

THE USE OF FLIES

Thomas Mouffet (1553–1604)

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These little creatures so hateful to all men are not yet to be contemned as being created of Almighty God for diverse and sundry uses. First of all, by these we are forewarned of the near approaches of foul weather and storms; secondly, they yield medicines for us when we are sick, and are food for divers other creatures, as well birds as fishes. They show and set forth the omnipotency of God, and execute His justice; they improve the diligence and providential wisdom of men. All which shall appear in their places.

As for their presaging of weather—when the flies bite harder then ordinary, making at the face and eyes of men, they foretell rain or wet weather, from whence Politian has it,

Thirsty for blood the fly returns,
And with his sting the skin he burns

Perhaps before rain they are most hungry, and therefore to assuage their hunger do more diligently seek after their food. This also is to be observed, that a little before a shower or a storm comes, the flies descend from the upper region of the air to the lowest, and do fly as it were on the very surface of the earth. Moreover, if you see them very busy about sweet meats or unguents, you may know that it will presently be a shower. But if they be in all places many and numerous, and shall so continue long (if Alexander Benedict. and Johannes Damascenus say true) they foretell a plague or pestilence; because so many of them could not be bred of a little putrefaction of the air.

Many ways does nature also by flies play with the fancies of men in dreams, if we may credit Apomasaris in his *Apotelesms*. For the Indians, Persians, and Egyptians do teach that if flies appear to us in our sleep, it does signify an herald at arms, or an approaching disease. If a general of an army or a chief commander dream that at such or such a place he should see a great company of flies; in that very place, wherever it shall be, there he shall be in anguish and grief for his soldiers that are slain, his army routed, and the victory lost. If a mean or ordinary man dream the like, he shall fall into a violent fever, likely may cost him his life. If a man dream in his sleep that flies went into his mouth or nostrils, he is to expect with great sorrow and grief imminent destruction from his enemies.

Nor do they only foretell storms that shall fall out such days, or such times of the year; but they do afford much matter for medicine, and cure for diseases. For Galen out of Saranus, Asclepiades, Cleopatra, and others has taken many medicines against the disease called Alopecia or the Fox's Evil; and he uses them either by themselves or mingled with other things. For so it is written in Cleopatra's book *de Ornatu*. Take five grains of the heads of flies, beat and rub them on the head affected with this disease, and it will certainly cure it. Asclepiades used to take a great many flies heads fresh plucked from the body, and rub the part that was bare or bald with this disease, especially if they were exulcerated. For the blood of flies (says he) does much help the parts that are exulcerated with nitrous medicines, or are otherwise galled or fretted. Soranus used to mix a pot full of whole flies dried to powder with alcyonium, quick brimstone, gunpowder, sow's gall, and other like things against the Fox Evil. Some add to these bear's hair, roots of reed and fern, and bark of chestnut; and with which medicine they cure perfectly not only the Fox Evil, but whatever defluxion of hair and the thinness thereof, however contracted; the place affected being only first rubbed till it be red again, with fig-leaves. Others use the blood that runs out of the heads of flies. Othersome apply the ashes of them ten days together with the ashes of paper or nuts, so that the third part be the ashes of flies. Some others do temper ashes of flies with women's milk, or coleworts; some only with honey.

After the same manner, Haly and Marcellus burn the heads of flies and mingle them with honey instead of an ointment. Brassavolus *lib. de morbo Gallico*, makes use of both the blood and the ashes of flies against the Fox's Evil. The like medicine Pliny uses to procure hair on the eye-lids: Take of ashes of flies and mouse dung of each alike mingled half a penny weight, add to it two sixth parts of stibium, and with these and oesipus, or sheep's fat, anoint the pair. Some prescribe flies with the roots of docks for the leprosy to be anointed withal. Pliny says that there were some that for the same cause did give 21 red flies dead, in drink, but those that were very weak a fewer number. That flies are very good for sundry diseases of the eyes, not only Haly, Galen, Pliny, and Archigenes have affirmed, but also Neotericks or later writers, especially for the pin and web, bleer-eye, squint-eye, and warts on the eye-lids. If the eyes be washed in the evening with water of ordinary flies distilled in way of bath for a month's space, it will cure them of all spots or films. If the hair be often wet with it, it will grow exceedingly. But the vessel must be buried in autumn, and the material distilled about winter. With two drops of this water put into the ears, Gesner writes, the deafness of them will be cured; and this medicine he says he learned of a Jew. Mutianus, which

was thrice consul, from observation did hang a live fly in a little linen bag about his neck, wherewith the rhume or bloodshot of them was cured, as Pliny affirms.

Flies in an odd number being rubbed together are reported to be very good to cure a fellon on the ring finger. Bean flies drank with vinegar do drive forth a horsleech sticking in the throat. The fly *Napellaris*, of the herb *Napellus*, or wolf's bane so-called, does not only cure the poison of that herb, but all other poison whatsoever, as Avicen witnesses, and Julius Scaliger confesses: from whence this anti-dote is made. Take round birth-wort, of each two ounces, terra sigillata half an ounce, flies of *Napellus* in number 18, juice of citrons what may suffice, mingle them, make an opiate. For (says Scaliger) against the biting of the tarantula, or any other venomous beast, or the poison of wolf's bane there is no anti-dote comparable to this. The same do Gainerius and Petrus Apponensts teach us. Yea, moreover when as there is no fly almost but will cause vomiting (as I shall make good out of Arnoldus) why may not all of them be thought preservatives against poison? Cardanus in like manner commends the wormed fly. But it is best learning of medicines by hands and eyes, i.e., by known experience, lest while we affect unknown medicines we lose the use of those we know. He tells us that an oil made of wood flies was in great estimation; yet he tells not us how to make or to use it. A fly chewed and swallowed does vehemently provoke vomiting. Arnoldus. I have heard of a certain man (says Gesner) that was wont to take three or four flies into his body, which gave him a very good stool. Take five grains of broomflowers, let them be put into an earthen pot, with butter here and there laid between them bed upon bed, with which the vessel may be filled, and being very well closed, let it be buried in horse dung, where the Sun uses to come, for the space of one year; at the year's end you shall find the flies turned into an unguent; the which afterwards are exceeding good for any grief whatsoever in any part of the body, as I have learned of a friend of very good credit. Nonus advises to take the bodies of great flies when the heads are off, and rubbed between the fingers, and to anoint a small impostumate swelling therewith for a special remedy. Fortius the poet affirms that there was a German maid which lived three years with eating of flies. If cattle cannot urine, or the urine scald their genitals, put but a live fly into them, and it will give them ease.

Neither do they serve for the health of men and cattle; but withal do seem to be created for food and sustenance of sundry sorts of creatures. For there are some kinds of spiders which hunt after flies and prey upon them. Swallows feed on flies, and almost on them alone, as if they were to be supposed to be made only for them, inasmuch as without them the swallow could not live. And that the reason why in fair weather they hunt after them aloft in the air, in rainy below near to the earth. Pliny affirms that the bird called *himantopus* makes them his chiefest food. There is a kind of duck called of the Tigurini, muggent (as if you would say, the duck that catches flies) like to the tame duck in bigness, which greedily snatches up the flies swimming on the water and eats them.

The chamæleon which some have reported, but falsely, to feed only on the air, feeds on flies, which with his tongue six inches long, putting it forth suddenly and waving it to and fro, he hits unawares, draws to him, and devours them, as I have seen with mine own eyes in the year 1571. All those birds called wagtails (if I am not deceived) live upon flies, but especially those that are whitish about the tails. The bigger sort of zigainæ, so called, feed on flies which they catch as they fly, as swallows do, and never miss one, as I have taken a great deal of sport to behold. The worms of flesh-flies, which we English call maggots and gentles, fishes are very much taken with; anglers use to fasten these to their hooks to catch roch, perch, carp, and other fish withal, very good they are for that purpose, especially if preserved in honey. Trouts are taken with the ground or gaipath fly, but chiefly with the dung fly, so that the anglers use to fasten one or two of them to their hook and with a sporting, or rather cunning, snatching back of their line, do invite the trout more greedily to bite, and the bait being swallowed down to hang the surer. Others put as many of those flies upon their hooks as they will hold, and plunge them quite down to the bottom, especially where they know the greater trout use to haunt, who are very desirous of the bait so laid before them, and by their greediness become a prey, and lose their lives; as William Bruer informs me. The fly called phryganium (in English, the cados fly) serves for the like use, as also the fly which usually sits upon man's ordure. But every month must have his several fly, for that which is for one month is not for another; the which the fishers very well know, who in defect of the natural fly do substitute artificial flies made of wool, feathers, or divers kind of silken colours, with which they cozen and deceive the fish. Only you must take heed that as soon as every they bite, you pull your line to you, lest the fish refusing the unsavoury bait get away. In the river Astream there swim fish of diverse colours feeding upon the native fly that flies on the top of the water, which when the fishermen perceived, they began to catch those kinde of flies, and fasten them on their hooks. Now these flies it seems as soon as ever they are touched lose their native colour, and so become altogether un-useful to fish withal. Wherefore they are fain to use artificial ones made according to their shape and colour (as Ælian reports). They add also to the purple wool, and divers coloured, made into the shape of that fly, two cocks feathers of wax colour, and so exactly resemble the natural fly. From whence we conclude this art of making flies to be very ancient, and derived to us by long tract of time;

however we have some bold bragging hookmen at this day that ascribe it to their own invention. Nor may we wonder that fishes and fishermen do so lie in wait to catch flies; when as Domitian the emperor thought it a work not un-beseeming Cæsar himself; who as Suetonius says of him, with an iron-pointed instrument stabbed all the flies in his chamber to the walls, as they stuck upon them, and would not leave so much as one; insomuch that when it was asked by any who was within with Cæsar, the servants answered, *Ne musca quidem*, no not so much as a Fly.

But how strongly do those infirm creatures demonstrate the great power of God? For consider but the least fly that is, and observe how in so little a body the most high God has curiously fitted feet, wings, eyes, snout, and other parts, which yet are less then the least thread. How does he out-fly a fly of his own name ten times bigger than himself? Does he not excel all other flies in running? Does he not pierce deeper with his snout, and draws out whole vessels of wine? The elephant, that great monster of creatures, is often vexed and molested with flies; and that they are able to tame the lions, Æsop shows in his elegant fable. The horse and bear are not able to endure their biting, much less then can the sheep and asses, unless humane prudence came in for their aid, and did prevail against them. Hence came the invention of that which some make of leather, rushes, or bristles which we call a fly-flap. And that orbicular fan fastened to a longstick made of the most choice peacock's feathers, of which Propertius of old makes mention in this distich:

That which forbids the nasty fly your dish to lick,
Is peacock's feathers fastened to a stick.

The Indians and Germans make these, the one of oxen's, the other of foxes' tails. Some make them of small willow twigs, others after another manner: the fashion whereof, Ælian, Vegetius, Ovid, Grapaldus do exactly describe. Moreover, whereas the rugged skin of the elephant is in stead of tail, mane, hair, (to speak in Pliny's language) neither has he any bristles to cover him, or tail to guard him, therefore men cover him all over with linen or silk, the better to free him from the irksomeness of the flies, and to keep him safe that they may not come at his skin.

That oxen and cattle be not annoyed with flies, anoint them with oil fried in a frying-pan, or with lion's grease, and flies will not settle on them. The same will origanum, or wild marjoram, effect, if rubbed till it be limber and spread upon them. If you anoint the hairs with the juice of the leaves of a gourd, you would not a little wonder how it will free them from flies, this I have oftentimes made use of with profit. Bay-berries being made into a very small powder and boiled with oil, have the same virtue, if they be anointed with them; as also the drivel of foam of oxen and horses.

Oftentimes flies get into the wounds and ulcers of cattle, so that by reason of the worms which they breed, there is added much malignity. First of all therefore, those ulcers being made clean, Columella applies an ointment made of pitch, old oil, and bacon grease, both within and without; afterwards he applies whey mingled with ashes. Almost all the summer long the ears of dogs are so exulcerated with flies that they often lose them quite. The which that it might be helped, they should be anointed with oil.

The fly ophioborus (from eating or devouring of serpents) gets close, says Aetius, between the scales of the serpent dryinam especially, insomuch that at length it kills him outright; this fly from the colour of its wings is called of Hesychius the brazen fly, because it resembles the colour of brass, it feeds on black beetles; and by biting begets in the serpent extremity of heat, after that unquenchable thirst, and death follows. Having fed upon the carcasses of these serpents, if afterwards they happen to bite a man, the wound is incurable and deadly.

The flies called merdivora or dung-flies are of divers sorts; one is like the flesh-fly but bigger, his eyes of a darkish red, shoulders black, in which there is a circle somewhat long and whitish; the back black drawn over with crossed lines or streaks. The wings silver colour, longer then the body; most commonly they are seen about men's excrements, seldom elsewhere. There is also a fly green all over, so resplendent and glittering as if it were transparent, the head dunnish, silver wings, frequently in the woods, and most commonly about dung; in bigness equal to the common or ordinary sort of flies. Whether it be that which Silvaticus calls giacucul, I know not. I have light upon another fly called dung-eaters, less than the green fly, the body dun, the head of a full red, with a line along the middle of it. I have another the body rough, yellowish, the eyes black standing out; the shoulders and back black, curiously spotted, the tail ash-colour. Another fly there is whose shoulders are of a pale red, somewhat towards a saffron colour; it has two horns longer then the rest, silver wings covering all the body; the head black, four square, and small, very frequently seen about horse-dung. To conclude about dunghills (from whence also it is probable they are generated) there are certain yellowish flies, the body somewhat longer than the rest, and bunching up; of whose generation we have before made mention. Also I saw another rare fly, not everywhere to be met withal, that feeds on a mudwall made with mud and putrefied materials, it was black all over, only it had silver wings, and in the shoulders it hath four white spots, in the rest of the body eight, i.e. on each side four; the eyes white, the

frontlet marked as it were with a white asterisk or little star; out of which shoot out two black horns and long, it has also upon the top of the thigh or shank a little white spot sprinkled up and down. This fly I keep, though dead, in a box for the rarity of it. *Bombilophagus* is a fly, mountainous, big, very black, the body rough, the eyes somewhat long, great, the head of a bright red; for his prey he falls fiercely on the bumble-bee, and getting the better of him by flight, nimbly gets upon his back and, sticking close to him, does so extremely bite that he throws him headlong to the ground, sucks out what honey he finds, and goes away conqueror. In the top of Cartmel Hills, Pennius affirms in his papers, that he saw it as long as the fight lasted; but the fortune of the battle falling to the flies, the bumble-bees were put to the worst and slain. And thus much of the zoophagi, or the flies that live upon living creatures.

The azoophagi so called are those that make their living out of creatures without life, and those are either on the land or in the water: of the land flies, some feed only on the earth and the dew of it; others of plants, herbs, and flowers growing thereon. The one I call (in a term of my own) ground-suckers, *humisugæ*; the other, herb-eaters, *herbivoræ*. The *humisuga*, or ground-sucker, has a dun-coloured body, in the head toward the mouth, a whitish shining spot, the belly and feet black, at the coming forth of the wings on both sides a white spots, the back grey, in the shoulders according to the length of them four sullied white lines, the wings silver, and (if they be put into the water) shining like the glow-worm. It is found in foot-paths and mole-heaps newly turned up; for it loves the ground that is made plain and smooth with treading on, and therefore called in English the graypath fly. It seldom comes upon flowers, especially at what time the mole casts up fresh earth, of the juice whereof it is sustained.

Of the *herbivoræ*, or those that feed on herbs or flowers, there are divers sorts or species; whereof three are like the bee termed of Lucian military or war flies. In regard they are bigger, lustier, and stronger, very specious to look on, very gallantly set out with two silver wings. The first and chief of these has a blackish head, the middle of the back being cut cross-wise with two overthwart lines, the end of the tail black: the body otherwise mud colour. The second not much unlike, the head blackish, the shoulders according to the length of them drawn with three yellow and black lines, the rest of the body marked alike and with the same colours. The third and least of these, the shoulders are rough and yellow, the head red, the rest of the body is divided with four yellow and four black lines going across it. The bodies of all of them do glitter, and as if they had nothing in them are transparent. They are conversant in gardens, sucking the juice of the flowers. Lucian describes these military flies thus—there are a kind of fly which some call military, others dog-flies, that make a very harsh and shrill noise, and fly exceeding swiftly. These are very long-lived, and continue all the winter without meat, especially when drawn together, and fastened to ridges and tops of houses. In whom this is most worthy of admiration, that both of them do the natural office both of male and female, like the son of Mercury and Venus, who was of a mixed nature, or hermaphrodite.

Much like to these is there another fly called *apiaria*, of a shining black, having two wings, gathering wax, and fastening the juice that he has gathered from the flowers to his hinder legs, as the bee does. He comes abroad in autumn, and is seldom seen at any other time. Whether this be that which Arist. calls *sirenis*; it differs certainly in the number of wings only, for that he makes to have four wings, whereas nature has afforded this but two.

There are other sorts of flies, that devour herbs and flowers, that are not like bees, to wit, the *struthiopteri*, *eninopteri*, and *chelidonii*, because it is like to the swallow. Of the *struthiopteri*, I have seen three sorts. The first whereof is tender and sort, six-footed, with two wings, the belly longer then ordinary, sending forth from the head a little above the eyes two feathers like ostriches feathers, as it were horns of a downy softness, as soft as any feathers whatsoever; crump shouldered, all the rest of the body white, longer then the wings which are black. The second is of the same colour, whitish, the head of a dusky colour; otherwise it differs little or nothing at all from the former. The third is all alike, only the horns are not so soft and downy; the tail is white, the body long, with five white lines going athwart it, the feet long, marked with black and white colours: as it goes it lifts up the tail a little, and softly claps his two transparent wings together. These three species do appear in the springtime with the first, in gardens, hedges, and shady places very frequently before and after rain.

The *erinopteros* is a fly all over white or rather silver colour, small and everywhere downy; inasmuch as when it sits upon a flower, if you look not hard upon it, you would think it were a feather; the wings of it are divided, the feathers being severed one from the other almost like bird's wings. Pennius received one of these painted from Edmund Knivet; afterwards he often saw them in hedges and places set with privet.

The fly called *chelidonium* is swifter of wing than all the rest, sides, tail, head, brown and hairy, the eyes black and hanging out, the bill or rather the nose picked, out of the top of which start out two horns; the top of the shoulders as also the back black, two silver wings, the forepart whereof do answer to the blackness of the feet. Sometimes it sits in one place for a great while together, as if it were unmovable, but as soon as you come near it, its out of your sight before you can say, "What's this?" and will not yield a jot to the swallow (from whom it has its name) for swiftness

of flight. Pennius received another flower fly of the learned Carolus Clusius, black, having two silver wings, two dainty white eyes in the back, having seven yellow spots, in the midst whereof is to be discerned a speck of black. There are flies that are found in beans, of sundry colours, but especially of a pale purple, which I conceive do come of the small worms called midæ. For when they are gone (which is in the midst of summer) suddenly there comes forth a great number of those flies swarming amongst the beans. The fly of napellus I have not seen, but those that come out of those black grains that stick to the stalk of the wormwood, much less than millet seed, more black than any Moor, only famous for their wonderful smallness.

There is a certain fly, very rare and wonderful, whether you respect the form or the shortness of its life. It moves with four wings and as many feet; for that it has not peculiar to it in regard of the shortness of its life only (says the philosopher) but also as it is a four-footed creature and a flying creature. It comes forth with the Sun, grows, flourishes, languishes, and dies the same day with the Sun setting. In the time of the summer solstice, these diary creatures break forth out of certain husks of putrefied grapes, which husks (or such as seem to be so) whether they are a kind of aurelia proceeding from some kind of canker-worms living in the water, it is not easy to show; for in that particular the philosopher is silent, from whom most of this story is gathered. Pliny calls them thin membranes; Aristotle small bottles, and says they are common to be seen in the river Hippane, by the Cimmerian Bosphorus of Pontus. They live a life both short and sweet, for they live not beyond the space of a natural day, and in the evening they put an end as to their lives, so to their miseries. In the mean while they are sustained and kept alive with their own radical moisture, either are beholding either to air or earth; hence we may gather the length of their life, yea rather admire and wish for it. These insects Cicero speaks of in the first of his *Tuscul*. Questions—these also Matthias Michoides in his 2nd book *de Sarmatia Europea* describes, especially in Boristhenes and Botus, in the summer there are a great company of the flies called ephemeris, or day flies. They are worms and flies both; some have four, others six wings; in the morning they run upon their feet over the water, about noon they fly about the banks, the sun setting, as many as were bred that day die in the self-same day. Which description does much differ from Aristotle's history of them, first because in the morning it is a creeping worm, then about noon a fly altogether, besides that he gives to some six wings contrary to the mind of Aristotle. Julius Scaliger in his learned *Esoteric Exercitations against Cardanus*, describes this fly after this manner—I have observed a kind of fly frequenting Sarca, and the lake of Bennacum, called Ephemerus, in the evening, but never any in the morning; being taken it lived only a night: it has four very long wings, how many feet I know not; but if it have six (for I do not remember how many it has) it suffices: it has a head like a fly, great eyes, the snout or beak rolled up together, the belly large, the tail exceeding long and full of joints, in the end forked, in some three forked, of colour a darkish yellow in the bigger sort, in the lesser of a brown or dunnish, very specious. The Taurini call this insect monietta, as they would say monachella. The Adriatic about Meranum and Tergeste call it Cuzotulum; of my countrymen it is called sitivola, i.e., sagitella. Ælian lib. 2 *de Animal*, chapter 4 sets forth another kind of these insects, such as are bred of sowre wine lees, which when the vessel is opened come forth, and the same day, for nature has given them a beginning of life, but in regard of the many miseries to which it is incident, quickly frees them of it before they can be sensible of their own, or any others unhappiness. But yet what these flies of which Ælian speaks be, unless they be those that we call bibiones, I know not; for that our vintners know of no other bred in their cask....

The wounds made by any of these flies must be anointed with bitter almonds bruised, or walnuts; when ulcers are made, it is fit to pour on liquid pitch boiled with hog's grease. Those things that kill and drive away the tike-flies called ricini for the most part kill and drive away the dog-flies.

The fly also by his boldness and sauciness has taught men how to provide remedies against them; for whereas both at home and abroad everywhere they were so troublesome that nothing could be so safely kept by the cook but presently they would be at it and spoil it, yea all kind of meats whatsoever, they now use to strew or stick up in their houses, or boil and mingle with such kind of things as flies love, nigella seed, elder, laurel, coriander, hellebore, bugloss, borage, sage, beets, loose-strife, organum, basil royal, henbane, licebane, balm, a shrub having a flower like a rose, pepper, ferula, cockle, libbard's bane; some give them orpiment powdered with milk or sweet wine, and sprinkle it about. Rhasis writes that crocodile broth chases away flies; who also commends the perfume of yellow arsenic, with olibanum, perfume of vitriol, writing ink tempered with water wherein worm wood has been washed keeps the flies from the letters. (Pliny) The seed of henbane, black ellebore, and the froth of quicksilver with barley flower beaten and kneaded, and made into little morsels with butter or grease, and smeared with a little honey, and so cast to the flies kills them. (Aetius) The gall of a hare mingled with milk, or boiled in water, and sprinkled about the house will chase away all the flies. Flies are destroyed with the smell of wine distilled with the herb balm. (Lullus) If you would gather flies together into one place, cast rhododaphne well bruised into a ditch; the juice of the herb ferula sprinkled workes the same effect. (Aetius) Bury the tail of a wolf in the house and the flies will not come

into it. (Rhasis, Avincen, Albertus) Boar's grease and resin melted, entangles them, oil chokes them, verqigrease kills them outright. If you anoint anything with casia beaten in oil, it will be safe from flies. There is found in my country (says Petrus Cressentius) a kind of toadstool or mushroom, broad and thick, reddish about the top, which sends forth certain knobs or little bunches, some broken, some whole; it is called the flies' mushroom, because when it is made into a poultice with milk, it destroys the flies. If a man hold in his hand the stone Heraclites, or the touchstone, although he were daubed all over with honey, yet will not the flies come at him, and by this means you may know whether the touchstone be true or no. They write that the King Cambayes' son was brought up by poison, who when he came to years, was all over so venomous that flies at once sucking were swollen to death. (Scaliger) If the fly get into one eye you may shut the other hard and it helps. (Aphrodisæus in *Problem*) If camels chance to be stung by the tabanus or asilus (a kind of fly so called) as it often comes to pass in Arabia, anoint them with whale's grease and all sorts of fish, and they will presently be gone. (Pliny) Solion in *Geoponicis* bids to sprinkle cattle with the decoction of bayberries; and both these flies through a kind of natural antipathy depart forthwith. If cattle be already stung with the asilus fly, anoint them with ceruse and water. The tabani will die (says Ponzettus) when you set before them oil of the decoction of land crocodiles called scinci, bruised, with hogs' seam and the flour of soot. Moreover let cattle be led to pasture in the evening, the stars guiding them, in the day time let them be kept in folds with boughs laid under them that they may lie the more easily and quietly. (Virgil) Or else let them be brought to the sides of thick woods where these flies by reason of the dullness of their sight cannot fly so freely. Sundry kinds of remedies against fliers Ruellius upon Hippocrates, as also Apollonius and Brixtus have prescribed more remedies against flies.

Now after what manner flies do execute the justice of God, let us briefly set down. No age but will speak of that famous army of flies, with which that great Lord of Hosts of heaven and earth did of old correct the fury of Pharaoh, and of the Egyptians, being joined with hardness of heart; and yet the wicked hypocrite did not come to himself, but wallowing still in the mire of sin without any sense, did afterwards invite greater and more grievous judgments to fall upon him. And that proud young gallant, who would needs ride to heaven upon his winged steed, was dismounted and cast down by the fly called oestrum. Hercules also, although exceeding in strength, the poets inform that he was almost vanquished by flies. In the time of King Rivallus, when as corruption of manners and guilt had infected Brittany, there came down from heaven showers of blood, and those being dried away, did produce swarms of poisoned flies who, if they did but once bite any man, he presently died, as our annals report. Nicolas Albanopolitanus, an English man, being elected Pope in the year 1154 called by the name Hadrian the Fourth, was choked with a fly flying into his mouth. (Urspergensis) Others say that he was killed with drinking a draught of water in which a fly was drowned; and that by the just judgment of God, who excommunicated Frederick Cesar, (whose surname was Barbarossa) and did incense all the princes of Italy against him. (Nauclerus, out of Johannes Cremoxensis) An ancient writer reports also that the army of Julian the Apostate was grievously infested with mighty swarms of flies; and Grillus says that the Megarenfes were by them driven from their habitation. In the year 1348 great numbers of flies dropping out of the air did cause in the eastern countries incredible poisoness and putrefaction; upon which followed such a plague among the people that scarce the tenth man among them was left alive. In the year 1091 wonderful store of strange flied did fly up and down many countries, who did sundry ways hunt the grass, trees, cattle, and men also. (Cranzius) In the year 1143 a sort of fly about the bigness of the common sort of flies, only of somewhat a longer body, did so fill the air that for many miles together the Sun could not be seen, which were also very troublesome. (Urspergensis) In the year 1285 Charles King of France leading an army into Spain, making war with Peter, King of Aragon, an army of huge flies of divers colours set upon the French and flew them with their beaks as it had been with swords. (Marineus Siculus l.II de Hisp, Reg) In the year 1578 about the middle of August, upon the top of the temple of Brumbium, there sat every year a swarm of flies which made such a noise with their wings as if they would throw down the roof; Timothy Bright told this to Pennius, a physician, a man both learned and veritous, and of no small note with us. Hither may be referred that which Strabe reports, lib. Georg 3. That amongst the Romans a plague did often happen by reason of them, insomuch that they were fain to hire men of purpose to catch them, who were paid according to the quantity more or less that they caught. But how greatly they annoy the inhabitants of Africa, Apulia, Spain, Italy, and the West-Indies, how grievously they sting and wound the Carthaginians and the inhabitants of Hispaniola, besides Oviedus, let those Englishmen speak who accompanied that flower of knighthood and maul of the Spanish pride, Francis Drake. As for those things which Apollonius, Fulgesus, and Pliny fabulously and superstitiously relate concerning flies, I thought them unworthy of this place; and therefore those flies called pisatides, cypriæ, eliades, actææ, and the rest of mere invention I pass by. It shall not be from the matter to tax in brief the madness of the ancient Gentiles that we may thereby be taught to lift up our eyes to the true, the God that does indeed keep flies away from us. It is said of Hercules in performing divine worship, whereas he was almost killed by the flies, that he offered sacrifice to Jupiter, or the flyway-driver,

by which means they were presently dispatched into the river Alphæus, from whence he was afterwards called by the name of Muscarius or fly-killer.

The Eleans did invoke Myagrus and Myades that multitude of flies might not cause a plague amongst them. (Pliny) He relates also how the Cyrenaics were wont to worship Achor, the god of flies, that by his means they might be secured from being troubled with them. Pliny more truly might have read this name Acaron, or Ithekron, instead of Achor, if he had heard of the town Acaron where Bahal-zebub, i.e. the god of flies, that famous idol used to be worshipped. Urspergeusis says that the Devil did very frequently appear in form of a fly; whence it was that some of the heathens called their familiar spirit musca or fly; perchance alluding to that of Plautus:

This man, O my Father, is a fly
nothing can be concealed from him, be it secret or public,
he is presently there, and knows all the matter.

But away with those false and filthy gods which we that are Christians, and profess the true Creator of all things, ought not at all to regard.

There is also said to be another use of flies. For Plutarch in his *Artaxerxes* relates that it was a law amongst a certain people that whosoever should be so bold as to laugh at and deride their laws and constitutions of state was bound for twenty days together in an open chest naked, all besmeared with honey and milk, and so became a prey to the flies and bees, afterward when the days were expired he was put into a woman's habit and thrown headlong down a mountain. Which place of Plutarch (by the translator's leave) I think should be interpreted not *Ciphone victus*, but *unctus Ciphi*, anointed with sweet-smelling ointment. Of which kind of punishment also Suidas makes mention in his *Epicurus*. There was likewise for greater offenders, a punishment of boats, so called. For that he that was convict of high treason was clapped between two boats with his head, hands, and feet hanging out. For his drink he had milk and honey poured down this throat, with which also his head and hands were sprinkled, then being set against the Sun, he drew to him abundance of stinging flies, and within being full of their worms, he putrefied by little and little, and so died. Which kind of examples of severity as the ancients showed to the guilty and criminous offenders; so on the other side the Spaniards in the Indies use to drive numbers of the innocents out of their houses, as the custom is among them, naked, all bedaubed with honey, and expose them in open air to the biting of most cruel flies. But for these things let Nemesis answer, who is at the back of cruel miscreants, yea may be said every moment to be present with them.

To conclude; the 1st use of flies (and that not to be contemned neither) appears to be this, that whereas none of them pass a summer, yet some of them do not live out a short day, we should by them be put in mind of our own frailty, and of the uncertainty of this vanishing life; the which although preserved with all the dainty food that can be got, with the softest raiment, and all the best ways and means that may be for a short space, yet when it seems most to flourish, it on a sudden declines and scarce with the fly holds out an autumn, much less a winter; we are in Pindar's account but daysmen, i.e., of a day's continuance and as the dream of a shadow. And with the flies, short-lived, yea shorter lived than they, for the most short-lived of them lives a day, whereas we have young children that survive not sometimes the fourth part of an hour. Away then you tyrant, whoever you are, make laws as you please, persecute the godly, add impudence to your strength, trouble and confound all things, give yourself up to all abominable and filthy lusts; yet at length Jupiter shall scare away these flies and, after you are dead, exercise you with variety of torments.

Thomas Mouffet, *The Theater of Insects: Or, Lesser Living Creatures* (1658):944–951.