
 ROGER ASCHAM

From Toxophilus
From The Second Book of the School of Shooting

[COMELINESS]

* * *For this I am sure, in learning all other matters, nothing is brought to the most profitable use, which is not handled after the most comely fashion. As masters of fence¹ have no stroke fit either to hit another, or else to defend himself, which is not joined with a wonderful comeliness. A cook cannot chop his herbs neither quickly nor handsomely, except he keep such a measure with his chopping-knives as would delight a man both to see him and hear him. Every handcraftman that works best for his own profit, works most seemly to other men's sight. Again, in building a house, in making a ship, every part, the more handsomely they be joined for profit and last,² the more comely they be fashioned to every man's sight and eye.

Nature itself taught men to join always well-favoredness with profitableness. As in man, that joint or piece which is by any chance deprived of his comeliness, the same is also debarred of his use and profitableness. As he that is goggle-eyed, and looks asquint, hath both his countenance clean marred and his sight sore blemished; and so in all other members like.³ Moreover, what time of the year bringeth most profit with it for man's use, the same also covereth and decketh both earth and trees with most comeliness for man's pleasure. And that time which taketh away the pleasure of the ground carrieth with him also the profit of the ground, as every man by experience knoweth in hard and rough winters. Some things there be which have no other end but only comeliness, as painting and dancing. And virtue itself is nothing else but comeliness, as all philosophers do agree in opinion;⁴ therefore, seeing that which is best done in any matters is always most comely done, as both Plato and Cicero in many places do prove, and daily experience doth teach in other things, I pray you, as I said before, teach me to shoot as fair and well-favoredly as you can imagine.* * *

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1. Fencing.

2. Usefulness and lastingness.

3. Likewise.

4. The reference is to the idea, originally and espe-

cially associated with Plato, that Goodness and Beauty (as well as Truth) are ultimately the same thing.