

PREFATORY

To my deare brother and friend M. IOHN FLORIO,
one of the Gentlemen of her Majesties most

Royall Privie Chamber

*Books, like superfluous humors bred with ease,
So stuffe the world, as it becomes opprest
With taking more than it can well digest ;
And now are turnd to be a great disease.*

*For by this overcharging we confound
The appetite of skill they had before :
There be'ng no end of words, nor any bound
Set to conceit the Ocean without shore.
As if man laboured with himselfe to be
As infinite in writing, as intents ;
And draw his manifold uncertaintie
In any shape that passion represents :
That these innumerable images
And figures of opinion and discourse
Draw'n out in leaves, may be the witnesses
Of our defects much rather than our force.
And this proud frame of our presumption,
This Babel of our skill, this Towre of wit,
Seemes only checkt with the confusion
Of our mistakings that dissolveth it.
And well may make us of our knowledge doubt,
Seeing what uncertainties wee build upon,
To be as weake within booke as without ;
Or els that truth hath other shapes than one.*

*But yet although wee labour with this store
And with the presse of writings seeme opprest,
And have too many bookes, yet want wee more,*

MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYES

*Feeling great dearth and scarcenesse of the best ;
Which cast in choicer shapes have beene produc'd,
To give the best proportions to the minde
Of our confusion, and have introduc'd
The likeliest images fraillie can finde.
And wherein most the skill-desiring soule
Takes her delight, the best of all delight,
And where her motions evenest come to rowle
About this doubtfull center of the right.*

*Which to discover this great Potentate,
This Prince Montaigne (if he be not more)
Hath more adventur'd of his owne estate
Than ever man did of himselfe before :
And hath made such bold sallies out upon
Custome, the mightie tyrant of the earth,
In whose Seraglio of subjection
Wee all seeme bred-up, from our tender birth ;
As I admire his powres, and out of love,
Here at his gate doe stand, and glad I stand
So neere to him whom I doe so much love,
T' applaud his happy settling in our land :
And safe transpassage by his studious care
Who both of him and us doth merit much,
Having as sumptuously, as he is rare
Plac'd him in the best lodging of our speech,
And made him now as free, as if borne here,
And as well ours as theirs, who may be proud
That he is theirs, though he be every where
To have the franchise of his worth allow'd.*

*It being the proportion of a happy Pen,
Not to b' invassal'd to one Monarchy,
But dwell with all the better world of men
Whose spirits all are of one communitie,
Whom neither Ocean, Desarts, Rockes nor Sands
Can keepe from th' intertraffique of the minde,*

PREFATORY

*But that it vents her treasure in all lands,
And doth a most secure commercement finde.*

*Wrap Excellencie up never so much,
In Hieroglyphicques, Ciphers, Characters,
And let her speake never so strange a speech,
Her Genius yet findes apt discipherers :
And never was she borne to dye obscure,
But guided by the Starres of her owne grace,
Makes her owne fortune, and is ever sure
In mans best hold, to hold the strongest place.*

*And let the Critick say the worst he can,
He cannot say but that Montaigne yet
Yeelds most rich peeces and extracts of man ;
Though in a troubled frame confus'dly set.
Which yet h' is blest that he hath ever seene,
And therefore as a guest in gratefulnesse,
For the great good the house yeelds him within
Might spare to tax th' unapt convoyunces.
But this breath hurts not, for both worke and frame,
Whilst England English speakes, is of that store
And that choice stuffe, as that without the same
The richest librarie can be but poore.
And they unblest who letters doe professe
And have him not : whose owne fate beats their want
With more sound blowes, than Alcibiades
Did his Pedante that did Homer want.*

By SAM. DANIEL one of the Gentlemen

extraordinarie of her Majesties most

royall privie Chamber.