

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
ESSAYS



Book 1 · Chapter 41

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That a man should not communicate his glorie

OF ALL THE FOLLIES of the world, the most universall, and of most men received, is the care of reputation, and studie of glorie, to which we are so wedded, that we neglect, and castoff ritches, friends, repose, life and health (goods effectuall and substantiall) to follow that vaine image, and idlie-simple voice, which hath neither body, nor hould-fast.

*La fama, ch' inuaghisce à un dolce suono
Gli superbi mortali, & par'si bella,
E un echo, un sogno, anzi d'un sogno un'ombra,
Ch'adogni vento si dilegua & sgombra,*

*Fame that enveagl's high aspiring men
With hir harmonious sound, and seemes so faire,
An Eccho is, a dreame, dreames shadow rather
Which flies and fleetes as any winde doth gather.*

And of mens unreasonable humors, it seemeth, that the best philosophers doe most slowly, and more unwillingly cleare themselves of this, then of any other: it is the most peevisch, the most froward, and the most opinative. *Quia etiam bene proficientes animos tentare non cessat. Because it ceaseth not to tempt even those Mindes that profite best.* There are not many whereof reason doth so evidently condemne vanitie, but it is so deeply rooted in us, as I wot not whether any man could ever clearly discharge himselfe of-it. When you have alleaged all the reasons you can, and believed all to disavowe and reject her, she produceth contrary to your discourse, so intestine an inclination, that you have small hold against-hir. For (as Cicero saith,) *Even those that oppugne hir, will neverthesse have the bookes they write against hir, to beare their names upon their fronts, endeavoring to make themselves glorious by dispising of glory.* Al other things fall within the compasse of commerce: we lend our goods, we employ our lives, if our friends stand in need of-us: But seldome shall wee see a man communicate his honour, share his reputation, and imparte his glory unto others. *Catulus Luctatius* in the warres against the Cymbres, having done the utmost of his endeavours to stay his souldiers that fled before their enemies, put-himselfe amongst the runne-awayes, and dissembled to bee a coward, that so they might rather seeme to follow

their Captaine, then flie from theemie: This was a neglecting and leaving off his reputation, to conceale the shame and reproach of others. When *Charles* the fift passed into *Provence*, the yeare a thousand five hundred thirty seaven, some are of opinion, that *Anthony de Leva*, seeing the emperor his master resolutely obstinate to undertake that voyage, and deeming it wonderfully glorious, maintained neverthelesse the contrary, and discourcelled him from-it, to the end all the honour and glory of this counsel might be attributed unto his Maister; and that it might be said, his good advise and fore-sight to have beene such, that contrary to al mens opinions, he had atchieved so glorious an enterprise: Which was, to honor and magnifie him at his owne charges. The Thracian Ambassadors comforting *Achileonida* the Mother of *Brasidas*, for the death of hir son, and highly extolling and commending him, said, he had not left his equall behind him. She refused this private commendation, and particular praise, to assigne-it to the publike state. *Do not tell me that* (quoth she,) *For I knowe the City of Sparta hath many greater, and more valiant Cittizens then he was.* At the battaile of *Crecy*, *Edward* the blacke Prince of *Wales*, being yet very yoong, had the leading of the vant-gard: The Lordes and Captaines that accompanied him, perceiving the great danger, sent unto King *Edward* the Princes father, to come and help them: which when he heard, he enquired what plight his sonne was-in, and how he did, and hearing that he was living, and on horse-backe; *I should* (quoth he) *offer him great wrong to goe now, and deprive him of the honor of this combates victory, which he already hath so long sustained; what danger soever there be in-it, it shall wholly be his:* and would neither goe nor send unto him: knowing, that if he had gone, or sent, it would have beene saide, that without his ayde all had beene lost, and that the advantage of this exploite would have beene ascribed unto him. *Semper enim quod postremum adiectum est, id rem totam uidetur traxisse.* For, evermore that which was last added, seemes to have drawne on the whole matter. In Rome many thought, and it was commonly spoken, that the chiefest glorious deedes of *Scipio*, were partely due unto *Laelius*, who notwithstanding did ever advance the greatnesse, further the glorie, and second the renowne of *Scipio*, without any respect of his owne. And *Theopompus* King of *Sparta*, to one who tolde him, that the common-wealth should subsist and continue still, forsomuch as he could commaund so well: *No*, said he, *it is rather, because the people know so well how to obey.* As the women that succeeded in the Peere-domes of *France*, had (notwithstanding their sexe) right to assist, and priviledge to pleade in cases appertaining to the jurisdiction of Peeres: So the Ecclesiasticall Peeres, notwithstanding their profession and function, were bound to assist our Kings in their warres, not onely with hir friends, servants, and tenants, but in their owne person. The Bishop of *Beauvais*, being with *Philip Augustus* in the battell of *Bovines*, did very courageously take part with him in the effect; but thought hee should not be partaker of the fruite and glorie of that bloody and violent exercise. He overcame, and forced that day many of the enemies to yelde, whom he delivered unto the first gentleman he met withall, to rifle, to take them prisoners, or at their pleasure to dispose of them. Which he also did, with *William Earle of Salisbury*, whom he delivered unto the Lord *John of Nesle*. With a semblable suttletie of conscience, unto this other. He desired to fell and strike downe a man, but not to hurt or wound him: and therefore never fought but with a great clubbe. A man in my time being accused to the King, to have laide violent handes upon a

Priest, denied it very stowtly, forsomuch as hee had onely thumped and trampled him with his feete.