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- BIBLIOTHECA CURIOSA -

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My books, how I love them. Of all my friends they are the oldest, the most kind and the most faithful. I have joyfully and sacredly kept their company through all changes for nearly thirty years. In sickness they have been more to me than medicine, and in sorrow and bereavement they have been at once my solace and my joy. In business their advice at times has been unexpected and disappointing, yet they proved themselves to be my surest and kindest guides. Here I meet and converse with the best and wisest of men of all ages; they tell me about their cities, kings, armies, politics and revolutions, and their magnificent temples, and I gaze with admiration and astonishment at the marvellous panorama. Their authors, although some of them hundreds of years in their graves, accompany, guide and protect me the world over, and I attend to the recital of their adventures with breathless interest never to be forgotten. Here may be seen a score of beautiful volumes printed when COLUMBUS was in his prime, and I have not the slightest doubt but that some of these monuments of the past have been handled and perused by our own first English printer, WILLIAM CAXTON, WYNKYN DE WORDE, MARTIN LUTHER and his friend PHILIP MELANCTHON, SHAKESPEARE and LOCKE, BACON, BOYLE and MILTON; RACINE and MOLIÈRE being as yet unborn. What histories they are in themselves, oftentimes bound in oak, having illuminated capitals and bearing the arms of popes, kings and cardinals. They have followed the birth of nations, the downfall of kingdoms, and in some instances have followed in silence the funeral procession of their own originators to the block. They furnish me with endless instruction and amusement, and, when overcome with care, they bid the storm of my heart be still. How often am I pained when I see such friends and companions slighted or abused with levity and vandalism. All are welcome to this rich intellectual repast, and I bespeak for them the respect I myself bestow.

JOHN BRITNELL,

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