CHAPTER XII.

APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND SEBOND.¹

Learning is, indeed, a very great and a very material accomplishment; and those who despise it sufficiently discover their own want of understanding; but yet I do not prize it at the excessive rate that some others do, as Herillus, the philosopher, for one, who therein places the sovereign good, and maintained "That it was only in her to render us wise and contented," ² which I do not believe; no more than I do what others have said, that learning is the mother of all virtue, and that all vice proceeds from ignorance, which, if it be true, requires a very long interpretation. My house has long been open to men of knowledge, and is very well known to them; for my father, who governed it fifty years and upwards, inflamed with the new ardour with which Francis the First embraced letters, and brought them into esteem, with great diligence and expense hunted after the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them into his house as persons sacred, and that had some particular inspiration of divine wisdom; collecting their sayings and sentences as so many oracles, and with so much the greater reverence and religion as he was the less able to judge of them; for he had no knowledge of letters any more than his predecessors. For my part I love them well, but I do not adore them. Amongst others, Peter Buneil,³ a man of great reputation for knowledge in his time, having, with some

¹ Called also Sebon, Sebyde, Sabonde, de Sebonde; born at Barcelona in the fourteenth century; died in 1422, at Toulouse, where he had lived as professor of medicine and theology. Joseph Scaliger said of this apology for Sebond: "Es omnino falsum, ut magnificat a magno."—Scalig. It.

² Laertius, i. 347.

³ A native of Toulouse, one of the most able Chronion of the sixteenth century, in the opinion of Henry Stephen; born 1499, died at Turin 1545. He was preceptor of Fibrac. See Bals, in verbo.
others of his sort, staid some days at Montaigne in my father's company, he presented him at his departure with a book, entitled *Theologia naturalis; sive, Liber Creaturarum, magistri Raimondi de Sebode.*

And as the Italian and Spanish tongues were familiar to my father, and as this book was written in a sort of jargon of Spanish with Latin terminations, he hoped that, with a little help, he might be able to understand it, and therefore recommended it to him for a very useful book, and proper for the time wherein he gave it to him; which was when the novel doctrines of Luther began to be in vogue, and in many places to stagger our ancient belief; wherein he was very well advised, wisely, in his own reason, foreseeing that the beginning of this distemper would easily run into an execrable atheism, for the vulgar, not having the faculty of judging of things, suffering themselves to be carried away by chance and appearance, after having once been inspired with the boldness to despise and control those opinions which they had before had in extreme reverence, such as those wherein their salvation is concerned, and that some of the articles of their religion are brought into doubt and dispute, they afterwards throw all other parts of their belief into the same uncertainty, they having with them no other authority or foundation than the others they had already discomposed; and shake off all the impressions they had received from the authority of the laws, or the reverence of the ancient customs, as a tyrannical yoke:

\[\text{Nam cupidis concusseatur nimirum ante metum;}\]

"For with most eagerness they spurn the law,
By which they were before most kept in awe;"

resolving to admit nothing for the future to which they had not first interposed their own decrees, and given their particular consent.

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1 In the first edition of the Essays, and in that of 1688, it is simply called *La Theologie Naturale de Raimond Sebode.* The original Latin work was first printed at Deventer, in 1487, and was often reprinted in France during the 16th and 17th centuries.

2 Lucret. v. 1130.
It happened that my father, a little before his death, having accidentally found this book under a heap of other neglected papers, commanded me to translate it for him into French. It is good to translate such authors as this, where there is little but the matter itself to express; but such wherein grace of language and elegance of style are aimed at, are dangerous to attempt, especially when a man is to turn them into a weaker idiom. It was a strange and a new undertaking for me; but having by chance at that time nothing else to do, and not being able to resist the command of the best father that ever was, I did it as well as I could; and he was so well pleased with it as to order it to be printed, which after his death was done. I found the ideas of this author exceeding fine, the contexture of his work well followed, and his design full of piety; and because many people take a delight to read it, and particularly the ladies, to whom we owe the most service, I have often thought to assist them to clear the book of two principal objections made to it. His design is bold and daring, for he undertakes, by human and natural reasons, to establish and make good, against the atheists, all the articles of the Christian religion; wherein, to speak the truth, he is so firm and so successful that I do not think it possible to do better upon that subject; nay, I believe he has been equalled by none. This work, seeming to me to be too beautiful and too rich for an author whose name is so little known, and of whom all that we know is that he was a Spaniard, practising physic at Toulouse about two hundred years ago; I inquired of Adrian Tamebus, who knew all things, what he thought of that book; who made answer, "That he thought it was some abstract

1 A Paris, chez Gabriel Euan," in 1569. Montaigne, in his first edition of the Essays, also states that the first edition of his translation was full of errors of the press, owing to the carelessness of the printer, who had the sore care of it. This translation was reprinted, in 1588, more correctly. Montaigne himself having purged it of the printer's errors. The best edition is that printed at Paris in 1611. There is such a perspicuity, spirit, and natural vivacity in this translation, that it has all the air of an original. Montaigne has added nothing of his own to it but a short dedication of it to his father.
drawn from St. Thomas d'Aquin; for that, in truth, his mind, so full of infinite erudition and admirable subtlety, was alone capable of such thoughts." Be this as it may, whoever was the author and inventor (and 'tis not reasonable, without greater certainty, to deprive Sebond of that title), he was a man of great judgment and most admirable parts.

The first thing they apprehend in his work is "That Christians are to blame to repose their belief upon human reason, which is only conceived by faith and the particular inspiration of divine grace." In which objection there appears to be something of zeal to piety, and therefore we are to endeavour to satisfy those who put it forth with the greater mildness and respect. This were a task more proper for a man well read in divinity than for me, who know nothing of it; nevertheless, I conceive that in a thing so divine, so high, and so far transcending all human intelligence, as is that truth, with which it has pleased the bounty of God to enlighten us, it is very necessary that he should moreover lend us his assistance, as a very extraordinary favour and privilege, to conceive and imprint it in our understanding. And I do not believe that means purely human are in any sort capable of doing it; for, if they were, so many rare and excellent souls, and so abundantly furnished with natural force, in former ages, could not have failed, by their reason, to arrive at this knowledge. 'Tis faith alone that livelily and certainly comprehends the deep mysteries of our religion; but, withal, I do not say that it is not a worthy and very laudable attempt to accommodate those natural and human utensils with which God has endowed us to the service of our faith; it is not to be doubted but that it is the most noble use we can put them to; and that there is not a design in a Christian man more noble than to make it the aim and end of all his studies to extend and amplify the truth of his belief. We do not satisfy ourselves with serving God with our souls and understandings only, we moreover
owe and render him a corporal reverence, and apply our limbs and motions, and external things to do him honour; we must here do the same, and accompany our faith with all the reason we have, but always with this reservation, not to fancy that it is upon us that it depends, nor that our arguments and endeavours can arrive at so supernatural and divine a knowledge. If it enters not into us by an extraordinary infusion; if it enters not only by reason, but, moreover, by human ways, it is not in us in its true dignity and splendour; and yet, I am afraid, we only have it by this way. If we hold upon God by the mediation of a lively faith; if we hold upon God by him, and not by us; if we had a divine basis and foundation, human occasions would not have the power to shake us as they do; our fortress would not surrender to so weak a battery; the love of novelty, the constraint of princes, the success of one party, and the rash and fortuitous change of our opinions, would not have the power to stagger and alter our belief; we should not then leave it to the mercy of every new argument, nor abandon it to all the rhetoric in the world; we should withstand the fury of these waves with an immovable and unyielding constancy:—

Illis os fluctus rupeis ut vasta refundit,
Et varias circums latrantes dissipat undas
Mole sub. 1

"As a great rock repels the rolling tides,
That foam and bark about her marble sides,
From its strong bulk."

If we were but touched with this ray of divinity, it would appear throughout; not only our words, but our works also, would carry its brightness and lustre; whatever proceeded from us would be seen illuminated with this noble light. We

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1 These Latin verses were written in praise of Romard by an anonymous modern poet, who borrowed the sentiment, and most of the words, from those lines of Virgil's,—

Ille velut pelagi rupeis immota restisset;
Ut pelagi rupeis magno venente fragore,
Quae sens. multis circums latrantes undas
Mole temet. ---

Aenid, vii. 587.
ought to be ashamed that, in all the human sects, there never was any of the faction, what difficulty and strange novelty soever his doctrine imposed upon him, that did not, in some measure, conform his life and behaviour to it, whereas so divine and heavenly an institution does only distinguish Christians by the name! Will you see the proof of this? Compare our manners to those of a Mahometan or Pagan, you will still find that we fall very short; there, where, out of regard to the reputation and advantage of our religion, we ought to shine in excelleency at a vast distance beyond all others; and that it should be said of us, “Are they so just, so charitable, so good? Then they are Christians.” All other signs are common to all religions; hope, trust, events, ceremonies, penance, martyrs.

The peculiar mark of our truth ought to be our virtue, as it is also the most heavenly and difficult, and the most worthy product of truth. For this our good St. Louis was in the right, who, when the Tartar king, who was become Christian, designed to come to Lyons to kiss the Pope’s feet, and there to be an eye-witness of the sanctity he hoped to find in our manners, immediately diverted him from his purpose; for fear lest our disorderly way of living should, on the contrary, put him out of conceit with so holy a belief.\(^1\) And yet it happened quite otherwise since to that other, who, going to Rome, to the same end, and there seeing the dissoluteness of the prelates and people of that time, settled himself so much the more firmly in our religion, considering how great the force and divinity of it must necessarily be that could maintain its dignity and splendour among so much corruption, and in so vicious hands. If we had but one single grain of faith, we should remove mountains from their places,\(^2\) saith the sacred Word; our actions, that would then be directed and accompanied by the divinity, would not be merely human, they would have in them something of miraculous, as well as our belief: *Brevis est institutio vitae honestae*

\(^1\) Mem. de Joinville, c. 9. \(^2\) St. Matthew, xxii. 19.
"Beataeque, si credas." 1  “Believe, and the way to happiness and virtue is a short one.” Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not; others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe. We think it strange if, in the civil war which, at this time, disorders our state, we see events float and vary after a common and ordinary manner; which is because we bring nothing to it but our own. Justice, which is in one party, is only there for ornament and palliation; it is, indeed, pretended, but ’tis not there received, settled, and espoused; it is there, as in the mouth of an advocate, not as in the heart and affection of the party. God owes his extraordinary assistance to faith and religion; not to our passions. Men, there are the conductors, and therein serve themselves with religion, whereas it ought to be quite contrary. Observe, if it be not by our own hands that we guide and train it, and draw it like wax into so many contrary figures, from a rule in itself so direct and firm. When and where was this more manifest than in France in our days? They who have taken it on the left hand, they who have taken it on the right; they who call it black, they who call it white, alike employ it to their violent and ambitious designs, conduct it with a progress, so conform in riot and injustice that they render the diversity they pretended in their opinions, in a thing wherein the conduct and rule of our life depends, doubtful and hard to believe. Did one ever see, come from the same school and discipline, manners more united, and more the same? Do but observe with what horrid impudence we toss divine arguments to and fro, and how irreligiously we have both rejected and retaken them, according as fortune has shifted our places in these intestine storms. This so solemn proposition, "Whether it be lawful for a subject to

1 Quintilian, xii. II. It is hardly necessary to remark that Montaigne uses this quotation in a different sense from its author.
rebel and take up arms against his prince for the defence of his religion," do you remember in whose mouths, the last year, the affirmative of it was the prop of one party, and the negative the pillar of another? And hearken now from what quarter comes the voice and instruction of the one and the other, and if arms make less noise and rattle for this cause than for that. We condemn those to the fire who say that truth must be made to bear the yoke of our necessity; and how much worse does France than say it? Let us confess the truth; whoever should draw out from the army, even that raised by the king, those who take up arms out of pure zeal to religion, and also those who only do it to protect the laws of their country, or for the service of their prince, could hardly, out of both these put together, make one complete company of gens-d'armes. Whence does this proceed, that there are so few to be found who have maintained the same will and the same progress in our civil commotions, and that we see them one while move but a foot-pace, and another run full speed? and the same men one while damage our affairs by their violent heat and fierceness, and another by their coldness, gentleness, and slowness; but that they are pushed on by particular and casual considerations, according to the variety wherein they move?

I evidently perceive that we do not willingly afford devotion any other offices but those that best suit with our own passions. There is no hostility so admirable as the Christian. Our zeal performs wonders, when it secounds our inclinations to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, and rebellion; but when it moves, against the hair, towards bounty, benignity, and temperance, unless, by miracle, some rare and virtuous disposition prompts us to it, we stir neither hand nor foot. Our religion is intended to extirpate vices, whereas it screens, nourishes, and incites them. We must not mock God. If we believed in him, I do not say by faith, but with a simple

1 Bayle quotes and comments on this passage in the article Hatman.
belief, that is to say (and I speak it to our great shame) if we believed in him and recognized him as we do any other history, or as we would do one of our companions, we should love him above all other things for the infinite bounty and beauty that shines in him;—at least, he would go equal in our affection with riches, pleasure, glory, and our friends. The best of us is not so much afraid to outrage him as he is afraid to injure his neighbour, his kinsman, or his master. Is there any understanding so weak that, having on one side the object of one of our vicious pleasures, and on the other (in equal knowledge and persuasion) the state of an immortal glory, would change the first for the other? and yet we often renounce this out of mere contempt; for what lust tempts us to blaspheme, if not, perhaps, the very desire to offend. The philosopher Antisthenes, as he was being initiated in the mysteries of Orpheus, the priest telling him, "That those who professed themselves of that religion were certain to receive perfect and eternal felicity after death,"—"If thou believest that," answered he, "why dost thou not die thyself?" 1 Diogenes, more rudely, according to his manner, and more remote from our purpose, to the priest that in like manner preached to him, "To become of his religion, that he might obtain the happiness of the other world;"—"What!" said he, "thou wouldest have me to believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, who were so great men, shall be miserable, and that thou, who art but a calf, and canst do nothing to purpose, shalt be happy, because thou art a priest?" 2 Did we receive these great promises of eternal beatitude with the same reverence and respect that we do a philosophical discourse, we should not have death in so great horror:—

Non iam se moriens dissolvi conqueretur;
Sed magis ire foras, vastemque relinquere, ut anguis,
Gauderet, praelonga senex aut cornua cervus. 3

"We should not on a deathbed grieve to be
Dissolved, but rather launch out cheerfully

1 Laertius, in Vitæ. 2 Id. ib. 3 Lucret. iii. 632
From our old hut, and, with the snake, be glad
To cast off the corrupted slough we had;
Or with th' old stag rejoice to be now clear
From the large horns, too ponderous grown to bear."

"I desire to be dissolved," we should say, "and to be with
Jesus Christ." The force of Plato's arguments concerning
the immortality of the soul set some of his disciples to seek
a premature grave, that they might the sooner enjoy the
things he had made them hope for.

All this is a most evident sign that we only receive our
religion after our own fashion, by our own
hands, and no otherwise than as other relig-
ions are received. Either we are happened
in the country where it is in practice, or we reverence the
antiquity of it, or the authority of the men who have main-
tained it, or fear the menaces it fulminates against misbeliev-
ers, or are allured by its promises. These considerations
ought, 'tis true, to be applied to our belief, but as subsidiaries
only, for they are human obligations. Another religion, other
witnesses, the like promises and threats, might, by the same
way, imprint a quite contrary belief. We are Christians by
the same title that we are Perigordians or Germans. And
what Plato says, "That there are few men so obstinate in
their atheism whom a pressing danger will not reduce to an
acknowledgment of the divine power," does not concern a
ture Christian; 'tis for mortal and human religions to be
received by human recommendation. What kind of faith
can that be that cowardice and want of courage establish in
us? A pleasant faith, that does not believe what it believes
but for want of courage to disbelieve it! Can a vicious pas-
sion, such as inconstancy and astonishment, cause any regular
product in our souls? "They are confident in their judg-
ment," says he, "that what is said of hell and future tor-
ments is all feigned; but an occasion of making the experi-

1 St. Paul, Epist. to Philipp. 1. 23.
2 Cicero, Tusc. Quaes. 1. 84. Callim-
chus, Epig. 24, &c.
3 Laws, book x.
4 Republic, 1.
ment presenting itself, when old age or diseases bring them to the brink of the grave, the terror of death, by the horror of that future condition, inspires them with a new belief. And by reason that such impressions render them timorous, he forbids in his Laws \(^1\) all such threatening doctrines, and all persuasion that any thing of ill can befall a man from the gods, excepting for his great good when they happen to him, and for a medicinal effect. They say of Bion that, infected with the atheism of Theodorus, he had long had religious men in great scorn and contempt, but that death surprising him, he gave himself up to the most extreme superstition; as if the gods withdrew and returned according to the necessities of Bion. \(^2\) Plato and these examples would conclude that we are brought to a belief of God either by reason or by force. Atheism being a proposition as unnatural as monstrous, difficult also and hard to establish in the human understanding, how arrogant soever, there are men enough seen, out of vanity and pride, to be the authors of extraordinary and reforming opinions, and outwardly to affect the profession of them; who, if they are such fools, have, nevertheless, not the power to plant them in their own conscience. Yet will they not fail to lift up their hands towards heaven if you give them a good thrust with; sword in the breast; and when fear or sickness has abated and dulled the licentious fury of this giddy humour, they will easily reunite, and very discreetly suffer themselves to be reconciled to the public faith and examples. A doctrine seriously digested is one thing, and those superficial impressions another; which springing from the disorder of an unhinged understanding, float at random and great uncertainty in the fancy. Miserable and senseless men, who strive to be worse than they can! \(^3\)

The error of paganism and the ignorance of our sacred truth, let this great soul of Plato, but great only in human greatness, fall also into this other mistake, “That children

\(^1\) Book II., and in the Republic, book III.  
\(^2\) Lucertius, in Vitæ.
and old men were most susceptible of religion,” as if it sprung and derived its credit from our weakness. The knot that ought to bind the judgment and the will, that ought to restrain the soul and join it to our creator, should be a knot that derives its foldings and strength not from our considerations, from our reasons and passions, but from a divine and supernatural constraint, having but one form, one face, and one lustre, which is the authority of God and his divine grace. Now the heart and soul being governed and commanded by faith, ’tis but reason that they should muster all our other faculties, according as they are able to perform to the service and assistance of their design. Neither is it to be imagined that all this machine has not some marks imprinted upon it by the hand of the mighty architect, and that there is not in the things of this world some image that in some measure resembles the workman who has built and formed them. He has, in his stupendous works, left the character of his divinity, and ’tis our own weakness only that hinders us from discerning it. ’Tis what he himself is pleased to tell us, “That he manifests his invisible operations to us by those that are visible.” Sebond applied himself to this laudable and noble study, and demonstrates to us that there is not any part or member of the world that disclaims or derogates from its maker. It were to do wrong to the divine goodness, did not the universe consent to our belief. The heavens, the earth, the elements, our bodies and our souls,—all things concur to this; we have but to find out the way to use them; they instruct us, if we are capable of instruction. For this world is a temple, into which man is introduced, there to contemplate statues, not the works of a mortal hand, but such as the divine purpose has made the objects of sense: the sun, the stars, the water, and the earth, to represent those that are intelligible to us. “The invisible things of God,” says St. Paul,1 “appear by the creation of the world, his

1 Romans, 1. 20.
eternal wisdom and divinity being considered by his works."

Atque adeo faciem coeli non invidet orbi
Ipse Deus, vultusque suos corpusque recludit
Semper volvendo; sequa ipsum incultet et offert:
Ut bene cognosci possit, docet quae videndo
Qualis et, doceatque suas attendere leges.¹

"And God himself envies not men the grace
Of seeing and admiring heaven's face;
But, rolling it about, he still anew
Presents its varied splendour to our view
And on our minds himself inculcates, so
That we th' Almighty mover well may know:
Instructing us, by seeing him the cause
Of all, to reverence and obey his laws."

Now our prayers and human discourses are but as sterile and undigested matter. The grace of God is the form; 'tis that which gives fashion and value to it. As the virtuous actions of Socrates and Cato remain vain and fruitless, for not having had the love and obedience of the true creator of all things for their end and object, and for not having known God, so is it with our imaginations and discourses; they have a kind of body, but it is an inform mass, without fashion and without light, if faith and grace be not added thereto. Faith coming to tinct and illustrate Sebond's arguments renders them firm and solid; and to that degree that they are capable of serving for directions, and of being the first guides to an elementary Christian to put him into the way of this knowledge. They in some measure form him to, and render him capable of, the grace of God, by which means he afterwards completes and perfects himself in the true belief. I know a man of authority, bred up to letters, who has confessed to me to have been brought back from the errors of unbelief by Sebond's arguments. And should they be stripped of this ornament, and of the assistance and approbation of the faith, and be looked upon as mere fancies only, to contend with those who are precipitated into the dreadful and horrible

¹ Manil. iv. 967.
darkness of irreligion, they will even there find them as solid and firm as any others of the same quality that can be opposed against them; so that we shall be ready to say to our opponents:—

Si melius quid habes, arcece; vel imperium fer: 1

"If you have arguments more fit, 
Produce them, or to these submit;""  

let them admit the force of our reasons, or let them show us others, and upon some other subject, better woven and of finer thread. I am, unawares, half engaged in the second objection, to which I proposed to make answer in the behalf of Sebond. Some say that his arguments are weak, and unable to make good what he intends, and undertake with great ease to confute them. These are to be a little more roughly handled, for they are more dangerous and malicious than the first. Men willingly wrest the sayings of others to favour their own prejudice opinions. To an atheist all writings tend to atheism; he corrupts the most innocent matter with his own venom. These have their judgments so prepossessed that they cannot relish Sebond's reasons. As to the rest, they think we give them very fair play in putting them into the liberty of combating our religion with weapons merely human, whom, in her majesty, full of authority and command, they durst not attack. The means that I shall use, and that I think most proper to subdue this frenzy, is to crush and spurn under foot pride and human arrogance; to make them sensible of the inanity, vanity, and vileness of man; to wrest the wretched arms of their reason out of their hands; to make them bow down and bite the ground under the authority and reverence of the Divine Majesty. "Tis to that alone that knowledge and wisdom appertain; that alone that can make a true estimate of itself; and from which we purloin whatever we value our-

1 Horace, Epist. i. 5, 6.
selves upon: Οὔ γὰρ ἐξ φανέων ὁ Θεὸς μέγα ἄλλας, ἢ ἐκ τῶν.1 “God permits not any being but himself to be truly wise.” Let us subdue this presumption, the first foundation of the tyranny of the evil spirit. Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.2 “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” “Understanding is in the gods,” says Plato,3 “and not at all, or very little, in men.” Now it is in the mean time a great consolation to a Christian man to see our frail and mortal parts so fitly suited to our holy and divine faith that, when we employ them to the subjects of their own mortal and frail nature they are not even there more unitedly or more firmly adjusted. Let us see, then, if man has in his power other more forcible and convincing reasons than those of Sebond; that is to say, if it be in him to arrive at any certainty by argument and reason. For St. Augustin,4 disputing against these people, has good cause to reproach them with injustice, “In that they maintain the part of our belief to be false that our reason cannot establish.” And to show that a great many things may be, and have been, of which our nature could not sound the reason and causes, he proposes to them certain known and undoubted experiments, wherein men confess they see nothing; and this he does, as all other things, with a curious and ingenious inquisition. We must do more than this, and make them know that, to convince the weakness of their reason, there is no necessity of calling out uncommon examples; and that it is so defective and so blind that there is no faculty clear enough for it; that to it the easy and the hard are all one; that all subjects equally, and nature in general, disclaim its authority and reject its mediation.

What does truth mean when she preaches to us to fly worldly philosophy;5 when she so often inculcates to us, "That our wisdom is but folly in the sight of God; that the

1 Herod. vii. 10. 2 Epist. St. Peter, v. 5. 3 In the Tanaæus. 4 De Civit. Del, xxi. 5. 5 St. Paul, Epist. to the Colossians, ii 8. 6 Id. Corinthians, i. 8, 19.
vainest of all vanities is man; that the man who presumes upon his wisdom does not yet know what wisdom is; and that man, who is nothing, if he thinks himself to be any thing, does seduce and deceive himself?" These sentences of the Holy Spirit do so clearly and vividly express that which I would maintain that I should need no other proof against men who would with all humility and obedience submit to his authority; but these will be whipped at their own expense, and will not suffer a man to oppose their reason but by itself.

Let us then, for once, consider a man alone, without foreign assistance, armed only with his own proper arms, and unfurnished of the divine grace and wisdom, which is all his honour, strength, and the foundation of his being. Let us see how he stands in this fine equipage. Let him make me understand, by the force of his reason, upon what foundations he has built those great advantages he thinks he has over other creatures. Who has made him believe that this admirable motion of the celestial arch, the eternal light of those luminaries that roll so high over his head, the wondrous and fearful motions of that infinite ocean, should be established and continue so many ages for his service and convenience? Can any thing be imagined so ridiculous, that this miserable and wretched creature, who is not so much as master of himself, but subject to the injuries of all things, should call himself master and emperor of the world, of which he has not power to know the least part, much less to command the whole? And the privilege which he attributes to himself of being the only creature in this vast fabric who has the understanding to discover the beauty and the parts of it; the only one who can return thanks to the architect, and keep account of the revenues and disbursements of the world; who, I wonder, sealed him this patent? Let us see his commission for this great employment. Was it granted in favour of the wise only? Few people will be concerned in it. Are fools and wicked persons worthy so extraordinary a favour, and,
being the worst part of the world, to be preferred before the rest? Shall we believe this man?—Quorum igitur causā quis dixerit effectum esse mundum? Eorum scilicet animantium, que ratione utuntur; hi sunt déi et homines, quibus profecto nihil est melius: “For whose sake shall we, therefore, conclude that the world was made? For theirs who have the use of reason; these are gods and men, than whom certainly nothing can be better;” we can never sufficiently decry the impudence of this conjunction. But, wretched creature, what has he in himself worthy of such an advantage? Considering the incorruptible existence of the celestial bodies, their beauty, magnitude, and continual revolution by so exact a rule:—

Cum suspicimus magni coelestis mundi
Templa super, stellisque micantibus æthera fixum,
Et venit in mentem lunae solisque viarum; 2

“When we the heavenly arch above behold,
And the vast sky adorned with stars of gold,
And mark the reg’lar courses that the sun
And moon in their alternate progress run; ”

considering the dominion and influence those bodies have, not only over our lives and fortunes:—

Faceta etenim et vitas hominum suspendit ab astra; 3

“Men’s lives and actions on the stars depend; ”

but even over our inclinations, our thoughts and wills, which they govern, incite, and agitate at the mercy of their influences, as our reason teaches us:—

Speculataque longe
Deprendit tacitis dominantia legibus astra,
Et totum alternâ mundum ratione moveri,
Fatorumque vices certis discernere signis; 4

“Contemplating the stars he finds that they
Rule by a secret and a silent sway;
And that the enamell’d spheres which roll above
Do ever by alternate causes move.

1 Balbus apud Cicero, de Nat. Deor. II. 2 Manilius, iii. 58. The original has fata quaque.
3 Lucret. v. 1298. 4 Id. i. 60.
And, studying these, he also can foresee,
By certain signs, the turns of destiny;''

seeing that not only a man, not only kings, but that monarchies, empires, and all this lower world follow the influence of the celestial motions:—

Quantaque quam parvi faciant discrimina motus:
Tantum est hoc regnum, quod regibus imperat ipsis! 1

"How great a change a little motion brings!
So great this kingdom is that governs kings:"

if our virtue, our vices, our knowledge, and this very discourse we are upon of the power of the stars, and the comparison we are making betwixt them and us, proceed, as our reason supposes, from their favour:—

Furit alter amore,
Et pentum tranare potest et vertere Trujam:
Alterius sors est scribendis legibus apta.
Ecce patrem nati perimunt, natosque parentes;
Mutuaque armatæ coeunt in vulnera fratres.
Non nostrum hoc bellum est; coguntur tanta movere,
Inque suas ferri pœnas, lacerandas membra.

Hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum; 2

"One mad in love may cross the raging main,
To level lofty Ilium with the plain;
Another's fate inclines him more by far
To study laws and statutes for the bar.
Sons kill their fathers, fathers kill their sons,
And one arm'd brother 'gainst another runs.
This war's not their's, but fate's, that spurs them on
To shed the blood which, shed, they must bemoan;
And I ascribe it to the will of fate
That on this theme I now expatiate:

if we derive this little portion of reason we have from the bounty of heaven, how is it possible that reason should ever make us equal to it? How subject its essence and condition to our knowledge? Whatever we see in those bodies astonishes us; Quæ molitio, quæ ferramenta, qui vectes, quæ

1 Manilius, i. 55, iv. 93.
2 Id. i. 79, 118.
machina, qui ministri tanti operis fuerunt? ¹ “What contrivance, what tools, what materials, what engines, were employed about so stupendous a work?” Why do we deprive them of soul, of life, and discourse? Have we discovered in them any immovable or insensible stupidity, we who have no commerce with them but by obedience? Shall we say that we have discovered in no other creature but man the use of a reasonable soul? What! have we seen any thing like the sun? Does he cease to be, because we have seen nothing like him? And do his motions cease, because there are no other like them? If what we have not seen is not, our knowledge is marvellously contracted; Quae sunt tantae animi angustiae?² “How narrow are our understandings!” Are they not dreams of human vanity, to make the moon a celestial earth? there to fancy mountains and vales, as Anaxagoras did? there to fix habitations and human abodes, and plant colonies for our convenience, as Plato and Plutarch have done? And of our earth to make a luminous and resplendent star? Inter caetera mortalitatis incommoda, et hoc est, caligo mentium; nec tantum necessitas errandi, sed errorum amor.³ . . . Corruptibile corpus aggravat animam, et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitante.⁴ “Amongst the other inconveniences of mortality this is one, that darkness of the understanding which leads men astray, not so much from a necessity of erring, but from a love of error. The corruptible body stupefies the soul, and the earthy habitation dulls the faculties of the imagination.”

Presumption is our natural and original disease. The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. He feels and sees himself lodged here in the dirt and filth of the world, nailed and rivetted to the worst and deadest part of the universe, in the lowest story of the house, the most remote from the heavenly arch, with animals of the worst con-

¹ Cicero, De Nat. Deor. l. 8. ² Cicero, ib. i. 31. ³ Seneca, de Ira, ii. 9. ⁴ Book of Wisdom: quoted by St. Augustine, De Civit. Dei, ix. 15.
dition of the three; and yet in his imagination will be placing himself above the circle of the moon, and bringing the heavens under his feet. 'Tis by the same vanity of imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, cuts out the shares of the animals, his fellows and companions, and distributes to them portions of faculties and force, as himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals?—from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them? When I play with my cat who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me? We mutually divert one another with our play. If I have my hour to begin or to refuse, she also has hers. Plato, in his picture of the golden age under Saturn,\(^1\) reckons, among the chief advantages that a man then had, his communication with beasts, of whom, inquiring and informing himself, he knew the true qualities and differences of them all, by which he acquired a very perfect intelligence and prudence, and led his life more happily than we could do. Need we a better proof to condemn human impudence in the concern of beasts? This great author was of opinion that nature, for the most part, in the corporal form she gave them, had only regard to the use of prognostics that were derived thence in his time. The defect that hinders communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be in our part as well as theirs? 'Tis yet to determine where the fault lies that we understand not one another,—for we understand them no more than they do us; and by the same reason they may think us to be beasts as we think them. 'Tis no great wonder if we understand not them, when we do not understand a Basque or a Trogloyte.\(^2\) And yet some have boasted that they understood them, as Apollonius Ty-
naus, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others. And seeing, as cosmographers report, that there are nations that have a dog for their king, they must of necessity be able to interpret his voice and motions. We must observe the parity between us; we have some tolerable apprehension of their meaning, and so have beasts of ours,—much about the same. They caress us, threaten us, and beg of us, and we do the same to them. As to the rest, we manifestly discover that they have a full and absolute communication amongst themselves, and that they perfectly understand one another, not only those of the same, but of divers kinds:—

Et mutae pecudes, cum denique saeclae ferarum
Dissimiles suerant voces variasque ciere,
Cum metus aut dolor est, aut cum jam gaudia gliscent.3

“The tamer herds, and wilder sort of brutes,
Though we of higher race conclude them mutes,
Yet utter dissonant and various notes,
From gentler lungs or more distended throats,
As fear, or grief, or anger, do them move,
Or as they do approach the joys of love.”

In one kind of barking of a dog the horse knows there is anger, of another sort of bark he is not afraid. Even in the very beasts that have no voice at all, we easily conclude, from the society of offices we observe amongst them, some other sort of communication; their very motions discover it:—

Non aliâ longè ratione atque ipse videtar
Protrahere ad gestum pueros Infantia linguae.4

“As infants who, for want of words, devise
Expressive motions with their hands and eyes.”

And why not, as well as our dumb people, dispute, argue, and tell stories by signs? Of whom I have seen some, by practice, so clever and active that way that, in fact, they wanted nothing of the perfection of making themselves under-

1 Philestratus, in Vit. 2
3 Lucret. v. 1058.
4 Lucretius, v. 1089.
stood. Lovers are angry, reconciled, entreat, thank, appoint, and, in short, speak all things by their eyes:—

El silenzio ancor suole
Haver prieghi e parole.¹

"Even silence in a lover
Love and passion can discover."

What with the hands? We require, promise, call, dismiss, threaten, pray, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, number, confess, repent, fear, express confusion, doubt, instruct, command, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, abuse, despise, defy, provoke, flatter, applaud, bless, submit, mock, reconcile, recommend, exalt, entertain, congratulate, complain, grieve, despair, wonder, exclaim, and what not! And all this with a variety and multiplication, even emulating speech. With the head we invite, remand, confess, deny, give the lie, welcome, honour, reverence, disdain, demand, rejoice, lament, reject, caress, rebuke, submit, huff, encourage, threaten, assure, and inquire. What with the eyebrows?—what with the shoulders? There is not a motion that does not speak, and in an intelligible language without discipline, and a public language that every one understands; whence it should follow, the variety and use distinguished from others considered, that these should rather be judged the property of human nature. I omit what necessity particularly does suddenly suggest to those who are in need;—the alphabets upon the fingers, grammars in gesture, and the sciences which are only by them exercised and expressed; and the nations that Pliny reports have no other language.² An ambassador of the city of Abdera, after a long conference with Agis, King of Sparta, demanded of him, "Well, sir, what answer must I return to my fellow-citizens?" "That I have given thee leave," said he, "to say what thou wouldest, and as much as thou wouldest, without ever speaking a word."³ Is not this a silent speaking, and very easy to be understood?

¹ Tasso, Aminta, ii.
² Pliny, Nat. Hist. vi. 30.
³ Plutarch, Apoth. of the Laced.
that we employ all our faculties, and apply the utmost power of our souls; why do we not conclude the same of them? Why should we attribute to I know not what natural and servile inclination the works that excel all we can do by nature and art? wherein, without being aware, we give them a mighty advantage over us in making nature, with maternal gentleness and love, accompany and lead them, as it were, by the hand to all the actions and commodities of their life, whilst she leaves us to chance and fortune, and to seek out by art the things that are necessary to our conservation, at the same time denying us the means of being able, by any instruction or effort of understanding, to arrive at the natural sufficiency of beasts; so that their brutish stupidity surpasses, in all conveniences, all that our divine intelligence can do. Really, at this rate, we might with great reason call her an unjust step-mother; but it is nothing so, our polity is not so irregular and uniformed.

Nature has universally cared for all her creatures, and there is not one she has not amply furnished with all means necessary for the conservation of its being. For the common complaints I hear men make (as the license of their opinions one while lifts them up above the clouds, and then again depresses them to the antipodes), that we are the only animal abandoned naked upon the bare earth, tied and bound, not having wherewithal to arm and clothe us but by the spoil of others; whereas nature has covered all other creatures either with shells, husks, bark, hair, wool, prickles, leather, down, feathers, scales, or silk, according to the necessities of their being; has armed them with talons, teeth, or horns, wherewith to assault and defend, and has herself taught them that which is most proper for them, to swim, to run, to fly, and sing, whereas man neither knows how to walk, speak, eat, or do any thing but weep, without teaching;—

Tum porro puer, ut servis projectus ab undis
Navita, nudus humi jacet, infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

Nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
Vagitque locum lugubri complet; ut aequum est,
Cui tantum in vitâ restet transire malorum.
At variae crescent pecudes, armenta, ferasque,
Nec crepitacula eis opus est, nec cuium adhibenda est
Almae nutricis blandis atque infracta loquela;
Nec variae quærunt vestes pro tempore cæli;
Denique non armis opus est, non moenibus altis,
Queis sua tutentur, quando omnibus omnia largè
Tollis ipsa parit, naturaque dædala rerum;¹

"Like to the wretched mariner, when toss'd
By raging seas upon the desert coast,
The tender babe lies naked on the earth,
Of all supports of life stript by his birth;
When nature first presents him to the day,
Freed from the cell wherein before he lay,
He fills the ambient air with doleful cries,
For telling thus life's future miseries;
But beasts, both wild and tame, greater and less,
Do of themselves in strength and bulk increase;
They need no rattle, nor the broken chat,
By which the nurse first teaches boys to prate;
They look not out for different robes to wear,
According to the seasons of the year;
And need no arms nor walls their goods to save,
Since earth and liberal nature ever have,
And will, in all abundance, still produce
All things whereof they can have need or use:"

these complaints are false; there is in the polity of the world
a greater equality and more uniform relation. Our skins
are as sufficient to defend us from the injuries of the weather
as theirs are; witness several nations that yet know not the
use of clothes. Our ancient Gauls were but
slenderly clad, any more than the Irish, our
neighbours, though in so cold a climate; but
we may better judge of this by ourselves; for all those parts
that we are pleased to expose to the air are found very able
to endure it; the face, the feet, the hands, the arms, the head,
according to the various habit; if there be a tender part
about us, and that would seem to be in danger from cold, it
should be the stomach where the digestion is; and yet our

¹ Lucret. v. 229.
forefathers were there always open, and our ladies, as tender and delicate as they are, go sometimes half-bare as low as the navel. Neither is the binding or swathing of infants any more necessary; and the Lacedemonian mothers brought up theirs in all liberty of motion of members, without any ligature at all.¹ Our crying is common with the greatest part of other animals, and there are but few creatures that are not observed to groan, and bemoan themselves a long time after they come into the world; forasmuch as it is a behaviour suitable to the weakness wherein they find themselves. As to the custom of eating, it is in us, as in them, natural, and without instruction;---

Sentit enim vim quisque suam quam possit abuti;²

“For every one soon finds his natural force,
Which he, or better may employ, or worse.”

Who doubts but an infant, arrived to the strength of feeding himself, may make shift to find something to eat. And the earth produces and offers him wherewithal to supply his necessity, without other culture and artifice; and if not at all times, no more does she do it to beasts, witness the provision we see ants and other creatures hoard up against the dead seasons of the year. The late discovered nations, so abundantly furnished with natural meat and drink, without care, or without cookery, may give us to understand that bread is not our only food, and that, without tillage, our mother nature has provided us sufficiently of all we stand in need of; nay, it appears more fully and plentifully than she does at present, now that we have added our own industry:---

Et tellus nitidas fruges vinetaque lata
Sponte suâ primum mortalibus ipsa creavit;
Ipsa dedit dulces festus, et pabula lata;
Quae nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta laboris,
Conterimusque boves et vires agricolarum;

¹ Plutarch, Lyst of Lycurgus.
² Lucret. ii. 1167.
³ Lucret. v. 1032.
"The earth did first spontaneously afford  
Choice fruits and wines to furnish out the board;  
With herbs and flow'rs unsown in verdant fields,  
But scarce by art so good a harvest yields;  
Though men and oxen mutually have strove,  
With all their utmost force, the soil t' improve;"

the debauchery and irregularity of our appetites outstrips all  
the inventions we can contrive to satisfy it.

As to arms, we have more natural ones than most other  
animals, more various motions of limbs, and the natural arms  
naturally and without lesson extract more ser-  
vise from them. Those that are trained to fight naked are  
seen to throw themselves into the like hazards that we do.  
If some beasts surpass us in this advantage, we surpass many  
others. And the industry of fortifying the body, and cover-  
ing it by acquired means, we have by instinct and natural  
proept. That it is so, the elephant shows, who sharpens and  
whets the teeth he makes use of in war (for the elephant's  
teeth has particular ones for that service, which  
e never employs them at all to any other use);  
when bulls go to fight, they toss and throw the dust about  
them; boars whet their tusks; and the ichneumon, when he  
is about to engage with the crocodile, fortifies his body, and  
covers and crusts it all over with close-wrought and well-  
tempered slime, as with a cuirass. Why shall we not say  
that it is also natural for us to arm ourselves with wood and  
iron?

As to speech, it is certain that if it be not natural it is not  
necessary. Nevertheless, I believe that a child whether speech is  
which had been brought up in an absolute soli-  
tude, remote from all society of men (which would be an  
experiment very hard to make), would have some kind of  
speech to express his meaning by. And 'tis not to be sup-  
posed that nature should have denied that to us which she  
has given to several other animals; for what is this faculty  
we observe in them, of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one  
another for succour, and inviting each other to love, which
they do with the voice, other than speech? And why should they not speak to one another? They speak to us, and we to them. In how many several sorts of ways do we speak to our dogs, and they answer us? We converse with them in another sort of language, and use other appellations, than we do with birds, hogs, oxen, horses, and alter the idiom according to the kind.

Così per entro loro schiera bruna
S' annusa l' una con l' altra fornica,
Forse a splar lor via e lor fortuna.¹

"Thus from one swarm of ants some sally out,
To spy another's stock or mark its rout."

Lactantius² seems to attribute to beasts not only speech, but laughter also. And the difference of language which is seen amongst us, according to the difference of countries, is also observed in animals of the same kind. Aristotle,³ in proof of this, instances the various calls of partridges, according to the situation of places:

Variaeque volucres . . .
Longē alia allo jaciant in tempore voces . . .
Et partim mutant cum tempes tatibus una
Raucisonos cantus.⁴

"And various birds do from their warbling throats,
At various times, utter quite different notes,
And some their hoarse songs with the seasons change."

But it is yet to be known what language this child would speak; and of that what is said by guess has no great appearance. If a man will allege to me, in opposition to this opinion, that those who are naturally deaf speak not, I answer that this is not only because they could not receive the instruction of speaking by ear, but rather because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, relates to that of speaking, and that these hold together by a natural and inseparable tie, in such manner

¹ Hist. of Animals, iv. 9.
² Inst. Divin. iii. 10.
³ Lucret. v. 1080, 1082, 1088.
that what we speak we must first speak to ourselves within, and make it sound in our own ears, before we can utter it to others.

All this I have said to prove the resemblance there is in human things, and to bring us back and join us to the crowd. We are neither above nor below the rest. All that is under heaven, says the sage, runs one law and one fortune:—

Indupedita suis fatalibus omnia vincilis.¹

“All things remain
Bound and entangled in one fatal chain.”

There is, indeed, some difference,—there are several orders and degrees; but it is under the aspect of one and the same nature:—

Res . . . . quæque suo ritu procedit; et omnes
Fœdère naturæ certo discrimina servant.²

“All things by their own rights proceed, and draw
Towards their ends, by nature’s certain law.”

Man must be compelled and restrained within the bounds of this polity. Miserable creature! he is not in a condition really to step over the rail. He is fettered and circumscribed, he is subjected to the same necessity that the other creatures of his rank and order are, and of a very mean condition, without any prerogative, or true and real preëminence. That which he attributes to himself, by vain fancy and opinion, has neither body nor taste. And if it be so, that he only, of all the animals, has this liberty of imagination and irregularity of thoughts, representing to him that which is, that which is not, and that he would have, the false and the true, 'tis an advantage dearly bought, and of which he has very little reason to be proud; for thence springs the principal and original fountain of all the evils that befall him,—sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair. I say, then, to return to my subject, that there is no appearance to induce a man to believe that beasts should, by a natural and forced inclination, do the same.

¹ Lucret. v. 874.
² Id. ib. 921.
things that we do by our choice and industry. We ought from like effects to conclude like faculties, and from greater effects greater faculties; and consequently confess that the same reasoning, and the same ways by which we operate, are common with them, or that they have others that are better. Why should we imagine this natural constraint in them, who experience no such effect in ourselves? added that it is more honourable to be guided and obliged to act regularly by a natural and inevitable condition, and nearer allied to the divinity, than to act regularly by a temerarious and fortuitous liberty, and more safe to entrust the reins of our conduct in the hands of nature than our own. The vanity of our presumption makes us prefer rather to owe our sufficiency to our own exertions than to her bounty, and to enrich the other animals with natural goods, and abjure them in their favour, in order to honour and ennoble ourselves with goods acquired, very foolishly in my opinion; for I should as much value parts and virtues naturally and purely my own as those I had begged and obtained from education. It is not in our power to obtain a nobler reputation than to be favoured of God and nature.

For instance, take the fox, the people of Thrace make use of when they wish to pass over the ice of some frozen river, and turn him out before them to that purpose; when we see him lay his ear upon the bank of the river, down to the ice, to listen if from a more remote or nearer distance he can hear the noise of the waters' current, and, according as he finds by that the ice to be of a less or greater thickness, to retire or advance,¹—have we not reason to believe thence that the same rational thoughts passed through his head that we should have upon the like occasions; and that it is a ratiocination and consequence, drawn from natural sense, that that which makes a noise runs, that which runs is not frozen, what is not frozen is liquid, and that which is liquid yields to impression? For to attribute this to a mere quickness of the

¹ Plutarch, on the Craftiness of Animals.