



Apology for Raimond Sebond

Michel de Montaigne

Learning is, in truth, a very useful and a very considerable quality; such as despise it merely discover their own folly: but yet I do not prize it at the excessive rate some others do; as Herillus the philosopher for one, who therein places the sovereign good, and maintained that it was merely in her to render us wise and contented, which I do not believe; no more than I do what others have said, that learning is the mother of all virtue, and that all vice proceeds from ignorance. If this be true, it is subject to a very long interpretation. My house has long been open to men of knowledge and is very well known to them; for my father, who governed it fifty years and more, inflamed with the new ardor with which King Francis embraced letters and brought them into esteem, with great diligence and expense hunted after the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them at his house as persons sacred, and who had some particular inspiration of divine wisdom; collecting their sayings and sentences as so many oracles, and with so much the greater reverence and religion, as he was the less able to judge; for he had no knowledge of letters, no more than his predecessors. For my part I love them well; but I do not adore them. Amongst the rest, Peter Bunel, a man of great reputation for knowledge in his time, having, with others of his sort, stayed some days at Montaigne in my father's company, he presented him at his departure with a book entitled "Theologia naturalis: sive Liber creaturarum magistri Raimondi de Sebonde;" and knowing that the Italian and Spanish tongues were familiar to my father, and this book being written in Spanish capped with Latin terminations, he hoped that with little help he might be able to make it turn to account, and therefore recommended it to him as a very useful piece and proper for the time wherein he gave it to him, which was when the novel doctrines of Martin Luther began to be in vogue, and in many places to stagger our ancient belief: wherein he was very well advised, justly, in his own reason, foreseeing that the beginning of this distemper would easily run into an execrable atheism; for the vulgar not having the faculty of judging of things themselves, suffering themselves to be carried away by fortune and appearance, after having once been inspired with the boldness to despise and question those opinions they had before had in extremest reverence, such as are those wherein their salvation is concerned, and that some of the articles of their religion have been brought into doubt and dispute, they very soon throw all other parts of their belief into the same uncertainty, they having in them no other authority or foundation than the others that had already been discomposed, and shake off all the impressions they had received from the authority of the laws or the reverence of ancient custom as a tyrannical yoke,

"For people eagerly spurn that of which they were before most in awe:"

resolving to admit nothing for the future to which they had not first interposed their own decrees, and given their special consent.

Now, my late father, a few days before his death, having casually found this book under a

heap of other neglected papers, commanded me to put it for him into French. It is well to translate such authors as this, where is little but the matter itself to express; but those wherein ornament of language and elegance of style are a main endeavor, are dangerous to attempt, especially when a man is to turn them into a weaker idiom. It was a strange and a new occupation for me; but having by chance at that time little else to do, and not being able to resist the command of the best father that ever was, I did it as well as I could; and he was so well pleased with it as to order it to be printed, which after his death was done. I found the imaginations of this author exceedingly fine, the contexture of his work well followed up, and his design full of piety. And because many people take a delight in reading it, and particularly the ladies, to whom we owe the most service, I have often been called upon to assist them to clear the book of two principal objections. His design is hardy and bold; for he undertakes, by human and natural reasons, to establish and make good against the atheists all the articles of the Christian religion: wherein, to speak the truth, he is so firm and so successful that I do not think it possible to do better upon that subject, and believe that he has been equalled by none. This work seeming to me to be too beautiful and too rich for an author whose name is so little known, and of whom all that we know is that he was a Spaniard, professing medicine at Toulouse about two hundred years ago, I inquired of Adrian Turnebus, who knew so many things, what the book might be. He made answer, that he fancied it was some quintessence drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas; for, in truth, that mind, full of infinite learning and admirable subtlety, was alone capable of such imaginations. Be this as it may, and whoever was the author and inventor (and 'tis not reasonable, without greater occasion, to deprive Sebonde of that title), he was a man of great sufficiency and most admirable parts.

The first thing they reprehend in his work is, that Christians are to blame to repose upon human reasons their belief, which is only conceived by faith and the particular inspiration of divine grace. In which objection there appears to be something of overzeal of piety, and therefore we are to endeavor to satisfy those who put it forth with the greater mildness and respect. This was a task more proper for a man well read in divinity than for me, who know nothing of it; nevertheless, I conceive that in a thing so divine, so high, and so far transcending all human intelligence as is this Truth with which it has pleased the goodness of almighty God to enlighten us, it is very necessary that He should, moreover, lend us His assistance, by extraordinary privilege and favor, to conceive and imprint it in our understandings; and I do not believe that means purely human are, in any sort, capable of doing it: for, if they were, so many rare and excellent souls, so abundantly furnished with natural power, in former ages, had not failed, by their reason, to arrive at this knowledge. 'Tis faith alone that vividly and certainly comprehends the deep mysteries of our religion; but withal, I do not say that it is not a brave and a very laudable attempt to accommodate the natural and human capabilities that God has endowed us with to the service of our faith. It is not to be doubted but that it is the most noble use we can put them to, and that there is no design or occupation more worthy of a Christian man than to make it the aim and end of all his thoughts and studies to embellish, extend, and amplify the truth of his belief. We do not satisfy ourselves with serving God with our souls and understanding only; we, moreover, owe and render Him a corporal reverence, and apply our limbs, motions, and external things to do Him honor; we must here do the same, and accompany our faith with all the reason we have, but always with this reservation, not to fancy that it is upon us that it depends, nor that our arguments and endeavors can arrive at so supernatural and divine a knowledge. If it enter not into us by an extraordinary infusion; if it only enter, not only by arguments of reason, but, moreover, by human ways, it is not in us in its true dignity and splendor, and yet I am afraid we only have it by this way. If we held upon God by the mediation of a lively faith; if we held upon God by Him and not by us; if we had a divine

basis and foundation, human accidents would not have the power to shake us as they do; our fortress would not surrender to so weak a battery; the love of novelty, the constraint of princes, the success of one party, the rash and fortuitous change of our opinions, would not have the power to stagger and alter our belief. We should not then leave it to the mercy of every novel argument, nor abandon it to the persuasions of all the rhetoric in the world; we should withstand the fury of these waves with an unmoved and unyielding constancy:—

“As a vast rock repels the broken waves, and dissipates the waters raging about her by its mass.”

If we were but touched with this ray of divinity, it would appear throughout; not only our words, but our works also, would carry its brightness and lustre; whatever proceeded from us would be seen illuminated with this noble light. We ought to be ashamed that in all the human sects there never was sectary, what difficulty and strange novelty soever his doctrine imposed upon him, who did not, in some measure, conform his life and deportment to it; whereas so divine and heavenly an institution as ours only distinguishes Christians by the name. Will you see the proof of this? compare our manners with those of a Mohammedan or Pagan; you will still find that we fall very short, whereas, having regard to the advantage of our religion, we ought to shine in excellence at an extreme, an incomparable distance, and it should be said of us, “Are they so just, so charitable, so good? Then they are Christians.” All other signs are common to all religions; hope, trust, events, ceremonies, penance, martyrs; the peculiar mark of our Truth ought to be our virtue, as it is also the most heavenly and difficult mark, and the most worthy product of Truth. And therefore our good St. Louis was in the right, who when the king of the Tartars, who had become a Christian, designed to visit Lyons to kiss the Pope’s feet, and there to be an eye-witness of the sanctity he hoped to find in our manners, immediately diverted him from his purpose, for fear lest our disorderly way of living should, on the contrary, put him out of conceit with so holy a belief. Yet it happened quite otherwise, since, to him who going to Rome to the same end, and there seeing the dissoluteness of the prelates and people of that time, settled himself all the more firmly in our religion, considering how great the force and divinity of it must necessarily be that could maintain its dignity and splendor amongst so much corruption and in so vicious hands. If we had but one single grain of faith we should move mountains from their places, says the sacred Word; our actions, that would then be directed and accompanied by the divinity, would not be merely human; they would have in them something of miraculous as well as our belief:—

“The institution of an honest and happy life is short, if you believe me.”

Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not believe; others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe; and we think it strange if, in the civil wars which at this time disorder our state, we see events float and vary after a common and ordinary manner, which is because we bring nothing there but our own. The justice which is in one of the parties, is only there for ornament and cloak; it is indeed alleged, but ’tis not there received, settled, or espoused: it is there as in the mouth of an advocate, not as in the heart and affection of the party. God owes His extraordinary assistance to faith and religion, not to our passions: men are the conductors and herein make use for their own purposes of religion; it ought to be quite contrary. Observe if it be not by our own hands that we guide and train it, and draw it, like wax, into so many figures, at variance with a rule in itself so direct and firm. When has this been more manifest than in France in our days?

They who have taken it on the left hand, they who have taken it on the right, they who call it black, they who call it white, alike employ it to their violent and ambitious designs, and conduct it with a progress so conform in riot and injustice that they render the diversity they pretend in their opinions, in a thing whereon the conduct and rule of our life depends, doubtful and hard to believe. Could one see manners more exactly the same, more uniform, issue from the same school and discipline? Do but observe with what horrid impudence we toss divine arguments to and fro, and how irreligiously we have rejected and retaken them, according as fortune has shifted our places in these intestine storms. This so solemn proposition, “Whether it be lawful for a subject to rebel and take up arms against his prince for the defence of his religion:” do you remember in whose mouths, last year, the affirmative of it was the prop of one party; of what other party the negative was the pillar? and harken now from what quarter come the voice and instruction of both the one and the other; and if arms make less noise and rattle for this cause than for that. We condemn those to the fire who say that Truth must be made to bear the yoke of our necessity; and how much worse does France than say it? Let us confess the truth; whoever should draw out from the army—aye, from that raised by the king’s authority, those who take up arms out of pure zeal and affection to religion, and also those who only do it to protect the laws of their country, or for the service of their prince, would hardly be able, out of all these put together, to muster one complete company. Whence does it proceed that there are so few to be found who have maintained the same will and the same progress in our public movements, and that we see them one while go but a foot pace, and another run full speed, and the same men, one while damaging our affairs by their violent heat and acrimony, and another while by their coldness, indifference, and slowness, but that they are impelled by special and casual considerations, according to the diversity of circumstances?

I evidently perceive that we do not willingly afford to devotion any other offices but those that best suit with our own passions; there is no hostility so admirable as the Christian; our zeal performs wonders when it seconds our inclinations to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, rebellion: but moved against the hair towards goodness, benignity, moderation, unless by miracle some rare and virtuous disposition prompt us to it, we stir neither hand nor foot. Our religion is intended to extirpate vices; whereas it screens, nourishes, incites them. We must not mock God. If we did believe in Him, I do not say by faith, but with a simple belief, that is to say (and I speak it to our great shame), if we did believe Him, or knew Him as any other history, or as one of our companions, we should love Him above all other things, for the infinite goodness and beauty that shine in Him: at least, He would go equal in our affections with riches, pleasures, glory, and our friends. The best of us is not so much afraid to offend Him, as he is afraid to offend his neighbor, his kinsman, his master. Is there any so weak understanding that having, on one side, the object of one of our vicious pleasures, and on the other, in equal knowledge and persuasion, the state of an immortal glory, would exchange the one against the other? And yet we oftentimes renounce this out of pure contempt: for what tempts us to blaspheme, if not, peradventure, the very desire to offend? The philosopher Antisthenes, as the priest was initiating him in the mysteries of Orpheus, telling him that those who professed themselves of that religion were certain to receive perfect and eternal felicity after death; “If thou believest that,” answered he, “why dost not thou die thyself?” Diogenes, more rudely, according to his manner, and more remote from our purpose, to the priest that in like manner preached to him to become of his religion that he might obtain the happiness of the other world: “What,” said he, “thou wouldst have me believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, those so great men, shall be miserable, and that thou, who art but a calf, and canst do nothing to purpose, shalt be happy because thou art a priest?” Did we receive these great promises of eternal beatitude with the same reverence and respect that that we do a philosophical lecture, we should not have death

in so great horror:—

“He should not, then, dying, repine to be dissolved, but rather step out of doors cheerfully, and, like the snake, be glad to cast his slough, or like the old stag, his antlers.”

“I am willing to be dissolved,” we should say, “and to be with Jesus Christ.” The force of Plato’s argument concerning the immortality of the soul sent some of his disciples to untimely graves, that they might the sooner enjoy the things he had made them hope for.

All this is a most evident sign that we only receive our religion after our own fashion by our own hands, and no otherwise than other religions are received. Either we are in the country where it is in practice, or we bear a reverence to its antiquity, or to the authority of the men who have maintained it, or we fear the menaces it fulminates against unbelievers, or are allured by its promises. These considerations ought, ’tis true, to be applied to our belief, but as subsidiaries only, for they are human obligations; another religion, other testimonies, the like promises and threats, might in the same way imprint a quite contrary belief. We are Christians by the same title that we are Perigordins or Germans. And what Plato says, that there are few men so obstinate in their atheism whom a pressing danger will not reduce to an acknowledgment of the divine power, does not concern a true Christian; ’tis for mortal and human religions to be received by human recommendation. What kind of faith can we expect that should be, that cowardice and feebleness of heart plant and establish in us? A pleasant faith, that does not believe what it believes, but for want of courage to disbelieve it. Can a vicious passion, such as inconstancy and astonishment, cause any regular product in our souls? They are confident in their own judgment, says he, that what is said of hell and future torments is all feigned: but the occasion of making the experiment presenting itself when old age or diseases bring them to the brink of the grave, the terror of death by the horror of their future condition, inspires them with a new belief. And by reason that such impressions render them timorous, he forbids in his laws all such threatening doctrines, and all persuasion that anything of ill can befall a man from the gods, excepting for his greater good, when they happen to him, and for a medicinal effect. They say of Bion that, infected with the atheism of Theodorus, he had long had religious men in great scorn and contempt, but that, death surprising him, he gave himself up to the most extreme superstition, as if the gods withdrew and returned according to the necessities of Bion. Plato and these examples would conclude that we are brought to a belief of God either by reason or by force. Atheism being a proposition unnatural and monstrous, difficult also and hard to establish in the human understanding, how arrogant and irregular soever that may be, there are enough seen, out of vanity and pride, to be the authors of extraordinary and reforming opinions, and to outwardly affect their profession, who, if they are such fools, have nevertheless not had the power to plant them in their conscience; they will not fail to lift up their hands towards heaven if you give them a good thrust with a sword in the breast; and when fear or sickness has abated and deadened the licentious fervor of this giddy humor they will readily return, and very discreetly suffer themselves to be reconciled to the public faith and examples. A doctrine seriously digested is one thing; quite another thing are those superficial impressions which, springing from the disorder of an unhinged understanding, float at random and uncertainly in the fancy. Miserable and senseless men, who strive to be worse than they can!

The error of paganism and the ignorance of our sacred truth made the great soul of Plato, but great only in human greatness, fall yet into this other vicious mistake, “that children and old men are most susceptible of religion,” as if it sprang and derived its reputation from our weakness. The knot that ought to bind the judgment and the will, that ought to restrain the soul and join it to the Creator, should be a knot that derives its foldings and strength, not from our

considerations, from our reasons and passions, but from a divine and supernatural constraint, having but one form, one face, and one lustre, which is the authority of God and His divine grace. Now, our heart and soul being governed and commanded by faith, 'tis but reason that they should muster all our other faculties, for as much as they are able to perform, to the service and assistance of their design. Neither is it to be imagined that all this machine has not some marks imprinted upon it by the hand of the mighty architect, and that there is not in the things of this world, some image, that in some measure resembles the workman who has built and formed them. He has in His stupendous works left the character of His divinity, and 'tis our own weakness only that hinders us from discerning it. 'Tis what He Himself is pleased to tell us, that He manifests His invisible operations to us, by those that are visible. Sebonde applied himself to this laudable study, and demonstrates to us that there is not any part or member of the world that disclaims or derogates from its maker. It were to do a wrong to the divine goodness, did not the universe consent to our belief; the heavens, the earth, the elements, our bodies and our souls, all these concur to this, if we can but find out the way to use them. They instruct us if we are capable of instruction; for this world is a most sacred temple, into which man is introduced, there to contemplate statues, not the works of a mortal hand, but such as the divine purpose has made the objects of sense, the sun, the stars, the waters, and the earth, to represent those that are intelligible to us. "The invisible things of God," says St. Paul, "from the creation of the world, His eternal power and Godhead," are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made:—

"And the deity himself does not envy to men the seeing heaven's face; but ever revolving, he still renews its face and body to our view; and himself so inculcates into our minds that we may well know him, and he may instruct us by seeing what he is, and may oblige us to obey his laws."

Now our human reasons and discourses are but sterile and undigested matter: the grace of God is its form; 'tis that which gives to it fashion and value. As the virtuous actions of Socrates and Cato remain vain and fruitless, for not having had the love and obedience of the true Creator of all things for their end and object, and for not having known God, so is it with our imaginations and discourses; they have a kind of body, but it is an inform mass, without fashion and without light, if faith and God's grace be not added to it. Faith coming to tint and illustrate Sebonde's arguments, renders them firm and solid, so that they are capable of serving for direction and first guide to a learner to put him into the way of this knowledge: they, in some measure, form him to and render him capable of the grace of God, by means whereof he afterwards completes and perfects himself in the true belief. I know a man of authority, bred up to letters, who has confessed to me that he had been reclaimed from the errors of misbelief by Sebonde's arguments. And should they be stripped of this ornament and of the assistance and approbation of the faith, and be looked upon as mere human fancies only, to contend with those who are precipitated into the dreadful and horrible darkness of irreligion, they will even then be found as solid and firm, as any others of the same class that can be opposed against them; so that we shall be ready to say to our opponents:—

"If you have anything better, produce it; otherwise, yield."

Let them admit the force of our proofs, or let them show us others, and upon some other subject, better woven and of finer thread. I am, unawares, half engaged in the second objection, to which I proposed to make answer in the behalf of Sebonde.

Some say that his arguments are weak and unfit to make good what he proposes, and undertake with great ease to confute them. These are to be a little more roughly handled; for they are more dangerous and malicious than the first. Men willingly wrest the sayings of others to favor their own prejudicated opinions; to an atheist all writings tend to atheism; he corrupts the most innocent matter with his own venom. These have their judgments so prepossessed that they cannot relish Sebonde's reasons. As to the rest, they think we give them very fair play in putting them into the liberty of fighting our religion with weapons merely human, which, in its majesty full of authority and command, they durst not attack. The means that I use, and that I think most proper, to subdue this frenzy, is to crush and spurn under foot pride and human arrogance; to make them sensible of the inanity, vanity, and nothingness of man; to wrest the wretched arms of their reason out of their hands; to make them bow down and bite the ground, under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty. 'Tis to this alone that knowledge and wisdom appertain; 'tis this alone that can make a true estimate of itself, and from which we purloin whatever we value ourselves upon:—

“The god will not permit that any one shall be wiser than him.”

Let us subdue this presumption, the first foundation of the tyranny of the evil spirit:—

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Understanding is in all the gods, says Plato, and not at all, or very little, in men. Now it is, in the meantime, a great consolation to a Christian man to see our frail and mortal parts so fitly suited to our holy and divine faith, that when we employ them on the subjects of their own mortal and frail nature, they are not, even there, more equally or more firmly applied. Let us see, then, if man has in his power other reasons more forcible than those of Sebonde; that is to say, if it be in him to arrive at any certainty by argument and reason. For St. Augustin, disputing against these people, has good cause to reproach them with injustice, in that they maintain the parts of our belief to be false that our reason cannot establish; and, to show that a great many things may be and may have been, of which our nature could not find the reason and causes, he proposes to them certain known and indubitable experiences wherein men confess they have no insight; and this he does, as all other things, with a close and ingenious inquisition. We must do more than this, and make them know that, to convict the weakness of their reason, there is no necessity of culling out rare examples; and that it is so defective and so blind, that there is no so clear facility clear enough for it: that to it the easy and the hard is all one; that all subjects equally, and nature in general, disclaims its authority, and rejects its mediation.

What does truth mean, when she preaches to us to fly worldly philosophy, when she so often inculcates to us, that our wisdom is but folly in the sight of God; that the vainest of all vanities is man; that the man who presumes upon his wisdom, does not yet know what wisdom is; and that man, who is nothing, if he think himself to be anything, but seduces and deceives himself? These sentences of the Holy Ghost so clearly and vividly express that which I would maintain, that I should need no other proof against men who would, with all humility and obedience, submit to its authority; but these will be whipped at their own expense, and will not suffer a man to oppose their reason, but by itself.

Let us then now consider a man alone, without foreign assistance, armed only with his own proper arms, and unfurnished of the divine grace and wisdom, which is all his honor, strength, and the foundation of his being: let us see what certainty he has in this fine equipment. Let him make me understand by the force of his reason, upon what foundations he has built those

great advantages he thinks he has over other creatures: what has made him believe, that this admirable movement of the celestial arch, the eternal light of those planets and stars that roll so proudly over his head, the fearful motions of that infinite ocean, were established, and continue so many ages, for his service and convenience? Can anything be imagined to be so ridiculous that this miserable and wretched creature, who is not so much as master of himself, but subject to the injuries of all things, should call himself master and emperor of the world, of which he has not power to know the least part, much less to command it? And this privilege which he attributes to himself, of being the only creature in this grand fabric that has the understanding to distinguish its beauty and its parts, the only one who can return thanks to the architect, and keep account of the revenues and disbursements of the world; who, I wonder, sealed for him this privilege? Let us see his letters-patent for this great and noble charge; were they granted in favor of the wise only? few people would be concerned in that: are fools and wicked persons worthy so extraordinary a favor, and, being the worst part of the world, to be preferred before the rest? Shall we believe this man?

“Who has said for whose sake that the world was made? For those living creatures who have the use of reason: these are gods and men, than whom certainly nothing can be better.”

We can never sufficiently decry the impudence of this conjunction. But, wretched creature, what has he in himself worthy of such a blessing? To consider the incorruptible existence of the celestial bodies, their beauty, grandeur, their continual revolution by so exact a rule:—

“When we behold the great celestial temples of the world and the firmament studded with glittering stars, and there come into our mind the courses of the moon and sun:”

to consider the dominion and influence those bodies have not only over our lives and fortunes:—

“He makes men’s lives and actions depend on the stars,”

but even over our inclinations, our thoughts and wills, which they govern, incite, and agitate at the mercy of their influences, as our reason finds and tells us:—

“Contemplating the distant stars, he finds that they rule by silent laws; that the world is regulated by alternate causes, and that he can discern by certain signs the turns of destiny;”

to see that not merely a man, not merely a king, but that monarchies, empires, and all this lower world follow the least dance of these celestial motions:—

“How great changes each little motion brings: so great is this kingdom that it governs kings themselves;”

if our virtue, our vices, our knowledge and science, this very discourse we frame of the power of the stars, and this comparison betwixt them and us, proceed, as our reason supposes, by their means and favor:—

“One mad with love may cross the sea and overturn Troy; another’s fate is to write laws. Sons kill their fathers: fathers kill their sons: one armed brother wounds another armed brother. These wars are not ours; ’tis fate that compels men to punish themselves thus, and

thus to lacerate themselves. . . . 'Tis fate that compels me to write of fate.”

If we derive this little portion of reason we have from the bounty of heaven, how is it possible that reason should ever make us equal to it how subject its essence and conditions to our knowledge? Whatever we see in these bodies astonishes us:—

“What contrivance, what tools, what levers, what engines, what workmen, were employed about so stupendous a work?”

Why do we deprive it of soul, of life, and reason? Have we discovered in it any immovable and insensible stupidity, we who have no commerce with the heavens but by obedience? Shall we say that we have discovered in no other creature but man the use of a reasonable soul? What! have we seen anything like the sun? does he cease to be because we have seen nothing like him? and do his motions cease, because there are no others like them? If what we have not seen is not, our knowledge is wonderfully contracted:

“How narrow are our understandings?”

Are they not dreams of human vanity to make the moon a celestial earth? there to fancy mountains and vales, as Anaxagoras did? there to fix habitations and human abodes, and plant colonies for our convenience, as Plato and Plutarch have done, and of our earth to make a beautiful and luminous star?

“Amongst the other inconveniences of mortality, this is one, to have the understanding clouded, and not only a necessity of erring, but a love of error.”

“The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation oppresses the pensive thinker.”

Presumption is our natural and original disease. The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. He feels and sees himself lodged here in the dirt and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst and dearest part of the universe, in the lowest story of the house, and most remote from the heavenly arch, with animals of the worst condition of the three, and yet in his imagination will be placing himself above the circle of the moon, and bringing heaven under his feet. 'Tis by the vanity of the same imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, cuts out the shares of animals his fellows and companions, and distributes to them portions of faculties and force as himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? and from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them? When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me? we mutually divert one another with our monkey tricks: if I have my hour to begin or to refuse, she also has hers. Plato, in his picture of the Golden Age under Saturn, reckons, amongst the chief advantages that a man then had, his communication with beasts, of whom inquiring and informing himself he knew the true qualities and differences of them all, by which he acquired a very perfect intelligence and prudence, and led his life far more happily than we could do: need we a better proof to condemn human impudence in the concern of beasts? This great author was of opinion that nature, for the most part, in the corporal form she gave them had only regard to the use of

prognostics that were in his time thence derived. The defect that hinders communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be on our part as well as theirs? 'Tis yet to determine where the fault lies that we understand not one another; for we understand them no more than they do us; by the same reason they may think us to be beasts as we think them. 'Tis no great wonder if we understand not them when we do not understand a Basque or the Troglodytes; and yet some have boasted that they understood these, as Apollonius Tyaneus, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others. And seeing that, as cosmographers report, there are nations that receive a dog for their king, they must of necessity be able to give some interpretation of his voice and motions. We must observe the parity betwixt us: we have some tolerable apprehension of their sense: and so have beasts of ours, and much in the same proportion. They caress us, they threaten us, and they beg of us, and we do the same to them. As to the rest, we manifestly discover that they have a full and absolute communication amongst themselves, and that they perfectly understand one another, not only those of the same, but of divers kinds:—

“The tame herds, and the wilder sorts of brutes, utter dissimilar and various sounds, as fear, or pain, or pleasure influences them.”

By one kind of barking the horse knows a dog is angry; of another sort of a bark he is not afraid. Even in the very beasts that have no voice at all, we easily conclude, from the social offices we observe amongst them, some other sort of communication; their very motions converse and consult:—

“From no far different reason the want of language in children seems to induce them to have recourse to gestures.”

And why not, as well as our mutes, dispute, contest, and tell stories by signs? of whom I have seen some, by practice, so supple and active in that way that, in earnest, they wanted nothing of the perfection of making themselves understood. Lovers are angry, reconciled, intreat, thank, appoint, and, in short, speak all things by their eyes:—

“Even silence in a lover can express entreaty.”

What of the hands? We require, promise, call, dismiss, threaten, pray, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, number, confess, repent, fear, confound, blush, doubt, instruct, command, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, abuse, despise, defy, despite, flatter, applaud, bless, humiliate, mock, reconcile, recommend, exalt, entertain, congratulate, complain, grieve, despair, wonder, exclaim, and what not, with a variation and multiplication to the emulation of speech. With the head we invite, demur, confess, deny, give the lie, welcome, honor, reverence, disdain, demand, turn out, rejoice, lament, reject, caress, rebuke, submit, huff, encourage, threaten, assure, inquire. What of the eyebrows? What of the shoulders? There is not a motion that does not speak, and in an intelligible language without discipline, and a public language that every one understands: whence it should follow, the variety and use distinguished from those of others, that this should rather be judged the special property of human nature. I omit what particular necessity on the sudden suggests to those who are in need; the alphabets upon the fingers, grammars in gesture, and the sciences which are only by them exercised and expressed, and the nations that Pliny reports to have no other language. An ambassador of the city of Abdera, after a long harangue to Agis, king of Sparta, demanded of him, “Well, sir, what answer must I return to my fellow-citizens?” “That I have

given thee leave,” said he, “to say what thou wouldst, and as much as thou wouldst, without ever speaking a word.” Is not this a silent speaking, and very easy to be understood?

As to the rest, what is there in our intelligence that we do not see in the operations of animals? Is there a polity better ordered, the offices better distributed, and more inviolably observed and maintained, than that of bees? Can we imagine that such and so regular a distribution of employments can be carried on without reason and prudence?

“Judging from these signs and following these cases, they have said that bees possess a tincture of the divine mind and ethereal breath.”

The swallows that we see at the return of the spring, searching all the corners of our houses for the most commodious places wherein to build their nests, do they seek without judgment, and, amongst a thousand, choose out the most proper for their purpose, without discretion? In that elegant and admirable contexture of their buildings, can birds rather make choice of a square figure than a round, of an obtuse than of a right angle, without knowing their properties and effects? Do they bring water and then clay without knowing that the hardness of the latter grows softer by being wet? Do they mat their palace with moss or down, without foreseeing that their tender young will lie more safe and easy? Do they secure themselves from the rainy winds, and place their lodgings towards the east, without knowing the different qualities of those winds, and considering that one is more wholesome than the other? Why does the spider make her web tighter in one place and slacker in another? Why now make one sort of knot and then another, if she has not deliberation, thought, and conclusion? We sufficiently discover in most of their works how much animals excel us, and how weak our art is to imitate them. We see, nevertheless, in our ruder performances that we there employ all our faculties and apply the utmost power of our souls; why do we not conclude the same of them? Why should we attribute to I know not what natural and servile inclination the works that surpass all we can do by nature and art? Wherein, before we are aware, we give them a mighty advantage over us, in making nature, with a maternal sweetness, to accompany and lead them, as it were, by the hand, to all the actions and commodities of their life, whilst she leaves us to chance and fortune, and to seek out, by art, the things that are necessary to our conservation; at the same time denying us the means of being able, by any instruction or contention of understanding, to arrive at the natural sufficiency of beasts; so that their brutish stupidity surpasses in all conveniences all that our divine intelligence can do. Really, at this rate, we might with great reason call her an unjust stepmother: but it is nothing so: our polity is not so irregular and deformed.

Nature has been universally kind to all her creatures, and there is not one she has not amply furnished with all means necessary for the conservation of its being; for the common complaints that I hear men make (as the license of their opinions one while lifts them up to the clouds, and then again depresses them to the Antipodes), that we are the only animal abandoned, naked upon the bare earth, tied and bound, not having wherewithal to arm and clothe us, but by the spoil of others; whereas nature has covered all other creatures with shells, husks, bark, hair, wool, prickles, leather, down, feathers, scales, silk, according to the necessities of their being; has armed them with talons, teeth, horns, wherewith to assault and defend, and has herself taught them that which is most proper for them, to swim, to run, to fly, and to sing, whereas man neither knows how to walk, speak, eat, or do anything but weep, without teaching:—

“Then the infant, like a mariner tossed by the raging billows upon the shore, lies naked on the earth, destitute at his very birth of all vital support, from the time when Nature brought him forth from his mother’s womb with travail, and he fills the air with doleful cries, as is

just, to whom in life it remains only to pass through troubles. But beasts, wild and tame, of themselves grow up: they need no rattle, no nurse with soothing words to teach them to talk: they do not look out for different robes according to the seasons, and need no arms nor walls to protect them and their goods: earth and nature in all abundance produce all things whereof they have need.”

Those complaints are false; there is in the polity of the world a greater quality and more uniform relation. Our skins are as sufficient to defend us from the injuries of the weather as theirs for them: witness several nations that still know not the use of clothes. Our ancient Gauls were but slenderly clad, no more than the Irish, our neighbors in so cold a climate. But we may better judge of this by ourselves: for all those parts that we are pleased to expose to the wind and the air, the face, the hands, the lips, the shoulders, the head, according to various custom, are found very able to endure it: if there be a tender part about us, and that seems to be in danger of cold, it should be the stomach where the digestion is, and yet our forefathers had this always open, and our ladies, tender and delicate as they are, go sometimes half bare as low as the navel. Nor is the binding and swathing of infants any more necessary; and the Lacedaemonian mothers brought up theirs in all liberty of motion of members, without any ligature at all. Our crying is common to us, with most other animals, and there are but few creatures that are not observed to groan and bemoan themselves a long time after they come into the world, forasmuch as it is a behavior suitable to the weakness wherein they find themselves. As to the usage of eating, it is in us, as in them, natural, and without instruction:—

“For every one soon finds out his natural force, which he may abuse.”

Who doubts but an infant, arrived to the strength of feeding himself, may shift to seek his food? and the earth produces and offers him wherewithal to supply his necessity without other culture and art, and if not at all times, no more does she do it to beasts; witness the provision we see ants and other creatures hoard up against the dead seasons of the year. The late discovered nations, so abundantly furnished with meat and natural drink, without trouble or preparation, give us to understand that bread is not our only food, and that without tillage our mother Nature has provided us abundantly with all we stand in need of; nay, it would appear still more fully and plentifully than she does at present, when we have mixed up these with our own industry:—

“The earth at first spontaneously afforded glossy fruits and glad wines to mankind; gave them prolific herds and glowing harvests, which now scarcely by art more abundantly yield, though men and oxen strive to improve the soil:”

the depravity and irregularity of our appetite outstrip all the inventions we can contrive to satisfy it.

As to arms, we have more that are natural than most other animals, more various motions of the limbs, and naturally and without lessons, extract more service from them: those that are trained up to fight naked, are seen to throw themselves upon hazard like our own; if some beasts surpass us in this advantage, we surpass several others. And the industry of fortifying the body and protecting it by acquired means we have by instinct and natural precept; as, for examples: the elephant sharpens and whets the teeth he makes use of in war (for he has particular ones for that service which he spares and never employs at all to any other use); when bulls go to fight, they toss and throw the dust about them; boars whet their tusks; and the ichneumon, when he is about to engage with the crocodile, fortifies his body by covering and encrusting it all over

with close-wrought, well-kneaded slime, as with a cuirass: why shall we not say, that it is also natural for us to arm ourselves with wood and iron?

As to speech, it is certain that, if it be not natural, it is not necessary. Nevertheless, I believe that a child who had been brought up in absolute solitude, remote from all society of men (which would be a trial very hard to make) would have some kind of speech to express his meaning: and 'tis not to be supposed that nature should have denied that to us which she has given to several other animals: for what other than speech is this faculty we observe in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one another for succor, and the softer murmurings of love, which they perform with the voice? And why should they not speak to one another? they speak very well to us, and we to them; in how many several ways do we speak to our dogs, and they answer us? We converse with them in another sort of language and other appellations than we do with birds, hogs, oxen, and horses; and alter the idiom according to the kind:—

“So amongst their sable bands, one ant with another is seen to communicate: observe, perhaps, each others' ways and ask what prizes they have brought home.”

Lactantius seems to attribute to beasts not only speech, but laughter also. And the difference of language which is manifest amongst us, according to the variety of countries, is also observed in animals of the same kind: Aristotle, in proof of this, instances the various calls of partridges, according to the situation of places:—

“Various birds make quite different notes; some their hoarse songs change with the seasons.”

But it is yet to be known what language this child would speak; and of this what is said by guess has no great weight. If any one should allege to me, in opposition to this opinion, that those who are naturally deaf, speak not: I answer, that this follows not only because they could not receive the instruction of speaking by the ear, but because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, has relation to that of speaking, holding together by a natural tie; in such manner, that what we speak we must first speak to ourselves within, and make it first sound in our own ears, before we can utter it to others.

All this I have said to prove the resemblance there is in human things, and to bring us back and join us to the crowd: we are neither above nor below the rest. All that is under heaven, says the wise man, runs one law and one fortune:—

“All things are bound in the same fatal chains.”

There is indeed some difference; there are orders and degrees; but 'tis under the aspect of one same nature:—

“Each thing proceeds by its own rule, and all observe the laws of nature under a sure agreement.”

Man must be compelled and restrained within the bounds of this polity. Wretched being, he is really not in a condition to step over the rail; he is fettered and circumscribed, he is subjected to a co-ordinate obligation with the other creatures of his class, and of a very humble condition, without any prerogative or pre-eminence true and real; that which he attributes to himself, by vain fancy and opinion, has neither body nor taste. And if it be so, that he only of all the animals has this privilege of the imagination, and this irregularity of thoughts representing to him that

which is, that which is not, and that he would have, the false and the true; 'tis an advantage dearly bought, and of which he has very little reason to be proud; for from that springs the principal fountain of all the evils that befall him, sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair. I say then (to return to my subject) that there is no probability to induce a man to believe, that beasts, by natural and compulsory tendency, do the same things that we do by our choice and industry; we ought, from like effects, to conclude like faculties, and from greater effects greater faculties, and consequently confess that the same reason, the same method by which we operate, are common with them, or that they have others that are better. Why should we imagine in them this natural constraint, who experience no such effect in ourselves? Add to which, that it is more honorable to be guided and obliged to act regularly by a natural and irresistible condition, and nearer allied to the Divinity, than to act regularly by a licentious and fortuitous liberty, and more safe to intrust the reins of our conduct in the hands of nature than in our own. The vanity of our presumption is the cause that we had rather owe our sufficiency to our own strength than to her bounty, and that we enrich the other animals with natural goods, and renounce them in their favor, to honor and ennoble ourselves with goods acquired; very foolishly in my opinion; for I should as much value parts naturally and purely my own, as those I had begged and obtained from education: it is not in our power to obtain a nobler reputation, than to be favored of God and nature.

For this reason, consider the fox, of which the people of Thrace make use when they desire to pass over the ice of some frozen river, turning him out before them to that purpose; should we see him lay his ear upon the bank of the river, down to the ice, to listen if from a more remote or nearer distance he can hear the noise of the water's current, and according as he finds by that the ice to be of a less or greater thickness, retire or advance: should we not have reason thence to believe that he had the same thoughts in his head that we should have upon the like occasion, and that it is a ratiocination and consequence drawn from natural sense: "that which makes a noise, runs; that which runs, is not frozen: what is not frozen is liquid; and that which is liquid yields to impression?" For to attribute this to a vivacity of the sense of hearing without meditation and consequence, is a chimera that cannot enter into the imagination. We may suppose the same of the many subtleties and inventions with which beasts protect themselves from enterprises we plot against them.

And if we would make an advantage of this that it is in our power to seize them, to employ them in our service, and to use them at our pleasure, 'tis but still the same advantage we have over one another. We have our slaves upon these terms; and the Climacidae, were they not women in Syria who, being on all fours, served for a stepladder, by which the ladies mounted the coach? And the majority of free persons surrender, for very trivial advantages, their life and being into the power of another; the wives and concubines of the Thracians contended who should be chosen to be slain upon their husband's tomb. Have tyrants ever failed of finding men enough devoted to their service; some of them, moreover, adding this necessity of accompanying them in death as in life? whole armies have so bound themselves to their captains. The form of the oath in that rude school of fencers, who were to fight it out to the last, was in these words: "We swear to suffer ourselves to be chained, burned, beaten, killed with the sword, and to endure all that true gladiators suffer from their master, religiously engaging both bodies and souls in his services:"—

"Burn my head with fire if you will, wound me with steel, and scourge my shoulders with twisted wire:"

this was an obligation indeed, and yet there were, in some years, ten thousand who entered into

it and lost themselves in it. When the Scythians interred their king, they strangled upon his body the most beloved of his concubines, his cupbearer, the master of his horse, his chamberlain, the usher of his chamber, and his cook; and upon his anniversary they killed fifty horses, mounted by fifty pages, whom they had impaled up the spine of the back to the throat, and there left them planted in parade about his tomb. The men that serve us do it more cheaply, and for a less careful and favorable usage than that we entertain our hawks, horses, and dogs with. To what solicitude do we not submit for the convenience of these? I do not think that servants of the most abject condition would willingly do that for their masters, that princes think it an honor to do for these beasts. Diogenes seeing his relations solicitous to redeem him from servitude: "They are fools," said he; "'tis he that keeps and feeds me is my servant, not I his." And they, who make so much of beasts, ought rather to be said to serve them, than to be served by them. And withal they have this more generous quality, that one lion never submitted to another lion, nor one horse to another, for want of courage. As we go to the chase of beasts, so do tigers and lions to the chase of men, and they do the same execution one upon another, dogs upon hares, pikes upon tench, swallows upon flies, sparrowhawks upon blackbirds and larks:—

"The stork feeds her young with the snake and with lizards found in rural bye-places. And the noble birds attendant on Jupiter hunt in the wood for hares and kids."

We divide the quarry, as well as the pains and labor of the chase, with our hawks and hounds; and above Amphipolis in Thrace, the hawkers and wild falcons equally divide the prey; as also, along the Lake Maeotis, if the fisherman does not honestly leave the wolves an equal share of what he has caught, they presently go and tear his nets in pieces. And as we have a way of hunting that is carried on more by subtlety than force, as angling with line and hook, there is also the like amongst animals. Aristotle says that the cuttle-fish casts a gut out of her throat as long as a line, which she extends and draws back at pleasure; and as she perceives some little fish approach, she let it nibble upon the end of this gut, lying herself concealed in the sand or mud, and by little and little draws it in, till the little fish is so near her, that at one spring she may surprise it.

As to what concerns strength, there is no creature in the world exposed to so many injuries as man: we need not a whale, an elephant, or a crocodile, nor any such animals, of which one alone is sufficient to defeat a great number of men, to do our business: lice are sufficient to vacate Sylla's dictatorship; and the heart and life of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm.

Why should we say that it is only for man by knowledge, improved by art and meditation, to distinguish the things commodious for his being and proper for the cure of his diseases from those which are not so; to know the virtues of rhubarb and fern: when we see the goats of Candia, when wounded with an arrow, amongst a million of plants choose out dittany for their cure, and the tortoise, when she has eaten of a viper, immediately go to look out for marjoram to purge her; the dragon rubs and clears his eyes with fennel; the storks give themselves clysters of seawater; the elephants draw out, not only of their own bodies and those of their companions, but out of the bodies of their master too (witness the elephant of King Porus, whom Alexander defeated) the dart and javelins thrown at them in battle, and that so dexterously that we ourselves could not do it with so little pain; why do not we say here also that this is knowledge and prudence? For to allege to their disparagement that 'tis by the sole instruction and dictate of nature that they know all this, is not to take from them the dignity of knowledge and prudence, but with greater reason to attribute it to them than to us, for the honor of so infallible a mistress. Chrysippus, though in all other things as scornful a judge of the condition of animals as any

other philosopher whatever, considering the motions of a dog who, coming to a place where three ways meet, either to hunt after his master he has lost, or in pursuit of some game that flies before him, goes snuffing first in one of the ways and then in another, and after having made himself sure of two, without finding the trace of what he seeks, throws himself into the third without examination, is forced to confess that this reasoning is in the dog: "I have followed my master by foot to this place; he must, of necessity, be gone by one of these three ways; he is not gone this way nor that; he must then infallibly be gone this other:" and that assuring himself by such reasoning and conclusion, he makes no use of his nose in the third way, nor ever lays it to the ground, but suffers himself to be carried on by the force of reason. This mode, which is purely logical, and this method of propositions divided and conjoined, and the right enumeration of parts, is it not every whit as good that the dog knows all this of himself as if he had learnt it of Trapezuntius?

Nor are animals incapable of being instructed after our method. We teach blackbirds, ravens, pies, and parrots to speak; and the facility wherewith we see them render their voices and breath so supple and pliant to be formed and confined within a certain number of letters and syllables, evinces that they have a reasoning examination of things within that makes them so docile and willing to learn.

Everybody, I believe, is glutted with the several sorts of tricks that tumblers teach their dogs; the dances where they do not miss any one cadence of the sound they hear; the many various motions and leaps they make them perform by the command of a word. But I observe with more admiration this effect, which, nevertheless, is very common, in the dogs that lead the blind both in the country and in cities: I have taken notice how they stop at certain doors, where they are wont to receive alms; how they avoid the encounter of coaches and carts, even where they have sufficient room to pass; I have seen them, along the trench of a town, forsake a plain and even path, and take a worse, only to keep their masters farther from the ditch. How could a man have made this dog understand that it was his office to look to his master's safety only, and to despise his own convenience to serve him? And how had he the knowledge that a way was large enough for him that was not so for a blind man? Can all this be apprehended without ratiocination?

I must not omit what Plutarch says he saw of a dog at Rome with the Emperor Vespasian, the father, at the theatre of Marcellus: this dog served a player who acted a farce of several gestures and several personages and had therein his part. He had, amongst other things, to counterfeit himself for some time dead, by reason of a certain drug he was supposed to have eaten: after he had swallowed a piece of bread, which passed for the drug, he began after a while to tremble and stagger, as if he was stupefied: at last, stretching himself out stiff, as if he had been dead, he suffered himself to be drawn and dragged from place to place, as it was his part to do; and afterward, when he knew it to be time, he began first gently to stir, as if newly awakened out of profound sleep, and lifting up his head, looked about him after such a manner as astonished all the spectators.

The oxen that served in the royal gardens of Susa to water them and turn certain great wheels to draw water for that purpose, to which buckets were fastened (such as there are many in Languedoc), being ordered every one to draw a hundred turns a day, they were so accustomed to this number that it was impossible by force to make them draw one turn more, but, their task being performed, they would suddenly stop and stand still. We are almost men before we can count a hundred, and have lately discovered nations that have no knowledge of numbers at all.

There is still more understanding required in the teaching of others than in being taught; now, setting aside what Democritus held and proved, that most of the arts we have were taught us by other animals, as the spider has taught us to weave and sew, the swallow to build, the swan and nightingale music, and several animals, in imitating them, to make medicines: Aristotle is

of opinion that the nightingale teach their young ones to sing and spend a great deal of time and care in it, whence it happens that those we bring up in cages and that have not had time to learn of their parents, lose much of the grace of their singing: we may judge by this that they improve by discipline and study: and even amongst the wild birds they are not all one and alike; every one has learnt to do better or worse, according to its capacity; and so jealous are they of one another whilst learning, that they contend with emulation, and with so vigorous a contention that sometimes the vanquished fall dead upon the spot, the breath rather failing than the voice. The younger ruminative, and begin to imitate some broken notes; the disciple listens to the master's lesson, and gives the best account it is able; they are silent by turns; one may hear faults corrected and observe reprehensions of the teacher. "I have formerly seen," says Arrian, "an elephant having a cymbal hung at each leg, and another fastened to his trunk, at the sound of which all the others danced about him, rising and falling at certain cadences, as they were guided by the instrument, and it was delightful to hear this harmony." In the spectacles of Rome, there were ordinarily seen elephants taught to move and dance to the sound of the voice, dances wherein were several changes and steps, and cadences very hard to learn. And some have been seen, in private, so intent upon their lesson as to practise it by themselves, that they might not be chidden nor beaten by their masters.

But this other story of the magpie, for which we have Plutarch himself to answer, is very strange; she was in a barber's shop at Rome, and did wonders in imitating with her voice whatever she heard. It happened one day that certain trumpeters stood a good while sounding before the shop. After that, and all the next day, the magpie was pensive, dumb, and melancholy, which everybody wondered at and thought that the noise of the trumpet had thus stupefied and dazed her, and that her voice was gone with her hearing; but they found at last that it was a profound meditation and a retiring into herself, her thoughts exercising and preparing her voice to imitate the sound of those trumpets; so that the first voice she uttered was perfectly to imitate their strains, stops, and changes: having, for this new lesson, quitted and disdained all she had learned before.

I will not omit this other example of a dog, which the same Plutarch (I can't tell them in order, as to which I get confused; nor do I observe it here any more than elsewhere in my work) says he saw on shipboard: this dog being puzzled how to get at the oil that was in the bottom of a jar and which he could not reach with his tongue, by reason of the narrow mouth of the vessel, went and fetched stones, and let them fall into the jar, till he made the oil rise so high, that he could reach it. What is this but an effect of a very subtle capacity? 'Tis said that the ravens of Barbary do the same, when the water they would drink is too low. This action is something akin to what Juba, a king of their nation, relates of the elephants: that, when by the craft of the hunter, one of them is trapped in certain deep pits prepared for them and covered over with brush to deceive them, all the rest diligently bring a great many stones and logs of wood to raise the bottom so that he may get out. But this animal in several other features comes so near to human capacity, that should I particularly relate all that experience has delivered to us, I should easily have granted me what I ordinarily maintain, namely, that there is more difference betwixt such and such a man, than betwixt such a man and such a beast. The keeper of an elephant, in a private house of Syria, robbed him every meal of the half of his allowance: one day his master would himself feed him and poured the full measure of barley he had ordered for his allowance into his manger; at which the elephant, casting an angry look at his keeper, with his trunk separated the one half from the other, and thrust it aside, thus declaring the wrong that was done him. And another, having a keeper that mixed stones with his corn to make up the measure, came to the pot where he was boiling flesh for his own dinner, and filled it with ashes. These are particular facts: but that which all the world has seen, and all the world knows, is that

in all the armies of the East one of their greatest elements of strength was elephants, with whom they did without comparison far more execution than we now do with our artillery, which is, as it were, in their stead in a day of battle (as may easily be judged by such as are read in ancient history):—

“The ancestors of these were wont to serve the Tyrian Hannibal, and our own captains, and the Molossian king, and to bear upon their backs cohorts, as a part of war, and (to bring) the tower, going into battle.”

They must of necessity very confidently have relied upon the fidelity and understanding of these beasts, when they entrusted them with the vanguard of a battle, where the least stop they should have made, by reason of the bulk and heaviness of their bodies, and the least fright that should have made them face about upon their own people, had been enough to spoil all. And there are but few examples where it has happened that they have fallen foul upon their own troops, whereas we ourselves break into our own battalions and rout one another. They had the commission, not of one simple movement only, but of many several things they were to perform in the battle; as the Spaniards did to their dogs in their new conquest of the Indies, to whom they gave pay and allowed them a share in the spoil; and those animals showed as much dexterity and judgment in pursuing the victory and stopping the pursuit, in charging and retiring as occasion required, and in distinguishing their friends from their enemies, as they did ardor and fierceness.

We more admire and value things that are unusual and strange than those of ordinary observation; I had not else so long insisted upon these examples, for I believe, whoever shall strictly observe what we ordinarily see in those animals we have amongst us, may there find as wonderful effects as those we fetch from remote countries and ages. 'Tis one same nature that rolls her course, and whoever has sufficiently considered the present state of things, might certainly conclude as to both the future and the past. I have formerly seen men brought hither by sea, from very distant countries, whose language not being understood by us, and, moreover, their mien, countenance, and dress being quite different from ours, which of us did not repute them savages and brutes? Who did not attribute it to stupidity and want of common sense, to see them mute, ignorant of the French tongue, ignorant of our salutations, cringes, our port and behavior, from which, of course, all human nature must take its pattern and example. All that seems strange to us, and what we do not understand we condemn. The same thing happens also in the judgment we make of beasts. They have several conditions like to ours; from those we may by comparison draw some conjecture: but of those qualities that are particular to them, how know we what to make of them? The horses, dogs, oxen, sheep, birds, and most of the animals that live amongst us, know our voices, and suffer themselves to be governed by them: so did Crassus' lamprey, that came when he called it; as also do the eels that are in the lake Arethusa; and I have seen ponds where the fishes run to eat at a certain call of those who use to feed them:—

“Each has its own name, and comes at the master's call;”

we may judge from that. We may also say that elephants have some share of religion, forasmuch as, after several washings and purifications, they are observed to lift up their trunks like arms, and, fixing their eyes towards the rising sun, continue long in meditation and contemplation, at certain hours of the day of their own motion without instruction or precept. But because we do not see any such signs in other animals, we cannot thence conclude that they are without

religion, nor form any judgment of what is concealed from us; as we discern something in this action which the philosopher Cleanthes took notice of, because it something resembles our own: he saw, he says, ants go from their ant-hill, carrying the dead body of an ant towards another ant-hill, from which several other ants came out to meet them, as if to speak with them; whither, after having been some while together, the last returned, to consult, you may suppose, with their fellow-citizens, and so made two or three journeys, by reason of the difficulty of capitulation: in the conclusion, the last comers brought the first a worm out of their burrow, as it were for the ransom of the defunct, which the first laid upon their backs and carried home, leaving the dead body to the others. This was the interpretation that Cleanthes gave of this transaction, as manifesting that those creatures that have no voice are not, nevertheless, without mutual communication and dealings, whereof 'tis through our own defect that we do not participate, and for that reason foolishly take upon us to pass our judgment upon it. But they yet produce other effects much beyond our capacity, to which we are so far from being able to arrive by imitation, that we cannot so much as by imagination conceive them. Many are of opinion that in the great and last naval engagement that Antony lost to Augustus, his admiral galley was stayed in the middle of her course by the little fish the Latins call Remora, by reason of the property she has of staying all sorts of vessels to which she fastens herself. And the Emperor Caligula, sailing with a great navy upon the coast of Romania, his galley alone was suddenly stayed by the same fish; which he caused to be taken, fastened as it was to the keel of his ship, very angry that such a little animal could resist at once the sea, the wind, and the force of all his oars, by being merely fastened by the beak to his galley (for it is a shellfish); and was moreover, not without great reason, astonished that being brought to him in the longboat it had no longer the strength it had in the water. A citizen of Cyzicus formerly acquired the reputation of a good mathematician from having learned the ways of the hedgehog: he has his burrow open in divers places and to several winds, and foreseeing the wind that is to come stops the hole on that side, which the citizen observing, gave the city certain prediction of the wind which was presently to blow. The chameleon takes his color from the place upon which he is laid; but the polypus gives himself what color he pleases, according to occasion, either to conceal himself from what he fears, or from what he has a design to seize: in the chameleon 'tis a passive, but in the polypus 'tis an active change. We have some changes of color, as in fear, anger, shame, and other passions, that alter our complexion; but it is by the effect of suffering, as with the chameleon. It is in the power of the jaundice, indeed, to make us turn yellow, but 'tis not in the power of our own will. Now these effects that we discern in other animals, much greater than our own, imply some more excellent faculty in them, unknown to us; as, 'tis to be presumed, are several other qualities and capacities of theirs of which no appearance reaches us.

Amongst all the predictions of elder times, the most ancient and the most certain were those taken from the flights of birds; we have nothing like it, not anything so much to be admired. That rule and order of moving, the wing, from which were prognosticated the consequences of future things, must of necessity be guided by some excellent means to so noble an operation: for to attribute this great effect to any natural disposition, without the intelligence, consent, and reason of the creature by which it is produced, is an opinion evidently false. And, in proof, the torpedo has this quality, not only to benumb all the members that touch her, but even through the nets to transmit a heavy dulness into the hands of those that move and handle them; nay, it is further said that, if one pour water upon her, he will feel this numbness mount up the water to the hand and stupefy the feeling through the water. This is a miraculous force; but 'tis not useless to the torpedo; she knows it and makes use of it; for to catch the prey she desires she will bury herself in the mud that other fishes, swimming over her, struck and benumbed with this coldness of hers, may fall into her power. Cranes, swallows, and other birds of passage,

by shifting their abode according to the seasons, sufficiently manifest the knowledge they have of their divining faculty, and put it in use. Huntsmen assure us that to cull out from amongst a great many puppies, that which ought to be preserved for the best, the simple way is to refer the choice to the dam, as thus: take them and carry them out of the kennel, and the first she brings back, will certainly be the best; or, if you make a show as if you would environ the kennel with fire, the one she first catches up to save: by which it appears they have a sort of prognostic that we have not; or that they have some capacity in judging of their whelps other and clearer than we have.

The manner of coming into the world, of engendering, nourishing, acting, moving, living, and dying of beasts, is so near to ours, that whatever we retrench from their moving causes and add to our own condition above theirs, can by no means proceed from any meditation of our own reason. For the regimen of our health, physicians propose to us the example of the beasts' way of living, for this saying has in all times been in the mouth of the people:—

“Keep warm your feet and head; as to the rest, live like a beast.”

Generation is the principle of natural action. We have a certain disposition of members most proper and convenient for us in that affair: nevertheless, some order us to conform to the posture of brutes, as the most effectual...and condemn as hurtful those indecent and indiscreet motions the women have superadded to the work; recalling them to the example and practice of the beasts of their own sex, more sober and modest...

If it be justice to render to every one his due, the beasts that serve, love, and defend their benefactors, and that pursue and fall upon strangers and those who offend them, do in this represent a certain air of our justice: as also in observing a very equitable equality in the distribution of what they have to their young. As to friendship, they have it, without comparison, more vivid and constant than men have. King Lysimachus' dog, Hyrcanus, his master being dead, lay upon his bed, obstinately refusing either to eat or drink, and the day that his body was burnt, he took a run and leaped into the fire, where he was consumed. As also did the dog of one Pyrrhus, for he would not stir from off his master's bed from the time that he died; and when they carried him away let himself be carried with him, and at last leaped into the pile where they burnt his master's body. There are certain inclinations of affection which sometimes spring in us without the consultation of reason and by a fortuitous temerity, which others call sympathy: of this beasts are as capable as we. We see horses form an acquaintance with one another, that we have much ado to make them eat or travel when separated; we observe them to fancy a particular color in those of their own kind, and where they meet it, run to it with great joy and demonstrations of goodwill, and to have a dislike and hatred for some other color. Animals have choice, as well as we, in their amours, and cull out their mistresses; neither are they exempt from our extreme and implacable jealousies and envies.

Desires are either natural and necessary, as to eat and drink; or natural and not necessary, as the coupling with females; or neither natural nor necessary: of which last sort are almost all the desires of men; they are all superfluous and artificial; for 'tis not to be believed how little will satisfy nature, how little she has left us to desire; the dishes in our kitchens do not touch her ordinance; the Stoics say that a man may live on an olive a day; our delicacy in our wines is no part of her instruction, nor the over-charging the appetites of love....

These irregular desires, that ignorance of good and a false opinion have infused into us, are so many that they almost exclude all the natural, just as if there were so great a number of strangers in a city as to thrust out the natural inhabitants and, usurping their ancient rights and privileges, extinguish their authority and power. Animals are much more regular than we, and

keep themselves with greater moderation within the limits nature has prescribed; but yet not so exactly, that they have not some analogy with our debauches; and as there have been known furious desires that have compelled men to the love of beasts, so there have been examples of beasts that have fallen in love with us, and admit monstrous affections betwixt different kinds: witness the elephant who was rival to Aristophanes the grammarian in the love of a young flower-girl in the city of Alexandria, which was nothing behind him in all the offices of a very passionate suitor: for going through the market where they sold fruit, he would take some in his trunk and carry it to her: he would as much as possible keep her always in his sight, and would sometimes put his trunk under her kerchief into her bosom and felt her teats. They tell also of a dragon in love with a maid; and of a goose enamored of a child in the town of Asopus; of a ram that was a lover of the minstrelless Glaucia; and there are every day baboons furiously in love with women. We see also certain male animals that are fond of the males of their own kind. Oppianus and others give us some examples of the reverence that beasts have to their kindred in their copulation; but experience often shows us the contrary:—

“The heifer thinks it no shame to take her sire upon her back; the horse his daughter leaps; goats increase the herd by those they have begot; birds of all sorts live in common, and by the seed they were conceived conceive.”

For malicious subtlety, can there be a more pregnant example than in the philosopher Thales's mule? He, laden with salt and fording a river, and by accident stumbling there, so that the sacks he carried were all wet, perceiving that by the melting of the salt his burden was something lighter, never failed, so often as he came to any river, to lie down with his load; till his master, discovering the knavery, ordered that he should be laden with wool, wherein finding himself mistaken he ceased to practise that device. There are several that are the very image of our avarice, for we see them infinitely solicitous to catch all they can and hide it with exceeding great care, though they never make any use of it at all. As to thrift, they surpass us not only in the foresight and laying up and saving for the time to come, but they have moreover a great deal of the science necessary thereto. The ants bring abroad into the sun their grain and seeds to air, refresh, and dry them, when they perceive them to mould and grow musty, lest they should decay and rot. But the caution and foresight they exhibit in gnawing their grains of wheat, surpass all imagination of human prudence: for by reason that the wheat does not always continue sound and dry, but grows soft, thaws and dissolves, as if it were steeped in milk, whilst hastening to germination, for fear lest it should shoot and lose the nature and property of a magazine for their subsistence, they nibble off the end by which it should shoot and sprout.

As to what concerns war, which is the greatest and most pompous of human actions, I would very fain know, whether we would use that for an argument of some prerogative, or, on the contrary, for a testimony of our weakness and imperfection; for, in truth, the science of undoing and killing one another, and of ruining and destroying our own kind, has nothing in it so tempting as to make it coveted by beasts who have it not:—

“What stronger lion ever took the life from a weaker? or in what forest was a small boar slain by the teeth of a larger one?”

yet are they not universally exempt; witness the furious encounters of bees, and the enterprises of the princes of the two opposite armies:—

“Often, betwixt two kings, animosities arise with great commotion; then, straight, the

common sort are heard from afar preparing for the war.”

I never read this divine description but that, methinks, I there see human folly and vanity represented in their true and lively colors: for these preparations for war that so frighten and astound us with their noise and tumult, this rattle of guns, drums, and confused voices:—

“When the glancing ray of arms rises heavenward, and the earth glows with beams of shining brass, and is trampled by horses and by men, and the rocks, struck by the various cries, reverberate the sounds to the skies;”

in this dreadful embattling of so many thousands of armed men, and so great fury, ardor, and courage, ’tis pleasant to consider by what idle occasions they are excited, and by how light ones appeased:—

“By reason of Paris’ love, Greece and the Barbarians (foreigners) engaged in dire warfare;”

all Asia was ruined and destroyed for the ungoverned lust of one Paris: the envy of one single man, a despite, a pleasure or a domestic jealousy, causes that ought not to set two oyster wenches by the ears, is the soul and mover of all this mighty bustle. Shall we believe those who are themselves the principal authors of these mischiefs? Let us then hear the greatest and most victorious emperor that ever was making sport of, and with marvellous ingenuity turning into a jest, the many battles fought both by sea and land, the blood and lives of five hundred thousand men that followed his fortune, and the power and riches of two parts of the world, drained for the service of his expeditions...

Now this great body, with so many fronts and motions as seem to threaten heaven and earth:—

“As the innumerable waves that roll on the Lybian shore, when stormy Orion, winter returning, plunges into the waters; or as the golden ears, scorched by the summer’s ray, on Hermus banks or fruitful Lycia, the bright shields dreadfully resound, and as the soldiers march, their footing shakes the ground:”

this furious monster, with so many heads and arms, is yet man, feeble, calamitous, and miserable; ’tis but an ant-hill of ants disturbed and provoked:—

“The black troop marches to the field:”

a contrary wind, the croaking of a flight of ravens, the stumble of a horse, the casual passage of an eagle, a dream, a voice, a sign, a morning mist, are any one of them sufficient to beat down and overturn him. Dart but a sunbeam in his face, he is melted and vanished: blow but a little dust in his eyes, as our poet says of the bees, and all our standards and legions, with the great Pompey himself at the head of them, are routed and crushed to pieces: for it was he, as I take it, that Sertorius beat in Spain with those brave arms, which also served Eumenes against Antigonus, and Surenas against Crassus:—

“These commotions of their minds, and this so mighty fray, quashed by the throw of a little dust, will cease.”

Let us but slip our flies after them, and even these will have the force and the courage to disperse them. Within recent memory, the Portuguese besieging the city of Tamly, in the territory of Xiatine, the inhabitants of the place brought a number of hives, of which are great plenty in that place, upon the wall, and with fire drove the bees so furiously upon the enemy that they gave over the enterprise and trussed up their baggage, not being able to stand their attacks and stings; and so the city, by this new sort of relief, was freed from the danger with so wonderful a fortune, that at their return from the fight there was not found a single bee to tell the story. The souls of emperors and cobblers are cast in the same mould; the weight and importance of the actions of princes considered, we persuade ourselves that they must be produced by some as weighty and important causes: but we are deceived; for they are pushed on and pulled back in their movements by the same springs that we are in our little matters: the same reason that makes us wrangle with a neighbor, causes a war betwixt princes; the same reason that makes us whip a lacquey, befalling a king makes him ruin a whole province. They are as prompt and as easily moved as we, but they are able to do more mischief; in a gnat and an elephant the passion is the same.

As to what concerns fidelity, there is no animal in the world so treacherous as man. Our histories have recorded the eager pursuit that dogs have made after the murderers of their masters. King Pyrrhus, observing a dog that watched a dead man's body, and understanding that he had for three days together performed that office, commanded that the body should be buried, and took the dog along with him. One day, as he was at a general muster of his army, this dog saw his master's murderers, and with great barking and extreme signs of anger flew upon them, by this first accusation awaking the revenge of this murder, which was soon after perfected by form of justice. As much was done by the dog of the sage Hesiod, which convicted the sons of Ganyctor of Naupactus of the murder committed on the person of his master. Another dog, put to guard a temple at Athens, having spied a sacrilegious thief who carried away the finest jewels, fell to barking at him with all the force he had; but, the warders not awaking at the noise, he followed him, and, day being broken, kept off at a short distance, without losing sight of him; if he offered him anything to eat, he would not take it, but would wag his tail at all the passengers he met, and took whatever they gave him at their hands; and if the thief laid down to sleep, he likewise stayed upon the spot. The news of this dog having come to the warders of the temple, they put themselves upon the pursuit, inquiring as to the color of the dog, and at last found him in the city of Cromyon, and the thief also, whom they brought back to Athens, where he had his reward: and the judges taking cognizance of this good office, ordered a certain measure of corn for the dog's daily sustenance, at the public charge, and the priests to take care to it. Plutarch delivers this story for a most certain truth, and as one that happened in the age wherein he lived.

As to gratitude (for it seems to me we had need bring this word into a little greater repute), this one example, which Apion reports himself to have been an eyewitness of, shall suffice. "One day," says he, "that at Rome they entertained the people with the fighting of several strange beasts, and principally of lions of an unusual size, there was one amongst the rest who, by his furious deportment, by the strength and largeness of his limbs, and by his loud and dreadful roaring, attracted the eyes of all the spectators. Amongst the other slaves, that were presented to the people in this combat of beasts, there was one Androclus of Dacia, belonging to a Roman lord of consular dignity. This lion, having seen him at a distance, first made a sudden stop, as it were, in a wondering posture, and then softly approached nearer in a gentle and peaceable manner, as if it were to enter into acquaintance with him; this being done, and being now assured of what he sought, he began to wag his tail, as dogs do when they flatter their masters, and to kiss and lick the hands and thighs of the poor wretch, who was beside

himself and almost dead with fear. Androclus having, by this kindness of the lion, a little come to himself, and having taken so much heart as to consider and recognize him, it was a singular pleasure to see the joy and caresses that passed betwixt them. At which the people breaking into loud acclamations of joy, the emperor caused the slave to be called, to know from him the cause of so strange an event. He thereupon told him a new and a very wonderful story: My master, said he, being proconsul in Africa, I was constrained by his severity and cruel usage, being daily beaten, to steal from him and to run away. And to hide myself securely from a person of so great authority in the province, I thought it my best way to fly to the solitudes, sands, and uninhabitable parts of that country, resolved, in case the means of supporting life should fail me, to make some shift or other to kill myself. The sun being excessively hot at noon, and the heat intolerable, I found a retired and almost inaccessible cave, and went into it. Soon after there came in to me this lion with one foot wounded and bloody, complaining and groaning with the pain he endured: at his coming I was exceedingly afraid, but he having espied me hid in a corner of his den, came gently to me, holding out and showing me his wounded foot, as if he demanded my assistance in his distress. I then drew out a great splinter he had got there, and growing a little more familiar with him, squeezing the wound, thrust out the dirt and gravel that had got into it, wiped and cleansed it as well as I could. He, finding himself something better and much eased of his pain, lay down to repose, and presently fell asleep with his foot in my hand. From that time forward, he and I lived together in this cave three whole years, upon the same diet; for of the beasts that he killed in hunting he always brought me the best pieces, which I roasted in the sun for want of fire, and so ate them. At last growing weary of this wild and brutish life, the lion being one day gone abroad to hunt for our ordinary provision, I escaped from thence, and the third day after was taken by the soldiers, who brought me from Africa to this city to my master, who presently condemned me to die, and to be exposed to the wild beasts. Now, by what I see, this lion was also taken soon after, who would now recompense me for the benefit and cure that he had received at my hands.” This is the story that Androclus told the emperor, which he also conveyed from hand to hand to the people; wherefore at the universal request, he was absolved from his sentence and set at liberty; and the lion was, by order of the people, presented to him. We afterwards saw, says Apion, Androclus leading this lion, in nothing but a small leash, from tavern to tavern at Rome, and receiving what money everybody would give him, the lion being so gentle, as to suffer himself to be covered with the flowers that the people threw upon him, every one that met him: saying, There goes the lion that entertained the man; there goes the man that cured the lion.

We often lament the loss of the beasts we love, and so do they the loss of us:—

“Next, Aethon his warhorse came, without any of his trappings, and with heavy tears wets his cheeks.”

As some nations have wives in common, and some others have every man his own: is not the same evident amongst beasts, and marriages better kept than ours? As to the society and confederation they make amongst themselves to league themselves together, and to give one another mutual assistance, is it not manifest that oxen, hogs, and other animals, at the cry of any of their kind that we offend, all the herd run to his aid, and embody for his defence? When the fish scarus has swallowed the angler’s hook, his fellows all crowd about him, and gnaw the line in pieces; and if by chance one be got into the net, the others present him their tails on the outside, which he holding fast with his teeth, they after that manner disengage and draw him out. Mulletts, when one of their companions is engaged, cross the line over their back, and with a fin they have there, indented like a saw, saw and cut it asunder. As to the particular offices

that we receive from one another for the service of life, there are several like examples amongst them. 'Tis said that the whale never moves that he has not always before him a little fish, like the seagudgeon, for this reason called the guide-fish, whom the whale follows, suffering himself to be led and turned with as great facility as the helm guides the ship: in recompense of which service, whereas all other things, whether beast or vessel, that enter into the dreadful gulf of this monster's mouth, are immediately lost and swallowed up, this little fish retires into it in great security, and there sleeps, during which time the whale never stirs; but so soon as it goes out, he immediately follows: and if by accident he lose sight of this little guide, he goes wandering here and there, and strikes his sides against the rocks, like a ship that has lost her rudder; which Plutarch testifies to have seen off the Island of Anticyra. There is a like society betwixt the little bird called a wren and the crocodile; the wren serves for a sentinel over this great animal; and if the ichneumon, his mortal enemy, approach to fight him, this little bird, for fear lest he should surprise him asleep, both with his voice and bill rouses him and gives him notice of his danger: he feeds on this monster's leavings, who receives him familiarly into his mouth, suffering him to peck in his jaws and betwixt his teeth, and thence to take out the bits of flesh that remain; and when he has a mind to shut his mouth, he first gives the bird warning to go out, by closing it by little and little, without bruising or doing it any harm at all. The shell-fish called nacre lives also in the same intelligence with the shrimp, a little animal of the lobster kind, serving him in the nature of usner and porter, sitting at the opening of the shell which the nacre keeps always gaping and open, till the shrimp sees some little fish proper for their prey within the hollow of the shell, and then it enters too, and pinches the nacre to the quick, so that she is forced to close her shell, where they two together devour the prey they have trapped into their fort. In the manner of living of the tunnies we observe a singular knowledge of the three parts of mathematics: as to astrology, they teach it to men, for they stay in the place where they are surprised by the Brumal Solstice, and never stir thence till the next Equinox; for which reason Aristotle himself attributes to them this science; as to geometry and arithmetic, they always form their array in the figure of a cube, every way square, and make up the body of a battalion, solid, close, and environed with six equal sides; so that swimming in this square order, as large behind as before, whoever in seeing them can count one rank, may easily number the whole troop, by reason that the depth is equal to the breadth, and the breadth to the length.

Michel de Montaigne. "Apology for Raimond Sebond." *Essays of Montaigne*. Vol. 4. Trans. Charles Cotton. New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910.

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