

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
ESSAYS



Book 1 · Chapter 24

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Of Pedantisme

I HAVE in my youth oftentimes beene vexed, to see a Pedant brought in, in most of Italian Comedies, for a vice or sporte-maker, and the nickname of *Magister* to be of no better signification amongst us. For, my selfe being committed to their tuition, how could I chuse but be somewhat jealous of their reputation? In deede I sought to excuse them by reason of the naturall disproportion, that is betweene the vulgare sorte, and rare and excellent men, both in judgement and knowledge: forsomuch as they take a cleane contrarie course one from another. But when I considered, the choysest men were they, that most contemned them, I was far to seeke, and as it were lost my selfe, witnes our good *Bellaye*:

Mais ie hay par sur tout vn scauoir pedantesque.

*A pedant knowledge, I
Detest out of all cry.*

Yet is this custome very ancient; for *Plutarch* saieth, that *Greeke and Scholer, were amongst the Romans, words of reproach and imputation.* And comming afterwards to yeares of more discretion, I have found they had great reason, and that, *magis magnos clerici, non sunt magis magni sapientes.* *The greatest Clarkes are not the wisest men.* But whence it may proceede, that a minde rich in knowledge, and of so many things, becommeth thereby never livelier nor more quicke-sighted; and a grose-headed, and vulgare spirit, may without amendment, containe the discourse and judgement of the most excellent wits, the world ever produced, I still remaine doubtfull. To receive so many, so strange, yea and so great wits, it must needs followe (said once a Lady unto me, yea one of our chiefest Princesses, speaking of some body) *that a mans owne wit, force, droope, and as it were diminish it selfe, to make roome for others.* I might say, that as plants are choked by over-much moisture, and lampes dammed with too much oyle, so are the actions of the mind over-whelmed by over-abundance of matter and studie: which occupied and intangled with so great a diversitie of things, looseth the mean to spread and cleare it selfe; and that surcharge keepeth it lowe-drooping and faint. But it is otherwise, for our mind stretcheth the more by how much more it is replenished. And in examples of former times, the contrary is seene, of sufficient men

in the managing of publike affaires, of great Captaines, and notable Counsellors in matters of estate, to have bin therewithall excellently wise. And concerning Philosophers, retired from all publike negotiations, they have indeede sometimes bene vilified, by the comike libertie of their times, their opinions and demeanors yeelding them ridiculous. Will you make them judges of the right of a processe, or of the actions of a man? They are ready for it. They enquire whether there be any life yet remaining, whether any motion. Whether man bee any thing then an Oxe; what working or suffering is; what strange beastes law and justice are. Speake they of the Magistrate, or speake they unto him? They do it with an unreverent and uncivill liberty. Heare they a Prince or a King commended? Hee is but a shepheard to them, as idle as a Swaine busied about milking of his cattell, or shearing of his sheepe: but yet more rudely. Esteeme you any man the greater for possessing two hundred acres of land? They scoffe at him, as men accustomed to embrace all the world, as their possession. Do you boast of your Nobilitie, because you can blazon your descent of seaven or eight rich Grandfathers? They will but little regard you, as men that conceive not the universall image of nature, and howe many predecessors every one of us hath had, both rich and poore, kings and groomes, Greekes and Barbarians. And were you lineally descended in the fiftieth degree from *Hercules*, they deeme it a vanitie to vaunt or alleadge this gift of fortune. So did the vulgare sort disdaine them as ignorant of the first and common things, and as presumptuous and insolent. But this Platonicall lustre is farre from that which our men stand in need of. They were envied as being beyond the common sort, as despising publike actions, as having proposed unto themselves a particular and inimitable life, aiming and directed at certaine high discourses, and from the common use: these are disdained as men beyond the ordinary fashion, as incapable of publike charges, as leading an unsociable life, and professing base and abject customes, after the vulgar kind. *Odi homines ignavos opera, Philosophos sententia. I hate men that are fooles in working, and Philosophers in speaking.* As for those Philosophers, I say, that as they were great in knowledge, so were they greater in all action. And even as they reporte of that *Syracusan* Geometrician, who being taken from his bookish contemplation, to shew some practise of his skill, for the defence of his countrie, reared sodainely certaine terror-moving engines, and shewed effects farre exceeding all mens conceit, himselfe notwithstanding disdaining all his handie-worke, supposing he had thereby corrupted the dignitie of his arte; his engines and manuall workes being but the apprenticeships, and trialls of his skill in sporte. So they, if at any time they have bene put to the triall of any action, they have bene seene to flie so high a pitch, and with so loftie a flight, that men might apparantly see their mindes and spirits were through the intelligence of things, become wonderfully rich and great. But some perceiving the seate of politike government possessed by unworthy and incapable men, have withdrawne themselves from it. And hee who demaunded of *Crates*, how long men should Philosophize, received this answer, untill such time as they who have the conduct of our armies be no longer blockish asses. *Heraclitus* resigned the royalty unto his brother. And to the Ephesians, who reproved him for spending his time in playing with children before the temple: hee answered, And is it not better to doe so, then to governe the publike affaires in your company? Others having their imagination placed beyond fortune and the world, found the seates

of justice, and the thrones of Kings, to be but base and vile. And *Empedocles* refused the royaltie, which the *Agrigentines* offered him. *Thales* sometimes accusing the carke and care men tooke about good husbandry, and how to grow rich; some replied unto him, that he did as the fox, because he could not attaine unto it himselfe: which hearing, by way of sport he would needes shew by experience how he could at his pleasure become both thriftie and rich; and bending his wits to gaine and profit, erected a traffike, which within one yeare brought him such riches, as the skilfullest in the trade of thriving, could hardly in all their life devise how to get the like. That which *Aristotle* reporteth of some, who called both him, and *Anaxagoras*, and such like men, wise, and not prudent, because they cared not for things more profitable: besides, I do not very well digest this nice difference of words, that serveth my find-fault people for no excuse: and to see the base and needy fortune, wherewith they are content, we might rather have just cause to pronounce them, neither wise nor prudent. I quit this first reason, and thinke it better to say, that this evill proceedeth from the bad course they take to follow sciences; and that respecting the manner we are instructed in them, it is no wonder if neither Schollers nor Maisters, howbeit they proove more learned, become no whit more sufficient. Verily the dayly care, and continuall charges of our fathers, aymeth at nothing so much, as to store our heads with knowledge and learning; as for judgement and vertue, that is never spoken of. If a man passe by, cry out to our people; *Oh what a wise man goeth yonder? And of another: Oh what a good man is yonder?* He will not faile to cast his eyes and respect toward the former. A third cryer were needefull, to say, *Oh what blocke-heads are those!* We are ever ready to aske, *Hath he any skill in the Greeke and Latine tongue? can he write well? doth hee write in prose or verse?* But whether hee bee growne better or wiser, which should bee the chiefest of his drift, that is never spoken of, we should rather enquire who is better wise, then who is more wise. We labour, and toyle, and plod to fill the memorie, and leave both understanding and conscience emptie. Even as birds flutter and skip from field to field to pecke up corne, or any graine, and without tasting the same, carry it in their bills, therewith to feede their little ones; so doe our pedants gleane and picke learning from bookes, and never lodge it further then their lips, onely to degorge and cast-it to the wind. It is strange how fitly sottishnesse takes holde of mine example. Is not that which I doe in the greatest part of this composition, all one and selfe same thing? I am ever here and there picking and culling, from this and that booke, the sentences that please me, not to keepe them (for I have no store-house to reserve them in) but to transport them into this: where, to say truth, they are no more mine, then in their first place: we are (in mine opinion) never wise, but by present learning, not by that which is past, and as little by that which is to come. But which is worse, their Schollers, and their little ones are never a whit the more fed or better nourished: but passeth from hand to hand, to this end onely, thereby to make a glorious shew, therewith to entertaine others, and with it's helpe to frame some quaint stories or pretty tales, as of a light and counterfeit coyne, unprofitable for any use or employment, but to reckon and cast acompts. *Apud alios loqui didicerunt, non ipsi secum. Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum. They have learned to speake with others, not with themselves, speaking is not so requisite as governement.* Nature, to shew that nothing is savage in whatsoever she produceth, causeth oftentimes, even in rudest and most unarted nations, productions of spirits to arise, that

confront and wrestle with the most artist productions. As concerning my discourse, is not the Gaskonie proverbe, drawne from a bag-pipe, pretty and quaint? *Bouha prou bouha, mas à remuda lous dits què m.* You may blow long enough, but if once you stirre your fingers, you may goe seeke. Wee can talke and prate, *Cicero* sayeth thus, These are *Platoes* customes, These are the very words of *Aristotle*; but what say we our selves? what doe we? what judge we? A Perot would say as much. This fashion puts me in minde of that rich Romane, who to his exceeding great charge had bene very industrious to finde out the most sufficient men in all sciences, which he continually kept about him, that if at any time, occasion should bee moved amongst his friends to speake of any matter pertaining to Schollership, they might supplie his place, and be ready to assist him: some with discourse, some with a verse of *Homere*, othersome with a sentence, eachone according to his skill or profession; who perswaded himselfe that all such learning was his owne, because it was contained in his servants mindes. As they doe whose sufficiencie is placed in their sumptuous libraries. I know some, whom if I aske what he knoweth, hee will require a booke to demonstrate the same, and durst not dare to tell me that his posteriours are scabious, except he turne over his *Lexicon* to see what posteriours and scabious is, we take the opinions and knowledge of others into our protection, and that is all: I tell you they must bee enfeoffed in us, and made our owne. Wee may very well be compared unto him, who having neede of fire, should goe fetch some at his neighbours chimney, where finding a good fire, should there stay to warme himselfe, forgetting to carry some home, what availes it us to have our bellies full of meat, if it be not digested? if it bee not transchanged in us? except it nourish, augment, and strengthen us? May we imagine that *Lucullus*, whom learning made and framed so great a Captaine without experience, would have taken it after our manner? We relie so much upon other mens armes, that we disanull our owne strength. Will I arme my selfe against the feare of death? it is at *Senecaes* cost: will I draw comfort either for my selfe or any other? I borrow the same of *Cicero*. I would have taken-it in my selfe, had I been exercised unto it, I love not this relative and begd-for sufficiencie. Suppose we may be learned by other mens learning. Sure I am, wee can never be wise, but by our owne wisdom.

μισῶ σοφιστήν, ὅστις οὐχ αὐτῷ σοφός.

*That wise man I cannot abide,
That for himselfe cannot provide,*

Ex quo Ennius: Nequidquam sapere sapientem, qui ipsi sibi prodesse non quiret. Whereupon saith *Ennius*. *That wise man is vainely wise, who could not profit himselfe.*

*si cupidus, si
Vanus, & Euganea quantumvis vilior agna.*

*If covetous, if vaine (not wise)
Then any lambe more base, more nice.*

Non enim paranda nobis solùm, sed fruenda sapientia est. For, wee must not onely purchase wisdom, but enjoy and employ the same. *Dionysius* scoffeth at those

Gramarians, who ploddingly labour to know the miseries of *Ulysses*, and are ignorant of their owne, mocketh those Musicians, that so attentively tune their instruments, and never accord their manners: derideth those Orators, that study to speake of justice, and never put it in execution. Except our minde be the better, unlesse our judgement be the sounder, I had rather my scholler had employed his time in playing at Tennis; I am sure his body would be the nimbler. See but one of these our universitie men or bookish schollers returne from schoole, after he hath there spent ten or twelve yeares under a Pedants charge: who is so unapt for any matter? who so unfitte for any company? who so to seeke if hee come into the world? all the advantage you discover in him, is, that his Latine and Greeke, have made him more sottish, more stupide, and more presumptuous, then before he went from home. Whereas hee should returne with a minde full-fraught, he returnes with a winde-puft conceite: insteade of plum-feeding the same, hee hath onely spunged it up with vanitie. These Maisters, as *Plato* speaketh of Sophisters (their cosin germanes) of all men, are those, that promise to be most profitable, unto men, and alone, amongst all, that not onely amend not what is committed to their charge,¹ but empaire and destroy the same, and yet they must full dearely be payed. If the law which *Protagoras* proposed to his disciples, were followed, which was that either they should pay-him according to his word, or sweare in the temple, how much they esteemed the profit, they had received by his discipline, and accordingly satisfie him for his paines, my Pedagogues would be aground, especially if they would stand to the othe of my experience. My vulgar Perigordin-speech doth very pleasantly terme such selfe conceited wisards, Letter-ferits, as if they would say letter strucken men, to whom (as the common saying it is) letters have given a blow with a mallet. Verily for the most parte they seeme to be distracted even from common sense. Note but the plaine husbandman, or the unwily shoemaker, and you see them simply and naturally plod on their course, speaking onely of what they know and no further; whereas these letter-puft pedants, because they would faine raise themselves aloft, and with their litterall doctrine which floteth up and downe the superficies of their braine, arme themselves beyond other men, they uncessantly intricate and entangle themselves: they utter lofty words, and speake golden sentences, but so that another man place, fit, and apply them. They are acquainted with *Galen*, but know not the disease. They will stuffe your head with lawes, when God wot they have not yet conceived the ground of the case. They know the Theorike of all things, but you must seeke who shall put it in practise. I have seene a friend of mine in mine owne house, who by way of sporte talking with one of these pedanticall gulls, counterfeited a kinde of fustian tongue, and speake a certaine gibrish, without rime or reason, sans head or foote, a hotch-pot of diverse things, but that he did often enterlace it with inkepot termes, incident to their disputations, to amuse the bookish sot for a whole day long with debating and contending; ever thinking he answered the Objections made unto him; yet was hee a man of letters, and reputation, a graduate, and wore a goodly formall long gowne.

*Vos ô patritius sanguis quos vivere par est
Occipiti cæco, posticæ occurrite sannæ.*

*You noble bloods, who with a noddle blinde,
Should live, meet with the mocke that's made behind.*

Whosoever shall narrowly looke into this kind of people, which far and wide hath spread it selfe, he shall finde (as I have done,) that for the most part, they neither understand themselves, nor others, and that their memorie is many times sufficiently full fraught, but their judgement ever hollow and emptie: except their naturall inclination have of it selfe otherwise fashioned them. As I have seene *Adrianus Turnebus*, who having never professed any thing but study and letters, wherein he was, in mine opinion, the worthiest man that lived these thousand yeeres, and who notwithstanding had no Pedanticall thing about him, but the wearing of his gowne, and some externall fashions, that could not well be reduced, and incivilized to the courtiers cut; things of no consequence. And I naturally hate our people, that will more hardly endure a long roabe uncuriously worne, then a crosse skittish mind: and that observe what leg, or reverence he makes, note his garbe or demeanor view his boots or his hat, and marke what maner of man he is. For his inward parts, I deeme him to have bin one of the most unspotted and truly-honest minds that ever was. I have sundry times of purpose urged him to speake of matters furthest from his study, wherein hee was so cleare-sighted, and could with so quicke an apprehension conceive, and with so sound a judgement distinguish them, that hee seemed never to have professed or studied other facultie then warre, and matters of state. Such spirits, such natures may be termed worthy, goodly, and solide.

*queis arte benigna
Et meliore luto finxit precordia Titan.*

*Whose bowels heavens-bright-Sunne composed
Of better molde, art wel-disposed.*

That maintaine themselves against any badde institution. Now it sufficeth not that our institution marre us not, it must change us to the better. There are some of our Parliaments and Courtes, who when they are to admit of any officers, doe only examine them of their learning; others, that by presenting them the judgement of some lawe cases, endeouore to sound their understanding. Me thinks the latter keepe the better stile: And albeit these two parts are necessary, and both ought to concurre in one, yet truely should that of learning bee lesse prized then judgement, this may well be without the other, and not the other without this. For as the Greeke verse saith.

ὡς οὐδέν ἢ μάθησις, ἢν μὴ νοῦς παρῆ,

*Learning nought worth doth lie,
Be not discretion by.*

Wherto serveth learning, if understanding be not joyned to it? Oh would to God, that for the good of our justice, the societies of Lawyers were as well stored with judgement, discretion, and conscience, as they are with learning and wit. *Non vitæ, sed scholæ discimus. We learne not for our life, but for the Schoole.* It is not enough to joyne learning and knowledge to the minde, it should be incorporated unto it: it must not be sprinkled, but dyde with it; and if it change not and better hir estate (which is imperfect) it were much better to leave it. It is a dangerous Sworde, and which hindereth and offendeth hir maister, if it bee in a weake hand, and

which hath not the skill to manage the same: *Vt fuerit melius non didicisse: So as it were better that we had not learned.* It is peradventure the cause, that neither we, nor divinitie require not much learning in women; and that *Francis Duke of Britannie*, sonne to *John the fifth*, when hee was spoken unto for a marriage betweene him and *Isabel* a daughter of *Scotland*; and some told him she was but meanly brought up, and without any instruction of learning, answered, hee loved hir the better for it, and that a woman was wise enough, if she could but make a difference betweene her smocke, and her husbands doublet. It is also no such wonder (as some say) that our auncesters did never make any great accompt of Letters, and that even at this day (except it be by chaunce) they are not often found in our Kings or Princes chiefest counsels and consultations: And if the end to growe rich by them, which now-adayes is altogether proposed unto us by the studie of Law, of Phisicke, of Pedantisme, and of Divinitie, did not keep them in credit, without doubt you should see them as beggarly and needy, and as much vilified as ever they were. And what hurt I pray you, since they neither teach us to think well, nor do well? *Postquam docti prodiderunt, boni desunt. Since men became learned, good men failed.* Each other science is prejudiciall unto him, that hath not the science of goodnesse. But may not the reason I whilome sought for, also proceede thence? That our study in *France*, having as it were no other aime but profit, but those lesse whom nature hath produced to more generous offices, then lucrative, giving themselves unto learning, or so briefly (before they have apprehended any liking of them, retired unto a profession that hath no communitie with bookes) there are then none left, altogether to engage themselves to study and Bookes, but the meaner kind of people, and such as are borne to base fortune, and who by learning and letters seek some meane to live, and enrich themselves. The mindes of which people beeing both by naturall inclination, by example, and familiar institution, of the basest stampe, doe falsely reape the fruite of learning. For it is not in hir power to give light unto the mind, that hath none, nor to make a blind man to see. The mystery of it is not to affoord him sight, but to direct it for him, to addresse his goings, alwayes provided he have feete of his owne, and good, straite, and capable legges. Knowledge is an excellent drugge, but no drugge is sufficiently strong to preserve it selfe without alteration or corruption, according to the fault of the vessell, that containes it. Some man hath a cleare sight, that is not right-sighted; and by consequence seeth what good is, and doth not follow it; and seeth knowledge, but makes no use of it. The chiefest ordinance of *Plato* in his common wealth, is, to give unto his Cittizens their charge, according to their nature. Nature can do all, and dooth all. The crookte-backt or deformed, are unfit for any exercise of the body, and crooked and mishappen mindes unproper for exercises of the minde. The bastard and vulgar sorte are unworthy of Philosophie. When we see a man ill shodde, if he chaunce to be a shoemaker, wee say it is no wonder, for commonly none goes worse shodde then they. Even so it seemes, that experience doth often shew us, a Phisitian lesse healthy, a Divine lesse reformed, and most commonly a Wiseman lesse sufficient then an other. *Aristo Chius* had heeretofore reason to say, that Philosophers did much hurt to their auditors, forasmuch as the greatest number of mindes are not apt to profite by such instructions, which, if they take not a good, they will follow a bad course: *ἀσώτους² Ex Aristippi, acerbos ex Zenonis schola exire. They proceed licentious out of the Schoole of Aristippus, but bitter out of the Schoole of Zeno.* In that excellent institution which *Xenophon* giveth the

Persians, we find, that as other Nations teach their children Letters, so they taught theirs vertue. *Plato* saith the eldest borne sonne, in their royall succession, was thus taught. As soone as he was borne, hee was delivered, not to women, but to such Eunuches, as by reason of their vertue were in chiefest authoritie about the King. Their speciall charge was first to shapen his limmes and bodie, goodly, and healthie; and at seaven yeares of age, they instructed and inured him to sitte on horsebacke, and to ride a hunting: when hee came to the age of fourteene, they delivered him into the handes of foure men, that is to say, the wisest, the justest, the most temperate, and the most valiant of all the nation. The first taught him religion; the second, to be ever upright and true; the third, to become Maister of his owne desires; and the fourth, to feare nothing. It is a thing worthy great consideration, that in that excellent, and as I may terme it, matchlesse pollicie of *Lycurgus*, and in trueth, by reason of her perfection, monstrous, yet notwithstanding, so carefull for the education of children, as of her principall charge, and even in the Muses bosome and resting-place, there is so little mention made of learning: as if that generous youth disdainning all other yokes but of vertue, ought onely be furnished, in lieu of tutors of learning, with maisters of valour, of justice, of wisdom, and of temperance. An example which *Plato* hath imitated in his Lawes. The manner of their discipline was, to propound questions unto them, teaching the judgement of men and of their actions: and if by way of reason or discourse, they condemned or praised, either this man, or that deede, they must be tolde the trueth and best: by which meanes at once they sharpned their wittes, and learned the right. *Astiages* in *Xenophon* calleth *Cyrus* to an accompt of his last lesson: It is (saieth he) that a great lad in our Schoole, having a little coate, gave it to one of his fellowes, that was of lesser stature than himselfe, and tooke his coate from him, which was too big for him: our Maister having made me judge of that difference, I judged that things must be left in the state they were in, and that both seemed to be better fitted as they were; whereupon he shewed me, I had done ill; because I had not onely considered the comelinesse, where I should chiefly have respected justice, which required, that none should be forced in any thing which properly belonged to him, and saide, hee was whipt for it, as we are in our countrie-townes, when we have forgotten the first preterperfect tense or *Aoriste* of *τύπτω*. My Regent might long enough make mee a prolix and cunning Oration *in genere demonstrativo*, in the oratorie kind of praise or dispraise, before ever hee should perswade me his Schoole is worth that. They have gone about to make the way shorter: and since Sciences (even when they are right taken) can teach us nothing but wisdom, honestie, integritie, and resolution; they have at first sight, attempted to put their children to the proper of effects, and instruct them, not by heare-say, but by assay of action, lively modelling and framing them, not onely by precepts and woordes, but principally by examples and woorkes, that it might not be a Science in their minde, but rather his complexion and habitude; not a purchase, but a naturall inheritance.

To this purpose when *Agesilaus* was demaunded, what his opinion was, children should learne: answered, *What they should doe being men*. It is no marvell, if such an institution have produced so admirable effects. Some say, that in other Citties of *Greece* they went to seeke for Rhetoricians, for Painters and for Musicians; whereas in *Lacedemon*, they fought for Lawe-

givers, for Magistrates, and Emperors of armies: In *Athens* men learnd to say well, but here, to doe well: there to resolve a sophisticall argument, and to confound the imposture and amphibologie of words, captiously enterlaced together; here to shake off the allurements of voluptuousnes, and with an undanted courage to contemne the threats of fortune, and reject the menaces of death: those busied and laboured themselves about idle wordes, these after materiall things: there the tongue was ever in continuall exercise of speaking, here the minde in an uncessant practise of well-doing. And therefore was it not strange, if *Antipater* requiring fiftie of their children for hostages, they answered cleane contrarie to that wee would doe, *that they would rather deliver him twice as many men*; so much did they value and esteeme the losse of their countries education. When *Agesilaus* inviteth *Xenophon* to send his children to *Sparta*, there to be brought up; it is not, because they should learne Rhetorike, or Logike, but, as himselfe saith, *to the ende they may learne the worthiest and best science that may bee, to witte, the knowledge how to obey, and the skill how to commaund*. It is a sport to see *Socrates*, after his blunt manner, to mocke *Hippias*, who reporteth unto him, what great summes of monie he had gained, especially in certaine little Citties, and small townes of *Sicily*, by keeping schoole, and teaching letters, and that at *Sparta* he could not get a shilling. That they were but Idiots and foolish people, who can neither measure nor esteeme; nor make no accoumpt of grammer or of rythmes; and who onely amuse themselves to knowe the succession of Kings, the establishing and declination of estates, and such like trash of flim-flam tales. Which done, *Socrates* forcing him particularly to allow the excellencie of their forme of publike government, the happines and vertue of their private life, remits unto him to guesse the conclusion of the unprofitableness of his artes. Examples teach us both in this martiall policie, and in all such like, that the studie of sciences doth more weaken and effeminate mens mindes, then corroborate and adapt them to warre. The mightiest, yea the best settled estate, that is now in the world, is that of the Turkes, a nation equally instructed to the esteeme of armes, and disesteeme of letters. I find *Rome* to have beene most valiant, when it was least learned. The most warlike nations of our daies, are the rudest and most ignorant. The Scithians, the Parthians, and *Tamburlane*, serve to verifie my saying. When the Gothes over-ranne and ravaged *Greece*; that which saved all their Libraries from the fire, was, that one amongst them, scattered this opinion, that such trash of bookes and papers must be left untoucht and whole for their enemies, as the onely meane, and proper instrument to divert them from all militarie exercises, and amuse them to idle, secure, and sedentarie occupations. When our King *Charles* the eight, in a manner without unsheathing his sworde, sawe himselfe absolute Lord of the whole kingdome of *Naples*, and of a great part of *Thuscanie*, the Princes and Lords of his traine, ascribed this sodaine, and unhoped for victorie, and facilitie of so noble and prodigious a conquest, onely to this, that most of the Princes and nobilitie of *Italie* amused themselves rather to become ingenious and wise by learning, then vigorous and warriers by militarie exercises.

NOTES

- 1 Subsequent editions add “as doth a carpenter or a mason,”
- 2 Early French editions of the *Essays* had “asotos” written in Greek, as ἀσώτους, even though Montaigne’s handwritten notes do use Latin for this word. Florio was working from an early posthumous edition, which had the Greek form.