

Discoveries and Some Poems

Ben Jonson

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DISCOVERIES MADE UPON MEN AND MATTER AND SOME POEMS

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INTRODUCTION

Ben Jonson's "Discoveries" are, as he says in the few Latin words prefixed to them, "A wood--Sylva--of things and thoughts, in Greek "[Greek text]" [which has for its first meaning material, but is also applied peculiarly to kinds of wood, and to a wood], "from the multiplicity and variety of the material contained in it. For, as we are commonly used to call the infinite mixed multitude of growing trees a wood, so the ancients gave the name of Sylvae--Timber Trees--to books of theirs in which small works of various and diverse matter were promiscuously brought together."

In this little book we have some of the best thoughts of one of the most vigorous minds that ever added to the strength of English literature. The songs added are a part of what Ben Jonson called his "Underwoods."

Ben Jonson was of a north-country family from the Annan district that produced Thomas Carlyle. His father was ruined by religious persecution in the reign of Mary, became a preacher in Elizabeth's reign, and died a month before the poet's birth in 1573. Ben Jonson, therefore, was about nine years younger than Shakespeare, and he survived Shakespeare about twenty-one years, dying in August, 1637. Next to Shakespeare Ben Jonson was, in his own different way, the man of most mark in the story of the English drama. His mother, left poor, married again. Her second husband was a bricklayer, or

small builder, and they lived for a time near Charing Cross in Hartshorn Lane. Ben Jonson was taught at the parish school of St. Martin's till he was discovered by William Camden, the historian. Camden was then second master in Westminster School. He procured for young Ben an admission into his school, and there laid firm foundations for that scholarship which the poet extended afterwards by private study until his learning grew to be sworn-brother to his wit.

Ben Jonson began the world poor. He worked for a very short time in his step-father's business. He volunteered to the wars in the Low Countries. He came home again, and joined the players. Before the end of Elizabeth's reign he had written three or four plays, in which he showed a young and ardent zeal for setting the world to rights, together with that high sense of the poet's calling which put lasting force into his work. He poured contempt on those who frittered life away. He urged on the poetasters and the mincing courtiers, who set their hearts on top-knots and affected movements of their lips and legs:-

"That these vain joys in which their wills consume
Such powers of wit and soul as are of force
To raise their beings to eternity,
May be converted on works fitting men;
And for the practice of a forced look,
An antic gesture, or a fustian phrase,
Study the native frame of a true heart,
An inward comeliness of bounty, knowledge,
And spirit that may conform them actually
To God's high figures, which they have in power."

Ben Jonson's genius was producing its best work in the earlier years of the reign of James I. His *Volpone*, the *Silent Woman*, and the *Alchemist* first appeared side by side with some of the ripest works of Shakespeare in the years from 1605 to 1610. In the latter part of James's reign he produced masques for the Court, and turned with distaste from the public stage. When Charles I. became king, Ben Jonson was weakened in health by a paralytic stroke. He returned to the stage for a short time through necessity, but found his best friends in the best of the young poets of the day. These looked up to him as their father and their guide. Their own best efforts seemed best to them when they had won Ben Jonson's praise. They valued above all passing honours man could give the words, "My son," in the old poet's greeting, which, as they said, "sealed them of the tribe of Ben."

H. M.

SYLVA

Rerum et sententiarum quasi "[Greek text] dicta a multiplici materia et varietate in iis contenta. Quemadmodum enim vulgo solemus infinitam arborum nascentium indiscriminatim multitudinem Sylvam dicere: ita

etiam libros suos in quibus variae et diversae materiae opuscula
temere congesta erant, Sylvas appellabant antiqui: Timber-trees.

TIMBER;
OR,
DISCOVERIES MADE UPON MEN AND MATTER,
AS THEY HAVE FLOWED OUT OF HIS DAILY READINGS,
OR HAD THEIR REFLUX TO HIS PECULIAR
NOTION OF THE TIMES.

Tecum habita, ut noris quam sit tibi curta supellex {11}
PERS. Sat. 4.

Fortuna.--Ill fortune never crushed that man whom good fortune
deceived not. I therefore have counselled my friends never to trust
to her fairer side, though she seemed to make peace with them; but
to place all things she gave them, so as she might ask them again
without their trouble, she might take them from them, not pull them:
to keep always a distance between her and themselves. He knows not
his own strength that hath not met adversity. Heaven prepares good
men with crosses; but no ill can happen to a good man. Contraries
are not mixed. Yet that which happens to any man may to every man.
But it is in his reason, what he accounts it and will make it.

Casus.--Change into extremity is very frequent and easy. As when a
beggar suddenly grows rich, he commonly becomes a prodigal; for, to
obscure his former obscurity, he puts on riot and excess.

Consilia.--No man is so foolish but may give another good counsel
sometimes; and no man is so wise but may easily err, if he will take
no others' counsel but his own. But very few men are wise by their
own counsel, or learned by their own teaching. For he that was only
taught by himself {12} had a fool to his master.

Fama.--A Fame that is wounded to the world would be better cured by
another's apology than its own: for few can apply medicines well
themselves. Besides, the man that is once hated, both his good and
his evil deeds oppress him. He is not easily emergent.

Negotia.--In great affairs it is a work of difficulty to please all.
And oftentimes we lose the occasions of carrying a business well and
thoroughly by our too much haste. For passions are spiritual
rebels, and raise sedition against the understanding.

Amor patriae.--There is a necessity all men should love their
country: he that profeseth the contrary may be delighted with his
words, but his heart is there.

Ingenia.--Natures that are hardened to evil you shall sooner break
than make straight; they are like poles that are crooked and dry,
there is no attempting them.

Applausus.--We praise the things we hear with much more willingness
than those we see, because we envy the present and reverence the
past; thinking ourselves instructed by the one, and overlaid by the

other.

Opinio.--Opinion is a light, vain, crude, and imperfect thing; settled in the imagination, but never arriving at the understanding, there to obtain the tincture of reason. We labour with it more than truth. There is much more holds us than presseth us. An ill fact is one thing, an ill fortune is another; yet both oftentimes sway us alike, by the error of our thinking.

Impostura.--Many men believe not themselves what they would persuade others; and less do the things which they would impose on others; but least of all know what they themselves most confidently boast. Only they set the sign of the cross over their outer doors, and sacrifice to their gut and their groin in their inner closets.

Jactura vitae.--What a deal of cold business doth a man misspend the better part of life in! in scattering compliments, tendering visits, gathering and venting news, following feasts and plays, making a little winter-love in a dark corner.

Hypocrita.--Puritanus Hypocrita est Haereticus, quem opinio propriae perspicaciae, qua sibi videtur, cum paucis in Ecclesia dogmatibus errores quosdam animadvertisse, de statu mentis deturbavit: unde sacro furore percitus, phrenetice pugnabat contra magistratus, sic ratus obedientiam praestare Deo. {14}

Mutua auxilia.--Learning needs rest: sovereignty gives it. Sovereignty needs counsel: learning affords it. There is such a consociation of offices between the prince and whom his favour breeds, that they may help to sustain his power as he their knowledge. It is the greatest part of his liberality, his favour; and from whom doth he hear discipline more willingly, or the arts discoursed more gladly, than from those whom his own bounty and benefits have made able and faithful?

Cognit. univers.--In being able to counsel others, a man must be furnished with a universal store in himself, to the knowledge of all nature--that is, the matter and seed-plot: there are the seats of all argument and invention. But especially you must be cunning in the nature of man: there is the variety of things which are as the elements and letters, which his art and wisdom must rank and order to the present occasion. For we see not all letters in single words, nor all places in particular discourses. That cause seldom happens wherein a man will use all arguments.

Consiliarii adjunct. Probitas, Sapientia.--The two chief things that give a man reputation in counsel are the opinion of his honesty and the opinion of his wisdom: the authority of those two will persuade when the same counsels uttered by other persons less qualified are of no efficacy or working.

Vita recta.--Wisdom without honesty is mere craft and cozenage. And therefore the reputation of honesty must first be gotten, which cannot be but by living well. A good life is a main argument.

Obsequentia.--Humanitas.--Solicitude.--Next a good life, to beget love in the persons we counsel, by dissembling our knowledge of ability in ourselves, and avoiding all suspicion of arrogance, ascribing all to their instruction, as an ambassador to his master,

or a subject to his sovereign; seasoning all with humanity and sweetness, only expressing care and solicitude. And not to counsel rashly, or on the sudden, but with advice and meditation. (*Dat nox consilium.* {17a}) For many foolish things fall from wise men, if they speak in haste or be extemporal. It therefore behoves the giver of counsel to be circumspect; especially to beware of those with whom he is not thoroughly acquainted, lest any spice of rashness, folly, or self-love appear, which will be marked by new persons and men of experience in affairs.

Modestia.--Parrhesia.--And to the prince, or his superior, to behave himself modestly and with respect. Yet free from flattery or empire. Not with insolence or precept; but as the prince were already furnished with the parts he should have, especially in affairs of state. For in other things they will more easily suffer themselves to be taught or reprehended: they will not willingly contend, but hear, with Alexander, the answer the musician gave him: *Absit, o rex, ut tu melius haec scias, quam ego.* {17b}

Perspicuitas.--Elegantia.--A man should so deliver himself to the nature of the subject whereof he speaks, that his hearer may take knowledge of his discipline with some delight; and so apparel fair and good matter, that the studious of elegancy be not defrauded; redeem arts from their rough and braky seats, where they lay hid and overgrown with thorns, to a pure, open, and flowery light, where they may take the eye and be taken by the hand.

Natura non effaeta.--I cannot think Nature is so spent and decayed that she can bring forth nothing worth her former years. She is always the same, like herself; and when she collects her strength is abler still. Men are decayed, and studies: she is not.

Non nimium credendum antiquitati.--I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them, provided the plagues of judging and pronouncing against them be away; such as are envy, bitterness, precipitation, impudence, and scurrilous scoffing. For to all the observations of the ancients we have our own experience, which if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates, and made the way that went before us, but as guides, not commanders: *Non domini nostri, sed duces fuere.* {19a} Truth lies open to all; it is no man's several. *Patet omnibus veritas; nondum est occupata. Multum ex illa, etiam futuris relictæ est.* {19b}

Dissentire licet, sed cum ratione.--If in some things I dissent from others, whose wit, industry, diligence, and judgment, I look up at and admire, let me not therefore hear presently of ingratitude and rashness. For I thank those that have taught me, and will ever; but yet dare not think the scope of their labour and inquiry was to envy their posterity what they also could add and find out.

Non mihi credendum sed veritati.--If I err, pardon me: *Nulla ars simul et inventa est et absoluta.* {19c} I do not desire to be equal to those that went before; but to have my reason examined with theirs, and so much faith to be given them, or me, as those shall evict. I am neither author nor fautor of any sect. I will have no man addict himself to me; but if I have anything right, defend it as Truth's, not mine, save as it conduceth to a common good. It

profits not me to have any man fence or fight for me, to flourish, or take my side. Stand for truth, and 'tis enough.

Scientiae liberales.--Arts that respect the mind were ever reputed nobler than those that serve the body, though we less can be without them, as tillage, spinning, weaving, building, &c., without which we could scarce sustain life a day. But these were the works of every hand; the other of the brain only, and those the most generous and exalted wits and spirits, that cannot rest or acquiesce. The mind of man is still fed with labour: Opere pascitur.

Non vulgi sunt.--There is a more secret cause, and the power of liberal studies lies more hid than that it can be wrought out by profane wits. It is not every man's way to hit. There are men, I confess, that set the carat and value upon things as they love them; but science is not every man's mistress. It is as great a spite to be praised in the wrong place, and by a wrong person, as can be done to a noble nature.

Honesta ambitio.--If divers men seek fame or honour by divers ways, so both be honest, neither is to be blamed; but they that seek immortality are not only worthy of love, but of praise.

Maritus improbus.--He hath a delicate wife, a fair fortune, a family to go to and be welcome; yet he had rather be drunk with mine host and the fiddlers of such a town, than go home.

Afflictio pia magistra.--Affliction teacheth a wicked person some time to pray: prosperity never.

Deploratis facilis descensus Averni.--The devil take all.--Many might go to heaven with half the labour they go to hell, if they would venture their industry the right way; but "The devil take all!" quoth he that was choked in the mill-dam, with his four last words in his mouth.

AEgidius cursu superat.--A cripple in the way out-travels a footman or a post out of the way.

Prodigo nummi nauci.--Bags of money to a prodigal person are the same that cherry-stones are with some boys, and so thrown away.

Munda et sordida.--A woman, the more curious she is about her face is commonly the more careless about her house.

Debitum deploratum.--Of this spilt water there is a little to be gathered up: it is a desperate debt.

Latro sesquipedalis.--The thief {22} that had a longing at the gallows to commit one robbery more before he was hanged.

And like the German lord, when he went out of Newgate into the cart, took order to have his arms set up in his last herborough: said was he taken and committed upon suspicion of treason, no witness appearing against him; but the judges entertained him most civilly, discoursed with him, offered him the courtesy of the rack; but he confessed, &c.

Calumniae fructus.--I am beholden to calumny, that she hath so

endeavoured and taken pains to belie me. It shall make me set a surer guard on myself, and keep a better watch upon my actions.

Impertinens.--A tedious person is one a man would leap a steeple from, gallop down any steep lull to avoid him; forsake his meat, sleep, nature itself, with all her benefits, to shun him. A mere impertinent; one that touched neither heaven nor earth in his discourse. He opened an entry into a fair room, but shut it again presently. I spoke to him of garlic, he answered asparagus; consulted him of marriage, he tells me of hanging, as if they went by one and the same destiny.

Bellum scribentium.--What a sight it is to see writers committed together by the ears for ceremonies, syllables, points, colons, commas, hyphens, and the like, fighting as for their fires and their altars; and angry that none are frightened at their noises and loud brayings under their asses' skins.

There is hope of getting a fortune without digging in these quarries. Sed meliore (in omne) ingenio animoque quam fortuna, sum usus. {23}

"Pingue solum lassat; sed juvat ipse labor." {24a}

Differentia inter doctos et sciolos.--Wits made out their several expeditions then for the discovery of truth, to find out great and profitable knowledges; had their several instruments for the disquisition of arts. Now there are certain scioli or smatterers that are busy in the skirts and outsides of learning, and have scarce anything of solid literature to commend them. They may have some edging or trimming of a scholar, a welt or so; but it is no more.

Impostorum fucus.--Imposture is a specious thing, yet never worse than when it feigns to be best, and to none discovered sooner than the simplest. For truth and goodness are plain and open; but imposture is ever ashamed of the light.

Icunculorum motio.--A puppet-play must be shadowed and seen in the dark; for draw the curtain, et sordet gesticulatio. {24b}

Principes et administri.--There is a great difference in the understanding of some princes, as in the quality of their ministers about them. Some would dress their masters in gold, pearl, and all true jewels of majesty; others furnish them with feathers, bells, and ribands, and are therefore esteemed the fitter servants. But they are ever good men that must make good the times; if the men be naught, the times will be such. Finis exspectandus est in unoquoque hominum; animali ad mutationem promptissimo. {25a}

Scitum Hispanicum.--It is a quick saying with the Spaniards, Artes inter haeredes non dividi. {25b} Yet these have inherited their fathers' lying, and they brag of it. He is a narrow-minded man that affects a triumph in any glorious study; but to triumph in a lie, and a lie themselves have forged, is frontless. Folly often goes beyond her bounds; but Impudence knows none.

Non nova res livor.--Envy is no new thing, nor was it born only in our times. The ages past have brought it forth, and the coming ages

will. So long as there are men fit for it, quorum odium virtute relicta placet, it will never be wanting. It is a barbarous envy, to take from those men's virtues which, because thou canst not arrive at, thou impotently despair'st to imitate. Is it a crime in me that I know that which others had not yet known but from me? or that I am the author of many things which never would have come in thy thought but that I taught them? It is new but a foolish way you have found out, that whom you cannot equal or come near in doing, you would destroy or ruin with evil speaking; as if you had bound both your wits and natures 'prentices to slander, and then came forth the best artificers when you could form the foulest calumnies.

Nil gratius protervo lib.--Indeed nothing is of more credit or request now than a petulant paper, or scoffing verses; and it is but convenient to the times and manners we live with, to have then the worst writings and studies flourish when the best begin to be despised. Ill arts begin where good end.

Jam literae sordent.--Pastus hodierni. ingen.--The time was when men would learn and study good things, not envy those that had them. Then men were had in price for learning; now letters only make men vile. He is upbraidingly called a poet, as if it were a contemptible nick-name: but the professors, indeed, have made the learning cheap--railing and tinkling rhymers, whose writings the vulgar more greedily read, as being taken with the scurrility and petulancy of such wits. He shall not have a reader now unless he jeer and lie. It is the food of men's natures; the diet of the times; gallants cannot sleep else. The writer must lie and the gentle reader rests happy to hear the worthiest works misinterpreted, the clearest actions obscured, the innocentest life traduced: and in such a licence of lying, a field so fruitful of slanders, how can there be matter wanting to his laughter? Hence comes the epidemical infection; for how can they escape the contagion of the writings, whom the virulency of the calumnies hath not staved off from reading?

Sed seculi morbus.--Nothing doth more invite a greedy reader than an unlooked-for subject. And what more unlooked-for than to see a person of an unblamed life made ridiculous or odious by the artifice of lying? But it is the disease of the age; and no wonder if the world, growing old, begin to be infirm: old age itself is a disease. It is long since the sick world began to dote and talk idly: would she had but doted still! but her dotage is now broke forth into a madness, and become a mere frenzy.

Alastoris malitia.--This Alastor, who hath left nothing unsearched or unassailed by his impudent and licentious lying in his aguish writings (for he was in his cold quaking fit all the while), what hath he done more than a troublesome base cur? barked and made a noise afar off; had a fool or two to spit in his mouth, and cherish him with a musty bone? But they are rather enemies of my fame than me, these barkers.

Mali Choragi fuere.--It is an art to have so much judgment as to apparel a lie well, to give it a good dressing; that though the nakedness would show deformed and odious, the suiting of it might draw their readers. Some love any strumpet, be she never so shop-like or meretricious, in good clothes. But these, nature could not have formed them better to destroy their own testimony and overthrow

their calumny.

Hear-say news.--That an elephant, in 1630, came hither ambassador from the Great Mogul, who could both write and read, and was every day allowed twelve cast of bread, twenty quarts of Canary sack, besides nuts and almonds the citizens' wives sent him. That he had a Spanish boy to his interpreter, and his chief negociation was to confer or practise with Archy, the principal fool of state, about stealing hence Windsor Castle and carrying it away on his back if he can.

Lingua sapientis, potius quam loquentis.--A wise tongue should not be licentious and wandering; but moved and, as it were, governed with certain reins from the heart and bottom of the breast: and it was excellently said of that philosopher, that there was a wall or parapet of teeth set in our mouth, to restrain the petulancy of our words; that the rashness of talking should not only be retarded by the guard and watch of our heart, but be fenced in and defended by certain strengths placed in the mouth itself, and within the lips. But you shall see some so abound with words, without any seasoning or taste of matter, in so profound a security, as while they are speaking, for the most part they confess to speak they know not what.

Of the two (if either were to be wished) I would rather have a plain downright wisdom, than a foolish and affected eloquence. For what is so furious and Bedlam like as a vain sound of chosen and excellent words, without any subject of sentence or science mixed?

Optanda.--Thersites Homeri.--Whom the disease of talking still once possesseth, he can never hold his peace. Nay, rather than he will not discourse he will hire men to hear him. And so heard, not hearkened unto, he comes off most times like a mountebank, that when he hath praised his medicines, finds none will take them, or trust him. He is like Homer's Thersites.

[Greek text]; speaking without judgement or measure.

"Loquax magis, quam facundus,
Satis loquentiae, sapientiae parum.{31a}
[Greek verse]. {31b}
Optimus est homini linguae thesaurus, et ingens
Gratia, quae parvis mensurat singula verbis."

Homeri Ulysses.--Demacatus Plutarchi.--Ulysses, in Homer, is made a long-thinking man before he speaks; and Epaminondas is celebrated by Pindar to be a man that, though he knew much, yet he spoke but little. Demacatus, when on the bench he was long silent and said nothing, one asking him if it were folly in him, or want of language, he answered, "A fool could never hold his peace." {31c}
For too much talking is ever the index of a fool.

"Dum tacet indoctus, poterit cordatus haberi;
Is morbos animi namque tacendo tegit." {32a}

Nor is that worthy speech of Zeno the philosopher to be passed over with the note of ignorance; who being invited to a feast in Athens, where a great prince's ambassadors were entertained, and was the only person that said nothing at the table; one of them with courtesy asked him, "What shall we return from thee, Zeno, to the prince our master, if he asks us of thee?" "Nothing," he replied, "more but that you found an old man in Athens that knew to be silent amongst his cups." It was near a miracle to see an old man silent, since talking is the disease of age; but amongst cups makes it fully a wonder.

Argute dictum.--It was wittily said upon one that was taken for a great and grave man so long as he held his peace, "This man might have been a counsellor of state, till he spoke; but having spoken, not the beadle of the ward." [Greek text]. {32b} Pytag. quam laudabilis! [Greek text]. Linguam cohibe, prae aliis omnibus, ad deorum exemplum. {33a} Digito compesce labellum. {33b}

Acutius cernuntur vitia quam virtutes.--There is almost no man but he sees clearer and sharper the vices in a speaker, than the virtues. And there are many, that with more ease will find fault with what is spoken foolishly than can give allowance to that wherein you are wise silently. The treasure of a fool is always in his tongue, said the witty comic poet; {33c} and it appears not in anything more than in that nation, whereof one, when he had got the inheritance of an unlucky old grange, would needs sell it; {33d} and to draw buyers proclaimed the virtues of it. Nothing ever thrived on it, saith he. No owner of it ever died in his bed; some hung, some drowned themselves; some were banished, some starved; the trees were all blasted; the swine died of the measles, the cattle of the murrain, the sheep of the rot; they that stood were ragged, bare, and bald as your hand; nothing was ever reared there, not a duckling, or a goose. Hospitium fuerat calamitatis. {34a} Was not this man like to sell it?

Vulgi expectatio.--Expectation of the vulgar is more drawn and held with newness than goodness; we see it in fencers, in players, in poets, in preachers, in all where fame promiseth anything; so it be new, though never so naught and depraved, they run to it, and are taken. Which shews, that the only decay or hurt of the best men's reputation with the people is, their wits have out-lived the people's palates. They have been too much or too long a feast.

Claritas patriae.--Greatness of name in the father oft-times helps not forth, but overwhelms the son; they stand too near one another. The shadow kills the growth: so much, that we see the grandchild come more and oftener to be heir of the first, than doth the second: he dies between; the possession is the third's.

Eloquentia.--Eloquence is a great and diverse thing: nor did she yet ever favour any man so much as to become wholly his. He is happy that can arrive to any degree of her grace. Yet there are who prove themselves masters of her, and absolute lords; but I believe they may mistake their evidence: for it is one thing to be eloquent in the schools, or in the hall; another at the bar, or in the pulpit. There is a difference between mooting and pleading; between fencing and fighting. To make arguments in my study, and confute them, is easy; where I answer myself, not an adversary. So I can see whole volumes dispatched by the umbratical doctors on all sides:

but draw these forth into the just lists: let them appear sub dio, and they are changed with the place, like bodies bred in the shade; they cannot suffer the sun or a shower, nor bear the open air; they scarce can find themselves, that they were wont to domineer so among their auditors: but indeed I would no more choose a rhetorician for reigning in a school, than I would a pilot for rowing in a pond.

Amor et odium.--Love that is ignorant, and hatred, have almost the same ends: many foolish lovers wish the same to their friends, which their enemies would: as to wish a friend banished, that they might accompany him in exile; or some great want, that they might relieve him; or a disease, that they might sit by him. They make a causeway to their country by injury, as if it were not honester to do nothing than to seek a way to do good by a mischief.

Injuria.--Injuries do not extinguish courtesies: they only suffer them not to appear fair. For a man that doth me an injury after a courtesy, takes not away that courtesy, but defaces it: as he that writes other verses upon my verses, takes not away the first letters, but hides them.

Beneficia.--Nothing is a courtesy unless it be meant us; and that friendly and lovingly. We owe no thanks to rivers, that they carry our boats; or winds, that they be favouring and fill our sails; or meats, that they be nourishing. For these are what they are necessarily. Horses carry us, trees shade us, but they know it not. It is true, some men may receive a courtesy and not know it; but never any man received it from him that knew it not. Many men have been cured of diseases by accidents; but they were not remedies. I myself have known one helped of an ague by falling into a water; another whipped out of a fever; but no man would ever use these for medicines. It is the mind, and not the event, that distinguisheth the courtesy from wrong. My adversary may offend the judge with his pride and impertinences, and I win my cause; but he meant it not to me as a courtesy. I scaped pirates by being shipwrecked; was the wreck a benefit therefore? No; the doing of courtesies aright is the mixing of the respects for his own sake and for mine. He that doeth them merely for his own sake is like one that feeds his cattle to sell them; he hath his horse well dressed for Smithfield.

Valor rerum.--The price of many things is far above what they are bought and sold for. Life and health, which are both inestimable, we have of the physician; as learning and knowledge, the true tillage of the mind, from our schoolmasters. But the fees of the one or the salary of the other never answer the value of what we received, but served to gratify their labours.

Memoria.--Memory, of all the powers of the mind, is the most delicate and frail; it is the first of our faculties that age invades. Seneca, the father, the rhetorician, confesseth of himself he had a miraculous one, not only to receive but to hold. I myself could, in my youth, have repeated all that ever I had made, and so continued till I was past forty; since, it is much decayed in me. Yet I can repeat whole books that I have read, and poems of some selected friends which I have liked to charge my memory with. It was wont to be faithful to me; but shaken with age now, and sloth, which weakens the strongest abilities, it may perform somewhat, but cannot promise much. By exercise it is to be made better and serviceable. Whatsoever I pawned with it while I was young and a

boy, it offers me readily, and without stops; but what I trust to it now, or have done of later years, it lays up more negligently, and oftentimes loses; so that I receive mine own (though frequently called for) as if it were new and borrowed. Nor do I always find presently from it what I seek; but while I am doing another thing, that I laboured for will come; and what I sought with trouble will offer itself when I am quiet. Now, in some men I have found it as happy as Nature, who, whatsoever they read or pen, they can say without book presently, as if they did then write in their mind. And it is more a wonder in such as have a swift style, for their memories are commonly slowest; such as torture their writings, and go into council for every word, must needs fix somewhat, and make it their own at last, though but through their own vexation.

Comit. suffragia.--Suffrages in Parliament are numbered, not weighed; nor can it be otherwise in those public councils where nothing is so unequal as the equality; for there, how odd soever men's brains or wisdoms are, their power is always even and the same.

Stare a partibus.--Some actions, be they never so beautiful and generous, are often obscured by base and vile misconstructions, either out of envy or ill-nature, that judgeth of others as of itself. Nay, the times are so wholly grown to be either partial or malicious, that if he be a friend all sits well about him, his very vices shall be virtues; if an enemy, or of the contrary faction, nothing is good or tolerable in him; insomuch that we care not to discredit and shame our judgments to soothe our passions.

Deus in creaturis.--Man is read in his face; God in His creatures; not as the philosopher, the creature of glory, reads him; but as the divine, the servant of humility; yet even he must take care not to be too curious. For to utter truth of God but as he thinks only, may be dangerous, who is best known by our not knowing. Some things of Him, so much as He hath revealed or commanded, it is not only lawful but necessary for us to know; for therein our ignorance was the first cause of our wickedness.

Veritas proprium hominis.--Truth is man's proper good, and the only immortal thing was given to our mortality to use. No good Christian or ethnic, if he be honest, can miss it; no statesman or patriot should. For without truth all the actions of mankind are craft, malice, or what you will, rather than wisdom. Homer says he hates him worse than hell-mouth that utters one thing with his tongue and keeps another in his breast. Which high expression was grounded on divine reason; for a lying mouth is a stinking pit, and murders with the contagion it venteth. Beside, nothing is lasting that is feigned; it will have another face than it had, ere long. {41} As Euripides saith, "No lie ever grows old."

Nullum vitium sine patrocinio.--It is strange there should be no vice without its patronage, that when we have no other excuse we will say, we love it, we cannot forsake it. As if that made it not more a fault. We cannot, because we think we cannot, and we love it because we will defend it. We will rather excuse it than be rid of it. That we cannot is pretended; but that we will not is the true reason. How many have I known that would not have their vices hid? nay, and, to be noted, live like Antipodes to others in the same city? never see the sun rise or set in so many years, but be as they

were watching a corpse by torch-light; would not sin the common way, but held that a kind of rusticity; they would do it new, or contrary, for the infamy; they were ambitious of living backward; and at last arrived at that, as they would love nothing but the vices, not the vicious customs. It was impossible to reform these natures; they were dried and hardened in their ill. They may say they desired to leave it, but do not trust them; and they may think they desire it, but they may lie for all that; they are a little angry with their follies now and then; marry, they come into grace with them again quickly. They will confess they are offended with their manner of living like enough; who is not? When they can put me in security that they are more than offended, that they hate it, then I will hearken to them, and perhaps believe them; but many now-a-days love and hate their ill together.

De vere argutis.--I do hear them say often some men are not witty, because they are not everywhere witty; than which nothing is more foolish. If an eye or a nose be an excellent part in the face, therefore be all eye or nose! I think the eyebrow, the forehead, the cheek, chin, lip, or any part else are as necessary and natural in the place. But now nothing is good that is natural; right and natural language seems to have least of the wit in it; that which is writhed and tortured is counted the more exquisite. Cloth of bodkin or tissue must be embroidered; as if no face were fair that were not powdered or painted! no beauty to be had but in wresting and writhing our own tongue! Nothing is fashionable till it be deformed; and this is to write like a gentleman. All must be affected and preposterous as our gallants' clothes, sweet-bags, and night-dressings, in which you would think our men lay in, like ladies, it is so curious.

Censura de poetis.--Nothing in our age, I have observed, is more preposterous than the running judgments upon poetry and poets; when we shall hear those things commended and cried up for the best writings which a man would scarce vouchsafe to wrap any wholesome drug in; he would never light his tobacco with them. And those men almost named for miracles, who yet are so vile that if a man should go about to examine and correct them, he must make all they have done but one blot. Their good is so entangled with their bad as forcibly one must draw on the other's death with it. A sponge dipped in ink will do all:-

"--Comitetur Punica librum
Spongia.--" {44a}

Et paulo post,

"Non possunt . . . multae . . . liturae
. . . una litura potest."

Cestius--Cicero--Heath--Taylor--Spenser.--Yet their vices have not hurt them; nay, a great many they have profited, for they have been loved for nothing else. And this false opinion grows strong against the best men, if once it take root with the ignorant. Cestius, in his time, was preferred to Cicero, so far as the ignorant durst.

They learned him without book, and had him often in their mouths; but a man cannot imagine that thing so foolish or rude but will find and enjoy an admirer; at least a reader or spectator. The puppets are seen now in despite of the players; Heath's epigrams and the Sculler's poems have their applause. There are never wanting that dare prefer the worst preachers, the worst pleaders, the worst poets; not that the better have left to write or speak better, but that they that hear them judge worse; Non illi pejus dicunt, sed hi corruptius judicant. Nay, if it were put to the question of the water-rhymer's works, against Spenser's, I doubt not but they would find more suffrages; because the most favour common vices, out of a prerogative the vulgar have to lose their judgments and like that which is naught.

Poetry, in this latter age, hath proved but a mean mistress to such as have wholly addicted themselves to her, or given their names up to her family. They who have but saluted her on the by, and now and then tendered their visits, she hath done much for, and advanced in the way of their own professions (both the law and the gospel) beyond all they could have hoped or done for themselves without her favour. Wherein she doth emulate the judicious but preposterous bounty of the time's grandees, who accumulate all they can upon the parasite or fresh-man in their friendship; but think an old client or honest servant bound by his place to write and starve.

Indeed, the multitude commend writers as they do fencers or wrestlers, who if they come in robustiously and put for it with a deal of violence are received for the braver fellows; when many times their own rudeness is a cause of their disgrace, and a slight touch of their adversary gives all that boisterous force the foil. But in these things the unskilful are naturally deceived, and judging wholly by the bulk, think rude things greater than polished, and scattered more numerous than composed; nor think this only to be true in the sordid multitude, but the neater sort of our gallants; for all are the multitude, only they differ in clothes, not in judgment or understanding.

De Shakspeare nostrat.--Augustus in Hat.--I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakspeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, "Would he had blotted a thousand," which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this but for their ignorance who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour, for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. "Sufflaminandus erat," {47a} as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so, too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him, "Caesar, thou dost me wrong." He replied, "Caesar did never wrong but with just cause;" and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.

Ingeniorum discrimina.--Not. 1.--In the difference of wits I have observed there are many notes; and it is a little maistry to know

them, to discern what every nature, every disposition will bear; for before we sow our land we should plough it. There are no fewer forms of minds than of bodies amongst us. The variety is incredible, and therefore we must search. Some are fit to make divines, some poets, some lawyers, some physicians; some to be sent to the plough, and trades.

There is no doctrine will do good where nature is wanting. Some wits are swelling and high; others low and still; some hot and fiery; others cold and dull; one must have a bridle, the other a spur.

Not. 2.--There be some that are forward and bold; and these will do every little thing easily. I mean that is hard by and next them, which they will utter unretarded without any shamefastness. These never perform much, but quickly. They are what they are on the sudden; they show presently, like grain that, scattered on the top of the ground, shoots up, but takes no root; has a yellow blade, but the ear empty. They are wits of good promise at first, but there is an ingenistitium; {49a} they stand still at sixteen, they get no higher.

Not. 3.--You have others that labour only to ostentation; and are ever more busy about the colours and surface of a work than in the matter and foundation, for that is hid, the other is seen.

Not. 4.--Others that in composition are nothing but what is rough and broken. Quae per salebras, altaque saxa cadunt. {49b} And if it would come gently, they trouble it of purpose. They would not have it run without rubs, as if that style were more strong and manly that struck the ear with a kind of unevenness. These men err not by chance, but knowingly and willingly; they are like men that affect a fashion by themselves; have some singularity in a ruff cloak, or hat-band; or their beards specially cut to provoke beholders, and set a mark upon themselves. They would be reprehended while they are looked on. And this vice, one that is authority with the rest, loving, delivers over to them to be imitated; so that oftentimes the faults which be fell into the others seek for. This is the danger, when vice becomes a precedent.

Not. 5.--Others there are that have no composition at all; but a kind of tuning and rhyming fall in what they write. It runs and slides, and only makes a sound. Women's poets they are called, as you have women's tailors.

"They write a verse as smooth, as soft as cream,
In which there is no torrent, nor scarce stream."

You may sound these wits and find the depth of them with your middle finger. They are cream-bowl or but puddle-deep.

Not. 6.--Some that turn over all books, and are equally searching in all papers; that write out of what they presently find or meet, without choice. By which means it happens that what they have discredited and impugned in one week, they have before or after extolled the same in another. Such are all the essayists, even their master Montaigne. These, in all they write, confess still

what books they have read last, and therein their own folly so much, that they bring it to the stake raw and undigested; not that the place did need it neither, but that they thought themselves furnished and would vent it

Not. 7.--Some, again who, after they have got authority, or, which is less, opinion, by their writings, to have read much, dare presently to feign whole books and authors, and lie safely. For what never was, will not easily be found, not by the most curious.

Not. 8.--And some, by a cunning protestation against all reading, and false venditation of their own naturals, think to divert the sagacity of their readers from themselves, and cool the scent of their own fox-like thefts; when yet they are so rank, as a man may find whole pages together usurped from one author; their necessities compelling them to read for present use, which could not be in many books; and so come forth more ridiculously and palpably guilty than those who, because they cannot trace, they yet would slander their industry.

Not. 9.--But the wretched are the obstinate contemners of all helps and arts; such as presuming on their own naturals (which, perhaps, are excellent), dare deride all diligence, and seem to mock at the terms when they understand not the things; thinking that way to get off wittily with their ignorance. These are imitated often by such as are their peers in negligence, though they cannot be in nature; and they utter all they can think with a kind of violence and indisposition, unexamined, without relation either to person, place, or any fitness else; and the more wilful and stubborn they are in it the more learned they are esteemed of the multitude, through their excellent vice of judgment, who think those things the stronger that have no art; as if to break were better than to open, or to rend asunder gentler than to loose.

Not. 10.--It cannot but come to pass that these men who commonly seek to do more than enough may sometimes happen on something that is good and great; but very seldom: and when it comes it doth not recompense the rest of their ill. For their jests, and their sentences (which they only and ambitiously seek for) stick out, and are more eminent, because all is sordid and vile about them; as lights are more discerned in a thick darkness than a faint shadow. Now, because they speak all they can (however unfitly), they are thought to have the greater copy; where the learned use ever election and a mean, they look back to what they intended at first, and make all an even and proportioned body. The true artificer will not run away from Nature as he were afraid of her, or depart from life and the likeness of truth, but speak to the capacity of his hearers. And though his language differ from the vulgar somewhat, it shall not fly from all humanity, with the Tamerlanes and Tamer-chains of the late age, which had nothing in them but the scenical strutting and furious vociferation to warrant them to the ignorant gapers. He knows it is his only art so to carry it, as none but artificers perceive it. In the meantime, perhaps, he is called barren, dull, lean, a poor writer, or by what contumelious word can come in their cheeks, by these men who, without labour, judgment, knowledge, or almost sense, are received or preferred before him. He gratulates them and their fortune. Another age, or juster men, will acknowledge the virtues of his studies, his wisdom in dividing, his subtlety in arguing, with what strength he doth inspire his

readers, with what sweetness he strokes them; in inveighing, what sharpness; in jest, what urbanity he uses; how he doth reign in men's affections; how invade and break in upon them, and makes their minds like the thing he writes. Then in his elocution to behold what word is proper, which hath ornaments, which height, what is beautifully translated, where figures are fit, which gentle, which strong, to show the composition manly; and how he hath avoided faint, obscure, obscene, sordid, humble, improper, or effeminate phrase; which is not only praised of the most, but commended (which is worse), especially for that it is naught.

Ignorantia animae.--I know no disease of the soul but ignorance, not of the arts and sciences, but of itself; yet relating to those it is a pernicious evil, the darkener of man's life, the disturber of his reason, and common confounder of truth, with which a man goes groping in the dark, no otherwise than if he were blind. Great understandings are most racked and troubled with it; nay, sometimes they will rather choose to die than not to know the things they study for. Think, then, what an evil it is, and what good the contrary.

Scientia.--Knowledge is the action of the soul and is perfect without the senses, as having the seeds of all science and virtue in itself; but not without the service of the senses; by these organs the soul works: she is a perpetual agent, prompt and subtle; but often flexible and erring, entangling herself like a silkworm, but her reason is a weapon with two edges, and cuts through. In her indagations oft-times new scents put her by, and she takes in errors into her by the same conduits she doth truths.

Otium Studiorum.--Ease and relaxation are profitable to all studies. The mind is like a bow, the stronger by being unbent. But the temper in spirits is all, when to command a man's wit, when to favour it. I have known a man vehement on both sides, that knew no mean, either to intermit his studies or call upon them again. When he hath set himself to writing he would join night to day, press upon himself without release, not minding it, till he fainted; and when he left off, resolve himself into all sports and looseness again, that it was almost a despair to draw him to his book; but once got to it, he grew stronger and more earnest by the ease. His whole powers were renewed; he would work out of himself what he desired, but with such excess as his study could not be ruled; he knew not how to dispose his own abilities, or husband them; he was of that immoderate power against himself. Nor was he only a strong, but an absolute speaker and writer; but his subtlety did not show itself; his judgment thought that a vice; for the ambush hurts more that is hid. He never forced his language, nor went out of the highway of speaking but for some great necessity or apparent profit; for he denied figures to be invented for ornament, but for aid; and still thought it an extreme madness to bind or wrest that which ought to be right.

Stili eminentia.--Virgil.--Tully.--Sallust.--It is no wonder men's eminence appears but in their own way. Virgil's felicity left him in prose, as Tully's forsook him in verse. Sallust's orations are read in the honour of story, yet the most eloquent. Plato's speech, which he made for Socrates, is neither worthy of the patron nor the person defended. Nay, in the same kind of oratory, and where the matter is one, you shall have him that reasons strongly, open

negligently; another that prepares well, not fit so well. And this happens not only to brains, but to bodies. One can wrestle well, another run well, a third leap or throw

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