent and bloody one in his Heart, and the Weapon in his Hand, with which he was resolv'd to dispatch himself.



C H A P. XXII.

Of Posts.

I Have been none of the least able in this Exercise, which is proper for Men of my Pitch, short and well knit; but I give it over, it shakes us too much to continue long. I was just now reading, *That King Cyrus, the better to have*
News brought him from all Parts of the
 Post-horses first set up by Cyrus. *Empire, which was of a vast Extent, caus'd it to be try'd how far a Horse could go in a Day without baiting, and at that Distance appointed Stages and Men, whose Business it was to have*
 Horses

Horses always in Readiness, to mount those who were dispatch'd away to him. And some say, that this swift Way of Posting is equal to that of the Flight of Cranes. *Cæsar* says, That *Lucius Vibulus Refus*, being in great Haste to carry Intelligence to *Pompey*, rid Day and Night, still taking fresh Horses for the greater Diligence and Speed; and himself, as *Suetonius* reports, travelling a hundred Miles a Day in a hired Coach; but he was a furious Courier, for where the Rivers stopt his Way, he always pass'd them by Swimming, without turning out of his Road to look for either Bridge or Ford. *Tiberius Nero*, going to see his Brother *Drusus*, who was sick in Germany, travell'd Two Hundred Miles in four and Twenty Hours, having Three Coaches. In the Wars the Romans had against King *Antiochus*, *T. Sempronius Gracchus*, says *Livy*, *Per dispositos equos prope incredibili celeritate ab Amphissa tertio die Pellam pervenit**. Upon Horses purposely laid in, he by an almost incredible Speed, rid in three Days from Amphissa to Pella. And it appears there, that they were establish'd Posts, and not Horses purposely laid in upon this Occasion. *Cecinna's* Invention to send back News to his Family, was much more quick; for he took Swallows along with him from home, and turned them out towards their Nests when he would send back any News; setting a Mark of some Colour upon them to signify his Meaning, according to what he and his People had before agreed upon. At the Theatre at Rome, Masters of Families carried Pidgeons in their Bosoms, to which they ty'd Letters, when they had a Mind to send any Orders to their People at Home; and the Pidgeons were train'd up to bring back an Answer. *D. Brutus* made use of the same Device, when besieg'd in *Mutina*, and others elsewhere have done the same. In *Peru* they rid Post upon Men's Shoulders, who took them upon their Shoulders in a certain Kind of Litter, made for that Purpose, and ran with such Agility, that in their full Speed the first Couriers throw their Load to the Second without making any Stop; and so on. I understand, that the *Valachians*, who are the Grand Seignior's Couriers, perform wonderful Dispatch, by reason they have Liberty to dismount the first they meet on the

Pidgeons
taught to
carry Letters.

* *Livius.*

Road, giving him their own tir'd Horses; to preserve themselves from being weary, they gird themselves straight about the Middle with a broad Girdle, but I could never find any benefit by it.



C H A P. XXIII.

Of Ill Means employed to a good End.

T Here is a wonderful Relation and Correspondence in this Universal Government of the Works of Nature, which very well makes it appear that it is neither Accidental, nor carried on by divers Masters. The Diseases and Conditions of our Bodies are in like manner manifest in States, and the various Governments of the World. *Kingdoms* and *Republicks* are Founded, Flourish, and Decay with Age as we do. We are subject to a Repletion of Humours either useles or dangerous, either of those that are good (for even those *Physicians* are afraid of:) And as we have nothing in us that is permanent, they say, *That a too brisk and vigorous Perfection of Health, must be abated by Art, lest as our Nature cannot rest in any certain Condition, and not having whether to rise to mend itself, it makes too sudden and too disorderly a Retreat* (and therefore prescribe Wrestlers to purge and bleed, to qualify that superabundant Health) or else a Repletion of evil Humours, which is the ordinary Cause of Sickness. States are very often sick of the like Repletion, and therefore Sorts of Purgations have commonly been used. Sometimes a great Number of *Families* are turn'd out to clear the Country; who seek out new Abodes elsewhere, and encroach upon others. After this Manner our ancient *Franks* came from the remotest Part of *Germany*, to seize upon *Gaul*, and to drive thence the first Inhabitants; so was that infinite Deluge of Men made up that came into *Italy* under the Conduct of *Brennus*, and others: So the *Goths* and *Vandals*, also the People who now possess *Greece*, left their Native Country to go settle in other Places where they might have more Room; and there is scarce two or three little Corners of the World that have not felt the Effects

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