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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. 25. Not to counterfeit being sick.

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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.*

**T**Here is an Epigram in *Martial* of very good Sense, for he has of all Sorts, where he pleasantly tells the Story of *Cælius*, 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 Cælius podagram\*.*

The Power of Counterfeiting is so great,  
*Cælius* 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 Plaister he had a great while

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

sworn over his Eye, he found he had totally lost the Sight of it indeed, and that it was absolutely gone. 'Tis possible that the Action of Sight was dull'd, for having been so long without Exercise, and that the Optick Power was wholly retir'd into the other Eye: For we evidently perceive, that the Eye we keep shut sends some Part of its Virtue to its Fellow, so that the remaining Eye will swell and grow bigger; as also Idleness, with the Heat of Ligatures and Plaisters, might very well have brought some gouty Humour upon this Dissembler of *Martial*. Reading in *Froisard* the Vow of a Troop of young *English Gallants*, to carry their Left-eyes bound up 'till they were arriv'd in France, and had perform'd some notable Exploit upon us; I have oft been tickled with the Conceit of it, it befalling them as it did the before-named *Roman*, and that they had return'd with but an Eye apiece to their Mistresses, for whose Sakes they had entred into this ridiculous Vow. Mothers have reason to rebuke their Children when they counterfeit having but one Eye, Squinting, Lameness, or any other Personal Defect; for besides that their Bodies being then so tender may be subject to take an ill Bent, Fortune, I know not how, sometimes seems to take a Delight to take us at our Word; and I have heard several Examples related of People who have become really sick by only feigning to be so. I have always used whether Horseback or on Foot, to carry a Stick in my Hand, and so as to affect doing it with a Grace. Many have threatned that this Wantonness would one Day be turn'd into Necessity, that is, *that I should be the first of my Family that should have the Gout*. But let us a little lengthen this Chapter, and eech it with a Piece of another Colour, concerning *Blindness*. *Pliny* reports of one, *that once dreaming he was blind, found himself in the Morning so indeed, without any preceeding Infirmity in his Eyes*. The Force of Imagination might assist in this Case, as I have said elsewhere, and *Pliny* seems to be of the same Opinion; but it is more likely that, the Motions which the Body felt within (of which *Physicians*, if they please, may find out the Cause) which took away his Sight, were the Occasions of his Dream. Let us add another Story, not very improper for this Subject, which *Seneca* relates in one of his Epistles: *You know, says he, writing to Lucullus, that Harpate, my Wife's Fool, is thrown upon me as an hereditary Charge;*  
for

for I have naturally an Aversion to those Monsters; and if I have a Mind to laugh at a Fool, I need not seek him far, I can laugh at myself. This Fool has suddenly lost her Sight. I tell you a strange, but a very true Thing; she is not sensible that she is blind, but eternally importunes her Keeper to take her abroad, because she says the House is dark. I pray believe, that what we laugh at in her happens to every one of us: No one knows himself to be avaricious. Besides, the Blind call for a Guide, but we stray of our own accord. I am not ambitious, we say, but a Man cannot live otherwise at Rome; I am not wastful, but the City requires a great Expence; 'tis not my Fault if I am choleric, and if I have not yet established any certain Course of Life, 'tis the Fault of Youth. Let us not seek our Disease out of ourselves, 'tis in us, and planted in our Bowels. And even this, that we do not perceive ourselves to be sick, renders us more hard to be cur'd. If we do not betimes begin to dress ourselves, when shall we have done with so many Wounds and Evils wherewith we abound? And yet, we have a most sweet and charming Medicine of Philosophy; for all the rest are sensible of no Pleasure 'till after the Cure: This pleases and heals at once. This is what Seneca says, he has carry'd me from my Subject, but there is Advantage in the Change.



## C H A P. XXVI.

*Of Thumbs.*

**T**Acitus reports, that amongst certain *Barbarian Kings* their Manner was, when they would make a firm Obligation, to join their Hand close to one another, and twist their Thumbs, and when by Force of Straining the Blood it appear'd in the Ends, they lightly prick'd them with some sharp Instrument, and mutually suck'd them. Physicians say, *That the Thumbs are the Master-finger of the Hand, and that their Latin Etymology is derived from Pollere.* The Greeks call'd them *ἀνίσχιστος*, as who should say, *another Hand.* And it seems, that the *Latins* also sometimes take in this Sense for the whole Hand;

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