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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. 24. Of the Roman Grandeur.

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They sell themselves to Death, and since the Wars
Are ceas'd, each for himself a Foe prepares.

*Hos inter fremitus, novosque lusus,
Stat sexus rudis, insciusque ferri,
Et pugnat capit improbus viriles*.*

Amidst these Tumults and Alarms
The tender Sex, unskill'd in Arms,
Immodestly will try their Might,
And now engaged in manly Fights.

which I should think strange and incredible, if we were not accustomed every Day to see in our own Wars many Thousands of Men of other Nations, for Money to stake their Blood and their Lives in Quarrels wherein they have no Manner of Concern.



C H A P. XXIV.

Of the Roman Grandeur.

I Will only say a Word or two of this infinite Argument, to shew the Simplicity of those who compare the pitiful Grandeurs of these Times to that of *Rome*. In the seventh Book of *Cicero's* Familiar Epistles (and let the *Grammarians* put out that Sirname of *Familiar* if they please, for in Truth it is not very proper; and they who instead of *familiar* have substituted *ad familiares*, may gather something to justify them for so doing, out of what *Suetonius* says in the Life of *Cæsar*, that he had a Volume of Letters of his *ad familiares*) there is one directed to *Cæsar*, being then in *Gaul*, wherein *Cicero* repeats these Words, which were in the End of another Letter that *Cæsar* had writ to him: *As to what concerns Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him King of Gaul, and if you would have me advance any other Friend of yours, send him to me.* It was no new Thing for a simple Citizen of *Rome*,

* *Stadius*.

as *Cæsar* then was, to dispose of *Kingdoms*; for he took away that of King *Deiotarus* from him to give it to a Gentleman of the City of *Pergamum*, call'd *Mithridates*. And they who writ his Life record several Cities by him sold; and *Suetonius* says, *That he had once from King Ptolemy three Millions and six hundred Thousand Crowns*, which was very near selling him his own Kingdom.

Tot Galatæ, tot Pontus, tot Lidia nummis *.

Such Sums of Money did he raise as these
From *Pontus*, *Lidia*, and the *Galates*.

Marcus Antonius said, *That the Grandeur of the People of Rome was not so much seen in what they took as in what they gave*. And indeed some Ages before *Antonius*, they had dethron'd one amongst the rest with so wonderful Authority, that in all the *Roman History* I have not observ'd any thing that more denotes the Height of their Power. *Antiochus* possessed all *Egypt*, and was moreover ready to conquer *Cyrus*, and other Appendixes of that Empire; when being upon the Progress of his Victories, *C. Popilius* came to him from the Senate, and at their first meeting refus'd to take him by the Hand, till he had first read his Letters, which after the King had read, and told him he would consider of them, *Popilius* made a Circumference about him with the Stick he had in his Hand, saying, *Return me an Answer, that I may carry it back to the Senate before thou stirrest out of this Circle*. *Antiochus*, astonish'd at the Roughness of so positive a Command, after a little Pause, reply'd, *I will obey the Senate's Command*; and then it was that *Popilius* saluted him as a Friend to the People of *Rome*. After having quitted claim to so great a *Monarchy*, in such a Torrent of successful Fortune, upon three Words in Writing; in earnest, he had Reason, as he afterwards did, to send the *Senate Word* by his *Ambassadors*, *that he had received their Order with the same Respects, as if he had been sent by the Immortal Gods*. All the Kingdoms that *Augustus* gained by the Right of War, he either restored to those who had lost them, or presented them to Strangers. And *Tacitus*, in reference to this, speaking of *Cogidunus*, King of *England*, gives us a brisk Touch of that infinite

* *Claud.*

Power: *The Romans, says he, were from all Antiquity accusom'd to leave the Kings they had subdued in Possession of their Kingdoms under their Authority, that they might have even Kings to be their Slaves: Ut haberent instrumenta servitutis, & reges.* 'Tis like that *Solyman*, whom we have seen make a Gift of *Hungary*, and other *Principalties*, had therein more respect to this Consideration, than to that he was wont to alledge, *viz. That he was glutted and overcharged with so many Monarchies, and so much Dominion, as his own Valour, and that of his Ancestors had acquired.*



C H A P XXV.

Not to counterfeit being sick.

There is an Epigram in *Martial* of very good Sense, for he has of all Sorts, where he pleasantly tells the Story of *Caelius*, who, to avoid making his Court to some great Men of *Rome*, to wait their Rising, and to attend them abroad, pretended to have the *Gout*; and the better to colour this Pretence, anointed his Legs, and had them lapp'd up in a great many Clouts and Swathings, and perfectly counterfeited both the Gesture and Countenance of a gouty Person; 'till in the End Fortune did him the Kindness to make him one indeed.

*Tantum cura potest & ars doloris,
Desit fingere Caelius podagram*.*

The Power of Counterfeiting is so great,
Caelius has ceas'd the *Gout* to counterfeit.

I think I have read somewhere in *Appian* a Story like this, of one, who to escape the Proscriptions of the *Triumviri* of *Rome*, and the better to be conceal'd from the Discovery of those who pursued him, having shaded himself in a Disguise, would yet add this Invention, to counterfeit having but one Eye; but when he came to have a little more Liberty, and went to take off the Plaster he had a great while

* *Mart. Epig. 28. lib. 1.*