

Of Friendship

1.28, 1.27

CONSIDERING the proceeding of a painter's work I have, [1] a desire hath possessed me to imitate him. He maketh choice of the most convenient place and middle of every wall there to place a picture, laboured with all his skill and sufficiency, and all void places about it he filleth up with antique Boscage [2] or Crotosko [3] works, which are fantastical pictures, having no grace but in the variety and strangeness of them. And what are these my compositions in truth other than antique works and monstrous bodies, patched and huddled up together of diverse members without any certain or well-ordered figure, having neither order, dependency, or proportion, but casual and framed by chance?

efinit in pisces mulier formosa superne.

woman fair for parts superior,
fishes in a fish for parts inferior. [4]

Touching this second point I go as far as my painter, but for the other and better part I am far behind; for my sufficiency reacheth not so far as that I dare undertake a rich, a polished, and, according to true skill, an art-like table. [5] I have advised myself to borrow one of Steven de la Boitie, [6] who with this kind of work shall honour all the world. It is a discourse he entitled *Voluntary Servitude*, but those who have not known him have since very properly baptized the same, *The Against One*. In his first youth he writ, by way of essay, in honour of liberty against tyrants. It hath long since been dispersed amongst men of understanding, not without great and well-deserved commendations; for it is full of wit and containeth as much learning as may be. Yet doth it differ much from the best he can do. And if in the age I knew him in, he would have undergone my design to set his fantasies down in writing, we should doubtless see many rare things and which would very nearly approach the honour of antiquity; for especially touching that part of Nature's gifts, I know none may be compared to him. But it was not long of him [7] that ever this treatise came to man's view,

and I believe he never saw it since it first escaped his hands; with certain other notes concerning the Edict of January, [8] famous by reason of our intestine war, [9] which haply in other places find their deserved praise. It is all I could ever recover of his relics (whom when death seized, he by his last will and testament, left with so kind remembrance, heir and executor of his library and writings), besides the little book I since caused to be published. [10]

To which his pamphlet I am particularly most bounden, for so much as it was the instrumental mean of our first acquaintance. For it was showed me long time before I saw him, and gave me the first knowledge of his name, addressing and thus nourishing that unspotted friendship which we (so long as it has pleased God) have so sincerely, so entire and inviolably maintained between us, that truly a man shall not commonly hear of the like, and amongst our modern men no sign of any such is seen. So many parts are required to the erecting of such a one that it may be counted a wonder if fortune once in three ages contract the like.

There is nothing to which Nature hath more addressed us than to society. And *Aristotle* sayeth that *perfect law-givers have had more regardful care of friendship than of justice*. [11] And the utmost drift of its perfection is this. For generally, all those amities [12] nourished by voluptuousness or profit, public or private need, are thereby so much the less fair and so much the less true amities, in that they intermeddle other causes, scope, and fruit with friendship than itself alone. Nor doe those four ancient kinds of friendships—natural, social, hospitable, and venerian [13]—either particularly or conjointly beseem the same.

That from children to parents may rather be termed respect. Friendship is nourished by communication, which by reason of the over-great disparity cannot be found in them and would haply [14] offend the duties of nature. For neither all the secret thoughts of parents can be communicated unto children, lest it might engender an unbeseeming [15] familiarity between them, nor the admonitions and corrections (which are the chiefest offices of friendship) could be exercised from children to parents. There have nations been found where, by custom, children killed their parents, and others where parents slew their children, thereby to avoid the hindrance of enterbearing [16] one another in after times; for naturally one dependeth from the ruin of another. There have philosophers been found disdainig this natural conjunction: witness *Aristippus* who, being urged with the

affection he ought his children as proceeding from his loins, began to spit, saying, *That also that excrement proceeded from him, and that also we engendered worms and lice.* [17] And that other man, whom *Plutarch* would have persuaded to agree with his brother, answered, *I care not a straw the more for him, though he came out of the same womb I did.* [18]

Verily, the name of brother is a glorious name and full of loving kindness, and therefore did he and I term one another sworn brother. But this commixture, dividence, [19] and sharing of goods, this joining wealth to wealth, and that the riches of one shall be the poverty of another, doth exceedingly distemper and distract all brotherly alliance and lovely conjunction. If brothers should conduct the progress of their advancement and thrift in one same path and course, they must necessarily oftentimes hinder and cross one another. Moreover, the correspondency and relation that begetteth these true and mutually perfect amities, why shall it be found in these? The father and the son may very well be of a far-differing complexion, and so may brothers. He is my son, he is my kinsman, but he may be fool, a bad, or a peevish-minded man. And then according as they are friendships which the law and duty of nature doth command us, so much the less of our own voluntary choice and liberty is there required unto it. And our genuine liberty hath no production more properly her own than that of affection and amity. Sure I am that concerning the same I have assayed all that might be, having had the best and most indulgent father that ever was, even to his extremest age, and who from father to son was descended of famous house and touching this rare-seen virtue of brotherly concord very exemplary:

ipse

notus in fratres omni paterni.

o his brothers known so kind,

s to bear a father's mind. [20]

To compare the affection toward women unto it although it proceed from our own free choice, a man cannot, nor may it be placed in this rank. Her fire, I confess it—

neque enim est dea nescia nostri

neque dulcem curis miscat amaritiam.)

Nor is that Goddess ignorant of me,
/hose bitter-sweets with my cares mixed be.) [21]

—to be more active, more fervent, and more sharp. But it is a rash and wavering fire, waving and diverse, the fire of an ague subject to fits and stints, and that hath but slender hold-fast of us. In true friendship, it is a general and universal heat, and equally tempered, a constant and settled heat, all pleasure and smoothness, that hath no pricking or stinging in it. Which the more it is in lustful love, the more is it but a raging and mad desire in following that which flies us:

*ome segue la lepre il cacciatore
l freddo, al caldo, alla montagna, al lito,
e piu l'estima poi che presa vede,
sol dietro a chi fugge afretta il piede.*

v'n as the huntsman doth the hare pursue,
i cold, in heat, on mountains, on the shore,
ut cares no more, when he her ta'en espies,
peeding his pace only at that which flies. [22]

As soon as it creepeth into the terms of friendship, that is to say, in the agreement of wits, it languisheth and vanisheth away. Enjoying doth lose it, as having a corporal end, and subject to satiety. On the other side, friendship is enjoyed according as it is desired; it is neither bred nor nourished nor increaseth but in jouissance, [23] as being spiritual, and the mind being refined by use and custom. Under this chief amity, these fading affections have sometimes found place in me, lest I should speak of him, who in his verses speaks but too much of it. So are these two passions entered into me in knowledge one of another, but in comparison, never. The first flying a high and keeping a proud pitch, [24] disdainfully beholding the other to pass her points far under it.

Concerning marriage, besides that it is a covenant which hath nothing free but the entrance, the continuance being forced and constrained depending elsewhere than from our will, and a match ordinarily concluded to other ends. A thousand strange knots are therein commonly to be unknit, able to break the web and trouble the whole course of a lively affection; whereas in friendship there is no commerce or business depending on the

same but itself. Seeing (to speak truly) that the ordinary sufficiency of women cannot answer this conference and communication, the nurse of this sacred bond; nor seem their minds strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable. And truly, if without that, such a genuine and voluntary acquaintance might be contracted, where not only minds had this entire jouissance but also bodies a share of the alliance, and where a man might wholly be engaged, it is certain that friendship would thereby be more complete and full. But this sex could never yet by any example attain unto it and is by ancient schools rejected thence.

And this other Greek licence [25] is justly abhorred by our customs, which notwithstanding, because according to use it had so necessary a disparity of ages and difference of offices between lovers, did no more sufficiently answer the perfect union and agreement which here we require: *Quis est enim iste amor amicitiae? cur neque deformem adolescentem quisquam amat, neque formosum senem? For what love is this of friendship? Why doth no man love either a deformed young man, or a beautiful old man?* [26] For even the picture the Academy [27] makes of it will not (as I suppose) disavow me to say thus in her behalf: That the first fury—inspired by the son of Venus [28] in the lover's heart upon the object of tender youth's flower, to which they allow all insolent and passionate violences, an immoderate heat may produce—was simply grounded upon an external beauty, a false image of corporal generation. [29] For in the spirit it had no power, the sight whereof was yet concealed, which was but in his infancy and before the age of budding. For, if this fury did seize upon a base-minded courage, the means of its pursuit were riches, gifts, favour to the advancement of dignities, and such like vile merchandise, which they reprove. If it fell into a more generous mind, the interpositions were likewise generous: philosophical instructions, documents to reverence religion, to obey the laws, to die for the good of his country; examples of valor, wisdom and justice; the lover endeavoring and studying to make himself acceptable by the good grace and beauty of his mind (that of his body being long since decayed), hoping by this mental society to establish a more firm and permanent bargain.

When this pursuit attained the effect in due season (for by not requiring in a lover, he should bring leisure and discretion in his enterprise, they require it exactly in the beloved; forasmuch as he was to judge of an internal beauty, of a difficile knowledge [30] and abstruse discovery), then

by the interposition of a spiritual beauty was the desire of a spiritual conception engendered in the beloved. The latter was here chiefest; the corporal, accidental, and second, altogether contrary to the lover. And therefore do they prefer the beloved and verify that the gods likewise prefer the same, and greatly blame the poet *Æschylus*, who in the love between *Achilles* and *Patroclus* ascribeth the lover's part unto *Achilles*, who was in the first and beardless youth of his adolescence and the fairest of the Græcians.

After this general community, the mistress [31] and worthiest part of it, predominant and exercising her offices (they say the most availful [32] commodity did thereby redound both to the private and public); that it was the force of countries received the use of it, and the principal defence of equity and liberty: witness the comfortable [33] loves of *Hermodius* and *Aristogeiton*. Therefore name they it sacred and divine, and it concerns not them whether the violence of tyrants or the demisness [34] of the people be against them. [35] To conclude, all that can be alleged in favor of the Academy is to say that it was friendship, a thing which hath no bad reference unto the Stoical definition of love: *Amorem conatunt esse amicitiaē faciendæ ex pulchritudinis specie*. That love is an endeavour of making friendship by the show of beauty. [36]

I return to my description in a more equitable and equal manner. *Omnino amicitiaē, corroboratis iam confirmatisque, ingeniis et ætatibus, judicandæ sunt*. Clearly, friendships are to be judged by wits and ages already strengthened and confirmed. [37]

As for the rest, those we ordinarily call friends and amities are but acquaintances and familiarities, tied together by some occasion or commodities, by means whereof our minds are entertained. In the amity I speak of, they intermix and confound themselves one in the other, with so universal a commixture that they wear out and can no more find the seam that hath conjoined them together. If a man urge me to tell wherefore I loved him, I feel it cannot be expressed but by answering: Because it was he, because it was myself.

There is beyond all my discourse, and besides what I can particularly report of it I know not what inexplicable and fatal power a mean and a mediatrix [38] of this indissoluble union. We sought one another before we had seen one another and by the reports we heard one of another, which wrought greater violence in us than the reason of reports may well bear; I

think by some secret ordinance of the heavens. We embraced one another by our names. And at our first meeting, which was by chance at a great feast and solemn meeting of a whole township, we found ourselves so surprised, so known, so acquainted, and so combinedly bound together, that from thence forward nothing was so near unto us as one unto another's. He writ an excellent Latin satire since published by which he excuseth and expoundeth the precipitation of our acquaintance, so suddenly come to her perfection. Sithence it must continue so short a time, and begun so late (for we were both grown men, and he some years older than myself), there was no time to be lost. And it was not to be modeled or directed by the pattern of regular and remiss [39] friendship, wherein so many precautions of a long and preallable [40] conversation are required. This hath no other idea than of itself and can have no reference but to itself. It is not one especial consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand: it is I wot not what kind of quintessence of all this commixture, which, having seized all my will, induced the same to plunge and lose itself in his; which likewise having seized all his will, brought it to lose and plunge itself in mine, with a mutual greediness, and with a semblable [41] concurrence. I may truly say "lose," reserving nothing unto us that might properly be called our own, nor that was either his or mine.

When *Lelius*, in the presence of the Roman consuls—who, after the condemnation of *Tiberius Gracchus*, pursued all those that had been of his acquaintance—came to inquire of *Caius Blossius* (who was one of his [42] chiefest friends) what he would have done for him, and that he answered, *All things. What, all things?* replied he. *And what if he had willed thee to burn our temples?* *Blossius* answered, *He would never have commanded such a thing. But what if he had done it?* replied *Lelius*. The other answered, *I would have obeyed him*. If he were so perfect a friend to *Gracchus* as histories report, he needed not offend the consuls with this last and bold confession and should not have departed from the assurance he had of *Gracchus* his mind. But yet those who accuse this answer as seditious understand not well this mystery, and do not presuppose in what terms he stood and that he held *Gracchus* his will in his sleeve, both by power and knowledge. They were rather friends than citizens, rather friends than enemies of their country or friends of ambition and trouble. Having absolutely committed themselves one to another, they perfectly held the reins of one another's inclination; and let this yoke be guided by virtue and

conduct of reason (because without them it is altogether impossible to combine and proportion the same). The answer of *Blosius* was such as it should be. If their affections miscarried, according to my meaning, they were neither friends one to other, nor friends to themselves.

As for the rest, this answer sounds no more than mine would do to him that would in such sort inquire of me, "If your will should command you to kill your daughter, would you do it?" and that I should consent unto it. For that heareth no witness of consent to do it, because I am not in doubt of my will and as little of such a friend's will. It is not in the power of the world's discourse to remove me from the certainty I have of his intentions and judgments of mine. No one of its actions might be presented unto me, under what shape soever, but I would presently find the spring and motion of it. Our minds have jumped so unitedly together, they have with so fervent an affection considered of each other, and with like affection so discovered and sounded, even to the very bottom of each other's heart and entrails, that I did not only know his, as well as mine own, but would (verily) rather have trusted him concerning any matter of mine than myself.

Let no man compare any of the other common friendships to this. I have as much knowledge of them as another, yea of the perfectest of their kind, yet will I not persuade any man to confound their rules, for so a man might be deceived. In these other strict friendships a man must march with the bridle of wisdom and precaution in his hand: the bond is not so strictly tied but a man may in some sort distrust the same. *Love him (said Chilon) as if you should one day hate him again. Hate him as if you should love him again.* This precept, so abominable in this sovereign and mistress [43] amity, is necessary and wholesome in the use of vulgar and customary friendships, toward which a man must employ the saying *Aristotle* was wont so often repeat, *Oh ye friends, there is no perfect friend.* [44]

In this noble commerce, offices and benefits (nurses of other amities) deserve not so much as to be accounted of; this confusion so full of our wills is cause of it. For even as the friendship I bear unto myself admits no accrease [45] by any succour I give myself in any time of need, whatsoever the Stoics allege, and as I acknowledge no thanks unto myself for any service I do unto myself; so the union of such friends, being truly perfect, makes them lose the feeling of such duties, and hate and expel from one another these words of division and difference: benefit, good deed, duty, obligation, acknowledgement, prayer, thanks, and such their like. All things

being by effect common between them—wills, thoughts, judgements, goods, wives, children, honour, and life—and their mutual agreement, being no other than one soul in two bodies, according to the fit definition of *Aristotle*, they can neither lend or give ought to each other. [46] See here the reason why lawmakers, to honour marriage with some imaginary resemblance of this divine bond, inhibit donations between husband and wife, meaning thereby to infer that all things should peculiarly be proper to each of them and that they have nothing to divide and share together.

If, in the friendship whereof I speak, one might give unto another, the receiver of the benefit should bind his fellow. For, each seeking more than any other thing to do each other good, he who yields both matter and occasion is the man showeth himself liberal, giving his friend that contentment to effect towards him what he desireth most. When the philosopher Diogenes wanted money, he was wont to say that he *re-demanded the same of his friends, and not that he demanded it*. And to show how that is practised by effect, I will relate an ancient singular example.

Eudamidas the Corinthian had two friends: *Charixenus*, a Sycionian, and *Aretheus*, a Corinthian. Being upon his deathbed and very poor, and his two friends very rich, thus made his last will and testament: *To Aretheus, I bequeath the keeping of my mother, and to maintain her when she shall be old. To Charixenus, the marrying of my daughter, and to give her as great a dowry as he may; and in case one of them shall chance to die before, I appoint the survivor to substitute his charge and supply his place*. Those that first saw this testament laughed and mocked at the same; but his heirs being advertised thereof were very well pleased and received it with singular contentment. And *Charixenus*, one of them, dying five days after *Eudamidas*, the substitution being declared in favour of *Aretheus*, he carefully and very kindly kept and maintained his mother, and of the five talents that he was worth, he gave two and a half in marriage to one only daughter he had, and the other two and a half to the daughter of *Eudamidas*, whom he married both in one day.

This example is very ample, if one thing were not, which is the multitude of friends. For this perfect amity I speak of is indivisible: each man doth so wholly give himself unto his friend that he hath nothing left him to divide elsewhere; moreover, he is grieved that he is [not] double, triple, or quadruple, and hath not many souls or sundry wills, that he might confer

them all upon this subject. Common friendships may be divided; a man may love beauty in one, facility of behaviour in another, and wisdom in another, paternity in this, fraternity in that man, and so forth; but this amity that possesseth the soul and sways it in all sovereignty, it is impossible it should be double. If two at one instant should require help, to which would you run? Should they crave contrary offices of you, what order would you follow? Should one commit a matter to your silence, which if the other knew would greatly profit him, what course would you take? Or how would you discharge yourself? A singular and principal friendship dissolveth all other duties and freeth all other obligations. The secret I have sworn not to reveal to another, I may without perjury impart it unto him, who is no other but myself. It is a great and strange wonder for a man to double himself, and those that talk of tripling know not nor cannot reach into the height of it. *Nothing is extreme that hath his like.* And he who shall presuppose that of two I love the one as well as the other, and that they inter-love one another and love me as much as I love them, he multiplieth in brotherhood a thing most singular and alonely [47] one, and than which one alone is also the rarest to be found in the world.

The remainder of this history agreeth very well with what I said, for *Eudamidas* giveth us a grace and favor to his friends to employ them in his need. He leaveth them as his heirs of his liberality, which consisteth in putting the means into their hands to do him good. And doubtless the force of friendship is much more nobly shown in his deed than in *Aretheus*.

To conclude, they are inimaginable effects to him that hath not tasted them, and which makes me wonderfully to honor the answer of that young soldier to *Cyrus*, who enquiring of him what he would take for a horse with which he had lately gained the prize of a race, and whether he would change him for a kingdom. [48] *No surely, my Liege (said he), yet would I willingly forgo him to gain a true friend, could I but find a man worthy of so precious an alliance.* He said not ill, in saying, *could I but find.* For a man shall easily find men fit for a superficial acquaintance. But in this, wherein men negotiate from the very centre of their hearts and make no spare of anything, it is most requisite all the wards [49] and springs be sincerely wrought and perfectly true.

In confederacies which hold but by one end, [50] men have nothing to provide for but for the imperfections which particularly do interest and concern that end and respect. It is no great matter what religion my

physician or lawyer is of; this consideration hath nothing in common with the offices of that friendship they owe me. So do I in the familiar acquaintances that those who serve me contract with me. I am nothing inquisitive whether a lackey be chaste or no but whether he be diligent. I fear not a gaming muleteer, [51] so much as if he be weak, nor a hot-swearing cook as one that is ignorant and unskillful. I never meddle with saying what a man should do in the world—there are over many others that do it—but what myself do in the world:

tibi sic usus est: Tibi, ut opus est facto, face.

o is it requisite for me;

o thou as needful is for thee. [52]

Concerning familiar table-talk, I rather acquaint myself with and follow a merry conceited humour than a wise man; and in bed, I rather prefer beauty than goodness; and in society or conversation of familiar discourse, I respect rather sufficiency though without *Preud'hommie*, [53] and so of all things else.

Even as he that was found riding on an hobby-horse, playing with his children, besought him who thus surprised him not to speak of it until he were a father himself, supposing the tender fondness and fatherly passion which then would possess his mind should make him an impartial judge of such an action; so would I wish to speak to such as had tried what I speak of. But knowing how far such an amity is from the common use and how seld [54] seen and rarely found, I look not to find a competent judge. For even the discourses which stern antiquity hath left us concerning this subject seem to me but faint and forceless in respect of the feeling I have of it. And in that point the effects exceed the very precepts of philosophy.

il ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico.

or me, be I well in my wit.

ought, as a merry friend, so fit. [55]

Ancient *Menander* accounted him happy that had but met the shadow of a true friend. Verily, he had reason to say so, especially if he had tasted of any. For truly, if I compare all the rest of my fore-passed life—which, although I have by the mere mercy of God passed at rest and ease and, except the loss of so dear a friend, free from all grievous affliction with an

ever-quietness of mind, as one that have taken my natural and original commodities in good payment without searching any others—if, as I say, I compare it all unto the four years I so happily enjoyed the dear society of that worthy man, it is nought but a vapour, nought but a dark and irksome light. Since the time I lost him,

*uem semper acerbum,
emper honoratum (sic Dii voluistis) habebo.*
Which I shall ever hold a bitter day,
yet ever honour'd (so my God t'obey).

I do but languish, I do but sorrow. And even those pleasures all things present me with, instead of yielding me comfort, do but redouble the grief of his loss. We were co-partners in all things. All things were with us at half; methinks I have stolen his part from him.

—*Nec fas esse ulla me voluptate hic frui
crevi, tantisper dumille abest meus particeps.*
have set down, no joy enjoy I may.
as long as he my partner is away. [56]

I was so accustomed to be ever two, and so inured to be never single, that methinks I am but half my self.

*lam mea si partem animæ tulit,
faturior vis, quid moror altera,
ec charus æque nec superestes,
iteger? Ille dies utramque
uxit ruinam.*
since that part of my soul riper fate reft me,
Why stay I here the other part he left me?
not so dear, nor entire, while here I rest:
that day hath in one ruin both opprest. [57]

There is no action can betide me or imagination possess me but I hear him saying, [58] as indeed he would have done to me. For even as he did excel me by an infinite distance in all other sufficiencies and virtues, so did he in all offices and duties of friendship.

*uis desiderio sit pudor aut modus,
im chari capitis?*
What modesty or measure may I bear,
I want and wish of him that was so dear? [59]

*o misero frater adempte mihi!
omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra.
tuæ tuus in vita dulcis alebat amor.
tu mea, tu moriens fregisti commoda frater.
cum una tota est nostra sepulta anima,
uius ego interitu tota demente fugavi
cæc studia, atque omnes delicias animi.
illoquar? audiero nunquam tua verba loquentem
umquam ego te vita frater amabilior,
spiciam posthac? at certe semper amabo.*
O brother rest from miserable me,
If our delights are perished with thee,
Which thy sweet love did nourish in my breath;
With thee my soul is all and whole enshrined,
That whose death I have cast out of my mind
If my mind's sweet-meats, studies of this kind.
Never shall I hear thee speak, speak with thee?
O brother, than life dearer, never see?
Yet shalt thou ever be belov'd of me. [60]

But let us a little hear this young man speak, being but sixteen years of age.

Because I have found this work to have since been published (and to an ill end) by such as seek to trouble and subvert the state of our commonwealth, nor caring whether they shall reform it or no, which they have fondly inserted among other writings of their invention, I have revoked my intent, which was to place it here. [61] And lest the author's memory should any way be interested [62] with those that could not thoroughly know his opinions and actions, they shall understand that this subject was by him treated of in his infancy, only by way of exercise, as a subject, common, bare-worn, and wire-drawn [63] in a thousand books. I will never doubt but he believed what he writ and writ as he thought, for he was so conscientious that no lie did ever pass his lips, yea, were it but in

matters of sport or play. And I know that had it been in his choice, he would rather have been born at *Venice* than at *Sarlac*, [64] and good reason why. But he had another maxim deeply imprinted in his mind, which was carefully to obey and religiously to submit himself to the laws under which he was born. There was never a better citizen, nor more affected to the welfare and quietness of his country, nor a sharper enemy of the changes, innovations, new-fangles, and hurly-burlies of his time. He would more willingly have employed the utmost of his endeavours to extinguish and suppress than to favour or further them. His mind was modeled to the pattern of other best ages.

But yet in exchange of his serious treatise, I will here set you down another, more pithy material, and of more consequence, by him likewise produced at that tender age. [65]