

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

ESSAYS

Book 1 · Chapter 21

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The profit of one man is the damage of an other

DEMADES the Athenian condemned a man of the Cittie, whose trade was to sell such necessaries as belonged to burials, under colour, he asked too much profit for them: and that such profit could not come unto him without the death of many people. This judgement seemeth to be ill taken, because no man profiteth but by the losse of others: by which reason a man should condemne all maner of gaine. The Marchant thrives not but by the licentiousnesse of youth; the Husband man by dearth of corne; the Architect but by the ruine of houses; the Lawyer by sutes and controversies betweene men: Honour it selfe, and practise of religious Ministers, is drawne from our death and vices. *No Phisitian delighteth in the health of his owne friend, saith the ancient Comike: nor no Souldier is pleased with the peace of his Cittie and so of the rest.* And which is worse, let every man sound his owne conscience, hee shall finde, that our inward desires are for the most part nourished and bred in us by the losse and hurt of others; which when I considered, I beganne to thinke, how Nature doth not gainesay herselfe concerning her generall policie: for Phisitians hold, that *The birth, encrease, and augmentation of everything, is the alteration and corruption of another.*

*Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,
Continuò hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante.*

*What ever from it's bounds doth changed passe,
That strait is death of that, which erst it was.*