**To the curteous Reader.**

Shall I apologize translation? Why but some holde (as for their free-hold) that such conversion is the subversion of Universities. God holde with them, and withholde them from impeach or empaire. It were an ill turne, the turning of Bookes should be the overturning of Libraries. Yea but my olde fellow Nolano tolde me, and taught publikely, that from translation all Science had it’s offspring. Likely, since even Philosophie, Grammar, Rhethorike, Logike, Arithmetike, Geometrie, Astronomy, Musike, and all the Mathematikes yet holde their name of the Greekes: and the Greekes drew their baptizing water from the conduit-pipes of the Egyptians, and they from the well-springs of the Hebrews or Chaldees. And can the well-springs be so sweete and deepe; and will the well-drawne water be so sower and smell? And were their Countries so ennobled, advantaged, and embellished by such deriving; and doth it drive our noblest Colonies upon the rockes of ruine? And did they well? and prooved they well? and must we proove ill that doe so? Why but Learning would not be made common. Yea but Learning cannot be too common and the commoner the better. Why but who is not jealous, his Mistresse should be so prostitute? Yea but this Mistresse is like ayre, fire, water, the more breathed the clearer; the more extended the warmer; the more drawne the sweeter. It were inhumanitie to coope her up, and worthy forfeiture close to conceale her. Why but Schollers should have some privilege of preheminence. So have they: they onely are worthy Translators. Why but the vulgar should not knowe at all. No, they can not for all this; nor even Schollers for much more: I would, both could and knew much more than either doth or can. Why but all would not be knowne of all. No nor can: much more we know not than we know: all know something, none know all: would all know all? they must breake ere they be so bigge. God only; men farre from God. Why but pearles should not be cast to swine: yet are rings put in their noses; and a swine should know his stie, and will know his meate and his medicine, and as much beside, as any swine doth suppose it to be Marjoram. Why, but it is not wel Divinite should be a childes or old wives, a coblers, or clothiers tale or table-talke. There is use, and abuse: use none too much: abuse none too little. Why but let Learning be wrapt in a learned mantle. Yea but to be unwrapt by a leaned nurse: yea, to be lapt up againe. Yea, and unlapt againe. Else, hold we ignorance the mother of devotion; praying and preaching in an unknowne tongue: as sory a mother, as a seely daughter: a good minde perhaps, but surely an ill manner. If the best be meete for us, why should the best be barrd? Why but the best wrote best in a tongue more unknowne: Nay in a tongue more known to them that wrote, and not unknowne of them to whom they wrote. Why but more honour to him that speakes more learned. Yea such perhaps, as Quintillian’s Orator: a learned man I warrant him, for I understand him never a word. Why but let men write for the most honour of the Writer. Nay, for most profit of the Reader: and so haply, most honour. If to write obscurely be perplexedly offensive, as Augustus well judged: for our owne not to write in our owne but unintelligible, is haply to fewer and more criticall, but surely without honor, without profit, if he goe not, or send not an interpreter; who else what is he but a Translator? Obscure be he that loves obscuritie. And therefore willingly I take his worde, though wittingly I doe mistake it, *Translata proficit*. Why but whoever did well in it? Nay, whoever did well without it? If nothing can be now sayd, but hath beene saide before (as hee sayde well) if there be no new thing under the Sunne. What is that that hath beene? That that shall be: (as he sayde that was wisest) What doe the best then, but gleane after others harvest? borrow their colors, inherite their possessions? What doe they but translate? perhaps, usurpe? at least, collect? if with acknowledgement, it is well; if by stealth, it is too bad: in this, our conscience is our accuser; posteritie our judge: in that our studie is our advocate, and you Readers our jurie.

Why but whom can I name, that bare a great name for it? nay who else, but either in parte of Plato and Aristotle out of many; Tullie, Plutarch, Plinie out of Plato, Aristotle and many; or of purpose, as all since have made most know the Greeke, and almost the Latine, even translated their whole treatises? Why Cardan maintaineth, neither Homers verse can be well exprest in Latine, nor Virgils in Greeke, nor Petrarch in either. Suppose Homer tooke nothing out of any, for we heare of none good before him, and there must be a first; yet Homer by Virgil is often so translated as Scaliger conceives there is the armour of Hercules most puissant on the backe of Bacchus most delicate: and Petrarch, if well tracked, would be found in their footsteps, whose verie garbage lesse Poets are noted to have gathered. Why but that Scaliger thinkes that Ficinus by his rusticall simplicitie translated Plato, as if an Owle should represent an Eagle, or some tara-rag Player should act the princely Telephus with a voyce, as rag’d as his clothes, a grace as bad as his voyce. If the famous Ficinus were so faulty, who may hope to scape foot-free? But for him and us all let me confesse, as he heere censureth; and let confession make halfe amends, that every language hath it’s Genius and inseparable forme; without Pythagoras his Metempsychosis it can not rightly be translated. The Tuscan altiloquence, the Venus of the French, the sharpe state of the Spanish, the strong signifacncy of the Dutch cannot from heere be drawne to life. The sense many keepe forme; the sentence is disfigured; the fineness, fitnesse, featenesse diminished: as much as artes nature is short of natures arte, a picture of a body, a shadow of a substance.

Why then belike I have done Montaigne as Terence by Menander, made of good French no good English. If I have done no worse, and it be no worse taken, it is well. As he, if no Poet, yet am I no theefe, since I say of whom I had it, rather to imitate his and his authors negligence, then any backbiters obscure diligence. His horse I set before you; perhaps without his trappings; and his meat without sauce. Indeede in this specially finde I fault with my maister, that as Crassus and Antonius in Tullie, the one seemed to contemne, the other not to know the Greeks, whereas the one so spake Greeke as he seemed to know no other tongue: the other in his travells to Athens and Rhodes had long conversed with the learned Grecians: So he, writing of himselfe, and the worst rather than the best, disclaimeth all memorie, authorities, or borrowing of the ancient or moderne; whereas in course of his discourse he seemes acquainted not onely with all, but no other but authours; and could out of question like Cyrus or Caesar call any of his armie by name and condition. And I would for us all he had in this whole body done as much, as in most of that of other languages my peerelesse deere-deerest and never sufficiently commended friend hath done for mine and your ease and inteligence. Why then againe, as Terence, I have had helpe. Yea, and thanke them for it, and thinke you neede not be displeased by them that may please you in a better matter.

Why but Essayes are but mens school-themes pieced together; you might as wel say, several texts. Al is in the choise & handling. Yea mary; but Montaigne, had he wit, it was but a French wit ferdillant, legier, and extravagant. Now say you English wits by the staydest censure of as learned a wit as is among you. The counsel of that judicious worthy Counsellor (honorable Sir Edward Wotton) would not have embarked me to this discovery, had not his wisedome knowne it worth my paines, and your perusing. And should or would any dog-tooth’de course of his discourses, or webbe of his Essayes, or entitling of his chapters, he holdeth a disjoynted, broken and gadding stile; and that many times they answere not his titles, and have no coherence together, to such I will say little, for they deserve but little; but if they lift, else let them chuse, I send them to the ninth chapter of the third books, folio 956, where himselfe preventeth their carping, and foreseeing their critikisme answereth them for me at full. Yet are there herein errors. If of matter, the Authours; if of omission, the printers: him I would not amend, but send him to you as I found him: this I could not attend; but where I now finde faults, let me pray and entreate you for your owne sake to correct as you reade; to amend as you list. But some errors are mine, and mine are by more than translation. Are they in Grammar, or Orthographie? as easie for you to right, as me to be wrong; or in construction, as mis-attributing him, her, or it, to things alive, or dead, or newter; you may soone know my meaning, and eftsoones use your mending: or are they in some uncouth termes; as entraine, conscientious, endeare, tarnish, comporte, efface, facilitate, amusing, debauching, regret, effort, emotion, and such like; if you like them not, take others more commonly set to make such likely French words familiar with our English, which well may beare them. If any be capitall in sense mistaking, be I admonished, and they shall be recanted: Howsoever, the falsenesse of the French prints, the diversities of copies, editions and volumes (some whereof have more or lesse then others), and I in London having followed some, and in the countrie others; now those in folio, now those in octavo, yet in this last survay reconciled all; therefore or blame not rashly, or condemne not fondly the multitude of them set for your further ease in a Table (at the end of the booke) which ere you beginne to reade, I entreate you to peruse: this Printers want a diligent Corrector, my many employments, and the distance between me, and my friends I should conferre-with, may extenuate, if not excuse, even more errors. In summe, if any think he could do better, let him trie; then will he better thinke of what is done. Seven or eight of great wit and worth have assayed, but found these Essayes no attempt for French apprentises or Littletonians. If this doone it may please you, as I wish it may, and I hope it shall, I with you shall be pleased: though not, yet still I am the same resolute

IOHN FLORIO.