

OF NATURAL AFFECTION TOWARDS ONE'S OFF-
SPRING.

1. APPEALS to foreign judicatures first came in request among the Grecians out of their distrust of one another's justice, they deeming it as requisite to fetch justice from abroad, as any other necessary commodity which was not of their own growth. And is it not even so that philosophers, by reason of dissensions amongst themselves, have in the decision of some questions appealed to the nature of irrational beings, as to a strange city, and have submitted the final determination of such questions to the affections or to the dispositions of brutes, as being unbiassed and not corrupted by bribes? Or else this is the general complaint of human frailty, that while we differ about the most necessary and the greatest things, we consult horses, dogs, and birds, how we should marry, beget children, and bring them up; and, as if the evidence of Nature in ourselves were not to be trusted, we appeal to the dispositions and affections of brute beasts, and testify against the manifold transgressions of our own lives, intimating how at the very first and in the first things we are confounded and disturbed. For Nature conserves the propriety in them pure, unmixed, and simple; but in men, the mixture of ascitious opinions and judgments (as oil is served by the druggists) alters the properties, and does not preserve what is their peculiar. Nor need we wonder if irrational ani-

mals follow Nature more than rational; for plants do it more than animals, for they have neither imagination nor passion for what is not according to Nature, but are bound in chains, and ever go that one way that Nature leads them. Brutes do little regard gentleness, wit, or liberty; they have indeed the use of irrational incitements and appetites, which put them upon wandering and running about, — but seldom far, for they seem to lie at the anchor of Nature, who guides them in the right way (as it were) by bit and bridle. But reason, the lord and master in man, finds sometimes one turning, sometimes another; but in all its wanderings leaves no mark or footstep of Nature.

2. But in brutes observe how all things are accommodated to Nature. As to marriages, they tarry not till laws are passed against celibacy and late marriages, as Lycurgus and Solon's citizens did; they matter not the disgrace of wanting children; nor are they ambitious of the honor of having three children, as many Romans, who marry and get children, not that they may have heirs, but that they may get estates. Again, the male accompanies with the female not at all times, because not pleasure but procreation is his end. Therefore in the spring time, when the fruitful breezes blow and the air is of a pregnant temper, then the female approaches the male, gentle and desirable, wantoning in the sweet smell and peculiar ornament of her body, full of dew and pure grass; and when she perceives she has conceived, she modestly departs, and provides for her bringing forth and for the safety of what she shall be delivered of. What brutes do cannot be sufficiently expressed; in all of them their affection to their young is evident by their providence, patience, and continence. Indeed we call the bee wise, and we celebrate her who "deviseth the yellow honey," flattering her for glutting us with her sweetness; but the wisdom and art of other creatures, about their bringing forth and the rearing their young, we

wholly neglect. For instance, first, the king-fisher, when she has conceived, makes her nest of the prickles of the sea-needle, weaving them one among another, in form of a long oval fishing-net; then she puts it under the dashing of the waters, that being by degrees beaten upon and milled, it may acquire a smooth surface, and become so solid that it cannot easily be divided by either stone or iron. And what is more wonderful, the mouth of the nest is so exactly fitted to the king-fisher, that neither a greater nor a less animal can enter it; and when she is in (as they say) it will not admit the sea-water. The sea-fish called *γαλοί* give birth to their young within themselves, let them go abroad to feed, and then take them into their bellies again when they go to sleep. The bear, a most fierce and ugly beast, brings forth her young shapeless and without limbs, but with her tongue, as with a tool, she shapes the members; so that she seems not only to bring forth but to work out her young. And Homer's lioness, —

Thus in the centre of some gloomy wood,
 With many a step the lioness surrounds
 Her tawny young, beset by men and hounds;
 Elate her heart, and rousing all her powers,
 Dark o'er the fiery balls each hanging eyebrow lowers;*

does she not, I say, look as if she were contriving how to make a bargain with the huntsman for her whelps? For generally the love of their young makes bold creatures timorous, the slothful industrious, and the voracious parsimonious. So Homer's bird "gives to her young, though with herself it go hard."† She feeds them by starving herself, and when she has taken up her food, she lays it down again, and keeps it down with her bill, lest she should swallow it unawares. In like manner,

For tender whelps, when strangers come in sight,
 The barking bitch prepares herself to fight; ‡

* Il. XVII. 134.

† Il. IX. 324.

‡ Odyss. XX. 14.

and fear for her young turns into a second passion. When partridges and their young are pursued, the old suffer the young to fly away before, so contriving it that the fowler may think to catch them. Thus they hover about, run forward a little, then turn again, and so detain the fowler till their young are safe. We daily behold hens, how they cherish their chickens, taking some of them under their spread wings, suffering others of them to run upon their backs, and taking them in again, with a voice expressing kindness and joy. When themselves are concerned, they fly from dogs and serpents; but to defend their chickens, they will venture beyond their strength and fight.

And shall we think that Nature has bred such affections in these creatures, because she is solicitous for the propagation of hens, dogs, and bears, and not that she may by these means make us ashamed? Certainly we must conclude that these creatures, following the duct of nature, are for our example, and that they much upbraid the remorselessness of humanity, of which human nature alone is culpable, in not being capable of gratuitous love, nor knowing how to be a friend without profit. Well therefore might the comedian be admired who said, For reward only man loves man. Epicurus thinks that after this manner children are beloved of their parents, and parents of their children. But if the benefit of speech were allowed to brutes, and if horses, cows, dogs, and birds were brought upon the stage, and the song were changed, and it were said that neither the bitch loved her whelps for gain, nor the mare her foal, nor fowls their chickens, but that they were all beloved gratis and by impulse of nature, then by the affection of all brutes this assertion would be approved as just and true. And is it not a shame, that the procreation of beasts, their birth, pains in birth, and their education, should be by nature and gratis, and yet for these things that man should require usury, rewards, and bribes?

3. This assertion, as to pure Nature, can never be true, nor ought it to be believed. For, as in wild plants, such as wild vines, figs, and olives, Nature has implanted the principles of cultivated fruit, though crude and imperfect; so she has endowed beasts with a love of their young, though imperfect and not attaining to justice, nor proceeding further than utility. But in man, whom she produced a rational and political being, inclining him to justice, law, religion, building of cities, and friendship, she hath placed the seed of those things that are generous, fair, and fruitful, -- that is, the love of their children, -- following the first principles which entered into the very constitution of their bodies. For terms and expressions are wanting to declare with what industry Nature -- who is skilful, unerring, and not to be surpassed, and (as Erasistratus says) has nothing idle or frivolous -- has contrived all things pertaining to the procreation of mankind; and modesty will not permit it. The making and economy of milk sufficiently speak her providence and care. In women what abundance of blood more than serves for necessary uses, which, through languidness and want of spirit, wanders about and disturbs the body; being at other times by Nature in monthly periods discharged by proper canals and passages, for the relief and purgation of the body, and to render the womb like a field fit for the plough and seed, and desirous of it at seasons. But when the womb has caught the seed, and it has taken root (for the navel as Democritus says, grows first, like an anchor to keep the foetus from fluctuating, or as a stay or footstalk to the child), then Nature stops the passages proper for monthly purgations, and keeps the superfluous blood after that for nourishment and to moisten the birth, which now begins to be formed and fashioned, and at the end of a set number of days increases so in the womb, that it must seek another place and other sort of food. Then Nature, more diligent than any husbandman,

deriving the blood to other uses, has as it were some subterranean fountains, which receive the affluent liquors; and they receive them not negligently nor without affection, but with a gentle heat and womanish softness they concoct, mollify, and alter them; for in this manner are the breasts internally affected and tempered. And milk is not poured out of them by pipes in a full stream; but the breasts, terminating in flesh that is pervious by small and insensible passages, do afford store of sweet and pleasant sucking to the infant's mouth. But for all this, such and so many instruments for procreation, such preparation, so great industry and providence, were all to no purpose, unless Nature had inbred in the mothers a love and care of their offspring.

Than man more wretched naught takes breath,
Not th' vilest thing that creeps on earth; *

which infallibly holds good of infants new-born. For nothing can be beheld so imperfect, helpless, naked, shapeless, and nasty, as man is just at his birth; to whom alone almost Nature has denied a cleanly passage into the world; and as he is smeared with blood, and daubed with filth, more like to one killed than to one new-born, he could never be touched, taken in arms, kissed, or hugged by any one to whom Nature had not given an inbred affection for him. Therefore other animals have their dugs below their belly, which grow on woman above her breast, that she may the more conveniently kiss, embrace, and cherish her infant; because the end of bringing forth and rearing is not necessity but love.

4. For let us look back to ancient times, to those who first brought forth and who first saw a child born. Upon them certainly no law enjoined any necessity of rearing their offspring, nor could expectation of thanks oblige them to feed their infants, as if it were for usury. Nay,

* II. XVII. 443.

rather, they were angry with their children, and long remembered the injuries they had received from them, as authors of so many dangers and of so much pain and travail to them.

As when keen darts the fierce Ilithyiae send;
The powers that cause the teeming matron's throes,
Sad mothers of unutterable woes!*

These verses, some say, were not written by Homer, but by some Homeres, who either had been or was then in travail, and felt the very pangs in her bowels. Yet the love implanted by Nature melts and sways the childbed woman. While she is still in a sweat and trembling for pain, she is not averse to her infant; but turns it to her, smiles on it, hugs and kisses it. Though she finds no true sweetness, nor yet profit, however, "she sometimes rocks it in a warm cradle, sometimes she dances it in the cool air, turning one toil into another, resting neither night nor day."

For what reward or gain was all this? For as little then as now; for the hopes are uncertain and far off. He that plants a vine in the vernal equinox gathers grapes upon it in the autumnal. He that sows wheat at the setting of the Pleiades reaps it at their rising. Cows, mares, and birds bring forth young ready for use. Man's education is laborious, his increase slow, his virtue lies at a distance; so that most parents die before their children show their virtue. Neocles never saw Themistocles's victory at Salamis, nor Miltiades the valor of Cimon at Eurymedon; Xanthippus never heard Pericles pleading; nor Aristo Plato philosophizing; nor did the fathers of Euripides and Sophocles know the victories their sons won, though they heard them indeed stammering and learning to talk. It is the mishap of fathers to see the revelling, drinking, and love intrigues of their children; to which purpose that of Evenus is memorable,

* II. XI. 269.

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