

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
ESSAYS



Book 1 · Chapter 34

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Of a defect in our policies

MY WHILOME-FATHER, a man who had no helpe but from experience, and his owne nature, yet of an unspotted judgement, hath heer-tofore told me, that he much desired to bring in this custome, which is, that in all citties there should be a certaine appointed place, to which, whosoever shoulde have neede of any thing, might come and cause his busines to be registred by some officer appointed for that purpose: As for example, if one have pearles to sell, he should say, I seek to sell some pearls: and another, I seek to buy some pearls: Such a man would faine have companie to travell to *Paris*; Such a one enquireth for a servant of this, or that qualitie; Such a one seeketh for a Maister; another a workeman; Some this; some that, every man as he needed. And it seemeth that this meanes of enter-warning one another; would bring no small commoditie unto common commerce and societie; For there are ever conditions that enter-seeke one another, and because they understand not one another, they leave men in great necessitie. I understand, to the infamous reproach of our age, that even in our sight, two most excellent men in knowledge, have miserablie perished for want of food and other necessaries: *Lilius Gregorius Giraldu* in *Italie*, and *Sebastianus Castalio* in *Germanie*: And I verily believe there are many thousands, who had they knowne or understood their wants, would either have sent for them, and with large stipends entertained them, or would have convaide them succour, where-ever they had beene. The world is not so generally corrupted, but I know some, that would earnestly wish, and with harty affection desire, the goods which their forefathers have left them, might, so long as it shall please fortune they may enjoy them, be employed for the reliefe of rare, and supply of excellent mens necessitie, and such as for any kinde of worth and vertue are remarkable; many of which are dayly seene to be pursued by ill fortune even to the utmost extremitie, and that would take such order for them, as had they not their ease and content, it might onelie be imputed to their want of reason or lack of discretion. In this Oeconomicke or houshold order my father had this order, which I can commend, but no way follow: which was, that besides the day-booke of houshold affaires, wherein are registred at least expences, paiments, gifts, bargains and sales, that require not a Notaries hand to them, which booke a receiver had the keeping-of: he appointed another journall-booke to one of his servants, who was his clarke,

wherein he should insert and orderly set downe all accidents worthy the noting, and day by day register the memories of the history of his house: A thing very pleasant to reade, when time began to weare out the remembrance of them, and fit for us to passe the time withall, and to resolve some doubts: when such a worke was begunne, when ended, what way or course was taken, what accidents hapned, how long it continued; all our voyages; where, and how long wee were from home; our marriages, who died, and when; the receiving of good or bad tidings, who came, who went, changing or remooving of housholde officers, taking of new, or discharging of old servants, and such-like matters. An ancient custome, and which I woulde have all men use and bring into fashion againe in their severall homes: and I repent my selfe, I have so foolishly neglected the same.