

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

ESSAYS

Book 1 · Chapter 28

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Nine and twentie Sonnets of Steven de la Boetie

To the Ladie of Grammont, Countesse of Guissen.

MADAME, I present you with nothing that is mine, either because it is already yours, or because I find nothing therein worthy of you. But wheresoever these verses shall be seene, for the honor which thereby shall redound to them, by having this glorious *Corisanda* of *Andoins* for their guide, I thought it good to adorne them with your worthy name. I have deemed this present fit for your Ladyship, forsomuch as there are few Ladies in *France*, that either can better judge of Poesie, or fitter apply the use of it, then your worthy selfe: and since in these her drooping dayes, none can give-it more life, or vigorous spirit, then you, by those rich and high-tuned accords, wherewith amongst a million of other rare beauties, nature hath richly graced you. Madame, these verses deserve to be cherished by you: and I am perswaded you will be of mine opinion, which is, that none have come out of *Gaskonie*, that either had more wit, or better invention, and that witnesse to have proceeded from a richer vaine. And let no jealousy possesse you, inasmuch as you have but the remainder of that, which whilome I caused to be printed under the name of my Lord of *Foix*, your worthy, noble and deare kinsman: For truely, these have a kinde of liveliness, and more piercing Emphasis than any other, and which I can not well expresse: as hee that made them in his Aprils youth, and when he was enflamed with a noble-glorious flame, as I will one day tell your Honour in your eare. The other were afterward made by him in favour of his wife, at what time hee wooed and solicited her for mariage, and beganne to feele I wot not what maritall-chilnesse, and husbands-coldnesse. And I am one of those, whose opinion is, that divine Poesie doth no where fadge so well, and so effectually applaudeth, as in a youthfull, wanton, and unbridled subject. The above-mentioned nine and twentie Sonnets of *Boetie*, and that in the former impressions of this booke were heere set downe, have since beene printed with his other workes.