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I

ESSAYS
BY
MONTAIGNE.



"The charming, chatty Montaigne."

GEORGE ELIOT, *Fortnightly Review*, vol. i.

"Montaigne is the earliest classical writer in the French language, *the first whom a gentleman is ashamed not to have read*. No writer of the sixteenth century has given so much delight."

HALLAM, *Literature of Europe*, vol. ii, p. 2.

"Our prose HORACE, Montaigne, supplies the French with what Shakespeare does ourselves—a perpetual topic."

Quarterly Review, 1852.

"Montaigne est comme Socrate, qui ne se considérait pas comme citoyen d'une seule ville, mais du monde."

SAINTE-BEUVE, *Causeries du Lundi*, tom. iv.

Mrs. Montgomery
11.5 Nov 1880.

ESSAYS
BY
MONTAIGNE.



EDITED AND COMPARED BY THE AUTHOR
OF "THE GENTLE LIFE."

Fourth Edition.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 133, FLEET STREET.

1880.



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TO

HENRY MORLEY,

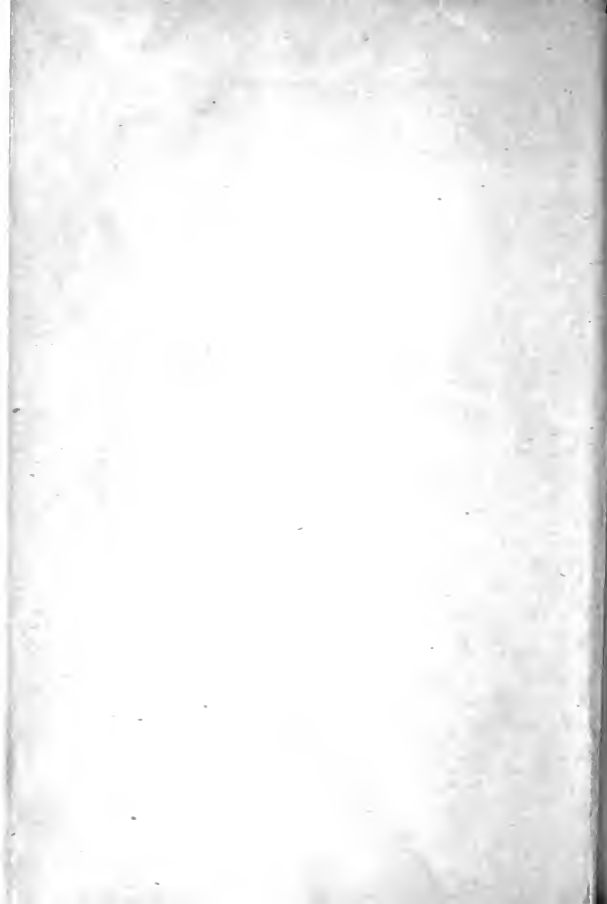
AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF JEROME CARDAN,

ETC., ETC.,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

IN SIGN OF

HONEST LITERARY BROTHERHOOD AND FRIENDSHIP.





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PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

WHEN Henri III told Montaigne that he "liked his book," "Then," returned Montaigne, "your Majesty must needs like me. My book is myself." The reader of the following pages, bearing this in mind, will not ask for a mere Dry-as-dust biography of the writer. The best life of Montaigne has been written by himself, discursively, full of egotism, brimming over with self-searchings, and thoughts which poured one after another into his active mind. "Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'escris : c'est moy, c'est mon essence." He did not write merely about his doings, his public acts when he was mayor, or what he said when on the justice seat ; but he wrote continually about his "essence," what he thought, felt, and suffered. Therefore, when one of his recent biographers, M. Grün, heads his chapters in this way : "Ch. 3, Montaigne Magistrat ;" "Ch. 4, Relations de

M. avec la Cour ;" " Ch. 9, M. Négociateur Politique,"* he does precisely what he should not do. He turns the life the seamy side without ; he shows us what we do not want to see : we want to listen to the garrulous, disjointed, but wise and learned reflections ; we do not want an audience with a man of business. It is as if some one—and there are writers who would joyfully do so—should chronicle the strappings, floggings, tasks, themes, and exercises perpetrated "at Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire (where) young gentlemen are boarded and taught in the Latin and Greek Languages by Samuel Johnson,"† and thus seek to keep us from the ever-delightful life by Boswell. What, in fine, do we want to know about Montaigne the mayor, Johnson the pedagogue, or Cromwell the farmer? It is of very different men, and yet the same, that we inquire.

Nevertheless, as Montaigne generally omits his dates, it will be useful to offer some few to the reader. Montaigne was born in 1533, of a stock originally English. This is the assertion of M. Gence, a gentleman who, we have elsewhere seen,‡ is both industrious and trustworthy in biographical researches. His father was Pierre Eyquem; and, although the name seems little like an English dissyllable, it may well have been the old Norman way of spelling Ockham, Oakham, or Egham. Nevertheless, a writer in the *Quarterly Review* tells

* *La Vie publique de Michel Montaigne.* Par Alphonse Grün. Paris, 1855.

† School advertisement of Mr. Samuel Johnson.

‡ *Like unto Christ.* Preliminary Essay.

us, "That a French biographer should make over to England one of the greatest of his countrymen may well surprise us. The self-denial is wholly uncalled for. We cannot in honesty accept the offer." Indeed! Critics, always too ready to spy a fault, should be careful. Montaigne was proud of his English origin. "Of two names that I have," he says, "one is common to all my race. My ancestors were formerly surnamed Eyquem, a name wherein a family well known in England is at this day concerned."* The reviewer is here plainly wrong, and has "corrected" the more learned and painstaking writer, as well as the reader, into the wrong path, an occurrence not unusual with some of these gentlemen.

Scaliger said that Montaigne's father "était vendeur de harenc" (*Scaligeriana*, 2, p. 457). And what does it matter to us if he did sell herrings? It is probable that the hasty Joseph merely repeated some common tittle-tattle; and it is certain that Eyquem was noble, if not rich. Montaigne, an eleven months child, as he tells us, was the third son, and his father, to strengthen and harden him, put him out to nurse in a village on the estate. Here he acquired that sympathy with the poor and with peasant life which lasted all his days. "Those poor fellows," he says, "who have never heard of Aristotle or of Cato, from them nature obtains a

* Montaigne's words are "se sont austresfois surnomméz Eyquem, surnom que touche encores une maison cogneue en Angleterre." —Essay on Glory. Florio has: "surnamed Higham or Eyquem, a name well knowen in England."

heroism and patient endurance which would shame us who have studied in the schools. The poor man who is digging in my garden has perhaps this morning buried his father. They never take to their beds but to die." Michel was taught Latin, before he learnt his own tongue, by a German tutor who did not understand French. By the time he was six, the boy, to whom father, mother, tutor, and maid spoke nothing but Latin, was as great a proficient in the language as his tutor. He was awakened in the morning by pleasant music, by order of his kind and quaint father, "to attune his nerves," and he was taught to run, ride, and fence; for old Montaigne was an adept at manly exercise, and, when sixty, could leap on the back of a horse, go up a steep staircase four steps at a stride, and support himself on a table by his thumbs. The son left home to go to the College of Guienne, but departed thence at thirteen. Grün says that he studied law under Cujas. "While a child," wrote Montaigne, "I was plunged into law, and it succeeded."

In 1557 the Court of Aids of Périgueux was consolidated with the Parliament of Bordeaux, and Montaigne, at the early age of twenty-four, was seated on the bench of a supreme court of justice. He formed a deep friendship with Stephen de la Boëtie; "an affection," wrote Bayle St. John, "which makes a streak of light in modern biography almost as beautiful as that left us by Lord Brook and Sir Philip Sidney." This was based, as a literary friendship should be based, on esteem. Boëtie had written a little treatise, *De la*

Servitude Volontaire, a beautiful, warm, and eloquent book, which, if we take Mrs. Shelley's word—for I have not read the book—deserved Montaigne's admiration, although written in a style utterly dissimilar to his own. This friend Boëtie was soon taken away : he died at the age of twenty-nine ; and Montaigne's account of his death, and constant references to him, are very touching. Michel lost also both his brothers and father ; and now he became truly the Sieur de Montaigne. He was favoured by Charles IX with the decoration of the Order of St. Michael, an order which was then in great esteem, and of which, as will be seen by his *Essays*, he was very proud, but which, by a too liberal distribution, fell into disesteem—a circumstance which he regrets in his *Essay on Honours and Rewards*.

At thirty-three he married Françoise de la Chassigne, daughter of Joseph de la Chassigne, but without any deep love or inclination. "Had I my own choice," he says, "I would not have married Wisdom herself ; I was drawn to it by extrinsic circumstances." Nevertheless, he made a good husband, and he was happy in an excellent wife ; he was, in fact, as he tells us very openly, "a better husband than either he promised or expected to be."

Montaigne had commenced authorship by translating Raymond de Sebond's *Natural Theology*, to please his father, who, indeed, gave it to the world in its French dress ; and the work had a great success. When about thirty-eight, at which time he had succeeded to his property, Montaigne retired to his

estate, there to meditate and write. France at this period was full of trouble. Our essayist had been to Paris at the same time as the famous Duke of Guise and Henry IV, then of Navarre. He foresaw that the latter would change his faith, and said that war would continue till the death of one of the men. He was at Blois when Guise was assassinated, and afterwards heard with horror of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Montaigne himself was too kindly, too wide in thought, too thoroughly Catholic, and yet Protestant, to do anything but regret such horrors, and to mourn over the intestine struggles of his country. He loved Paris, "the eye of France and the glory of the world," and yet he left it. He had been in office, had known court life; but he left court and office—save to be afterwards chosen, when he was at the baths of Della Villa, near Lucca, Mayor of Bordeaux, in days when men of importance were chosen to such offices,—and gave up all to leisure, study, and meditation. "*Variam dant otia mentem*," he wrote; "I lately retired to mine own house, to avoid all manner of concern in affairs, and to spend in privacy and repose the little remainder of the time I have to live." It was about 1572 that he began this "fagoting up of so many divers pieces," and in this way: "I never put pen to paper but when idleness becomes irksome, and never anywhere but at home. I never correct my first by my second conceptions;* perhaps I may alter a word or so, but only to vary the phrase."

* This must be construed freely; the edition of 1588 contains many passages either omitted or improved in later editions.

He had a good library, and a bequest of the books of his friend La Boëtie enlarged it. In it he spent most of his time meditating and walking about, and often dictating ; if he sat down, "his thoughts went to sleep." He had a royal hatred for critics, "those forward censurers that fall upon all writers, particularly upon later ones, the men yet living." He "took a delight to cheat such upstarts by concealing his quotations and not acknowledging his authors ; so that his critics might give a stab to Plutarch or a fillip on the nose to Seneca," while they thought they were blaming himself. He jogged on at his own rate and ease ; he was not ashamed of being called ignorant :* he himself knew himself ; and surely few men have known more of men and books than he.

His house was but a small chateau, with a tower at the south-east corner, of grey stone, somewhat ancient. Here he set up his library ; and as he left it, save that the books are dispersed, it yet remains. It is on the third story, overlooking the entrance to the chateau, cheerful, airy, and quiet, as Montaigne describes it, *très plaisamment percé*, with a window overlooking the inner court, and on the roof and joists are several scores of moral sentences hastily written down by Montaigne, and probably so written to help his bad memory. Here are some of them, as given by Dr. Payen :†—*Ne plus*

* Hence, perhaps, he has suffered much from self-sufficient critics, who complain of his want of learning. Thus, too, Dr. Farmer and others called Shakspeare unlearned !

† *Nouveaux Documents Inédits, etc., sur Montaigne*, par le Dr. J. F. Payen. Paris, 1850.

sapias quam necesse est, ne obstupescas. Solum certum nihil esse certi, et homine nihil miserius aut superbius. Væ qui sapientes estis in oculis vestris. . . . Nostra vagatur in tenebris, nec cæca potest mens cernere verum, from Lucretius; *παντι λογη λογος ἰσος ἀντικειται,* from Sextus Empiricus.*

There is also an inscription in the little closet wherein he worked, in Latin, but in a state of decay. Of this relic, "the following," says the *Quarterly Review*, No. cxcviii, "is the effect when the gaps have been conjecturally supplied:—

"In the year of Christ 1571, the 38th of his age, on his birthday, to wit, the last day of February, Michel de Montaigne, long wearied of court slavery and public employments, has withdrawn himself into the bosom of the Sisters of Learning, where, in peace and freed from care, he will pass through what little may yet remain of a life of which the most part hath already passed away, if only fate permit. This narrow abode and loved ancestral retreat he hath consecrated to his liberty, repose, and tranquillity."

M. Grün declares that this inscription is puerile and not genuine. But, with others, the present writer thinks it eminently in the style of Montaigne, and, moreover, very touching, even saddening, if one can be sad over so whole and sound a man. In this sweet retirement, growing old and mourning over increasing years, much as a late author did

* See p. 243 of the present volume, where Empiricus is quoted from. "The well-balanced word, *i.e.* the truth, is opposed to all words;" ἴσος, even, equal, well-considered.

afterwards with some merriment and more plaintiveness, Montaigne passed his life, save when his friends broke in on his retirement, and the good citizens of Bordeaux resolved not to let him off from being mayor. To this honour—he was in Italy when elected—after King Henry III had interposed his authority, he submitted, and entered on his office in January 1582. He served so well that he was re-elected—a sufficient proof that he was trusted and recognised as a man of position, honour, and integrity, as well as of capacity. Montaigne had been, as he lets us know, afflicted with an hereditary disease, the colic or stone; he travelled abroad to alleviate it, he philosophised on it, and bore all his trials with patience. Beyond these travels, he went not much abroad; he is said to have accompanied Charles IX to Rouen, and to have acted as secretary to Catherine de Medicis when she sent her letter of instructions to Charles. Having tried all the mineral and thermal springs far and near to alleviate his malady, he found little ease or comfort, save in dictating, studying, and writing. Although Montaigne had a daughter alive, he adopted, as a *filie d'alliance*, Marie du Gournay, a learned and excellent young lady, to whom the world owes much that it knows concerning Montaigne, and whose enthusiastic love and admiration for him was conceived whilst reading his Essays. The affection, which was mutually felt and warm, was entirely platonic.

Time came that this home and parlour philosopher should die. He was attacked by a quinsy, which brought on

paralysis of the tongue, and for three days, in possession of his full senses, this garrulous essayist lay unable to speak. Bernard de St. Antoine tells us, says Mr. St. John, that Montaigne, feeling the approach of death, got out of bed in his shirt, and, putting on his dressing-gown, opened the door of his chamber, and, writing word for all his servants and others to whom he had left legacies to be called together, paid them the sums he had bequeathed them, foreseeing the difficulty they might have in obtaining the amount after his decease. There is a quaint touch in this incident;—it would form a good subject for a picture that would be much in Montaigne's own way. We know how he despised and hated lawyers, with good reason, and he must have had some delight in depriving such carrion of their fees and of their possible chance to cheat. Getting worse, our essayist told his wife to send for the priest and for his friends, and caused mass to be celebrated in his chamber. At the moment of the elevation he attempted to rise, but fell back fainting, and with his hands crossed in the act of devotion. He died on the 13th of September, 1592, having lived fifty-nine years, seven months, and eleven days, and presenting in his death, says Pasquier, "a fine mirror of the interior of his soul." His widow, in whose opinion he was, as she says in the inscription of his tomb, *Vir ad naturæ gloriam natus*, buried him in the church of the Feuillans at Bordeaux, where there is a monument erected, with inscriptions in Latin and Greek. The first recites his titles, his sweetness of manners, sharpness of wit, ready

eloquence, and incomparable judgment, all far above those given to mankind in general, and concludes tenderly thus: *Francisca Chassanea ad luctum perpetuum heu relicta marito dulcissimo (sic) univira unijugo, et bene merenti mærens* P. C. The latter speaks of him as wise of mouth and heart, a new Cato, and as one ready, although a philosopher, to swear solely by the faith of Christ, if presumed to be Pyrrhonic in other matters.

Montaigne's adopted daughter hastened to the side of his widow, to comfort and console her, and to collect with pious care the dead author's letters. His daughter Leonora afterwards twice married. He left no son, and he empowered Pierre Charron,* a philosophic pupil of his, to assume his arms.

Having digested the foregoing facts and dates, it is possible that the reader may desire a few words on the popular estimation of Montaigne. Our author has very boldly but unwisely been claimed as a sceptic; and Emerson, in his brilliant but hasty generalisation, places him thus ticketed amongst his "Representative Men." But, in the general acceptance of the word, nothing can be further from the truth; and the Christian who allows the Atheist and the

* This author's name is spelt by the American abbreviator of Bayle St. John's Biography of Montaigne *Chamon*. His treatise *De la Sagesse* is an 8vo volume of small size, published at Bordeaux in 1595. Two editions were published by the Elzevirs, one without date, says Fournier, "est regardée comme la meilleure que les Elzevirs aient imprimée." A second appeared at Leyden from the same printers in 1646. The last I know of is that of 1801. Pope alludes to the "more sage Charron."

doubter to claim Montaigne, as, indeed, they claim Locke, Newton, Bayle, and even Shakspeare, will do wrong. Montaigne was born, bred, and died a Catholic. He was continually referring to the greatness and goodness of God, and ever at prayers. Perhaps no single sentence written by any of his countrymen is so greatly defensive of the dignity, power, and goodness of the Almighty as the conclusion of the Essay "On a Child Monster" (p. 273). Montaigne was no sceptic; he laughed at the pretended miracles of the priests, he read and admired philosophic writers, but he was so just and so many-sided that devotees could claim him as devout. When in Italy he took care to buy a rosary blessed by the Pope; and he mentions the fact with satisfaction, if not pleasure, in his letters. He was sure to be hated by one-sided critics, because he weighed calmly and fairly all things. He has few hasty generalisations, none of the "slap-dash assertions" which irritated the elder Hazlitt. "Il juge plus équitablement les maux mêmes dont il est témoin et victime."* Like the old Greek, he would have philosophised even while being pounded in a mortar. He would examine and question, but he was no sceptic, in the sense of infidel.

Another error of the critics is to talk of Montaigne as un-

* Saint-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, "Montaigne," 1850. The article in our *Quarterly Review* (1852) is a mere expansion of this admirable *résumé* of the new facts regarding Montaigne. Saint-Beuve says, "Tel qui l'est Montaigne est notre Horace." The *Quarterly*, "Montaigne is our prose Horace;" and the English writer (kind soul!) carefully picks out the same quotations as Saint-Beuve.

learned. Take him for all in all, no man of his age had read so much or pondered so deeply. His quotations are not always correct, nor did he always intend them to be so. He knew how to use books, and when he used them the matter became his own. Hence you cannot well separate his quotations from his text. When you have read Montaigne, it is curious to find how very stale some of the finest classics become. You find that the Frenchman has pressed out the juice of Plato, Seneca, Cicero, and Pliny, and has said what they had to say, often with their help, in a way to be remembered. He is so sound that he is a favourite with all good, honest men. "I heard with pleasure that one of the newly discovered autographs of Shakspeare was in a copy of Florio's Montaigne," wrote Emerson.* Gibbon thought that in the essayist's days there were only two men of true liberality in France,—Henry IV and Montaigne. Montaigne himself complains that they had only one-sided men; one man had wit, another religion, another heart, another address, etc.; but for one to combine all these he saw *none*—"ma fortune ne m'en a fait voir nul." This was after the death of Boëtie. He himself surely was one. He was the most open, the "frankest and honestest of all writers." He tells his own faults. When he most strictly confessed himself, he says he found his best virtue had a tincture of vice. He is too

* It is with real sorrow that one is obliged to add that the authenticity of this autograph is almost as much doubted as is the existence of "Folio" Perkins.

free and open. Some of his essays have a more than "biblical plainness." Happily these do not so greatly concern either us or himself; they were published in his third part, after the cream of observation had been secured; and from this volume they are omitted. He is of invincible truth; he is plain yet sublime. Pope talks about pouring out all about himself (which he never could have done) as plain

"As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne;"

but, plain as he is, Montesquieu places him as one of the four grand poets, "Les quatre grands poètes, Platon, Malebranche, Shaftesbury, Montaigne."* Pasquier (lettre i, liv. xviii) says, "As I wish to please God, I love, honour, and respect his memory as much and more than that of any other." Balzac declares that he was the freest and most true of any man who ever wrote "son histoire domestique." But Bossuet only mentions him once, and then merely to call him "one Montaigne"; a parallel to our celebrated "one Milton." Brantôme, jealous of his being made a Knight of St. Michael, says that he had far better gone on "scribbling essays," and that "his kinsman the Marquis of Trans got him knighted by the king in order to turn the order into ridicule; for the Marquis was always a great mocker." Fenelon, who read him, reproaches him for his Gascon words; but in later times he has fared better. Beranger defends

* Quoted by Sainte-Beuve. *Causeries*, tom. iv, p. 78.

him ; Montesquieu praises him ; Pascal read and re-read him till he nearly knew him by heart ; Rousseau quotes him, and identifies himself with some of his assertions, while he endeavours to answer others ; Marmontel frequently refers to him ; and Voltaire, in a thoroughly appreciative passage, proves that he was a great original writer, and not merely a commentator on the ancients : “ Quelle injustice de dire que Montaigne n’a fait que commenter les anciens ! ”

Turning to England, we know that, if Shakspeare did not read him, Ben Jonson and Samuel Daniel, and all the worthies contemporary with Florio, did. That worthy Italian teacher was himself borne up under his troubles by the philosophy of his original, and, in spite of printers’ errors and mistakes, to which, critic-stung perhaps, he pointedly refers, he subscribes himself the “ Still-Resolute John Florio.”

Halifax, to whom Cotton dedicated his translation, loved the original, and quotes Mdle. de Gournay’s *éloge* upon him — “ the quintessence of philosophy, the setter at liberty of the understanding, the judicial throne of reason ; ” but Addison, who was by far too finical to wholly relish him, speaks of him as “ the most eminent egotist in the world. This lively old Gascon,” said Joseph, “ has woven all his bodily infirmities into his work ; ”* and then Mr. Thackeray’s ideal gentleman-author quotes Scaliger with approval. “ After having

* *Spectator*, No. 562, in an essay on Egotism, undoubtedly by Addison.

told the world that his father sold herrings, he adds : ' For my part,' says Montaigne, ' I am a great lover of your white wines.*' ' What the devil signifies it to the public,' says Scaliger, ' whether he is a lover of white wines or of red wines?' " In such kind of writing it matters much ; Scaliger was not an artist in portraiture, and Montaigne was. If we call to mind one bodily infirmity of Montaigne, we shall find *why* he loved white wines; and surely every minute touch goes to make up a picture. Can we forgive Addison also for this next piece of hypocrisy? " Had he [Montaigne] kept his own counsel, *he might have passed for a much better man*, though perhaps he would not have been so diverting an author." " Who would not weep if Atticus were he?" Addison was an eminent Christian ; did he find that Christianity taught him hypocrisy? At any rate, he entirely mistakes Montaigne, whom he had not manliness enough to appreciate. The Gascon did not *want* to pass for a better man than he was ; his very first sentence is an assertion that his book is one of good faith. That which a man admires is a test for judging the man. One can understand, after reading this sentence, that Addison could and did try to crush young authors, and that he did it as Pope has described ; his way was to

"Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer."

But sounder Englishmen than Addison loved the good old

* "La grande fadaise de Montaigne, qui a écrit qu'il aimait mieux le vin blanc."—*Scaligeriana*.

Gascon. Johnson knew his worth, and Lord Byron, says Leigh Hunt, "got more satisfaction out of his essays than from the works of any of the ancients." Hallam has criticised almost only to praise. Hazlitt, in his *Comic Writers*, has a wonderfully appreciative passage on him. The younger Hazlitt has edited him, Carlyle has noticed him with fervour, Saint-Beuve with a tender delicacy, and almost every modern writer, who is not a fop or a snob, has echoed Emerson's saying, "This old Gascon is still new and immortal for me."

It only remains for me to say something about the volume of *Essays* itself. Montaigne lived to see five editions of his book; and the growth of his fame during his life, and for some time after his death, was ever on the increase. Between 1580 and 1659 thirty-five editions were exhausted; but from 1659 to 1724 we are assured that not one edition was called for. Then, just as that of Shakspeare did, after he had retired from public ken, Montaigne's fame again sprouted up; and in the last and present centuries his popularity has been unbounded. The original editions of his book sell at enormous prices, and a *Cæsar*, with his autograph and notes, for which M. Parison gave 18 sous, was bought by the Duke of Aumale for 1550 francs! The translations of Montaigne into English have not been numerous, because two or three, at the most, have served their purpose, and these have been continually reissued. Florio the "still-resolute," who was born

in London in Henry the Eighth's time, and descended from an Italian family, and who taught French and Italian at Oxford, and was appointed tutor to Prince Henry, translated Montaigne very admirably, issuing the Essays in a folio, with a frontispiece by Martin Droeshout, who afterwards engraved the famous first folio portrait of Shakspeare. The third edition of this translation was published in 1632, after Florio had been appointed clerk of the closet to Queen Anne of Denmark. He writes in his preface, "Enough, if not too much, has been said of this Translation. If the faultes, found even by myself, in the first edition, be now by the printer corrected, *as he was directed*, the work is much amended ; if not, know that through mine attendance on her Majesty I could not intend it ; and blame not Neptune for thy second shipwracke. Let me conclude with this worthy man's daughter of alliance, *Que l'en semble donc, lecteur ?*—Still-Resolute JOHN FLORIO."*

A long copy of verses by Sam. Daniel, addressed to Florio, speaks of the author as

————— "This greate potentate,
This Prince Montaigne, if he bee not more,
Hathe more adventur'd of his owne estate
Than ever man did of himselfe before;"

—a just estimate of the self-searching of Montaigne ; a noble and bold appreciation very different from that of Joseph

* Florio died at Fulham of the plague, in 1625, at a ripe old age.

Addison. This third edition of Florio I have, in the preparation of this volume, extensively used: further to quote Daniel—

“It being the proportion of a happy pen
Not to be invassall'd to one monarchy.”

The Essays were newly rendered into English in 1685 by Charles Cotton, Esq., the friend and pupil of Isaak Walton, and the author of *Scarronides*, that villainous specimen of burlesque verse. His design, he says, in attempting the translation, “was to present my country with a new copy of a very brave original”; and he speaks of having corrected the errors, numerous and gross, of the former translator, Florio. He dedicated the book (which is in three vols. 8vo.) to George, Marquis of Halifax; and that nobleman appended a letter expressing his admiration of Montaigne. Cotton, it seems to me, is much more obliged to Florio than he acknowledges; but his diction has a nearer approach to that of Montaigne, it being easy, colloquial, and familiar. Altogether, Cotton's is an admirable translation, save where now and then he lazily misses the sense; and therefore, in the edition published in 1759, with amendments “from the most accurate and elegant French edition of Peter Coste,” his translation is followed, and he is spoken of as “having succeeded to a miracle in so difficult a piece”; and, continues the editor, “we are persuaded that very few Frenchmen, except, perhaps, some natives of Guienne, would find themselves capable of turning the Essays into modern French with the same spirit and the same justice to the

author." In the edition of 1759 (on which translation the present volume is very materially founded), with corrections, alterations, amendments, and fresh notes, many of Cotton's errors were corrected; and upon that edition Mr. Hazlitt based the one published some years ago, in which he corrected many errors yet remaining.* This version I have frequently consulted, and used to compare each essay, and indeed line, with the original, in the fine stereotyped edition of Firmin Didot, most beautifully and carefully printed in four volumes, published in the year ten (1802). From the very excellent portrait prefixed to Didot's edition that upon our title has been engraved.

It would be impossible to compress the whole of the three volumes of Montaigne into one of this size; but, our print being small, this volume contains as much as two of the edition of 1759, or about as much as the two parts first issued by Montaigne of his Essays. All the most interesting biographical Essays, and all which most come home to men's business and bosoms, are included. The Apology for Raymond de Sebond, a polemical, discursive, and very long discourse, is, saving two or three extracts, omitted; and another equally long essay is also omitted, for another reason,

* Some of Cotton's printer's errata (he calls them "errata's") are very amusing, and should be a lesson for word-picking critics. His first is this: "For 'society,' p. 8, l. 15, read 'saciety,'" meaning, by the way, *satiety*: and he concludes indignantly, "What other errata's (*sic*) shall occur, the reader is desired to amend them at his discretion."

as quite unsuited to the present age. But the reader will get really, in this compact volume, the very marrow of Montaigne; and, if he seeks further, he may be disappointed. So, unlike the Still-Resolute John Florio, or the indignant Cotton, but begging pardon for the many "errata's" of which no doubt I have been guilty, I leave this volume to the reader, hoping that he will admire and enjoy "the charming, chatty Montaigne" as much as doth the present writer.

To the second edition of this volume, the Editor has only to add, that it has been carefully read by himself and by his friend Mr. Edward Levien, M.A.; and that all Montaigne's quotations have been rectified, and many of them corrected. Excellent, therefore, as was the first edition, it is hoped that this is still more worthy of the appreciation of the judicious reader.

J. HAIN FRISWELL.

ARTS CLUB.

October, 1868.





TO THE READER.



HIS is a book of good faith, Reader. It warns thee at the outset that I proposed not to myself any other end but what was domestic and private; I had no thought whatever towards thy service, nor my own glory : my powers are not equal to such design. I had devoted this to the use of my relations and friends ; so that, when they had lost me (which they soon must do), they could here find some traits of my qualities and humour, and thereby might foster, in a more perfect and lively way, what remembrance they had of me. Had this been to seek the favour of the world, I would have dressed myself better,* and should have presented myself with a studied (grave and solemn) march. I wish that people might see me in my simple, natural, and every-day

* The Editor has found it necessary to re-translate the whole of this quaint address. There are some variations also in the readings. In the edition 1595, after "mieux paré," Montaigne adds, "de beautés empruntées," "borrowed plumes." The present translation is nearly word for word.

dress, without study, strut, or artifice; for it is myself that I have to paint. My faults may be read to the life, and my natural shape seen, so far as respect for the public will allow me. Had I been amongst those nations which are said still to live under the sweet liberty of the first laws of Nature, I assure you I would very willingly have painted myself at full length and quite naked. Thus, Reader, I am myself the matter of my book: it is not right that thou shouldest employ thy leisure on a subject so frivolous and vain. Farewell, then.

From Montaigne: this first of March, one thousand five hundred and eighty.





OF SORROW.



I AM as free from this passion as any man, and I neither like it in myself nor admire it in others ; and yet the world is pleased to honour it in the lump with a particular favour, and to make it

the ornament of wisdom, virtue, and conscience ; a silly, mean dress ! The Italians have more properly given the name *tristezza* to surliness, it being a quality always malignant, always foolish ; and, as it is always cowardly and mean, the Stoics would not allow their wise men to have any to do with it.

A contemptible passion.

Its effects.

Nevertheless, history says* that Psammenitus, king of Egypt, being defeated and taken prisoner by Cambyses, King of Persia, seeing his own daughter pass by him in the habit of a servant sent to draw water, though his friends about him burst out into tears and lamentations, yet he himself remained unmoved, without uttering a word, and with his eyes fixed on the ground ; and that seeing, moreover, his son immediately after led to execution, he still maintained the same gravity of countenance, till spying one of his servants dragged away amongst the captives, he smote his forehead,

* Herodotus, iii, 14.

and mourned sadly. Very like to this is the story of a late prince of our own nation, who being at Trent, and having news brought him of the death of his elder brother, but a brother on whom depended the whole support and honour of his house ; and hearing soon after of the death of a younger brother, the second hope of his family, he withstood both these strokes with an exemplary magnanimity ; but one of his servants happening, a few days after, to die, he suffered his constancy to be overcome by this last event, and, losing his courage, so abandoned himself to sorrow and mourning, that some from thence concluded he was only pierced to the quick by this last shock ; but the truth is, that, being before brimful of grief, the least addition overflowed the bounds of his patience. The same might also be judged of the former example, did not the history proceed to tell us, that Cambyses asking Psammenitus* why he was so unconcerned at the misfortune of his son and daughter, and so impatient at the death of his friend, "It is," answered he, "because this last affliction was only to be manifested by tears, the two first exceeding all manner of expression."

Extreme sorrow is dumb. And, perhaps something like this might be working in the fancy of the painter of old, who being in the sacrifice of Iphigenia† to represent the sorrow of the bystanders proportionably to the degrees by which they were variously affected by the death of this innocent fair, and having in the other figures exerted the utmost power of his art, he drew that of the virgin's father with a veil over his face, meaning thereby that no kind

* Herod., iii, 14.

† Val. Max., viii, II.

of countenance was capable of expressing such a degree of sorrow as his was. This is the reason why the poets feign the unfortunate mother, Niobe, after having first lost six sons, and successively as many daughters, to be quite stupefied with grief and at last turned to stone,

————— “Diriguise malis,”*

thereby to express that melancholy, dumb, and deaf stupidity which benumbs all our faculties, when oppressed with accidents that we are not able to bear. And, indeed, the operation of grief, if it be excessive, must so overwhelm the soul as to deprive it of the liberty of its functions ; as it happens to every one of us, who upon the first alarm of very ill news find ourselves surprised, stupefied, and in a manner deprived of all power of motion ; so that the soul, by giving vent to sighs and tears, seems to disentangle and clear itself, and to obtain more room and freedom.

“Et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est.”†

In the war which King Ferdinand made upon the dowager of King John of Hungary, a man in armour was particularly taken notice of by every one for his extraordinary gallantry in a certain encounter near Buda, and, being unknown, was highly commended, and as much lamented when left dead upon the spot, but by none so much as by Raïsciac, a German nobleman, who was charmed with such rare valour. The body being brought off the field of battle, and the count, with the common curiosity, going to view it, the armour of the

*Grief the
cause of
sudden
death.*

* Ov., Met., vi, fab. 4. *Orig.*, “diriguitque malis.”

† Æneid, xi, 151.

deceased was no sooner taken off but he knew him to be his own son. This increased the compassion of all the spectators; only the count, without uttering one word, or changing his countenance, stood like a stock, with his eyes fixed on the corpse, till the vehemency of sorrow having overwhelmed his vital spirits, he sunk, stone dead, to the ground.*

The lovers who would represent an insupportable passion say,

“Chi può dir com' egli arde, è in picciol fuoco.”†

“He who knows how he burns has little fire.”

—————“Misero quod omnes

Eripit sensus mihi; nam simul te,

Lesbia, aspexi nihil est super mî

Quod loquar amens;

Lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus

Flamma dimanat, sonitu suopte

Tinniunt aures, gemina teguntur

Lumina nocte.”‡

So that it appears from hence that, in the height and greatest fury of the fit, we are not in a condition to pour out our complaints, or to use persuasion, the soul being at that time oppressed with profound thought, and the body dejected and languishing with desire. For all passions that suffer themselves to be relished and digested are but moderate.

“Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.”§

“Light cares cry out; the great ones still are dumb.”

A surprise of unexpected joys does likewise produce the same effect.

* This is differently related in the edition of 1595.

† Petrarch, Sonnet 137.

‡ Catullus, li, v.

§ Seneca, Hippol., act ii, scene 3.

“Soon as she saw me coming, and beheld
 The Trojan ensigns waving in the field,
 She was astonish'd at th' unlook'd for sight,
 And, like a statue, lost all feeling quite.
 Life's gentle heat did her stiff limbs forsake:
 She swoon'd; at length with falt'ring tongue she spake.”*

Besides the examples of the Roman lady who died for joy to see her son safe returned from the battle of Cannæ,† and of Sophocles and Dionysius, the tyrant, who also both died of joy, and of Talva,‡ who died in Corsica at reading the news of the honours which the Roman Senate had decreed for him, we have, moreover, one in our time, viz., Pope Leo X, who, upon the news of the taking of Milan, a thing he had set his heart upon, was so overjoyed, that he immediately fell into a fever, and died.§ And, for a still more remarkable testimony of the weakness of human nature, it is observed by the ancients, that Diodorus the logician died upon the spot,|| from an extreme passion of shame, for not having been able, in his own school, and in the presence of a great auditory, to disengage himself from a quibble that was propounded to him by Stilpo. For my own part, I am very little subject to these violent passions. I am naturally dull and hard of apprehension, which I encrust and strengthen every day by discourse.

* Æneid, iii, 306.

† In Valer. Maximus, ix, 12.

|| Pliny, *ut supra*.

† Pliny, Nat. Hist., vii, 54.

§ Guicciardini, xiv.



THAT OUR AFFECTIONS CARRY THEMSELVES BEYOND OUR EXISTENCE.



Mankind too curious after futurity.

THEY who accuse mankind of the folly of gaping always after future things, and advise us to lay hold of the present good, and to set up our rest on that, as having too short reach to seize that which is to come, even less than that which is past, have hit upon the most universal of human errors, if that may be called an error whereto Nature

itself has disposed us, which, for the better continuation of her own work, has, among several others, impressed us with this deluding imagination, as being more jealous of our action than afraid of our knowledge. We are never present with, but always beyond ourselves. Fear, desire, and hope violently push us on towards what is to come, and deprive us of the sense and consideration of that which is present, by amusing us with the thought of what will be, even when we shall be no more. " 'Tis a great calamity to have a mind anxious about future things."*

The duty of man.

Plato often repeats this great precept,† "Do what thou hast to do ; and know thyself." Of

* Seneca, Epist. 98.

† In Timæus ; Montaigne's words are, "Fay ton faict, et te cognoy."

these two parts, each generally comprehends our whole duty, and, in like manner, each takes in the other ; for he that would mind his own business will find that his first lesson is to know what he is, and what is proper for him ; and he who rightly understands himself will never mistake another man's work for his own, but will love and improve himself above all other things—will refuse superfluous employments, and reject all unprofitable schemes and proposals. As folly, though it should enjoy all that it can possibly desire, would not be content, so wisdom acquiesces with the present, and is never dissatisfied. Epicurus exempts his wise men from all foresight and care of futurity.

Among those laws that relate to the dead, I look upon that to be as good by which the actions of princes are to be examined after their decease.* *The conduct of princes should be canvassed after their death.* They are, while living, at least associates in making the laws, if not the masters of them ; and therefore, what justice could not inflict upon their persons, it is but reason should be executed upon their reputations, and the estates of their successors—things that we often value above life itself.† This is a custom of singular advantage to those countries where it is observed, and as much to be desired by all good princes, who have reason to take it ill that the memories of the wicked should be treated with the same respect as theirs. We owe, it is true, subjection and obedience to all kings alike, in regard to their office ; but as to affection and esteem, these are only due to their

* Cicero, Tusc. Quæst., v, 18. † Diodorus Siculus, i, c. 6.

virtue. Let it be granted that, by the rule of government, we are to be quite passive under unworthy princes, to conceal their vices, and to aid their indifferent actions with our recommendation, whilst their authority stands in need of our support; yet, when such communication betwixt the prince and subject is at an end, there is no reason why we should not, for the sake of our own liberty, and of common justice, publish our real resentments. And to debar good subjects of the glory of having reverently and faithfully served a prince, whose imperfections they so well knew, were to deprive posterity of so useful an example. And they who, out of respect to some private obligation, do, against their own knowledge and conscience, unjustly espouse the memory of a bad prince, do a private act of justice at the expense of public justice. Titus Livy* very truly says that the language of courtiers is always sounding of vain ostentation, and not to be depended on; every one indifferently extolling the valour and greatness of his own king to the highest pitch. It is not impossible but some may condemn the courage of those two soldiers who boldly answered Nero to his face. The one being asked by him why he bore him ill-will, "I was true to thee," he said, "whilst thou was worthy of my love; but, when thou didst turn parricide, incendiary, a stage-player, and a coachman, I began to hate thee, and do so still."† And the other being asked why he had a design to take away his life, "Because," said he, "I had no other remedy against thy perpetual mischiefs."‡ But, considering the public and universal testimonies that were given after his death

* Lib. xxxv, c. 48. † Tacit., *Annal.*, xv, 67. ‡ *Ibid.*, c. 68.

(and will be to all posterity, both of him, and all other bad princes like him) of his tyrannical and wicked practices, what man in his senses can blame them?

It displeases me that, in so sacred a government as that of the Lacedæmonians, there should be so hypocritical a ceremony used at the death of their kings, when all their confederates and neighbours, and all sorts and degrees of men and women, as well as their slaves, cut and slashed their foreheads in token of sorrow, repeating in their cries and lamentations that that king (let him have been as wicked as the devil) was the best they ever had,* thereby attributing to his quality the praise that belongs to merit, and to the highest degree of it, though in the meanest subject. Aristotle, who leaves no subject untouched, makes a query upon the saying of Solon,† “that none can be said to be happy before he be dead.” Whether any one, who has even lived and died according to his heart’s desire, can be termed happy, if he has left an ill character behind him, or if his posterity is miserable. Whilst we have life and motion, we convey ourselves, by prepossession or anticipation, whither and to what we please; but, when once we are out of being, we have no communication with what still exists; and therefore it had been better for Solon to have said, that no man is ever happy, because he is not so till after he is no more.

Vain ceremony of the Lacedæmonians at the death of their kings.

No man can be said to be happy before death.

“He boasts no sense can after death remain,
Yet makes himself a part of life again,
As if some other *he* could feel the pain.”‡

* Herodot., vi, 401.

† Ibid., i, 14.

‡ Lucret., iii, 890, *et seq.*; imitated by Dryden.

*The dead
treated as
if alive.*

Bertrand du Guesclin dying before the Castle of Rancon, near Puy, in Auvergne, the besieged were afterwards, upon surrender, obliged to deposit the keys of the place upon his corpse. Bartholomew d'Alviano, general of the army of the Venetians, happening to die in their wars in Brescia, and his corpse being brought back to Venice through the territories of Verona, the enemy's country, most of the army were for demanding a safe conduct for it from the Veronese; but Theodore Trivulzio opposed it, rather choosing to make way for it by force of arms, at the hazard of a battle, saying, "It was not meet that he, who in his life was never afraid of his enemies, should seem to fear them when he was dead." And, in truth, in a case of much the same nature, by the Greek laws, he who made suit to an enemy for a body to give it burial did, by that act, renounce his victory and his right to erect a trophy; and he to whom such suit was made was ever reputed the victor. By this means it was that Nicias lost the advantage he had clearly gained over the Corinthians, and that Agesilaus, on the contrary, confirmed the doubtful title he had before to what he gained from the Bœotians.

These matters might appear very odd, had it not been a general practice in all ages, not only to extend the care of ourselves beyond this life, but, moreover, to fancy that very often the favours of Heaven accompany us to the grave, and continue even to our ashes: of this there are so many instances among the ancients, waiving those of our own time, that it is not necessary I should insist on it. Edward, King of England, the first of that name, having, in the long wars betwixt him and Robert, King of Scotland, experienced of how great advantage his own immediate presence was to

his affairs, as he had been always victorious where he was personally engaged, when he came to die, bound his son by a solemn oath, that, as soon as he was dead, he should cause his body to be boiled till the flesh parted from the bones, and, after burying the flesh, to carry the bones continually with him in his army, so often as he should be obliged to go against the Scots ; as if victory had been chained by destiny to his limbs. John Zisca, who, in vindication of Wickliffe's heresies, disturbed the Bohemians, left order that they should flay him after his death, and make a drum of his skin, to carry into the field against his enemies, fancying it would contribute greatly to the continuation of the successes he had obtained over them. Certain Indians also, in a day of battle with the Spaniards, carried with them the bones of one of their captains, in consideration of the victories they had formerly obtained under his conduct. And other people, of the same new world, do yet carry about with them, in their wars, the relics of valiant men who have died in battle, to excite their courage and advance their fortune. Of these examples, the first only reserve for the tomb the reputation they gained by their achievements, but the latter attribute a certain agency to their dead limbs. The behaviour of Captain Bayard reads better, who, finding himself mortally wounded with a shot from a harquebus, and being advised to retire out of the field, made answer that he would not begin at the last gasp to turn his back to the enemy, and fought on as long as he had strength ; till, feeling himself too faint, and no longer able to sit his horse, he commanded his steward to set him down against the root of a tree, but in

such a posture that he might die with his face towards the enemy; which he did.*

Singular modesty of the emperor Maximilian. I must yet add another example, as remarkable, with regard to the present subject, as the former, The emperor Maximilian, great-grandfather to Philip, the present king of Spain, was a prince

richly endowed with great qualities, and remarkably handsome, but had withal a humour very contrary to that of other princes, who, for the dispatch of their most important affairs, convert their *cabinet* into a chair of state, viz., that he never permitted any of his valets, how much a favourite soever, to attend him privately, and was as shy as a virgin to discover to his physician any part of the body that is by custom covered. And I myself, who never blush at what I say, am yet naturally so modest in this point, that, unless it be at the importunity of necessity or pleasure, I very rarely let any one see those parts which custom requires us to conceal. But the emperor indulged this modest humour to such a degree of superstition, as to give express orders in his last will that they should put him on drawers as soon as he was dead; to which, methinks, he would have done well to have added by a codicil, that whoever put them on should

Cyrus's reverence for religion. be hoodwinked. The charge which Cyrus left with his children,† that neither they, nor any other, should either see or touch his body after the soul was departed from it, I attribute to some superstitious devotion of his; both his historian and himself, amongst other great qualities, having, in the whole course of

* Mem. of Martin du Bellay, iv. † Xenophon's *Cyro.*, viii, 7.

their lives, demonstrated a singular attention and respect to religion.

This story displeased me, told me by a great man, of a relation of mine, who had been very eminent both in peace and war, that, being arrived to a very old age, and excessively tormented with the stone, he spent the last hours of his life in an extraordinary solicitude about ordering the pomp and ceremony of his funeral, pressing all the men of condition who came to see him to promise their attendance on him to his grave; and he most earnestly importuned the very prince, who visited him in his last agonies, that he would order his family to join in the funeral procession, urging several reasons and examples to him, to prove that it was a respect due to a person of his condition; and, having obtained a promise, and appointed the method and order of his funeral parade, he seemed to die content. So much vanity as this was, to the very last, I scarce ever heard of. The opposite solicitude (of which I do not want a domestic example) seems to be somewhat akin to this: that a man shall cudgel his brains, in the last moments of his life, to regulate his obsequies with so particular and unusual a parsimony, as to permit no more attendance than one single servant with a lanthorn; yet I see this humour commended, as well as the regulation of Marcus Æmilius Lepidus,* who forbade his heirs to bestow upon his corpse so much as the common ceremonies in use upon such occasions. Is it temperance and frugality to avoid expense and pleasure, when

* Before he died, he commanded his son to carry him to his sepulchre on the bare bed, without linen or purple.—Livy, Ep. xlviij.

the use and knowledge thereof are by us imperceptible? An easy and cheap reformation this! If instruction were at all necessary, I should be of opinion that this, as all other actions of life, should be regulated by every man's ability; and the philosopher of Lycon* prudently ordered his executors to dispose of his body where they should think most fit, and as for his funeral, to order it neither superfluous nor too mean. For my own part, I should wholly leave the ordering of this ceremony to custom, and to their discretion to whose lot it shall fall to do me that last office. *Totus hic locus est contemnendus in nobis, non negligendus in nostris.*† “The place of our sepulture is wholly to be contemned by us, but not to be neglected by our friends;” and it was a holy saying of a saint, “The care of funerals, the place of sepulture, and the pomp of the obsequies, are rather consolations to the living than any benefit to the dead.”‡ From this consideration it was that, when Criton asked Socrates, on his death-bed, how he would be buried, the philosopher made him answer, “How ye will.”§ If I were to concern myself further about this affair, I should think it more genteel to imitate those who entertain themselves, while alive, with the ceremony of their own obsequies, and are pleased with beholding their own dead countenances in marble. Happy are the men who can regale and gratify their senses by insensibility, and live even when they are dead!

I am ready to conceive an implacable hatred against all popular government (though I cannot but think it the most

* Diogenes Laertius, v, 74.

† August. de Civit. Dei, i, 12.

‡ Cicero, Tuscul. Quæst., 45.

§ Plato's Phædo.

natural and equitable of all others), so oft as I call to mind the injustice and inhumanity of the Athenians, who, without mercy, or once vouchsafing to hear what they had to say for themselves, put to death their brave captains newly returned triumphant from a naval victory, which they had obtained over the Lacedæmonians, near the Arginusian Isles (the sharpest and most obstinate engagement which ever the Greeks fought at sea), for no other reason but that the Greeks followed their blow, and pursued the advantages prescribed them by the law of arms, rather than stay to gather up and bury their dead. An execution that was yet rendered more odious by the behaviour of Diomedon, who, being one of the condemned persons, and a man of eminent virtue, both political and military, advancing to speak, after having heard the sentence (till when he was not allowed a peaceable hearing), instead of pleading his own cause, or proving the manifest impiety of so cruel a sentence, only expressed a concern* for the safety of his judges, beseeching the gods to convert this sentence to their own good, and praying that, for neglecting to pay those vows that he and his companions had made (which he also acquainted them with) in acknowledgment for so glorious a success, they might not bring down the indignation of the gods upon them; after which he went courageously to his execution.

Fortune, not many years after, served them with the same pottage :† for Chabrias, captain-general of their naval forces, having got the better of Pollis,

Cruel and childish superstitions of the Athenians as to burial.

How punished.

* Diod. Sic., xiii, 31. † *Orig.*, "les punit de mesme pain soupe."

admiral of Sparta, about the isle of Naxos, totally lost the fruits* of his victory (of very great importance to their affairs); and, lest he should incur the misfortune of the Athenian captains, he chose to save a few bodies of his dead friends that were floating on the sea, which gave opportunity to a great number of his living enemies to sail away in safety, who afterwards made them pay dear for this unseasonable superstition.

“Dost ask where thou shalt lie when dead?
With those that ne'er yet being had.”†

This next passage restores the sense of repose to a body without a soul. “Nor with a tomb as with a haven blest, where, after life, the corpse may rest in peace.”‡

Just as Nature demonstrates to us that several dead things still retain an occult relation to life: wine changes in cellars, according to the changes of the seasons of the vine from whence it came: and the flesh of venison is said to alter its condition in the powdering tub, and to vary its taste, according to the seasons of the living flesh of its kind.

* Diod. Sic., xv, c. 9.

† Seneca, Tr. Chor., ii, 30.

‡ Cicero, Tusc. Quæst., i, 44.





HOW THE SOUL DISCHARGES ITS PAS- SIONS UPON FALSE OBJECTS WHEN THE TRUE ARE WANTING.

A GENTLEMAN of my country, who was very often tormented with the gout, being importuned by his physicians to abstain from salt meats, used to reply merrily, that there was a necessity for his having something to quarrel with in the extremity of his pain, and that he fancied, that sometime railing at and cursing the Bologna sausages, at other times the dried tongues and the gammon, was some mitigation of it. And in good truth, as we are chagrined if the arm which is advanced to strike misses the mark, and spends itself in vain, and as, also, that, to make a prospect pleasant, the sight should not be lost and scattered in the ether, but have some bounds to limit it at a reasonable distance,

“As winds do lose their strength unless withstood
By some thick grove of strong opposing wood.”*

in like manner it appears that the soul, being agitated and discomposed, is lost in itself, if it has not something to

* Lucan, iii, 362.

encounter with, and therefore always requires an object to aim at and keep it employed. Plutarch says, *à-propos* of those who are fond of lap-dogs and monkeys, that the amorous part which is in us, for want of a right object, rather than lie idle, does, in a manner, forge in the fancy one that is false and frivolous. And we see that the soul, in the exercise of its passions, rather deceives itself by creating a false and fantastical subject, even contrary to its own belief, than not to have something to work upon. After this manner, brute beasts spend their fury upon the stone or weapon that has hurt them, and are ready to tear themselves to pieces for the injury they have received from another.

“So the fierce bear, made fiercer by the smart
Of the bold Lybian’s mortal wounding dart,
Turns round upon the wound, and the tough spear
Still quivering in her breast doth flying bear.”*

Mankind’s recourse to things inanimate for amusement. What causes of the misfortunes that befall us do we not invent? What is it that we do not blame, right or wrong, that we may have something to quarrel with? Those beautiful tresses, young lady, which you tear off by handfuls, are no way guilty; nor is it the whiteness of that bosom which you smite with so much indignation and cruelty, that with an unlucky bullet has killed your dear brother: quarrel with something else. Livy, speaking of the Roman army in Spain, says, that for the loss of two brothers, their great captains, *flere omnes repente, et offensare capita*,† all wept and beat their foreheads; but this is a common practice. And the philosopher Bion said pleasantly of the king who plucked off the hair of his

* Luc., vi, 220, etc.

† Livy, xxv, 37.

head for sorrow, "Does this man think that baldness is a remedy for grief?"* Who has not seen gamesters bite and gnaw the cards, and swallow the dice in revenge for the loss of their money? Xerxes lashed the sea, and wrote a challenge to Mount Athos.† Cyrus set a whole army several days at work,‡ to revenge himself on the river Gyndes§ for the fright it had put him in when he was passing over it; and Caligula demolished a very beautiful palace|| for the imprisonment his mother had there.

I remember there was a story, when I was a *Impertinentvanity of a king.* boy, that one of our neighbouring kings, having been smitten by the hand of God, swore he would be revenged, and he ordered a proclamation that, for ten years to come, no person in his dominions should pray to him, or so much as mention him, or even believe in him; by which we are not so much to take measure of the folly, as of the vain-glory peculiar to the nation of which this story was told. They are vices, indeed, that always go together, but such actions as these have more of temerity in them than of stupidity. Augustus Cæsar, having been tossed with a tempest at sea,¶ fell to defying the god Neptune; and, in the pomp of the Circensian Games, to be revenged, deposed his statue from the place it had amongst the other deities. In this he was less excusable than in the former, and less, too, than he was afterwards, when, having lost a battle under Quintilius Varus in Germany, he raved like a madman, and

* Cic., Tus. Quæst., iii, 26.

† Herodot., vii, 24-35.

‡ Herodot., i.

§ Now the Diy'alah.

|| Seneca, De Irâ, iii, 22.

¶ Suetonius, in the Life of Augustus, sec. 16.

sometimes ran his head against the wall, crying out, "O Varus! give me my legions again!"* For theirs exceeded all folly, because it was attended with impiety, by carping at God himself, or at least at Fortune, as if she had ears to be dinned with our complaints; like the Thracians,† who, when it thunders or lightens, fall to shooting against heaven with Titanian vengeance, as if by flights of arrows they thought to reduce the deity to reason. Now, as the ancient poet in Plutarch tells us, in his treatise of contentment, or the peace of the mind, c. 4 of Amyot's translation,

"Point ne se fault courroucer aux affaires:
Il ne leur chault de toutes nos choleres."

We must not blame heaven, which cares nothing for our rage, but we can never enough condemn our own unruly passions.

* Suetonius, *ibid.*, sec. 23.

† Herodot., iv, 289.





OF IDLENESS.

AS we see ground that has lain fallow, if the soil is fat and fertile, produce innumerable sorts of wild herbs that are good for nothing, for want of being cultivated, and sown with certain seeds proper for our service ; even so it is with our minds, which, if not applied to some particular subject to check and restrain them, rove about confusedly in the vague expanse of imagination.

“So when the sun by day, or moon by night,
Strikes on the polish'd brass its trembling light,
The glittering species here and there divide,
And cast their dubious beams from side to side :
Now on the walls, now on the pavement play,
And to the ceiling flash the glaring day.”*

In which agitation there is no folly nor idle fancy which they do not create.

———“*velut ægri somnia, vanæ
Finguntur species.*”

“Like a sick man's dream, full of phantasy.”†

The soul that has no established limit to circumscribe it

* Dryden's *Æneid*, viii, 22. † Hor., *Art. Poet.*, 7, 8.

loses itself ; for, as the epigrammatist says, "He that is everywhere is nowhere."* When I lately retired *Idleness* to my own house, with a resolution to avoid all *bewilders* manner of concern in affairs as much as possible, *the mind.* and to spend the small remainder of my life in privacy and peace, I fancied I could not give my mind more enjoyment than to leave it at full liberty to entertain, rest, and compose itself ; which I also hoped that it might do the more easily henceforwards, as being by time become more settled and improved ; but I find,

———"variam semper dant otia mentem,"†

that leisure gives an ever varying mind ; that, on the contrary, like a horse broke loose, which runs away with greater speed than the rider would put him to, it gives birth to so many chimeras and fantastic monsters, one upon the neck of another, without order and design, that, for the sake of surveying the folly and absurdity of them when I list, I have begun to draw a catalogue of them, hoping in time to make my mind ashamed of itself.

* Martial, vii, 72.

† Lucan, iv, 504.





OF LIARS.



HERE is not a man whom it would so ill become to boast of memory as myself ; for I own I have scarce any, and do not think that in the world there is another so defective as mine. My other faculties are all mean and common ; but, in this respect, I think myself so singular and rare, as to deserve a more than ordinary character. Besides the inconvenience I naturally suffer from this defect of memory (for in truth, the necessary use of it considered, Plato might well call it a great and powerful goddess), in my country, when they would signify that a man is void of sense, they say that he has no memory ; and when I complain of the defect of mine, they reprove me, and do not think I am in earnest by accusing myself for a fool ; for they do not discern the difference betwixt memory and understanding, in which they make me worse than I really am ; for, on the contrary, we rather find, by experience, that a strong memory is liable to be accompanied with a weak judgment ; and, as I acquit myself in nothing so well as the friend, they do me another wrong in this respect, that, by the same words with which they accuse my infirmity, they represent me as ungrateful. They bring my affection into question

*Montaigne's
confession
that he has
a bad me-
mory.*

upon account of my memory, and turn a natural imperfection into a bad conscience. He has forgot, say they, this request, or that promise; he does not remember his friends; he has forgot to say, or to conceal, such and such a thing for my sake.* It is true I am apt to be forgetful, but am not indifferent about anything which a friend has given me in charge. It is enough that I suffer the misfortune without being branded with a sort of malice, a vice so contrary to my nature.

The advantages which Montaigne derives from his want of memory.

This, however, is my comfort: first, that it is an evil from which principally I have found reason to correct a worse that would have grown upon me, namely, ambition; for this is an intolerable defect in those who are incumbered with the management of public business. And (as several examples of the like kind in the progress of nature demonstrate) the greater is this defect, I find my other faculties the stronger in proportion. I should have been apt to have rested my understanding and judgment on other men's, and have lazily followed their footsteps, without exerting my own strength, had any strange inventions and opinions occurred to me by the help of my memory. By this means, too, I am not so talkative; for the magazine of the memory is apt to be better stored with matter than that of the invention;

* Montaigne more than once complains of his memory, and some authors have on that account accused him of falsehood, alleging, as a proof, his numerous quotations. But these are frequently inexact, and because his memory was overloaded, it was not, in his opinion, good or exact. Many of his quotations were from notes; but many of these, although he made use of notes, are not correct. Montaigne, therefore, had grounds for his assertion.—ED.

and, had my memory been good, I had, ere this, deafened all my friends by my babble; for the subjects themselves, by rousing that sort of talent which I have of handling and applying them, would have animated and spun out my discourses. It is pity, but it is no less true, that I have observed in some of my intimate friends, who, when their memories represent a thing to them entire, and as it were in present view, begin their story so far back, and crowd it with so many impertinent circumstances, that, if the story be good in itself, they spoil it, and, if it be bad, you are either to curse the strength of their memory or the weakness of their judgment. It is a difficult matter to close up a narration, and to cut it short in its career. Neither is there anything that more discovers the strength of a horse than when it makes a full stop with a grace; and, of those men who talk pertinently, I know some who would, but cannot stop short; for, whilst they are seeking a period for the narration, they talk idly, and drawl out their words like men that have scarce strength to utter them. Old men especially, who yet retain the memory of things past, but forget how often they have related them, are dangerous companions; and I have known very pleasant stories told by a man of quality that became very nauseous by being repeated a hundred times over in the same company. The second obligation I have to this weak memory of mine is, that I less remember the injuries done to me; so that (as the ancient said)* I should have a prompter, like Darius, who, that he might not forget the affront he had received from the Athenians, whenever he sat down to table,

* Cic., *pro Lig.*, xii.—“Oblivisci nihil soles, nisi injurias.”

ordered one of his pages to repeat three times in his ear, "Sir, remember the Athenians."* Moreover, the places which I revisit, and the books which I read over again, always seem new to me.

A liar ought to have a good memory. It is not without reason said, that he who has not a good memory should never offer to tell lies. I know very well that the grammarians distinguish betwixt an untruth and a lie, and say, that to tell an untruth is to tell a thing that is false, which we ourselves, however, believe to be true; and that the Latin word *mentiri*, i.e., *contra mentem ire*, means to go and act against the conscience; and that, therefore, this only touches those who speak contrary to what they know, who are the persons I point at. Now these do either wholly invent a story out of their own heads, or else mar and disguise one that has a real foundation. When they disguise and alter, by often telling the same story, they can scarce avoid contradicting themselves, by reason that the real fact having first taken possession in the memory, and being there imprinted by the way of knowledge and science, it will be ever ready to present itself to the imagination and to dislodge falsehood, which cannot have so sure and settled a footing there as certainty; and because the circumstances which they first heard, evermore running in their minds, make them forget those that are forged or foisted in. As to what they wholly invent, forasmuch as there is no contrary impression to give a shock to their forgery, there seems to be the less danger of their tripping; and yet even this also, by reason it is a mere phantom, and not to be

* Herodotus, v. 105.

laid hold of, is very apt to escape the memory, if it be not very perfect. I have had very pleasant experience of this, at the expense of such as profess only to accommodate their discourse to the business they have in hand, or to the humour of the great men with whom they converse ; for the circumstances to which they are ready to sacrifice their honour and conscience being subject to several changes, their language must needs vary at the same time ; from whence it happens, that of the same thing they tell one man it is this, and another, it is that, giving it different forms and colours ; and if by accident these men compare notes upon informations so contrary, what becomes of this fine art ? Besides, they are such fools that they often contradict themselves ; for what a memory need they have to retain so many different forms as they have forged upon one and the same subject ! I have known many, in my time, very ambitious of the reputation of this fine sort of wisdom ; but they do not see that, if there be a reputation in it, it can answer no end.

In plain truth, lying is a cursed vice. We are *Lying a* men who have no other tie upon one another but *very hate-* our word. If we considered the horrid conse- *ful vice.* quences of a lie, we should prosecute it with vengeance as the worst of crimes.

I perceive how absurdly children are usually corrected for innocent faults, and are made to smart for rash actions that are of no significance or consequence. The faculty of lying, and what is something of a lower form, stubbornness, seem to be faults that ought, in every instance, to be checked, both in their infancy and progress, they being vices which are apt to grow up with them ; and, after the tongue has contracted

a habit of lying, it is scarce to be imagined how impossible, almost, it is to draw it out of the false track; from whence it comes to pass, that we see some, who are otherwise very honest men, not only subject, but mere slaves to this vice. I have an honest lad to my tailor whom I never heard speak truth, not even when it might have been to his advantage. If Falsehood had, like Truth, only one face, we should be upon better terms; for we should then take the contrary of what the liar should say for certain truth; but the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand forms, and a field without limits. The Pythagoreans make *good* to be certain and finite, and *evil* infinite and uncertain: there are a thousand ways to miss the white, and only one to hit it. For my own part, I am not sure that I could prevail with my conscience to secure myself from manifest and extreme danger by an impudent and solemn lie. One of the ancient Fathers said, that we had better be in company with a dog that we know, than with a man whose language we do not understand. *Ut externus non alieno sit hominis vice.** So that two persons of different nations are *not* men with regard to each other; or as a foreigner, to one who understands not what he says, cannot be said to supply the place of a man. And how much less sociable is false speaking than silence.

An ambas- King Francis I boasted that he nonplused
sador Francisco Taverna, ambassador of Francis Sforza,
caught in Duke of Milan, a man of great fame for his elo-
a lie by quence, by this means. The ambassador had
Francis I.

* Here is a proof of incorrect memory. The quotation runs in Pliny, "Ut externus alieno penè non sit hominis vice." Nat. Hist., vii, 1.

been despatched to excuse his master to the king for an action of great consequence, which was this; the king in order to maintain some correspondence still in Italy, out of which he had been lately driven, and particularly in the duchy of Milan, had thought fit to have a gentleman in his behalf to reside constantly near the duke; an ambassador in effect, but in appearance as a private man, who pretended to reside there for his own affairs. The reason of this was, that the duke, who depended much more upon the emperor (at a time, especially, when he was treating of a marriage with his niece, daughter to the King of Denmark, and since dowager of Lorraine), could not be known to have any correspondence or intelligence with us, without hurting his interest considerably. For this commission a Milanese gentleman was thought proper, viz., one Merveille, who was an equerry to the king. This person being despatched with private credentials, and the instructions of ambassador, besides other letters of recommendation to the duke, in favour of his own private concerns, for a mask and a cloak, he stayed so long at the duke's court, that the emperor took umbrage at it; which was the occasion, as we suppose, of what followed after, viz., that, under pretence of a murder by him committed, his trial was despatched in two days, and his head struck off in the dead of the night.* The king applying to all the princes of Christendom, and even to the duke himself, to demand satisfaction, Taverna came to the court of France with a long counterfeit story, had his audience at the morning council, where, for the support of his cause, he made a

* Bellay's Memoirs. The incident occurred in 1534.

plausible harangue, concluding, that his master had never looked upon this Merveille for any other than a private gentleman and his own subject, who came to Milan only about his own affairs, and had never lived there in any other character ; absolutely disowning that he had ever heard that he was one of the king's household, or so much as known to his majesty, so far was he from taking him for an ambassador. The king, in his turn, urging several objections and questions to him, and sifting him in every way, gruelled him at last in the circumstance of the execution being performed in the night, and as it were by stealth. To this the poor man, being confounded, made answer, in order to show his complaisance, that, out of respect to his majesty, the duke would have been very sorry that such an execution should have been performed in the day-time. Any one may imagine how he was reprimanded when he came home, for having so grossly prevaricated with a prince of so nice a discernment as King Francis.

Pope Julius II having sent an ambassador to the King of England, to animate him against King Francis, the ambassador having had his audience, and the king, in his answer, observing the difficulties that would attend the making such preparations as would be absolutely necessary to cope with so powerful a king, and mentioning some reasons, the ambassador absurdly replied, that he himself had also considered them, and had indeed mentioned them to the Pope.* This speech of his, so different from his errand, which was

* Erasmus, in his *Lingua*, mentions this fact, as having happened while he was in England.

to push him immediately upon a war, gave the King of England the first glimpse of a conjecture, which was afterwards verified, that the said ambassador was in his heart a friend to France; of which the King of England having advertised the Pope, his estate was confiscated, and he had like to have





OF READINESS OR SLOWNESS IN SPEECH.

“Onc ne furent à tous toutes graces données.”*

“All graces ne'er were yet to all men given.”



THUS we see, as to the gift of eloquence, some have a facility and readiness of speech, and that which is termed a quick delivery, so fluent that they are never at a pause; and others there are slow of speech, who never utter a sentence but what has been laboured and premeditated.

As the diversions and exercises of the ladies are so regulated as to make the best display of their greatest beauty, so in these two different advantages of eloquence, of which the preachers and lawyers of our age seem to be the chief professors.

The slow speaker fit to be a preacher. If my opinion were to be taken, I should think the slow speaker would be more proper for the pulpit, and the other for the bar; because the preacher's function allows him as much time as he pleases to

The ready one to be an advocate. prepare himself; and, besides, his is one continued thread of discourse, without intermission; whereas it is the advocate's interest to enter the lists extempore, and the unexpected answers of the

* Etienne de la Boetie. Sonnet xiv.

adverse party throw him off his bias, so that he is immediately forced to strike into a new path. Yet, at the interview betwixt Pope Clement and King Francis, at Marseilles, it happened quite contrary, that Monsieur Poyet, a man who had been bred up all his life to the bar, and was in high repute, being commissioned to make the harangue to the pope, and having so long studied it beforehand, that it is said he brought it quite ready with him from Paris; the pope, on the very day that it was to be spoke, for fear lest he should intend to say something that might disgust the ambassadors of the other princes that were about him, sent the king a topic which he thought fittest both for the time and place, but such a topic as was quite different from that which Monsieur Poyet had taken so much pains about; so that the speech he had prepared remained of no use, and he was forced, that very instant, to set about another; but, finding himself incapable of performing it, the Cardinal du Bellay was constrained to take that charge upon him.

The pleader's province is more difficult than that of the preacher; and yet, in my opinion, we find more passable pleaders than preachers, at least in France. It seems that it is the nature of wit to operate speedily, and on a sudden; whereas the operation of judgment is deliberate and slow. But it is as strange for a man to be totally silent for want of leisure to prepare his speech, as it is for another to speak never the better though he had leisure.

It is said of Severus Cassius,* that he spoke best without having thought of the subject beforehand; that he was more

* Seneca, Rhetor. Controv., iii.



indebted to his fortune than to his diligence ; that he spoke best when he was angered ; and that his adversaries were afraid to provoke him, lest his indignation should give a double edge to his eloquence. I know by experience that that sort of genius which is so averse to a vehement and painful premeditation, if it does not operate briskly and freely, performs nothing to the purpose. We say of some works, that they stink of oil and the lamp, by reason of a certain harshness and roughness from the labour with which they were composed. But, besides this, the solicitude of performing well, and the struggle of the mind too far strained, and too intent upon its undertaking, break the chain of thought, and hinder its progress, as is the case with water, which, being pressed by its force and quantity, hardly passes out of the neck of a full bottle when just opened. In that sort of genius of which I have been speaking there is this also, that it does not like to be disordered and stimulated with such strong passions as the wrath of Cassius (for such an impulse would be too rough) : it likes not to be shocked, but solicited, and had rather be warmed and roused by sudden and accidental occasions that are foreign to the point. If it be left to itself, it only flags and languishes ; agitation gives it grace and vigour. I do not like to be master of myself, and am more under the dominion of chance. Occasion, company, and even the rising and falling of my voice, extract more from my imagination than I can find in it when I sound it and speculate by myself. Consequently, I speak better than I write, if either was to be preferred where neither is worth anything. This also befalls me, that I am absent from myself, and that chance brings me to myself more than any inspection into my own

judgment. I shall throw out a witticism when I write which I may think very fine and delicate, others dull and lifeless ; but, to speak freely, everyone talks thus of himself according to his talent. For my part, I am so bewildered that I know not what I was about to say, and a stranger finds it out before me. Were I to make a rasure as oft as this befalls me, I should have nothing at all to say ; but chance will at another time show it to me as plain as the sun at noon-day, and make me wonder how I came to hesitate.





OF PROGNOSTICATIONS.

AS for Oracles, it is certain that they began to lose their credit long before the birth of Jesus Christ, for we read that Cicero was at a loss to know the reason of it, by his saying, “How comes it to pass that the oracles at Delphi are not only now silent, but have been so for a good while, insomuch that nothing is more despised?”* But as to the other prognostics that were derived from the anatomy of the beasts at the sacrifices, to which Plato, in some measure, ascribes the natural constitution of the intestines of these beasts; as to the clattering motion of chickens with their feet, the flying of birds (*Aves quasdam...rerum augurandarum causâ natas esse putamus*,† *i.e.*, We think some sort of birds be created purposely for the sake of augury); claps of thunder, the winding of rivers (*Multa cernunt aruspices; multa augures provident*, etc.‡—“Soothsayers and augurs conjecture and foresee many things, and many things are foretold in oracles, divination, dreams, and prodigies”); and as to other of the like nature, upon which the ancients grounded most of their undertakings, whether

* Cic. de Divinatione, ii, 52. † Cic. de Nat. Deorum, ii, 64.

‡ Cic. de Nat. Deorum, iii, 65.

public or private, our religion has totally abolished them. And although there yet remain among us some methods of divination from the stars, from spirits, the forms of human bodies, from dreams and the like: a notable instance of the wild curiosity of our nature in amusing itself to anticipate futurity, as if it had not enough to do to digest the things present.

“Why pleased it Thee, Thou ruler of the spheres,
To add this care to mortals' care-clog'd minde,
That they their miserie know ere it appears?
Let thy drifts sudden come; let men be blinde
T'wards future fate: oh, let him hope that feares.”*

Ne utile quidem est scire quid futurum sit; miserum est enim, nihil proficientem angere.† “It is of no avail to know what is to come to pass; and it is a miserable thing to be tormented for nothing.” Yet divination is of much less authority in our days. And this is why that of Francis, Marquis de Saluzzo, is a very notable instance, who, being a lieutenant-general in the army of King Francis, beyond the mountains, a prodigious favourite at our court, and obliged to the king for the said marquisate, which his brother had forfeited, and who withal had no occasion to change his party, his own affection opposing any such step, suffered himself to be so terrified (as it was confidently affirmed) with the favourable prognostications that were universally spread abroad to the advantage of the Emperor Charles V, and to

* Lucan, ii, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15. *Liceat sperare timenti.* This fine translation is from the Montaigne of the ‘still-resolute John Florio’; a translation read by Shakspeare, but to which Hazlitt has done scant justice.

† Cic. de Nat. Deorum, iii, 6.

our disadvantage (even in Italy, where these idle prophecies had gained such credit, that at Rome a great sum of money was staked on the supposition of our ruin), that having often condoled with his particular friends for the misfortunes which he saw must unavoidably fall upon the crown of France, and the friends he had there, he revolted in 1536, and changed sides ; but to his great loss, however, whatsoever constellation presided at that time. For he behaved in this affair like a man agitated with divers passions ; and having both towns and forces at his command, the enemy's army under Antonio de Leva close by him, and we having no manner of suspicion whatever of him, it was in his power to have done worse than he did ; for we did not lose a man by his treachery, nor a single town but Fossan, nor even that till after long dispute.

“ The God of Wisdom has in shades of night
 Future events conceal'd from human sight,
 And smiles with pity at the mortal race
 Trembling for what may never come to pass.

He's master of himself alone,
 He lives that makes each day his own ;
 His life is happy who can say,
 When night comes I've liv'd well to-day,
 And for to-morrow takes no care,
 Whether the day prove foul or fair.

The man that's cheerful in his present state
 Is never anxious for his future fate.”*

And they who put a contrary sense on this passage are in the wrong. Much more wisely said Pacuvius,

“ Nam istis qui linguam avium intelligunt,” etc.

“ As for such who understand the language of birds, and

* From Hor., Ode xxix, lib. iii, and Ode xvi, lib. ii.

know more by the liver of an animal than by their own reason, I think it is better to give them a hearing than credit.”*

The so much celebrated art of divination among the Tuscans had its rise thus : a ploughman forcing his share deep into the earth, turned up the demi-god Tages,† who had the visage of a child, but the wisdom of an old man. Everybody flocked to him ; and his sayings and his system, containing the principles of this art, and the means of attaining to it, were compiled and preserved for many ages. As its rise was, so was its progress. I should choose rather to regulate my affairs by the turn of a die than by such dreams ; and, indeed, in all republics, a good share of authority has ever been left to chance. Plato, in that system of government which he has formed out of his own head, ascribes the decision of several important things to chance, and, amongst the rest, would have marriages of the better‡ sort of people be appointed by lot ; and to such choice by chance he gives so great a sanction as to order the children born of such marriage to be brought up in the country, and that those of mean parentage should be turned out of it. Nevertheless, that if anyone so banished should, as it grew up, happen to give any hopes of being eminently good, it might be recalled ; and those that were kept at home, who gave little expectation of their youth, were as liable to be banished. I see some that study, pore, and comment on their almanacs, producing their authority for occurrences, who after all must needs stumble upon some truth in a number of lies : *quis est enim qui totum diem jaculans non*

* Pacuvius apud Cic. de Divinatione, i, 57.

† Cic. de Divinatione, ii, 23.

‡ In his Republic, lib. v.

*aliquando collinet?** i.e., Who is there that shoots at a mark all day will not hit it sometimes? I do not think the better of them for some accidental hits. There would be more certainty in it, if it was settled as a rule of truth always to lie. Besides, nobody keeps a register of their mis-reckonings, because they are common and endless; but, if they once guess right, their divinations are cried up as rare, incredible, and prodigious. Diagoras, surnamed the Atheist, being in the temple of Samothrace, where he saw the many vows and pictures of those that had escaped shipwreck, the person who showed them said to him, "You who think that the gods have no concern for human things, what say you of so many persons saved by their favour?" "So it was," replied Diagoras; "but here are not the pictures of those that were drowned, who were much the greater number." Cicero observes,† that of all the philosophers who acknowledged any deities, Xenophanes of Colophon is the only one that endeavoured to eradicate all manner of divination. And it is not so much to be wondered, if we have seen some of our princes, to their own cost, influenced by these chimeras.‡ I wish I had with my own eyes seen those two wonderful books, viz., that of Joachim the Calabrian abbot, which foretold all the future popes, their names and shapes; and that of the Emperor Leo, which prophesied of the emperors and patriarchs of Greece. This I have been an eye-witness of—that in public confusions, men, astonished at their fortunes, have abandoned their reason almost totally to superstition, by looking up to the starry heaven for the ancient causes and

* Cic. de Divinatione, ii, 59. † Cic. de Nat. Deorum, i, 37.

‡ Cic. de Divin., i, 3.

menaces of their misfortune, and have therein been so surprisingly successful in my time, as to make me believe that this study, being an amusement for men of penetration and leisure, those who are inclined to this subtlety of explaining and unriddling mysteries would be capable of finding out what they want to know in all writings whatsoever. But, above all, that which gives them the greatest scope is, the obscure, ambiguous, and fantastic part of their prophetic jargon, to which their authors give no clear interpretation, to the end that posterity may make what application of it they please.*

The Dæmon of Socrates was, perhaps, a certain *Montaigne's* impulse of the will, which obtruded itself on him, *opinion of* without consulting his own judgment. For in a *Socrates'* soul so refined as his was, and prepared by the *Dæmon.* constant exercise of wisdom and virtue, it is probable that these inclinations of his, though rash and indigested, were always important, and worthy to be followed. Every one finds in himself some image of such agitations of a prompt, vehement, and fortuitous opinion. It is my duty to allow them some authority who attribute so little to our prudence. And I myself have had some agitations, weak in reason, but violent in persuasion or in dissuasion (which was the common case with Socrates), by which I have suffered myself to be carried away so much to my own advantage, that they might well be supposed to have something in them of divine inspiration.

* The whole of this admirable essay is as applicable to-day as it was to the time in which it was written.



OF CONSTANCY.



*In what
constancy
and resolu-
tion consist.*

BY resolution and constancy it is not implied that we ought not, as much as in us lies, to secure ourselves from the mischiefs and inconveniences that threaten us; nor, consequently, that we should not be afraid of being surprised by them; on the contrary, all honest means of preserving ourselves from harms are not only allowed of, but commendable.* And the business of constancy chiefly is, to suffer without flinching those inconveniences against which there is no remedy. At the same time, there is no motion of the body, nor any guard in the handling of arms, that we disapprove of, if it serves to defend us from the stroke that is aimed at us. Several very warlike nations have, in their battles, found their chief advantage in a retreat, and done the enemy more mischief by turning their backs to them than their faces; of which way of fighting the Turks retain something to this day. Socrates, in Plato, rallies Laches, who had defined fortitude to be nothing more

* Contrariwise, all honest means for a man to warrante himselfe from evils are not onely tolerable but commendable.—*Florid's translation*, 3rd ed., 1632.

nor less than standing firm in rank to face the enemy. "What," said he, "would it be cowardice to beat them by giving ground?" At the same time, he quoted Homer to him, where he commends Æneas for his skill in retreating. And because Laches, upon fresh consideration, owned this was the practice of the Scythians, and in general of all cavalry, he urged another proof from the instance of the infantry of the Lacedæmonians (a nation of all others the most obstinate in maintaining their ground), who, in the battle of Platea, not being able to break into the Persian phalanx, thought fit to fall back, that the enemy, supposing them flying, might break and disunite their firm body in the pursuit, by which means the Lacedæmonians obtained the victory. As for the Scythians, it is said of them, that when Darius set out on his expedition to subdue them, he sent to reproach their king with cowardice, for always retiring before him, and declining a battle; to which Indathyrse (for that was his name) made answer, "That he did so not for fear of him, or of any man living, but that it was the way of marching in his country, where there was neither tilled fields, nor town nor house to defend, or to fear the enemy could make any advantage of; but that if he had such a voracious appetite, let him only come and view their ancient place of sepulture, and there he should have his bellyful."*

Nevertheless, as a cannonade which is directed straight at you, it is shameful to quit a post to avoid the threatened blow, forasmuch as, by reason of the violence and velocity of the shot, we account it inevitable; and many an one, by

* Herodotus, iv, 127.

ducking the head or shaking the hand, has furnished matter for his comrades to laugh at. And yet, in the expedition which the Emperor Charles V made against us in Provence, the Marquis de Guasto going to reconnoitre the city of Arles, and venturing to advance out of the shelter of a windmill, by the favour of which he made his approach so near the town as he had done, he was spied by the Seigneurs de Bonneval and the Seneschal d'Aginois, as they were walking on the Théâtre des Arènes, who, having showed him to Monsieur de Villiers, commissary of the artillery, he levelled a culverin at him so exactly right, that had not the marquis, upon seeing fire given to it, instantly popped to one side, it was taken for granted he would have been shot in the body. And, in like manner, some years before this, Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Urbino, father to the queen-mother of France, laying siege to Mondolpho, in those parts called the Vicariat of Italy, seeing the gunner give fire to a piece that pointed directly at him, was so fortunate as to duck down that moment, or otherwise the ball, that only grazed the top of his head, would doubtless have hit him on the breast. To speak truth, I do not think that these dodgings are a matter of judgment; for how is any man living able to judge of high or low aim on so sudden an occasion? And it is much more natural to think that fortune favoured their fear, and that the same motion, at another time, might as well put a person into danger as free him from it. For my own part, I cannot forbear starting when the noise of a gun thunders in my ears on a sudden, and in a place where I have no reason to expect it, which I have also observed in other men of stouter hearts than mine. Neither do the Stoics mean that the soul of their

philosopher should be proof against the first surprise, by visions and fancies ; and they think that it is but natural for him to be shocked by the terrible rattle of thunder, or the fall of some ruin, for instance, even so as to turn pale, or be convulsed (as well as in the other passions). And this the Stoics, I say, dispense with in their wise man, provided his judgment remains sound and entire, and that the seat of his reason suffers no concussion nor alteration whatsoever, and that he yields no consent to his fright and disturbance. A fright is the same thing to him who is not a philosopher in the first part of it, but it is quite another case with him in the second ; for, in such a one, the impression of the passions does not remain superficial only, but penetrates even to the seat of his reason, so as to infect and corrupt it. According to his passions he judges and conforms his conduct. But in this verse you may see the state of the wise Stoic elegantly and plainly expressed :

“ Mens immota manet ; lacrymæ voluntur inanes.” *

“ Firm stands the mind, though useless tears are shed.”

The peripatetic philosopher is not exempt from the perturbations of the mind, but he keeps them within bounds.

* Virg. Æn. iv, 449.





OF THE CEREMONY AT THE INTERVIEW OF PRINCES.

THERE is no subject so frivolous that does not merit a place in this rhapsody. According to our common rules of civility, it would be unpolite behaviour to an equal, and much more to a superior, to fail of being at home when he has given you notice that he will come to pay you a visit. Nay, Queen Margaret of Navarre carried the point further, by saying, that it is uncivil in a gentleman to go out of his house, as is a common practice, to meet any one coming to see him, be he ever so great a man; and that it is more respectful and civil to stay at home to receive him, were it only for fear of missing him by the way; and that it is enough to accompany him to his apartment. For my part, who am for as little ceremony as possible, in my own house, I often forget both these vain offices. If any one be offended, what would you have me do? It is better to offend him once than myself every day; for it would be a perpetual slavery. To what end do we avoid the servile attendance of courts, if we bring the same home to our own cottages? It is also a common rule in all assemblies, that those of less quality

*Respect
paid to a
great man.*

should be the first at the place of assignation, because to be waited on is an honour to which those of the greatest distinction have the best title.

Nevertheless, at the interview betwixt Pope Clement VII and King Francis, at Marseilles, in 1533, the king, after he had given order for the necessary preparations, went out of town, and gave the pope two or three days respite for his entry and refreshment, before he came to him. And in like manner also, at the interview betwixt the same pope and the Emperor Charles V at Bologna, the latter end of the year 1532, the emperor gave leave to the pope to be there first, and then went thither himself. It is, they say, a common ceremony at the conferences of such princes, that the greatest should be at the place appointed before the others—nay, before him in whose territories they are to meet; and the reason is, because it should seem proper for the inferiors to seek out and apply to the greater, and not he to them.

Not every country only, but every city, and even every profession has a particular form of civility. I was carefully enough educated when a child, and have lived in too good company to be ignorant of the ceremonial laws of our French nation, and am able to train up others in the same knowledge. I love also to follow them, but not so servilely as to be enslaved to them all my life-time. They have some painful formalities, the omission of which, provided it be discretional, and not through mistake, is no breach of decorum. I have often seen people rude by being over civil, and troublesome in their courtesy.

As for the rest, to know how to behave well is a very useful

The advantages of civility.

science. Like gracefulness and beauty, it creates a liking at the very beginning of an acquaintance and familiarity, and, by consequence, opens a door for our instruction by the example of others, and for displaying and producing ourselves for a model, if it has anything in it that is instructive, and fit to be communicated.





O F F E A R.

“Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.”*



AM not a good naturalist (as they call it), and scarce know by what springs fear operates in us ; but this I know, that it is a strange passion, and the physicians say that there is not one of all the passions that sooner dethrones our judgment from its natural seat. Verily, I have seen a great many people whom fear has made frantic, and it is certain that in persons the most composed it creates terrible confusion while the fit is upon them. I omit the vulgar sort of people, to whom it one while represents their great grand-sires risen out of their graves, another while hobgoblins, spectres, and chimeras ; but even amongst the soldiers, who ought to be possessed with the least share of it, how often have they mistaken a flock of harmless sheep for armed squadrons, reeds and bulrushes for pikes and lances, friends for enemies, and the white cross of France for the red one of Spain? In 1527, when the Duke of Bourbon took Rome, an ensign, who was upon guard at the Bourg St. Pierre, was so frightened at the very first alarm, that he threw himself out of the breach with the colours in his hand, and ran directly

Strange effects of fear.

* Æneid, ii, 774. “Amazed, my hair stood up, my voice was dumb.”

from the town upon the enemy, thinking all the while that he was retreating towards the inner defences of the city, till at last, seeing the Duke of Bourbon's men draw up to face the besieged, who they thought were making a sally, he with much ado found his mistake, and then, turning about, he retreated through the same breach through which he came out, but not till he had advanced above a quarter of a mile into the field against the besiegers. It did not fall out quite so happily for Captain Julius's ensign, when St. Pol was taken from us by the Count de Bures and M. du Reu, for he, being so very much scared as to throw himself out of the town, colours and all, through a port-hole, he was cut to pieces by the besiegers.

The opposite effects produced by fear. The like passion does sometimes operate upon a multitude altogether. In one of Germanicus's encounters with the Germans, two great parties were so scared that they fled two different ways, each running to the place from which the other set out. Sometimes it adds wings to the heels, as it did to the two first, and sometimes nails the feet to the ground, and fetters them; as we read of the Emperor Theophilus,* who, in a battle wherein he was defeated by the Agaranes, was so astonished and stupefied, that he had no power to fly, so much does fear dread even the means of safety, till such time as Manuel, one of the chief generals of his army, having jogged and shook him so as to rouse him out of his trance, said to him, "Sir, if you will not follow me, I will kill you; for it is better that you should lose your life, than by being taken prisoner to lose your empire."

* Quintus Curtius, iii, 11.

Fear, then, expresses its utmost force, when, after it has deprived us of all sense, both of duty and honour, it makes us act like desperadoes. In the first fair battle which the Romans lost against Hannibal, in the consulship of Sempronius,* a body of at least ten thousand foot, which had taken fright, seeing no other escape for their cowardice, forced their way through the bulk of the enemy's army, which they penetrated with prodigious fury, and made a great slaughter of the Carthaginians, by that means purchasing an ignominious flight as dearly as they might have done a glorious victory.

The thing I am most afraid of is fear, because it is a passion which supersedes and suspends all others. What affliction could be greater and more just than that of Pompey's friends, who in his ship were spectators of that horrid massacre? Yet so it was, that the fear of the Egyptian vessels,† which they saw approaching to them, stifled that passion to such a degree, that it is observed they did nothing but press the rowers to make haste away, for fear of being surrounded by the enemy, till they arrived at Tyre, and that there, being delivered from their apprehension, they had leisure to turn their thoughts again to the loss they had so lately sustained, and to give such vent to those lamentations and tears which this other more prevalent passion had suspended.

“My mind, which fear had then oppress'd,
Was of all judgment disposess'd.”‡

* Liv., xxi, 56.

† Cic., Tusc. Quæst., iii, 26.

‡ Ibid., iv, 8.

Such as have been soundly thrashed in some skirmish * may yet, all bruised and bloody as they are, be brought on again next day to the charge ; but those who have once conceived a dread of the enemy will never be brought so much as to look him in the face. They who are in fear every day of losing their estate, of banishment, or of being made slaves, live in perpetual anguish, without appetite or rest ; whereas such as are naturally poor slaves and exiles often live as merrily as those in better condition. And so many people who, not being able to bear the terrors of fear, have hanged, drowned, and thrown themselves from precipices, have convinced us that fear is even more insupportable than death.

Panic The Greeks acknowledge another kind of fear, *fears.* which is not caused by an error of our judgment, proceeding, say they, from no visible cause, but by an impulse from heaven ; so that whole armies and nations have been struck with it. Such was that which brought so wonderful a desolation upon Carthage, where nothing was to be heard but outcries and shrieks ; the inhabitants ran out of their houses as if they were ready to fall on their heads, and they attacked, wounded, and killed one another, as if they had been so many enemies come to take their city.† They were all, in short, in the strangest disorder and distraction, till, by prayer and sacrifices, they had appeased the anger of the gods. This is what they call panic terrors.‡

* Florio says, "Those who in any bickering of warre have been thoroughly skared," using a word which, as "skeared," our American cousins claim as their own.

† Diod. Sic., xv, 7.

‡ Plutarch, in his Treatise of Isis and Osiris, c. 8.



WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE OF MAN'S HAPPINESS BEFORE HIS DEATH.

“Each day may be of man the latest day ;
Nor till he's dead ‘He's happy’ can we say.”*



HERE is scarce a boy at school but knows the story of King Cræsus to this purpose, who, being taken prisoner by Cyrus, and condemned to suffer death, cried out, a little before his death, “O

*No man's
happiness
to be judged
till death.*

Solon, Solon!”† which being reported to Cyrus, and he inquiring what it meant, Cræsus gave him to understand that he now was convinced to his cost of the truth of that warning which was formerly given him by Solon, to call no man happy, how much soever fortune smiled upon him, till he had passed over the last day of his life, by reason of the uncertainty and vicissitude of human affairs, which are apt to change in a trice from one condition to another that is quite the reverse to it ; and therefore it was that Agesilaus said, in answer to one who pronounced the King of Persia a happy man for coming very young to such a height of power, “It is true ; but neither was Priam at such an age unhappy.”‡ We have known some of the kings of Macedon, successors of Alexander the

* Ovid, *Metam.*, iii, 2, 5.

† Herodot., i, 86.

‡ Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

Great, who were reduced to be joiners and carpenters at Rome; tyrants of Sicily to be schoolmasters at Corinth; a conqueror of one half of the world, and general of many armies, a miserable suppliant to the beggarly officers of a king of Egypt—so dear did the great Pompey pay for a reprieve of five or six months from death; and in the time of our fathers, that Ludovico Sforza, the tenth Duke of Milan, who had so long made all Italy tremble, died in prison at Loches,* and, what was worse for him, he had suffered imprisonment ten years. That most beautiful queen,† the widow of the greatest king in Christendom, did not she die by the hand of an executioner? Base and barbarous cruelty! And to this might be added a thousand more instances of the same kind; for, as storms and tempests are provoked at the pride and loftiness of our structures, it would seem that there are spirits above which envy the grandeur of this lower world.

“And hence we fancy Unseen Powers in things
Whose force and will such strange confusion brings,
And spurn and overthrow our greatest kings.”‡

And it would seem also as if Fortune sometimes lies in wait to surprise the last day of our lives, to show the power she has in one moment to overthrow what she was so many years erecting, and make us cry out with Laberius,

—————“Nimirum hac die

Unâ plus vixi mihi, quam vivendum fuit!”§

“I have therefore lived one day too long.” And in this sense it were reasonable to attend to the good advice of Solon; but he

* In the reign of Louis XII, who confined him there, A. D. 1500.

† Mary, Queen of Scotland, and mother of James I, King of England. This is not in the quarto edition of 1588.

‡ Lucr., v, 1231.

§ Macrobius, ii, 7.

being a philosopher, with which sort of men the favours and frowns of fortune stand for nothing, either to the making a man happy or unhappy, and with whom grandeur and power, accidents of quality, are in a manner quite indifferent,—I am apt to think that he had some further aim, and meant that the very felicity of our lives, which depends on the tranquillity and satisfaction of a generous mind, and on the resolution and stability of a well-composed soul, ought never to be pronounced as the enjoyment of any man till he has been seen to play the last, and doubtless the hardest act of his part. In all the rest there may have been some disguise. Either these fine lessons of philosophy are only to keep us in countenance, or accidents, not touching us to the quick, give us leisure always to keep up the same gravity ; but in this last scene betwixt death and us there is no more playing the counterfeit : we must speak plain, and if there be any purity and simplicity at the bottom, it must be discovered.

“*Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Ejiciuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.*”*

“The mask is pulled off, the bare thing remains.”

Therefore this last act ought to be the criterion or touchstone by which all the other actions of our life ought to be tried and sifted. It is the grand day—it is the day that is judge of all the rest. “It is the day,” says one of the ancients, “by which all my years past are to be judged.” To death do I submit the trial of the fruit of my studies. It will then appear whether my discourses came only from my mouth or from my heart. I have known many who by their death

* Lucret., iii, 57, 58.

have given a good or a bad reputation to their whole lives. Scipio, the father-in-law of Pompey, by dying well, expunged the ill opinion which had till then been conceived of him. Epaminondas being interrogated which of the three men he had in greatest esteem, Chabrias, Iphicrates, or himself, "We must all die," said he, "before that question can be resolved."* It would really be doing vast injustice to that personage to scan him without considering how great and honourable was his end. The Almighty has ordered everything as it best pleased him; but, in my time, three of the most execrable persons that ever I knew, most abominably vicious, and the most infamous to boot, died regular deaths, and in all circumstances composed, even to perfection. There are some deaths that are grave and happy. I have seen the thread of a person's life cut in his progress to wonderful advancement, and in the prime of his years,† who made so glorious an exit that, in my opinion, his ambitious and courageous projects had nothing so sublime in them as the manner in which he bore their interruption; and he arrived, without completing his course, at the place he proposed, with more grandeur and glory than he could desire or hope for; anticipating by his fall the fame and power to which he aspired in his career. In the judgment I form of another man's life, I always observe how he behaves at the end of it; and the chief study of my own is, that my latter end may be decent, calm, and silent.

* Plutarch, Apothegms.

† It is very probable that Montaigne here speaks of his friend Boetius, at whose death he was present.



PHILOSOPHY TEACHES US HOW TO DIE.



ICERO says that the study of philosophy is nothing more or less than a man's preparation for his death. The reason of which is, because study and contemplation do in some sort withdraw and employ the soul apart from the body, which is a kind of discipline for death, and a resemblance of it; or else because all the wisdom and reasoning in the world terminates at last in this point, to teach us not to fear to die. And, to say the truth, either our reason abuses us, or it ought to have no other aim but our satisfaction, and no other exercise, in short, but to make us live well, and, as the Holy Scriptures say,* at our ease. The opinions of all mankind agree in this, that pleasure is our end, though men use divers means to attain to it, otherwise they would be rejected as soon as started; for who would give ear to a man that should establish our affliction and misery for his end? The disputes of the philosophic sects on this point are merely verbal: *Transcurramus sœler-*

* Ecclesiastes, iii. 12. "I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life."

tissimas nugas,* Let us skip over those learned trifles, in which there is more obstinacy and quibbling than is consistent with so sacred a profession; for what character soever a man undertakes to personate, he ever mixes his own part with it.

*Pleasure
the aim
and fruit
of virtue.* Let all the philosophers say what they will, the mark at which we all aim, even in virtue itself, is pleasure. I love to rattle the word in their ears, because it is so very grating to them, and if it denotes any supreme delight, or excessive satisfaction, it is more owing to the assistance of virtue than to any other aid. This pleasure, for being more gay, nervous, robust, and manly, is only the more seriously voluptuous, and we ought to give it the name of pleasure, as that which is more favourable, gentle, and natural—not that vigour from which we have denominated it. The other more sordid pleasure, if it deserved so fair a name, it ought to be upon account of concurrence, not by privilege,—I do not think it less free from inconveniences and crosses than virtue. Besides that the enjoyment of it is more momentary, flashy, and frail, it has its watchings, fastings, and labours, and, moreover, has so many several sorts of wounding passions in particular, and so stupid a satiety attending it, that it is as bad as doing penance. We are very much mistaken to suppose that its inconveniences serve as a spur to it, and as a seasoning for its sweetness, as we see in nature that one contrary is quickened by another; and to say, when we come to virtue, that the like consequences and difficulties overwhelm it, and render it austere and inaccessible; whereas, much more

* Seneca, Epist. 117.

aply than in luxury, they ennoble, sharpen, and heighten the divine and perfect pleasure which virtue procures us. He is certainly very unworthy of being acquainted with it who weighs the expense against the profit of it, and knows not the charms of it, nor how to use it. They who preach to us that the pursuit of it is rugged and painful, but the fruition of it pleasant, what do they mean by it but that it is always disagreeable? For what human means ever arrived to the attainment of it? The most perfect have been forced to content themselves with aspiring to it, and to approach it without possessing it. Of all the pleasures which we know, the very pursuit of them is pleasant. The attempt savours of the quality of the thing which it has in view; for it is a good part of and consubstantial with the effect. The felicity and rectitude which shine in virtue fill up all its apartments and avenues, even from its first entrance to its utmost limits.

One of the chief benefits of virtue is the contempt of death—an advantage which accommodates human life with a soft and easy tranquillity, and gives us a pure and amiable taste of it, without which every other pleasure is extinct; which is the reason why all the rules of philosophy centre and concur in this one article. And though they all unanimously teach us in like manner to despise sorrow, poverty, and other accidents to which the life of man is subject, yet they are not so solicitous about them, not only because these accidents do not so necessarily require it, many men passing their whole lives without feeling poverty, sickness, or sorrow, as Xenophilus, the musician, who lived to the age of a hundred and six in

*Contempt
of death one
of the chief
benefits of
virtue.*

perfect health;* but also because, at the worst, death can, whenever he please, cut short and put an end to all other inconveniences. But as to death, it is inevitable: *Omnes eodem cogimur*, etc.†

“To the same fate we must all yield by turn;
Sooner or later, all must to the urn.”

By consequence, if it fright us, it is a continual torment, of which there can be no mitigation, and there is no way by which we can possibly avoid it. We may incessantly turn our heads this way and that way, as if we were in a suspicious country: *quæ quasi saxum Tantalò, semper impendet*‡—i.e., like the rock of Tantalus, it always hangs over our head ready to fall. Our courts of justice often send condemned criminals to be executed at the place where the fact was committed; and carrying them by all the fine houses by the way, to give them as good cheer as you please.

—————“Non Siculæ dapes
Dulcem elaborabunt saporem:
Non avium citharæque cantus
Somnum reducent.”§

“Yet the best Sicilian dainties would not please them, nor the sweetest songs of birds lull them to sleep.” Do you think it would make them merry, and that the fatal end of their journey being continually before their eyes would not deprave their tastes, so as to have no relish for any of these delicacies? *Audit iter, numeratque dies, spatiosoque viarum*, etc.||

* *Omnis humani incommodi expertus*, etc., says Valerius Maximus—“After having lived free from every human ailment, he died in the highest reputation of being perfect master of his science.”

† Hor., ii, 3.

§ Hor., iii, 1.

‡ Cic. de Finib. i, 18.

|| Claud., in *Ruff.*, ii.

“ He measures his minutes by the length of his journey, and is ceaselessly tormented by the idea of the punishment which awaits him.”

The end of our race is death ; it is the necessary object of our view, which if it frights us, how is it possible we should advance a step without a fit of an ague? The remedy which the vulgar use is not to think of it ; but from what brutish stupidity can they be so grossly blind? They must bridle the ass by the tail : *Qui capite ipse suo instituit vestigia retro.** It is no wonder if he be often taken in the snare. Our people are frightened at the bare mention of death, and many cross themselves at it, as if it were the name of the devil. And because there is mention made of death in last wills and testaments, you are not to expect they will set their hands to them till the physician has utterly given them over ; and then, betwixt grief and fear, God only knows in what condition of mind they are to do it. The Romans, observing that this monosyllable *death* was very shocking to the people’s ears, and that they thought it an ominous sound, found out a way to soften it, and to express it periphrastically, and instead of saying in plain terms “such a one is dead,” to say “such a one has lived,” or “has ceased to live.” For if the word *life* was but mentioned, though past, yet it was some comfort. From hence we have borrowed our phrase “the late Mr. John,” etc.

I was born betwixt eleven and twelve o’clock at noon, on the last day of February, 1533, as we now compute, beginning the year with January, *Montaigne’s birth and present age.*

* Lucret., iv, 474.

and it is now just a fortnight since I was complete thirty-nine years of age. It is not certain, at least, but I may live as many more; yet not to think of a thing so remote would be folly. For why? The young and the old quit life upon the same terms, and no one departs out of it otherwise than if he had but just before entered into it; moreover, there is no man so very old who thinks of Methuselah but imagines he has still a constitution for twenty years longer. But, thou fool! who has insured, or rather assured, unto thee the term of thy life? Thou believest what the physicians say; but rather consult fact and experience. According to the common course of things, it is an extraordinary favour thou hast lived so long. Thou hast already exceeded the ordinary term of life; and that thou mayst be convinced of this, do but call to mind thy acquaintance, and reckon up how many more have died before they arrived at thy age than ever attained to it. Do but make a register of such, even whose lives have been distinguished with fame, and I will lay a wager that more have died under thirty-five years of age than above it. It is highly rational, and pious too, to take example by the human existence of Jesus Christ himself, who ended his life at thirty-three years of age. The greatest man, too, that ever was, of mere mortals, viz., Alexander, died also at the same age. How many ways has death to surprise us?

“*Quid quisque videt, nunquam homini satis
Cautum est in horas.*”*

“No man is ever assured against the accidents which

* Hor., ii, 13.

may occur to him at any hour." To omit fevers and pleurisies, who would ever have imagined that a Duke of Brittany should be pressed to death in a crowd, as one was in 1305, in the reign of Philip the Fair, at Pope Clement's entry into Lyons? Have we not seen one of our kings* killed at his diversion, and one of his ancestors die by being pushed down by a hog?† *Æschylus* being threatened by the fall of a house, ran out of it into the fields, where he was knocked on the head by a shell-fish which an eagle dropped from its talons.‡ Another, *Anacreon*, was choked with a grape-stone.§ An emperor died by the scratch of a comb in combing his head.|| *Æmilius Lepidus* lost his life by a stumble at his own threshold ; and *Aufidius* lost his life by a jostle against the door as he entered the council chamber.¶ *Cornelius Gallus*, the prætor ; *Tigilinus*, captain of the watch at Rome ; *Ludovico*, son of *Guido de Gonzagua*, Marquis of Mantua, also died very unexpectedly. And a worse instance of any was *Speusippus*,** a Platonic philosopher, and one of our popes. The poor judge *Bebius*, during the reprieve of eight days which he gave to a criminal, was himself seized, and lost his life.†† Whilst *Caius Julius*, the physician, was anointing the eye of his patient, death closed his own.‡‡ And, to come nearer home, a brother of mine,

* Henry II of France, mortally wounded in a tournament by the Count de Montgomery.

† Philip, or, as some say, Louis VII, son of Louis le Gros, who was crowned in the life-time of his father.

‡ Valerius Maximus, ix, 12.

§ Plin., Nat. Hist., vii, 53.

|| Ibid., sect. 8.

¶ Ibid. These instances are all taken from Pliny.

** Tertullian. *Audio, Apolog.*, 46.

†† Plin., Nat. Hist., vii, 53.

‡‡ Ibid.

Captain St. Martin, who had already given sufficient proofs of his valour, though but three-and-twenty years of age, playing at tennis, received a blow from the ball just above his right ear, which made no scar nor contusion, so that he did not so much as sit down or rest himself upon it, yet in five or six hours after he died of an apoplexy occasioned by that stroke. These examples being, as we see, so frequent and common, how is it possible that a man can disengage himself from the thoughts of death, or avoid fancying that it is ready every moment to take us by the collar? What does it signify, you will say, which way it comes to pass, provided a man does not torment himself with the apprehension of it? I am of this opinion, that if a man could by any means screen himself from it he would, though it were by a calf's skin. I am not the man that would flinch, for all I desire is to be composed, and the best recreation that I can give myself I take hold of, be it as inglorious and unfashionable as you please.

“Prætulerim . . . delirus inersque videri,
 Dum mea delectent mala me, vel denique fallant,
 Quam sapere, et ringi.”*

“Let me pass for a fool or a sluggard, so long as I am pleased with my faults, rather than be wise and eaten up with melancholy.” But it is a folly to think of carrying the point by that means; people go and come, they gad abroad, and dance, and not a word of death. All this is fine; but when it comes, either to themselves, wives, children, and friends, surprising them unawares, in disorder and exposed, what torments do

* Hor., ii, 2.

they feel, what outcries do they make, what madness and despair possess them ! Did you ever see any people so dejected, so changed, and so confounded ? There is an absolute necessity, therefore, of making more early preparation for it. And we should pay too dear for such a beastly neglect of it, could any man be supposed so void of sense as to be guilty of it, which I think utterly impossible. Were it an enemy that a man could escape from, I would advise him to borrow arms even of cowardice to do so ; but, seeing that it is not to be avoided, and that it catches the runaway and the coward, as well as the gallant man—

“ No speed of foot can rob Death of his prize :
 He cuts the hamstrings of the man that flies ;
 Nor spares the timid stripling’s back, who starts
 To run beyond the reach of all his darts ;”*

forasmuch, also, as there is no armour proof enough to secure us—

“ Ille licet ferro, cautus se condat et ære,
 Mors tamen inclusum protrahet inde caput ;”†

“ A cautious man may well arm himself with steel and brass, but Death will pull his head out of his helmet ;”—let us learn bravely to stand our ground and fight it. And that we may, in the first place, deprive it of the greatest advantage it has over us, let us take a course quite contrary to the common way. Let us disarm it of its strangeness ; let us converse and be familiar with it, and have nothing so frequent in our thoughts as death ; let us at every turn represent it to our imagination, and view it in all aspects. At the stumbling of a horse, at the fall of a tile upon our heads, or the least prick

* Hor., iii, 2.

† Propert., iii, 13.

of a pin, let us make this reflection at the very instant, "Well, and what if it had been death itself?" And thereupon let us harden and fortify ourselves. Amidst all our feasting and jollity, let us evermore curb ourselves with the remembrance of our condition, and not suffer ourselves to be so far transported with pleasure as to forget how many ways this merriment of ours exposes us to death, and with how many dangers it threatens us. This was the practice of the Egyptians, who, in the height of their feasting and carousals, caused the dried skeleton of a man to be brought into the room, to serve for a memento to their guests.*

"Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum :
Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur, hora."†

"Think every day shines on thee as thy last ;
Welcome the day whereof the hope was past."‡

Where death waits for us is uncertain ; therefore let us look for it everywhere. The premeditation of death is the premeditation of liberty. He who has learnt to die has forgot what it is to be a slave. There is no such thing as evil in life to him who rightly comprehends that the being deprived of life is not an evil. The knowing how to die frees us from all subjection and constraint. When the unhappy king of Macedon, who was Paulus Æmilius's prisoner, sent to entreat him that he would not lead him in triumph, the latter made answer, "that truly is in your own power."§ In truth, if nature does not lend a little assistance in all things,

* Herodot., ii.

† Hor., i, 4.

‡ I have altered this vigorous rendering in one word only from Florio. Instead of two lines, Cotton and Hazlitt give us four, weak and meaningless. § Plutarch, Æmil. ; Cic., Tusc. Quæst., v, 40.

it will be difficult for art and industry to make any progress. I am myself not melancholy, but thoughtful; and there is nothing which I have more frequently entertained myself with than the ideas of death, yea, in the gayest and most wanton season of my life. *Jucundum quum ætas florida ver ageret.**

In the company of ladies, and in the height of play, some have, perhaps, thought me brooding upon jealousy, or on the uncertainty of some hope, while I was entertaining myself with the remembrance of some person who was lately surprised with a fever which carried him off, after an entertainment like this, when his head was full of idle fancies, love, and jollity, as mine was then, and that therefore I had the more to answer for. *Jam fuerit, nec post unquam revocare licebit†*—"He was here a moment ago, and now can never be recalled." Yet that thought did not add a wrinkle to my forehead more than any other. It is impossible but such imaginations must at first sting us, but, by often revolving them, and making them familiar to us, they are sure at the long run to lose their sting. Otherwise, for my part, I should have been in a perpetual fright and frenzy; for never was a man so distrustful of his life, never man so indifferent about its duration. Neither the health which I have hitherto enjoyed with great vigour, and with little interruption, prolongs, nor does sickness contract, my hopes of life. Methinks I have an escape every minute, and it eternally runs in my mind, "whatever may fall out another day may as well happen to-day." Hazards and dangers do, in truth, little or

* Catullus, Epist. lxvi, 16.

† Lucret., iii.

nothing to hasten our end ; and if we consider how many more remain and hang over our heads, besides the accident that seems to threaten us immediately, we shall find that the sound and the sick, those who are at sea and those who are on land, those who are abroad in the wars and those who enjoy tranquillity at home, are the one as near death as the other. "No man is more frail than the other, nor more certain of the morrow."* For anything I have to do before I die, I should think the longest leisure short to finish it, if it took but an hour's time. A certain person, the other day, looking into my table-book, wondered to find a memorandum in it of something that I would have done after my death ; upon which I told him the real truth, that, though I was no more than a league from my house, and at that time in good health and spirits, yet when that thing came into my head I made haste to write it down there, because I was not certain to live to get home. As I am a man that am continually brooding over my own thoughts, and keep them close to myself, I am prepared at all hours for what may happen to me, and the approach of death will be no novelty to me. We should always, as far as possible, be booted and ready to depart ; and we should be careful, above all things, to have no business to do then but our own. "With so short a life, why do we form such vast projects?"† For we shall find work enough to do there without any addition. One man complains the more of death because it stops his career to a glorious victory ; another that he must be snatched away before he has married his daughter, or made a settlement on

* Seneca, Epist. 9.

† Horace, ii, 16.

his young children; a third laments that he must part from his dear wife; a fourth, that he must leave his son: as if these were the chief comforts of life. For my part, I am at this instant, thanks be to God, in such a state that I am ready to quit my being, whenever it shall please him, without any manner of regret. I am quite disengaged from the world; my leave is soon taken of all but myself. Never was any man prepared to bid adieu to the world absolutely and purely, nor did any one ever quit his hold of it more universally than I hope to do. The dearest deaths are the best.*

———“Miser! O miser! (aiunt) omnia ademit
Una dies infesta mihi tot præmia vitæ.”†

“Poor wretch! one day hath taken from me so many joys of life.” And the builder,

———“Pendent opera interrupta, minæque
Murorum ingentes, æquataque machina cælo.”‡

“The interrupted works, great walls, and sky-reaching scaffolds, alas! remain.” A man must form no design that will take so much time to finish it, or that at least he will be so passionately desirous of seeing brought to a conclusion. We are born for action. *Quum moriar, medium solvar et inter opus*§—“May death reach me in the midst of my work!” I would always have a man to be doing, and spinning out the offices of life as far as possible; and, though death should seize me planting my cabbages, I should not be concerned at it, and much less for leaving my garden unfinished.

* “Les plus mortes morts sont les plus saines.” This vivid expression was added by Montaigne to the second edition.

† Lucret., iii, 911.

‡ Æneid, iv, 88.

§ Ovid, Amor., ii, 10.

I know one who on his death-bed complained incessantly of his destiny for cutting off the thread of a chronicle he was then compiling, when he was advanced no further than the fifteenth or sixteenth of our kings.

“*Illud in his rebus non addunt, nec tibi earum
Jam desiderium rerum, super insidet una.*”*

“They do not tell us that in dying we shall not have the same desire of things as heretofore.” We are to divest ourselves of these vulgar and noxious humours. To this very purpose it was, said Lycurgus, that men appointed their burial-places near to the churches, to accustom the common people, women and children, so much to the view of the dead bodies that they might not be startled, and to the end that the continual sight of bones, graves, and funerals might put us in mind of our mortality.

“At their feasts the ancients treated their guests with mimic slaughter, and mixed their banquets with plays of gladiators. All the blood was sprinkled on their tables, their cups, and even themselves.”† And as the Egyptians, after their feasts, presented their company with a great image of death, which was brought in by one that cried out to them, “Drink and be merry, for such wilt thou be when thou art dead;” so have I made it a practice, not only to have death in my imagination, but continually in my mouth; and there is nothing of which I am so inquisitive as the manner of men’s deaths, their dying words, looks, and deportment; nor is there any passage in history that takes up so much of my attention; and it is manifest, by many instances of this kind

* Lucret., iii. 913.

† Sil. Ital., xi, 51.

which I have mentioned, that I have a particular fancy for this subject. If I was a writer of books, I would compile a register of the various deaths of people, with notes, which would be of use for instructing men both to live and die. Dicæarchus made one to which he gave that title, but it had another view, which was not so profitable.*

It will, perhaps, be objected by some, that the circumstances of dying so far exceed all manner of conception, that the best fencer will be quite out of his guard when it comes to that push. But, let them say what they will, premeditation is no doubt of great good; and, besides, is it nothing to proceed so far at least without any disturbance and tremor? But, moreover, nature itself does assist and encourage us. If the death be sudden and violent, we have no time for fear; I perceive that the longer the distemper holds me I naturally enter into a certain disgust of life. I find it much more difficult to digest this resolution of dying when I am in health than when I am sick of a fever. The less I am attached to the comforts of life, by my beginning to lose the use and pleasure of them, the aspect of death becomes the less terrible to me; which gives me hope that the farther I remove from the former, and the nearer I approach to the latter, the more easily I shall compound for the exchange. And as I have experienced in many other occurrences, that, as Cæsar says, things often appear to us greater at a distance than near at hand, I have found that when I was in health I have held diseases in much greater horror than when I have felt them. The

It is of advantage to think of death beforehand.

* Cic., Offic., ii, 5.

alacrity, pleasure, and vigour I now enjoy represent the contrary estate to me in so great a disproportion to my present condition, that in my imagination I swell these inconveniences to twice their magnitude, and think them to be more weighty than I find them to be in reality when I labour under them; and I hope to find the case to be the same with respect to death. Let us but observe, in the ordinary changes and declensions which we suffer, how nature steals from us the sight of our bodily decay. What remains to an old man of the vigour of his youth and maturer age? *Heu! senibus vitæ portio quanta manet!**—"Alas! what a little life remains to old men!" A veteran soldier of Cæsar's guards, who was quite jaded and bowed down with age, coming to ask him leave that he might despatch himself, Cæsar, observing his decrepitude, answered pleasantly, "Thou fanciest, then, that thou art still alive?"† Should a man fall into old age on a sudden, I do not think he would be capable of enduring such a change; but, being led by the hand of Nature, as it were, by a gradual and insensible descent, it moves us gently into that miserable state, and familiarises it to us, so that when youth dies in us we feel no shock, though it is in fact a harder death than the total dissolution of a languishing life, and than the death of old age; forasmuch as the leap from an uneasy existence to a non-existence is not so disagreeable as it were from a sprightly, florid state of existence to one that is full of pain and anguish. The body, when bowed and bent, has less strength to sustain a burden, and the case is the same with the soul; and therefore it is absolutely

* Maxim., Eleg. i.

† Seneca, Epist. 77. °

necessary she should be raised up firm and erect against the power of this adversary. For as it is impossible she should be in tranquillity while in fear, so if, on the other hand, she be composed, she may boast (which is a thing, as it were, above the state of mortals) that no uneasiness, torment, and terror, nor the least disgust, has any place in her.

“Non vultus instantis tyranni
 Mente quatit solidâ : neque Auster
 Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
 Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.”*

“A firm soul does not shake at the stern countenance of the present tyrant, nor can the stormy wind of the Adriatic, nay, nor the uplifted hand of the thunderer Jove, move such a one.” She is then become the mistress of her likings and passions, the mistress of distress, shame, poverty, and all the other injuries of fortune ; let us therefore, as many of us as can, gain this advantage, which is the true and sovereign liberty that enables us to defy violence and injustice, and to despise prisons and chains.

Our religion itself has no surer human founda-
 tion than the contempt of life. Not only reason *Arguments*
 prompts us to it ; for why should we fear to lose a *against the*
 thing which, being lost, cannot be regretted? but *fear of*
death.
 also, since we are threatened with death of so many various
 kinds, is it not worse to fear them all than to suffer
 one of them? And what matters it when it happens, since
 it is unavoidable? Socrates being told that the thirty tyrants
 had condemned him to die,† “And so has Nature them,”
 said he. What a folly it is for us to afflict ourselves about a

* Hor., iii, 3.

† Socrates was not condemned to death by the thirty tyrants, but by the Athenians.

passage that exempts us from all trouble? As our birth brought us the birth of all things, so when we die all things to us will be dead. Therefore to lament that we shall not be alive a hundred years hence is as absurd as to be sorry that we were not in the land of the living a hundred years ago. Death is the beginning of another life. So did we weep, and so much it cost us to enter into this, and so did we put off our former veil, when we entered into the present state. Nothing can be a grievance that is but for once; and is it reasonable to be so long in fear of a thing that is of so short a duration? A long life and a short life are by death made all one; for there is no long nor short to things that are no more. Aristotle relates* that there are certain little beasts on the banks of the river Hypanis which live but one day, and that those of them which die at eight o'clock in the morning die in their prime, and those that die at sunset are in the age of decrepitude. Who of us would not be indifferent whether happiness or misery were the lot of a momentary existence? Ours, be it more or less, if compared to eternity, or even to the duration of mountains, rivers, stars, trees, and even of some animals, is no less ridiculous.

Nay, Nature herself forces us to our dissolution; "Go out of this world," says she, "as you came into it. By the same passage that you came from death to life, without passion or fear, go back from life to death. Your death is a part of the constitution of the universe: it is a part of the life of the world.

'Mortals among themselves by turns do live,
And life's bright torch to the next runner give.'†

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., i, 39.

† Lucret., ii, 75. An allusion to the Athenian games, wherein those that ran a race carried torches, which they gave into the hands of those that were to run next.

Shall I alter this excellent system of things for you? It is the condition of your creation, death is a part of you; and, whilst you endeavour to escape it, you fly from yourselves. This very being of yours that you now enjoy is equally shared betwixt life and death. The day of your birth is one day's advance to death as well as life.* Every day you live you steal from life, and live at the expense of life itself. The perpetual work of your life is to build up death. You are in death while you live, because, when your life is ended, you succeed to death: or, if you had rather have it so, you are dead after life, but dying all the time you live, and death handles the dying much more roughly, sharply, and more feelingly than the dead. If you have made your advantage of life, you have had enough of it: go away satisfied. *Cur non ut plenus vitæ conviva recedis?*†—'Why do you not go away from life like a satisfied guest from a feast?' If you have not known how to make the best use of it, and if it was unprofitable to you, why should you be loth to part with it? To what end would you desire longer to keep it? Life, in itself, is neither a good nor an evil; but it is the scene of good or evil, as you make it; and if you have lived a day you have seen all; one day is like all others. There is no other light, no other sight; this very sun, this moon, these very stars, the present system of things is the very same that your ancestors enjoyed, and the same that will entertain your latest posterity.

'Non alium videre patres, aliumve nepotes
Aspicient.'‡

* Seneca, *Hercul. Fur.*, act. iii, chor. v, 874. † Lucret., iii, 951.
‡ Manilius, i, 521, 522.

'Our grandfathers saw the same and our grandsons shall see no other.' And come the worst that can come, the distribution and variety of all the acts of my comedy are performed in a year. If you have attended to the succession of my four seasons, they comprehend the infancy, youth, virility, and old age of the world. The year has played its part, and has no new scene or shift but to begin again, and it will always be the same thing over and over again. *Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus**—'The year rolls on within itself again.' I am not determined to contribute any new recreations for you.

'More pleasures still kind Nature will not frame,
For to all times all things will be the same.†

"Make room for others, as others have done for you. Equality is the soul of equity.‡ Who can complain of being under the same destiny with all his fellow creatures? Besides, live as long as you can, you will thereby not at all shorten the space of time that you are to lie dead in the grave; it is all to no purpose: you will be every whit as long in that situation which you so much dread as if you had died at the breast.

——— 'Licet quot vis vivendo vincere secla,
Mors æterna tamen nihilominus illa manebit.'§

'Life may fill many ages, but death will be eternal.' And yet I will place you in such a condition as you shall not be dissatisfied with. Nor shall you so much as wish for the life you are so much concerned for. Death is less to be feared than nothing, if there was anything less than nothing.

* Virg., *Georg.*, ii, 402.

‡ Seneca, *Epist.* 30.

† Lucret., iii, 957.

§ Lucret., iii, 1103.

‘Multo . . . mortem minus ad nos esse putandum,
Si minus esse potest quam quod nihil esse videmus.’*

Neither can it in any way concern you, whether living or dead : not living, because you still exist ; nor dead, because you are no more. Moreover, no one dies before his hour ; and the time you leave behind was no more yours than that which was past and gone before you were born ; nor does it any more concern you.

‘Respice enim quam nil ad nos anteacta vetustas
Temporis æterni fuerit.’†

‘Look back, and though times past eternal were,
In those before us yet we had no share.’

“ Let your life end where or when it will, it is all included in eternity. The benefit of life consists not in the space, but in the use of it. Such a one may have lived a long time who yet may be said to have enjoyed but a short life. Give attention to time while it is present with you. It depends upon your will and not upon the number of years that you have lived long enough. Do you think never to arrive at the place towards which you are continually going ? And yet there is no road but hath its end. And if company will make it more pleasant, does not all the world go the self-same way as you do ? *Omnia te, vita perfuncta, sequentur*‡ — ‘All the world in death must follow thee.’ Does not all the world dance the same brawl that you do ? Is there anything that does not grow old as well as you ? A thousand men, a thousand animals, and a thousand other creatures die at the same instant that you expire.

* Lucret., iii, 939.

† Ibid., 985.

‡ Ibid., 981.

‘Nam nox nulla diem, neque noctem aurora secuta est,
 Quæ non audierit mistos vagitibus ægris
 Ploratus, mortis comites, et funeris atri.’*

“ ‘No night succeeds the day, no morning rises to chase away the dark mists of night, whercin the cries of the mourners are not heard.’ To what end do you endeavour to avoid death, unless it was possible for you to evade it? You have seen instances enough of those to whom it has been welcome, as it has put an end to their great misery. Have you talked with any to whom it has therefore been unwelcome? It is very foolish to condemn a thing which you have not experienced, neither yourself, nor in the person of any other. Why,” cries nature, “dost thou complain of me and destiny? Do we wrong thee? Is it for thee to govern us, or for us to dispose of thee? Though thy age may not be accomplished, yet thy life is. A little man is as entirely a man as a giant; neither men nor their lives are measured by the

Why immortality was refused by Chiron.

ell. Chiron refused to be immortal when he was acquainted with the terms upon which he was to enjoy it by his father, Saturn, the very god of time and its duration. Do but seriously consider how much more intolerable and painful a life would be which was to last for ever than that which I have given thee. If death was not to be your lot, you would eternally curse me for having deprived you of it. I have, it is true, mixed a little bitterness with it, to the end that, when you have perceived the conveniency of it, you might not embrace it too greedily and indiscreetly: and that you might be established in this moderation which I require of you, neither to fly from

* Lucret., ii, 579.

life nor death, I have tempered both with bitter and sweet. I taught Thales, the chief of all your sages, that either life or death was indifferent ; so that, when one asked him why then did he not die, he answered very wisely, because it was a matter of indifference. Water, earth, air, and fire, and the other members of this my structure, are no more the instruments of thy life than of thy death.* Why art thou afraid of thy last day, which conduces no more to thy dissolution than any before it? The last step is not the cause of being tired, but only the discovery of it. Every day travels towards death, thy last only arrives at it." Thus far the good lessons of our mother Nature.

I have often considered with myself whence it should proceed that, in the field of battle, the image of death, whether we view it in our own danger of it, or in that of others, is not near so dreadful as in our own houses (which, if it were not fact, they would be a pack of whining milksops), and that death having always the same aspect, yet it meets with more courage in peasants and men of low rank than in others. I really believe that the dismal air and apparatus with which we set it out more terrifies us than the thing itself. A new manner of life quite contrary to the former ; the cries of mothers, wives, and children ; the visits of astonished, afflicted friends ; the attendance of pale and blubbering servants ; a dark room with burning wax tapers in it ; our beds surrounded with physicians and parsons : in short, nothing but ghastliness and horror about us make men fancy themselves already

* Seneca, *Epist.* 120.

dead and buried.* "Children are afraid of their very friends when they see them masked, and so are we ourselves. The vizard must be taken off as well from things as persons." And when that is taken off, we shall find nothing underneath but the very same death which a footman or a chambermaid suffered the other day without any fear. Happy, therefore, is that death which does not give leisure to make such a pompous and grand preparation.

* Seneca, Epist. 24. See also similar considerations in Bacon's admirable essay on Death.





ONE MAN'S PROFIT IS ANOTHER MAN'S LOSS.*

DEMADES the Athenian condemned a fellow-citizen who furnished out funerals for demanding too great a profit for his goods, and because that profit must be gained by the death of a great many people. But I think it a sentence ill-grounded, forasmuch as no profit can be made but at the expense of some other person, and that every kind of gain is by that rule liable to be condemned. The tradesman thrives by the extravagance of youth, and the farmer by the dearness of corn; † the architect by the ruin of buildings; the officers of justice by quarrels and law-suits; nay, even the honour and function of divines are owing to our mortality and vices. "No physician takes pleasure in the health even of his best friends," said the ancient Greek comedian, "nor soldier in the peace of his country; and so of the rest." ‡ And what is

* In the original the title is, *Le proufit de l'un est dommage de l'autre.*

† This might have been partially true in the time of Montaigne; but political economy teaches us a very different lesson as to the true prosperity of the tradesman and farmer.

‡ Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, vi, 38, whence most of this essay is taken.

yet worse, let every one but examine his own heart, and he will find that his private wishes spring and grow up at the expense of some other person. Upon which consideration, this thought came into my head, that Nature does not hereby deviate from her general policy; for the naturalists hold that the birth, nourishment, and increase of any one thing is the decay and corruption of another.

“Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante.”*

“Whatever from its bounds doth changèd pass,
Straite is the death of that which erste it was.”

* Lucret., iii, 752. The translation is by Florio.





OF PEDANTRY.



WAS often vexed, when I was a boy, to see a pedant always brought in as a coxcomb* in the Italian comedies, and that the title of *Magister* was in no greater esteem amongst us ; for, as I was put under their tuition, could I help having a tenderness for their reputation ? I endeavoured indeed to excuse them, from the natural disparity that is betwixt the vulgar and persons of excellent and uncommon judgment and knowledge, forasmuch as they go a quite contrary way to one another ; but in this I was non-plused when I found that the men of the best sense were they who most heartily despised them : witness our famous poet Du Bellay—

“Mais je hay par sur tout un sçavoir pedantesque.”

And they used to do so in former times ; for Plutarch says that the terms Grecian and Scholar were names of reproach and contempt among the Romans. Afterwards I found, by the experience of years, that they had abundant reason for it, and that *magis magnos clericos non sunt magis magnos*

* For a Vice or Sport-maker, says Florio ; in the original, “pour badin.”

sapientes.* But how it should come to pass that a mind enriched with the knowledge of so many things does not thereby become the more quick and lively, and that a gross and common understanding should find room, without improving itself, for the discourses and judgments of the most excellent genius the world ever produced, I am yet to seek. A young lady, one of the first of our princesses, said to me once, speaking of a certain person, that he admitted so many wild and strange notions, and such strong conceptions, that his brains must be crowded and pressed together into a less compass, to make room for those of others. I should be ready to conclude that, as plants are drowned with too much moisture, and lamps with too much oil, so too much study and business has the same effect upon the operation of the mind; which, being employed and embarrassed by a variety of matter, has no power to throw off the weight, which keeps it bowed, and, as it were, benumbed. But it is quite otherwise; for the mind, the fuller it is, the more it expands itself. And, to look back to the old times, we see, on the contrary, men very sufficient for the management of public affairs, great captains, and great statesmen, who were withal men of great learning. And as to the philosophers, who were retired from all public affairs, they have sometimes *Philosophers despised, and why.* also been despised by the comical liberty of their time, their opinions and formalities exposing them to ridicule. Would you make them judges of the merits of a law-suit, or of a man's actions? They are fully prepared for it, and straight begin to examine if there be life, if there be

* "The most greates clerkes are not the most wisest men," writes Florio, using the double superlative of which Shakspeare was fond.

motion, if the man* be any other than an ox ; what is to do or to suffer, and what sort of animals law and justice are. Do they speak either of a magistrate or to him, it is with an irreverent and uncivil freedom. Do they hear a prince or a king commended, they treat him, at best, but as an idle shepherd, that busies himself only about milking and shearing his flock. Do you esteem any man of the more consequence for being lord of 2000 acres of land, they make a pish at it, being accustomed to claim the whole world for their possession. Do you boast of your nobility, or your being descended from seven rich ancestors, they look upon you with contempt, as one having no notion of the universal image of nature, and who does not consider how many predecessors every one of us has had, rich, poor, kings, slaves, Greeks, and Barbarians. And, though you were the fiftieth descendant from Hercules, they think you vain to set such a value on this, which is only a gift of fortune. Consequently the vulgar scorned them, as men ignorant both of the chief thing and things that were common, and accused them both of presumption and of ignorance.

But this Platonic picture does by no means resemble our pedants ; for the philosophers were envied for thinking themselves better than the common sort of men, despising public affairs and transactions, assuming a particular and inimitable manner of life, and for discoursing in bombast and obsolete language ; but the pedants are despised for being below the

*Difference
betwixt the
ancient
philoso-
phers and
our pedants.*

* Plato's Theatetus : τὸν τοιοῦτον ὁ μὲν πλησίον καὶ ὁ γέλτων λέληθεν. οὐμονὸν ὄρι πάττει, ἀλλ' ὀλίγου καὶ εἰ ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶν ἢ τι ἄλλο θρέμμα. In this passage Montaigne somewhat misrepresents Plato.

usual form, for being incapable of public offices, and for their low-life manners, resembling the vulgar : *Odi homines ignava opera, philosophica sententia*,* “I hate the men who think like philosophers, but yet are mere triflers.” As for those same philosophers, I must needs say, that, as they were great men in science, they were yet much greater in all their actions, as it is said of the geometrician of Syracuse,† who, being disturbed in his contemplation, in order to put some of his skill in practice for the defence of his country, suddenly set on foot certain terrible engines, which wrought effects beyond all human belief ; yet, nevertheless, he himself despised his own handiwork, thinking that, by playing the mechanic, he had debased the dignity of his art, of which he reckoned those his performances but trivial models, by way of experiment. So they sometimes, when they have been put upon the proof of action, have been seen to fly to so high a pitch, that it plainly appeared their hearts and souls were elevated to a strange degree, while their minds were enriched with the knowledge of things. Nay, some, who saw the reins of government seized by persons incapable of holding them, have avoided all share in the management of affairs. And he who asked Crates how long he thought it necessary to philosophize, received for answer, “As long as our armies are commanded by blockheads.”‡

Heraclitus resigned the royalty to his brother ; and, the Ephesians reproaching him for spending his time in playing with boys before the temple, “Is it not better,” said he, “to

* Pacuvius apud Aul. Gellius, xiii, 8.

† Archimedes, in Plutarch's Life of Marcellus.

‡ Diog. Laert., Crates, vi, 92.

do so, than to sit at the helm of affairs with you?" Others, having their thoughts elevated above the world and fortune, have looked upon the tribunals of justice, and even the thrones of kings, with an eye of contempt and scorn. Thus Empedocles refused the royalty which was offered to him by the Agrigentines. Thales once, inveighing against the care and pains men took to grow rich, was compared to the fox who said of the grapes which he could not come at that they were sour; whereupon he had a mind, for the jest's sake, to show them an experiment to the contrary; and, after having prostituted his learning in the search of profit and gain, he set up a traffic,* which in less than a year brought him so much wealth that the most experienced in the business were scarce able, with all their industry and economy, to rake so much together in their whole lives. What Aristotle reports of some, who termed Thales, Anaxagoras, and the like sort of men, *wise*, but not *prudent*, for not taking due care of the main chance, though I do not well digest the difference of those epithets, will not, however, serve as an excuse for my pedants; for to consider the low and necessitous fortunes with which they are contented, we have rather reason to pronounce that they are neither wise nor prudent.

But, to give up this first reason, I think it better to say that this misfortune arises from their wrong method of applying themselves to the sciences, and that, after the manner in which we are instructed, it is no wonder if neither the scholars nor

Men of learning contemptible for their wrong education.

* Cic. de Div., i, 49, says that Thales, in order to show that it was possible even for a philosopher, if he pleased, to get an estate, bought up all the olive-trees in the Milesian field, before they were in bloom.

the masters are a whit the more capable of business though they are the more learned. In good truth, the care and expense our parents are at have no other aim but to furnish our heads with knowledge, but not a word of judgment and virtue. Cry out of one that passes by, to our people, "O! what a learned man!" and of another, "O! what a good man!" they will not fail to turn their eyes and pay their respects to the former. There should then be a third man to cry out, "O! what blockheads!" Men are ready to ask, "Does he understand Greek or Latin? Is he a poet or prose-writer?" But whether he is the better or more discreet man, though it is the main question, this is the last; for the inquiry should be, who has the best learning, not who has the most.

They only study to load the memory. We only take pains to stuff the memory, and leave the understanding and conscience quite unfurnished. As the birds which fly abroad to forage for grain bring it home in their beak, without tasting it themselves, to feed their young, just so our pedants pick knowledge out of several authors, and hold it at their tongue's end, to spit out and distribute it abroad. It is strange to think how guilty I myself am of this very folly; for do I not the same thing almost throughout this whole essay? I cull here and there out of several books such sentences as please me, not to keep them in my memory* (for I have none to retain them in), but to transplant them into this work, where, to say the truth, they are no more mine than they were in the places from whence I took them.

We are, as I conceive, only skilled in the knowledge of the

* See what Montaigne says of his memory, *ante*, p. 24.

present, and not at all of what is past, or to come; *They only aim at making a vain display of their learning.* but the worst of it is, the scholars and pupils of these pedants are no better nourished or improved by it, and it passes from one hand to another for this purpose, only to make a show of it in conversation and story-telling, like those glittering counters which are of no other use or service but to play or count a game with. *Apud alios loqui didicerunt, non ibsi secum,** "They have learned to converse with others, but not with themselves." *Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum,†* "We have not to talk, but to steer the vessel."

Nature, to show that its conduct is not wild, does often, in nations which are the least cultivated by art, cause productions of genius such as are a match for the greatest efforts of art. As in relation to what I am now speaking of, the Gascon proverb derived from a reed pipe has a delicate meaning, *Bouha pro bouha, mas à remuda lous dits qu'em,* "You may blow your heart out, but, if once you stir your fingers, the lesson is over." We can say, "Cicero says thus: 'These were the morals of Plato; these the very words of Aristotle;'" but what do we say ourselves that is our own? What is it we do? What is our own judgment? A parrot would say as much to the purpose as that.

This puts me in mind of that wealthy Roman † *A Roman who fancied himself learned because he paid learned men.* who had taken care, though at a very great expense, to collect able men in every science, whom he kept continually in his company, to the end that if amongst his friends any topic of discourse should be started, they might supply his place, and

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., v, 36. † Senec., Epist. 108.

‡ Calvisius Sabinus. He lived in the time of Seneca.

be ready to prompt him, one with a saying, another with a verse of Homer, etc., every one according to his talent ; and he fancied this knowledge to be his own, because it was in the heads of those whom he retained about him, as they also do whose fund of learning lies in their sumptuous libraries. I know one who, when I ask him a question, calls for a book to show me the answer.

Learning is useless further than it is our own. We take other men's opinions upon trust, and give ourselves no manner of trouble ; whereas we should make them our own. In this we seem to be very like the man who, wanting fire, went to his neighbour's house to fetch it,* and, finding a very good one there, stayed to warm himself by it, but never remembered to carry any home with him. Of what service is it to us to have a bellyful of meat if it does not digest, if it does not change its form in our bodies, and if it does not nourish and strengthen us? Can we imagine that Lucullus, whose learning, without any manner of experience, made and formed him so great a commander, acquired it after our manner? We suffer ourselves to lean so much upon the arms of others, that our strength is of no use to us. Would I fortify myself against the fear of death, I do it at the expense of Seneca ; would I extract consolation for myself or my friend, I borrow it from Cicero ; whereas I might have found it in myself, if I had been trained up in the exercise of my own reason. I do not fancy this acquiescence in second-hand hearsay knowledge ; for, though we may be learned by the help of

* This comparison may be found at the end of Plutarch's Treatise of Hearing. Thence Montaigne took it, using the very words of Amyot's translation.

another's knowledge, we can never be wise but by our own wisdom.

Μισῶ σοφιστήν, ὅστις οὐχ αὐτῷ σοφός.*

“I hate the sage who is not sage for himself.” Therefore, says Ennius, “Vain is the wisdom of that sage who cannot profit himself by it :”†

“If he is covetous, a liar, or effeminate.”‡

Non enim paranda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est,§
“For wisdom is not only to be acquired, but enjoyed.”

Dionysius|| laughed at the grammarians who were so solicitous to know what were the miseries which Ulysses suffered, and who knew not their own; at musicians, who were so exact in tuning their instruments, and who never tuned their manners; and at orators, who studied to declare what was justice, but who did not perform it. If our mind takes so wrong a bias, and if the judgment be so unsound, I should have liked it altogether as well if my scholar had spent his time at tennis, for then the body would at least have been more lithsome. Do but observe him when he is come back from school, after he has spent fifteen or sixteen years there; nothing is so unfit for business. All that you find in him more than he had before he went thither is that his Latin and his Greek have rendered him only a greater and a more conceited coxcomb than he was when he went from home. He ought to have returned with his head well furnished, whereas it is only puffed up and inflated.

* Eur pides.

† Cic. de Offic., iii, 15.

‡ Juv. Sat., vii, 19.

§ Cic. de Finib., i, 1.

|| Montaigne here cites Dionysius, instead of Diogenes, the cynic.

Pretenders to learning. These sparks, as Plato says of the Sophists, their cousins-german, are of all men those who promise to be the most useful to their fellow-creatures, and who alone, of all men, do only not amend what is committed to them, as a carpenter and a mason do, but make bad worse, and take pay for it to boot. If the rule which Protagoras proposed to his pupils was followed, either that they should give him his own demand or take an oath in the temple what value they set upon the advantage they had received from his discipline, and satisfy him accordingly for his trouble, my pedagogues would be horribly frustrated, especially if they were to be judged by the testimony of my experience. In my vulgar Perigordian language, such smatterers in learning are pleasantly called *Lettre-ferits*, as if one should say they were letter-marked, or had letters stamped on them by the stroke of a mallet; and, in truth, they seem for most part to be sunk even below common sense. For you see the peasant and the cobbler go simply and honestly in their own way, speaking only of what they know and understand; whereas these fellows are continually perplexing and entangling themselves in order to set themselves off, and make a parade of that knowledge which floats only on the superficies of the brain. They say a good thing sometimes, but let another apply it. They are wonderfully well acquainted with Galen, but not at all with the disease of the patient. They have stuffed your ears with the laws, but know nothing of the merits of the cause. They have the theory of everything, but you must seek for others to put it in practice.

I have sat by when a friend of mine, at my own house, for

sport's sake, has with one of these fellows counterfeited a jargon of unconnected gibberish, patched up of various pieces, without head or tail, saving that he interlarded certain terms here and there which were peculiar to the subject of their dispute; by which means he amused the blockhead in debating the point from morning to night, who thought he had always fully answered every objection. And yet this was a man of letters and reputation, and had a fine robe.

*Character
of a true
pedant.*

Whoever narrowly pries into this kind of men, whose number is very extensive, will, as I have done, find that, for the most part, they neither understand themselves nor others, and that, though they have strong memories, their judgment is very shallow, unless where nature itself has given them another turn, as I observed in Adrianus Turnebus, who, though he never made other profession than that of learning only, in which, in my opinion, he was the greatest man that has been these thousand years, yet had nothing pedantic about him but the wearing of his gown, and a certain external fashion that was uncourtly, which are things of no moment; and I hate our people who dislike the pedant worse than his impertinence, and take their measure of a man's understanding by the bow he makes, his very gesture, and even by his boots. For within this outside of his there was not a more illustrious soul upon earth. I have often, for the purpose, started subjects to him to which he was quite unaccustomed, wherein I found he had so clear an insight, so quick an apprehension, and so solid a judgment, that one would have thought he had never been practised in anything but arms and affairs of state. These endowments of nature

have such beauty and vigour—*Queis arte benigna, et meliore luto finxit præcordia Titan*,* “Formed of a finer clay, and animated by a purer fire”—that they keep their ground in defiance of a bad education. But it is not enough that our education does not spoil us: it is necessary that it should alter us for the better.

Knowledge should be accompanied with judgment. There are some of our parliaments which, when they are to admit any officers, examine only into their learning; others also add the trial of their understanding, by asking their judgment of some law-case. The latter seem to me to proceed in the best method. And, though both are absolutely necessary, and it is requisite that they should be defective in neither, yet, in truth, judgment is to be preferred to science, the former of which may make shift without the latter, but not the latter without the former: for, as the Greek verse says,

“Learning is nothing worth, if wit
And understanding be not join'd with it.”

Would to God that, for the sake of justice, our courts of judicature were as well furnished with understanding and conscience as they are with knowledge! *Non vitæ, sed scholæ discimus*, says Seneca:† “We do not study to live, but to dispute.” Now learning is not to be made a mere appendix to the mind, but to be incorporated with it: it must not only be tintured with it, but thoroughly dyed; and if it does not change and meliorate its imperfect state, it were, without question, better to let it alone. It is a dangerous weapon, and if in weak hands that know not how to use it, it will embarrass and hurt its master; *ut fuerit melius non didi-*

* Juv., xiv, 34.

† Ep. 106, in fin.

cisse,* so that it would have been better not to have learned at all." This, peradventure, is the cause that neither we nor divinity require much learning in women, and that Francis, Duke of Brittany, son of John V, when, in talking of his marriage with Isabel, the daughter of Scotland, he was told that she was homely bred, and without any manner of learning, he made answer that he liked her the better for it, and that a woman was learned enough if she could distinguish betwixt her husband's shirt and his doublet.

So that it is no such great wonder, as they *Whether* make of it, that our ancestors had learning in no *learning* great esteem, and that, even to this day, it is but *be absolute-* seldom to be met with in the privy councils of our *ly neces-* kings; and if this end of enriching ourselves by it (which is the only thing we propose to ourselves now-a-days, by the means of law, physic, pedantry, and even divinity itself) did not uphold its credit, you would no doubt see it in as despicable a state as ever. What pity, then, would it be if it neither instructed us to think well nor to do well! *Postquam docti prodierunt, boni desunt*,† "Since the appearance of learned men, good men are become scarce." All other knowledge is detrimental to him who has not the science of becoming a good man.

But may not the reason I touched upon just *Every kind* now also proceed from hence, that our study in *of genius* France, having, as it were, no other view but *not capable* profit, few of those who are formed by nature for *of being* offices rather of dignity than gain apply them- *made better* *by learn-* *ing.*

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., ii, 4.

† Senec., Epist. 95.

selves to learning, or for so little a while (being taken from their studies, before they have had a relish for them, to some profession which has nothing to do with books), that, generally speaking, there are none left to apply themselves wholly to study but people of mean education, who only study learning for a livelihood. And the minds of such people, being by nature and domestic education and example of the basest alloy, make a wrong use of learning. For it is not for knowledge to furnish light to a dark soul, nor to make a blind man see. Its business is not to find a man eyes, but to clear them, and to regulate a man's steps, provided he has good feet and legs of his own. Knowledge is an excellent drug ; but no drug has virtue enough to preserve itself from corruption and decay, if the vessel into which it is put be not sound and sweet. A man may have a clear sight who looks a-squint, and consequently sees good, but does not follow it, and sees knowledge, but makes no use of it. Plato's principal institution in his Republic is to fit his subjects with employments suitable to their nature. Nature can do everything, and does everything. Cripples are not fit for exercises of the body, nor weak understandings for those of the mind. Philosophy is too sublime for degenerate and vulgar minds. When we see a shoemaker ill-shod, we say it is no wonder. Thus, it seems, we often find, by experience, a physician worse doctored, a divine worse reformed, and consequently a scholar of less sufficiency than other men. Aristo of Chios had anciently reason to say* that philosophers did their auditors more harm than good,

* Cic. de Nat. Deor., iii, 31.

because most of them are not capable of receiving benefit by such instructions, on which they were too apt to put a bad interpretation; so that, ἀσώτους *ex Aristippi*, *acerbos ex Xenonis schola exire**—i.e., that they went away prodigals from the school of Aristippus, and sour churls from that of Zeno.

In that excellent institution which Xenophon *The Persians gave their children a virtuous instead of a learned education.* ascribes to the Persians, we find that they taught their children virtue as other nations instruct them in letters. Plato says that the eldest son in the royal succession was thus tutored.† As soon as he was born, he was delivered, not to women, but to the eunuchs of the greatest authority about their kings for their virtue, whose charge it was to keep his body in health and good plight, and, after he came to seven years of age, to teach him to ride, and to go a-hunting. When he attained to fourteen, they transferred him to four of the wisest, the most just, the most temperate, and the most valiant men of the nation. The first instructed him in religion, the second taught him to be always honest, the third to be the master of his appetites, and the fourth to despise all danger.

It is a thing worthy of very great consideration *The Lacedæmonian youth not bred to literature.* that, in that excellent and, in truth, for its perfection, prodigious form of civil regimen proposed by Lycurgus, though solicitous of the education of children as a thing of its greatest concern, and even in the very seat of the Muses, he should make so little mention of learning; as if their generous youth, disdaining any other

* Cic. de Nat. Deor., iii, 31.

† In the first Alcibiades.

yoke but that of virtue, ought to be furnished only with such masters as should instruct in valour, prudence, and justice, instead of being put under our masters of the sciences—an example which Plato has followed in his laws. The form of their discipline was to propound questions to them upon the judgment of men and their actions; and, if they commended or condemned either this or that person or fact, they were obliged to give their reason for so doing; by which means they at once sharpened their understanding and became skilful in the law. Astyages, in Xenophon,* having demanded of Cyrus an account of his last lesson, he made this answer; viz., “A tall boy in our school, having a cassock too short, took another by force from one of his companions, who was not so tall, and gave him his own in exchange. Our master having made me judge of this dispute, I thought it best for both of them to keep the cassock they then had, for that each of them was better accommodated with the other’s cassock than with his own. But my master told me I had given wrong judgment; for I had only considered the fitness of the garments, whereas I ought principally to have had regard to strict justice, which requires that no one should be deprived of his property by force.” And young Cyrus added that he was lashed for it, as we are in our villages for forgetting the first aorist of *τύπτω*. My pedagogue must make me a fine oration, *in genere demonstrativo*, before he can persuade me that his school is as good as that. They chose to shorten the way; and, forasmuch as the sciences, when they are rightly pursued and applied, cannot but teach us prudence,

* Xenophon, *Cyropædia*, i, 3, sect. 14.

fidelity, and resolution, they thought fit to initiate their children in the knowledge of the effects, and to instruct them, not by hearsay, but by the proof of the action, in vigorously forming and moulding them, not only by words and precepts, but chiefly by works and examples, to the end that it might not only be a knowledge of the mind, but become constitutional and habitual, and not barely an acquisition but a natural possession. Agesilaus being asked for the purpose what he thought most proper for boys to learn, replied, "What they ought to do when they come to be men." No wonder if such an institution produced such admirable effects.

It is said they used to go to the other cities of Greece to inquire out rhetoricians, painters, and musicians, but to Lacedæmon for legislators, magistrates, and generals of armies. At Athens they learned to speak well, at Lacedæmon to act well; at Athens to get clear out of a sophistical argument and to unravel ensnaring syllogisms, at Lacedæmon to escape the baits of pleasure, and, with a noble courage, to withstand the menaces of fortune and death. The Athenians cudgelled their brains about words, the Lacedæmonians about things; at Athens there was an eternal babble of the tongue, at Lacedæmon a continual exercise of the mind. Therefore it is no wonder that, when Antipater demanded fifty of their children for hostages, they made answer, quite contrary to what we should do, that they would rather give him twice the number of full-grown men; such a value did they set upon their children's domestic education.* When

* Plutarch, Apoth. of the Lacedæmonians.

Agesilaus courted Xenophon to send his children to be bred up at Sparta, it was not that they should learn rhetoric there or logic, but to be instructed, he said, in the noblest of all sciences—viz., how to obey and how to command.*

How Socrates bantered a sophist. It is very merry to see Socrates, after his manner, rallying Hippias, when he tells him what a sum of money he had got by teaching school, especially in certain little villages in Sicily, but that at Sparta he did not get one penny. "What idiots are they," said Socrates,† who know nothing of mensuration nor numeration, and make no account either of grammar or poetry, and only amuse themselves in studying the succession of kings, the settlement and declension of states, and the like kind of stuff!‡ And, after all, Socrates having made him, from one step to another, acknowledge the excellency of their form of public administration, and the felicity and virtue of their private life, he leaves him to guess what inference he draws from the inutility of his pedantic arts.

The sciences damp courage. Examples have taught us that, in military affairs, and all others of that kind, the study of the sciences damps and enervates the courage of men rather than quickens and rouses it. The most potent empire that appears to be at this day in the whole world is that of the Turks, a people who have a great esteem for arms, and as hearty a contempt for literature. I find that Rome was more valiant before she grew so learned. The most warlike nations in our days are the most stupid and the most ignorant, of which the Scythians, Parthians, and the great

* Plutarch, Agesi'aus, c. 7. † Plato's Hippias Major. ‡ Idem.

Tamerlane may serve as a proof. When the Goths ravaged Greece, the only thing that preserved all the libraries from being burnt was an opinion that one of their body possessed them with, that it was absolutely the best way to leave all that furniture entire in the enemy's hands, as it would tend to divert them from the exercise of arms, and incline them to a lazy and sedentary life. When our king Charles VIII, as it were without drawing his sword, saw himself possessed of the kingdom of Naples, and of a great part of Tuscany, the nobility about him attributed this unexpected facility of conquest to this, that the princes and nobles of Italy studied more to render themselves ingenious and learned than vigorous and warlike.





OF ONE DEFECT IN OUR GOVERNMENT.*

MY late father, for a man that had no other advantages than experience only and his own natural parts, was nevertheless of a very clear judgment. He has formerly told me that he once had thoughts of endeavouring to introduce this practice: that there might be in every city a certain place assigned, to which such as stood in need of anything might repair, and have their business entered by an officer appointed for that purpose; as, for example, I want to sell or to buy pearls; such a one wants company to go to Paris; such a one inquires for a servant of such a quality; such a one for a master; such a one inquires for an artificer, some for one thing, some for another, every one according to what he wants. And I fancy these mutual advertisements would be of no contemptible advantage to the public correspondence and intelligence; for there are always people that hunt after one another, and, for want of

* *D'un défaut de nos polices.* Montaigne, in his suggestive garrulity, here anticipates our modern advertisements.

knowing one another's occasions, men are left in very great necessity.

I hear, to the great shame of the age we live in, that in our very sight two most excellent men for learning died so poor that they had scarce bread to put in their mouths: Lilius Gregorius Giraldus in Italy, and Sebastianus Castalio in Germany.* And I do believe there are a thousand men would have invited them into their families, with very advantageous conditions, or have relieved them where they were, had they known their wants. The world is not so generally corrupted but that I know a man that would heartily wish the estate his ancestors have left him might be employed, so long as it should please Fortune to let him enjoy it, to shelter rare and remarkable persons of any kind, whom misfortune sometimes persecutes to the last degree, from the danger of necessity, and at least place them in such a condition that they must be very hard to please if they were not contented.

My father, in his economical government, had this order (which I know how to commend, but by no means to imitate), which was, that, besides the register he kept of the household affairs, where the small accounts, payments, and contracts, which do not require a secretary's hand, were entered, and which his bailiff always had in custody, he ordered him whom he kept to write for him to keep a paper journal, and in it to set down

* The first was born at Ferrara in 1489, and died there in 1552; his works consist of a history of the gods and dialogues of the poets. Castalio was a native of Dauphiny, born in 1515, died in 1563. He published a Latin version of the Bible, in which he affected to use only Ciceronian Latin.

all the remarkable occurrences and daily memoirs of his family affairs. Very pleasant to look over when time begins to wear things out of memory, and very useful sometimes to put us out of doubt when such a thing was begun, when ended, what visitors came, with what attendants, and how long they staid; our voyages, absences, marriages, deaths, reception of good or ill news, the change of principal servants, and the like. An ancient custom which I think it would not be amiss for every one to revive in his own family; and I find I did very foolishly in neglecting the same.





OF WEARING CLOTHES.*

WHATEVER I shall say upon this subject, I am of necessity to force a barrier of Custom, so careful has she been to shut up all the avenues. I was discussing with myself in this cold season whether the custom of going naked in those nations lately discovered is owing to the hot temperature of their air, as we say of the Moors and Indians, or whether it was the original custom of mankind. Men of understanding, forasmuch as all things under the sun, as the Holy Writ declares, are subject to the same laws, were wont in such considerations as these, where we are to distinguish the natural laws from those of human invention, to have recourse to the general polity of the world, where there could be nothing counterfeited. Now all other creatures being sufficiently furnished with all necessaries for their existence, it is not to be imagined that we only should be brought into the world in a defective and indigent condition, and in a state that cannot subsist without foreign assistance; and therefore I believe that, as plants, trees, animals, and all things that

What gave rise to the custom of some nations to go stark naked.

* Florio translates this *De l'usage de se vestir*, "Of the use of apparel." What Montaigne here hints has been seriously maintained by learned physicians.

have life, are by Nature sufficiently covered to defend them from the injuries of weather—

“Proptereaque ferè res omnes, aut corio sunt,
Aut setâ, aut conchis, aut callo, aut cortice, tectæ;”*

“Shells, crusts, rinds, skin, or hair, enclose and cover almost all created things;”—so were we; but as those who by artificial light put out that of the day, so we, by borrowed forms, have destroyed our own. And it is plain that it is custom which renders that impossible to us which otherwise is not so; for of those nations who have no notion of clothing, some are situated under the same temperate climate that we are, and some in much severer climates. And, besides, our most tender parts are always exposed to the air, as the eyes, mouth, nose, and ears; and our peasants, like our ancestors in former times, go open-breasted to the waist. Had we been born with a necessity of wearing petticoats and breeches, there is no doubt but Nature would have fortified those parts she intended should be exposed to the fury of the seasons with a thicker skin, as she has done the fingers' ends and the soles of the feet. And why should this seem hard to believe? I observe much greater distance betwixt my habit and that of one of our country boors than betwixt his and a man that has no other covering but his skin. How many men, especially in Turkey, go naked upon the account of devotion? I know not who it was that asked a beggar whom he saw in his shirt in the depth of winter as brisk as another muffled up to the ears in furs, how he could endure to go so. “Why, sir,” said he, “you go with your face bare, but I am all face.”

* Lucret., iv, 933.

The Italians, I think, have a story of a fool of the Duke of Florence, whom his master asking how, being so thin clad, he was able to support the cold which he himself was so guarded against, "Why," replied the fool, "use my receipt, put on all the clothes you have at once, as I do, and you will feel no more cold than I." King Masanissa, to an extreme old age, could never be prevailed upon to go with his head covered, how cold, stormy, or rainy soever the weather might be;* which also is reported of the Emperor Severus. Herodotus tells us † that, in the battles fought betwixt the Egyptians and the Persians, it was observed, both by himself and others, that of those who were left dead upon the place, the heads of the Egyptians were found to be without comparison harder than those of the Persians, by reason that the last had gone with their heads always covered from their infancy, first with biggins, and then with turbans, and the others were always shaved and bare. And King Agesilaus, to a decrepid age, took care to wear always the same clothes in winter that he did in summer. Cæsar, says Suetonius, ‡ marched always at the head of his army, for the most part on foot, with his head bare, whether it was rain or sunshine; and as much is said of Hannibal,

—————"Tum vertice nudo,

Excipere insanos imbres, cœlique ruinam."§

A Venetian who has long lived in Pegu, and is lately returned from thence, writes that the men and women of that kingdom, though they cover all their other parts, go always barefoot, and ride so too. And Plato does very earnestly

* Cic. De Senect., 10.

‡ Jul. Cæsar, sect. 58.

† Lib. iii.

§ Silius Ital., i, 250.

advise, for the health of the whole body, to give the head and feet no other covering than what Nature has bestowed. He whom the Poles have elected for their king* (since ours came thence), who is indeed one of the greatest princes of this age, never wears any gloves, and, be it winter or whatever weather, never wears any other cap abroad than what he wears at home. Whereas I cannot endure to go unbuttoned or untied; my neighbouring labourers would think themselves in fetters if they were so braced. Varro is of opinion that, when it was ordained that we should have our heads uncovered in the presence of the gods, or the magistrate,† it was rather so ordered upon the score of health, and to inure us to the injuries of weather, than upon the account of reverence. And since we are now treating of cold, and of Frenchmen being used to wear variety of colours (not I myself, for I seldom wear other than black or white, in imitation of my father), let us add another story of Captain Martin du Bellay, who affirms that in his Luxembourg journey he saw so sharp frosts that the ammunition wine was cut with hatchets and wedges, delivered out to the soldiers by weight, and that they carried it away in baskets. And Ovid says,

“Nudaque consistunt, formam servantia testæ,
Vina; nec hausta meri, sed data frusta, bibunt.”‡

“The wine, stript of its cask, still kept its form, and they did not drink wine, but ate pieces of it.” At the mouth of the Lake Mæotis the frosts are so very sharp that on the very same spot where Mithridates his lieutenant had fought the enemy dry-foot, and given them a defeat, the summer following he also obtained over them a naval victory.

* Stephen Barthory.

† Plin. Nat. Hist., xxviii, c. 6.

‡ Ovid, Trist., iii, 10.

The Romans fought at a great disadvantage with the Carthaginians near Placentia, by reason that they went on to charge with their blood chilled and their limbs benumbed with cold, whereas Hannibal had caused great fires to be dispersed quite through his camp to warm his soldiers, and oil to be distributed amongst them; to the end that, anointing themselves, they might fortify the pores against the piercing air and freezing wind that raged in that season.

The retreat the Greeks made into their own country is famous for the difficulties and calamities they overcame. Of which this was one, that, being encountered in the mountains of Armenia with a *Ravages made by snow in the mountains of Armenia.* horrible storm of snow, they lost all knowledge of the country and of the roads, and, being shut up, were a day and a night without eating or drinking, during which most of their cattle died, many of themselves were starved, several were struck blind with the driving of the hail and the glittering of the snow, many of them maimed in their fingers and toes, and many rendered stiff and motionless with the extremity of the cold who had yet their understanding entire.

Alexander saw a nation where they bury the *Fruit-trees buried in the winter.* fruit-trees in winter to defend them from the frost; and we also may see the same. But concerning clothes, the king of Mexico changed his clothes four times a day, and never put them on more, employing those he left off in his continual liberalities and rewards; as also neither pot, dish, nor other utensil of his kitchen or table, was ever served in twice.



OF FRIENDSHIP.

HAVING observed the way in which a painter who serves me disposed of his workmanship, I had a fancy to imitate him. He chooses the fairest part and the middle of a wall or partition, wherein he places a picture which he has finished with the utmost care and art, and he fills up the void spaces that are about it with grotesque figures, which are fanciful strokes of the pencil, without any beauty but what they derive from their variety and oddness. And, in truth, what are these Essays of mine but grotesque and monstrous pieces of patchwork, put together without any certain figure, or any order, connection, or proportion but what is accidental? As the mermaid—*Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne*,* “A woman, beautiful in her upper parts, basely ending as a fish.” In the latter part I go hand in hand with my painter, but fall very short of him in the former and the better part; for I have not so much skill as to pretend to give a fine picture performed according to art. I have therefore thought fit to borrow one from Stephen de Boëtius,† which will be an

* Hor. Ar. Poet., v, 4.

† This Montaigne omits; why he has not inserted it he tells us at the end of the Essay.

honour to all the rest of this work. It is a discourse which he has entitled "La Servitude Volontaire," *i.e.*, Voluntary Slavery; but some, who did not know what he intended by that title, have since very properly given it another—*viz.*, "Le Contre-un."* It is a piece which he wrote in his younger years, by way of essay, for the honour of liberty, against tyrants. It has passed through the hands of men of the best understanding, with very great recommendations, as it highly deserves, for it is elegantly writ, and as full as anything can be on the subject. Yet it may truly be said that he was capable of a better performance; and if in that riper age, wherein I had the happiness to be acquainted with him, he had entered upon an undertaking like this of mine, to commit his fancies to writing, we should have seen many uncommon things, and such as would have gone very near to have rivalled the best writings of the ancients; for in this branch of natural endowments especially I know no man comparable to him. But we have nothing of his left, save only this tract (and that even by chance, for I believe he never saw it after he let it go out of his hands) and some memoirs concerning that edict of January,† made famous by our civil wars, which, perhaps, may find a place elsewhere. This is all that I have been able to recover of what he has left behind him (though with such an affectionate remembrance on his death-bed he did by his will bequeath his library and papers to me), except the little volume of his works‡ which I

* A discourse against monarchy, or government by one person alone.

† Issued in 1562, during the minority of Charles IX.

‡ Printed at Paris by Frederick Morel in 1571.

committed to the press, and to which I am particularly obliged, because it was the introduction of our first acquaintance; for it had been shown to me long before I knew his person, and, as it gave me the first knowledge of his name, it consequently laid the foundation of that friendship which we mutually cultivated, so long as it pleased God to spare his life, a friendship so entire and so perfect that certainly the like is hardly to be found in story, nor is there the least trace of it to be seen in the practice of the moderns. And indeed there must be such a concurrence of circumstances to the protection of such a friendship that it is very much if fortune brings it to pass once in three years.

Friendship There is nothing to which nature seems to have
the most more inclined us than society; and Aristotle says
happy consequence of that the good legislators were more tender of
society. friendship than of justice. Now this is the utmost
 point of the perfection of society; for generally all those
 friendships that are created and cultivated by pleasure,
 profit, public or private necessity, are so much the less
 amiable and generous, and so much the less friendships,
 as they have another motive, and design, and consequence
 than pure friendship itself. Neither are those four ancient
 kinds — viz., natural, social, hospitable, and that which
 may exist between the sexes, either separately or jointly
 correspondent with, nor do they constitute, true friendship.
 That of children to parents is rather respect; friendship
 being nourished by a communication which cannot be formed
 betwixt them, by reason of the too great disparity of age,
 and which would perhaps violate the obligations of nature; for
 neither are all the secret thoughts of the parents communi-

cable to their children, for fear of creating an unsuitable familiarity betwixt them, nor could admonitions and corrections, one of the principal offices of friendship, be exercised by children to their parents. There are some countries where it is the custom for children to kill their fathers, and others where the fathers kill their children, to avoid their being sometimes an impediment to their designs; and naturally the hopes of the one are founded on the destruction of the other. There have been philosophers who have despised this tie of nature; witness Aristippus,* who, when he was seriously told of the affection he owed to his children, as they were descended from his loins, fell a spitting, and said that that also came from him, and that we did likewise breed insects and worms. Witness another, whom Plutarch endeavoured to reconcile with his brother: "I make never the more account of him," said he, "for coming out of the same place."†

This word "**brother**" is indeed a fine sounding and a most affectionate name; and for this reason Boëtius and I styled ourselves brothers.‡ But the jumble of interest, the division of estates, and the necessity that the wealth of the one must be the impoverishment of the other, do wonderfully dissolve and relax this fraternal cement. When brothers seek their way to preferment by the same path or channel, it is hardly

* Diog. Laert., *in vitâ.*

† Plutarch's treatise of Brotherly Love.

‡ That is to say, that, according to the usage established in Montaigne's time, they gave one another the style of brothers, as it was to be the token and pledge of the friendship which they had contracted. And upon the same principle Mademoiselle de Gournay styled herself Montaigne's daughter, and not because Montaigne married her mother, as it has been affirmed.

possible but that they must often jostle and hinder one another. Moreover, why is it necessary that the correspondence and relation which create such true and perfect friendship should be found in kindred? The father and the son may happen to be of a quite contrary disposition, and so may brothers. This is my son: this is my father; but he is passionate, a knave, or a fool. And then, the more those friendships are required of us by law and the obligations of nature, so much the less is there in them of our own choice and voluntary freedom. And, indeed, our free will has no production more properly its own than that of affection and friendship. Not that I have not myself experienced all that is possible in this respect, having had the best of fathers, who was also the most indulgent, even to extreme old age, and descended of a family for many generations famous and exemplary for this brotherly concord:

—————“Et ipse
Notus in fratres animi paterni.”*

As for the love we bear to women, though it arises from our own choice, we are not to bring it into comparison or to rank it with the others. Its fire, I confess,—

“Nequè enim est Dea nescia nostri
Quæ dulcem curis miscet amaritiam,”†

—is more active, more eager and sharper; but withal it is more precipitant and fickle, wavering and variable, a fever subject to paroxysms and intermission, that is confined to only one corner of our fabric; whereas, in friendship, it is one general and universal heat, but temperate and equal, a

* Hor., Ode ii, 2, 6.

† Catullus, Ep. 66.

heat that is constant and settled, all easy and smooth, without any particle that is rough and poignant. Moreover, in love there is nothing more than a frantic desire of what flies from us.

“Come segue la lepre il cacciatore
Al freddo, al caldo, alla montagna, al lito ;
Nè più l' estima poi che presa vede ;
E sol dietro à chi fugge affretta il piede.”*

“ Like hunters, who, following the hare, when they have caught her despise her, being only pleased at pursuing that which flies.” As soon as ever love has contracted articles of amity—that is to say, as soon as there is a concurrence of desires—it languishes and vanishes, for fruition destroys it, as having only a carnal appetite, and such a one as is subject to satiety. Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed in proportion as it is desired, and it only grows up, thrives, and increases by enjoyment, as being of itself spiritual, and the soul is refined by the very practice of it. With this perfect friendship I cannot deny but that those wavering affections have formerly found some place in my breast, not to say a word of my friend Boëtius, who confesses but too much of it in his verses. Consequently, both these passions have taken possession of me, but so that I knew the one from the other, and never set them on a par, the first soaring aloft with majesty and looking down with disdain on the latter, stretching its pinions far below it.

As to marriage, besides its being a covenant, the entrance into which is altogether free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory, and having another dependence than on

* Ariosto, x, 7.

that of our own free will, and it being also a contract commonly made for other ends, there are a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread and interrupt the current of a lively affection, whereas in friendship there is no commerce or transaction but within itself.

Women supposed to be incapable of perfect friendship. Moreover, to say the truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to keep up that correspondence and communication which are necessary for cultivating this sacred tie; nor do they seem to be endued with that constancy of mind to bear the constraint of so hard and durable a knot. And really, if without this there could be such a free and voluntary familiarity contracted, where not only the soul might have this entire fruition, but the body also might share in the alliance, and the whole man be engaged in it, it is certain that the friendship would be more entire and complete by it. But there is no instance in which this sex ever yet attained to such perfection, and by the ancient schools it is denied it ever can.

And that other Grecian license is justly abhorred by our moralists, which, however, for having, according to their practice, so necessary a disparity of age, and differences of offices betwixt the lovers, bears no more proportion than the other to the perfect union and harmony that is here required. *Quis est enim iste amor amicitiae? Cur neque deformem adolescentem quisquam amat, neque formosum senem?**—“For what means this love of friendship? How comes it to pass that nobody loves a deformed youth, nor a

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., iv, 33.

handsome old man?" Neither do I conceive that the picture which the Academy gives of it will be a contradiction to my assertion, that the first fury inspired by the son of Venus in the heart of the lover upon the sight of blooming youth, to which they allow all the insolent and passionate efforts that an immoderate ardour can produce, was singly founded on an external beauty, the false image of corporeal generation; for it could not be founded on the mind, which was yet undiscoverable, being but now springing forth, and not of maturity to blossom; which fury, if it seized upon a mean spirit, the objects of its pursuit were riches, presents, preferments, and such sorry goods as are by no means approved. But, if this fury fell upon a more generous soul, the means used were also generous, such as philosophical instructions, precepts to revere religion, to obey the laws, to die for the good of one's country, to give instances of valour, prudence, and justice; the lover studying to render himself agreeable by the grace and beauty of his mind, that of his body being long ago decayed, and hoping by this mental society to establish a more firm and lasting contract. When this courtship had had its effect in its due season (for what they do not require in the lover—viz., that he should take time and use discretion in his courtship—they strictly require in the person loved, forasmuch as he is under a necessity to judge of internal beauty, difficult to know and discover) then there sprung up in the person beloved a desire of spiritual conception by the intervention of a spiritual beauty. This was the principal, the corporeal, accidental, and second causes, all the reverse of the lover. For this reason they prefer the person loved, prove that the gods do the same, and highly

blame the poet Æschylus for having spoken in the manner he did of the amours of Achilles and Patroclus. This general familiarity being once settled, supposing its most worthy proof to be predominant, and to perform its proper offices, they say that fromthence great benefit accrued, both to private persons and the public ; that it was the strength of those countries which admitted the practice of it, and the chief defence of justice and liberty. Witness the salutary amours of Harmodius and Aristogiton. They therefore call it sacred and divine, and think that it has no enemy but the violence of tyrants and the cowardice of the common people. In short, all that can be allowed in favour of the Academy is to say that it was an amour which terminated in friendship ; and this also agrees well enough with the Stoical definition of love: *Amorem conatum esse amicitiā faciendæ ex pulchritudinis specie*,* “ That love is an endeavour of contracting friendship by the splendour of beauty.”

The completest friendship characterized. I return to my definition of a species of friendship that is juster and more uniform than what has been mentioned. *Omniño amicitiā corroboratis jam confirmatisque et ingeniis, et ætatibus judicandæ sunt*,† “ There is no judging of friendship till the persons are arrived to the maturity of years and understanding.” As for the rest, what we commonly call friends and friendships are but acquaintances contracted, either occasionally or for some advantage, by means of which there happens an agreement of our minds. But in the friendship I am treating of, our souls mingle and interweave themselves one with

* Cic., Tusc. Quest., iv, 34.

† Cic. de Amicitiā, 20.

another so universally that there is no more sign of the cement by which they were first joined together. If I am pressed to give a reason why I loved him, I find it cannot be expressed otherwise than by saying, "Because it was he: because it was I." There was I know not what unaccountable power of destiny that brought about this union, beyond all that I can say in general or particular. We sought for each other long before we met by the characters we heard one of another, which wrought more upon our affections than, in reason, mere reports should do. I think, by some secret appointment of heaven, we loved to hear each other named. At our first meeting, which was accidental, at a city feast, we were all at once so taken with each other, so well acquainted, and so mutually obliging, that from thenceforward nothing was so dear to us as the one to the other. He wrote an excellent Latin satire, which is published, wherein he excuses and accounts for the suddenness of our acquaintance, and its being so soon brought to maturity. He said that, it being like to have so short a continuance, as it was contracted so late in life (for we were both full-grown men, and he the oldest by a year or two), there was no time to lose; nor was it to be regulated by the pattern of those effeminate and formal friendships that require so many precautions of a long preliminary conversation.

This is no other idea than that of itself, and can have no relation but to itself. It is not one particular consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand. It is I know not what quint-
The quint-essence of true friendship
 essence of all this mixture, which, having engrossed my whole will, carried it to be plunged and absorbed in his,

and which, having engrossed all his will, brought it back, with the like appetite and concurrence, to be plunged and absorbed in mine. I may truly say absorbed, having reserved nothing to ourselves that was our own, or that was either his or mine. When Lælius, in presence of the Roman consuls (who, after they had condemned Tiberius Gracchus, prosecuted all those who held correspondence with him), came to ask Caius Blossius, who was his chief friend, what he would have done for him, and that he made answer, "Everything," "How! everything?" exclaimed Lælius; "and what if he had commanded thee to set fire to our temples?" "He would never have laid that command on me," replied Blossius. "But what if he had?" said Lælius. "Why, if he had," said the other, "I would have obeyed him." If he was so perfect a friend to Gracchus as the histories report him to have been, he was under no necessity of offending the consuls by such a bold confession as the last, and might still have retained the assurance he had of Gracchus's good will. Nevertheless, they who accuse this as a seditious answer do not well understand this mystery, nor presuppose what is a fact, that he was now master of Gracchus's will, both by the power of a friend and the knowledge he had of the man. They were more friends than citizens, and more friends to one another than either friends or enemies to their country, or than friends to ambition and disturbance. Having absolutely resigned themselves to one another, each perfectly held the reins of the other's inclination, which also, they governed by virtue and guided by reason (without which it were altogether impossible to draw in the harness). Blossius's answer was such as it ought to have been. If either acted

hand over head, they were not friends according to my notion, either one to the other or to their own dear selves. As for the rest, this answer carries no worse sound than mine would do, if any one should ask me if my will commanded me to kill my daughter, would I kill her, and I should make answer that I would; for this carries no evidence of consent to do it. Because I do not in the least suspect my own will, and as little that of such a friend. It is not in the power of all the arguments in the world to dispossess me of the certainty I have of the intentions and opinions of my friend; nay, no one action of his, what face soever it might bear, could be represented to me of which I could not immediately discover the motive. Our souls have kept so even a pace together, and we have with such a fervent affection laid open the very bottom of our hearts to one another's view, that I not only know his as well as I do my own, but should certainly much rather trust my interest with him than with myself.

Let no one, therefore, rank other common friendships with such a one as his. Of those I have had as much experience as any one, and of the most perfect, too, of their kind. But I am not for confounding the rules of the one with those of the other, which whoever should be guilty of will find himself deceived. In those other ordinary friendships a man must act with greater prudence, precaution, and circumspection, the knot of such friendships being not so strong that a man can be sure it will not slip. "Love him," said Chilon,* "as if you were one

*The idea of
common
friendship.*

* Aulus Gellius, i, 3. Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Bias, attributes this saying to that wise man (i, 7), as Aristotl. had done

day to hate him; and hate him as if you were one day to love him." This precept, though so abominable in the sovereign friendship I am treating of, is of service in the practice of the ordinary common friendships, to which may most justly be applied an exclamation often used by Aristotle—viz., "O my friends! there is no friend."*

*Amongst
friends all
things are
common.*

In this sublime state of friendship, so hearty is the concurrence of our wills that the offices and benefits which are the support of the inferior class of friendship do not deserve so much as to be mentioned here; for in the very same manner as the friendship I bear to myself receives no increase, whatever I relieve myself withal in a case of necessity (say the Stoics what they will), and as I do not find myself obliged to myself for the service I do to myself, so the union of such friends being truly perfect makes them insensible of such obligations, and causes them to loathe and banish from their conversation the words benefit, obligation, acknowledgment, entreaty, thanks, and the like terms of distinction and difference. Everything being, in effect, common between them, as thoughts, judgments, estates, wives, children, honour and life, and their agreement being as entire as if it was but one soul in two bodies, they cannot be said, according to Aristotle's very proper definition,† either to lend or to

before in his Rhetoric (ii, 13), where we read the second article—viz., that a man should be hated as if some day hereafter he should be loved, which is not in Diogenes Laertius. As to the first article, that a man should only be loved as if he were some day to be hated, Cicero says that he cannot imagine such an expression came from Bias, one of the seven wise men. De Amicitia, 16.

* Diog. Laert., Life of Aristotle, v, 21.

† Ibid., v, 20.

give anything to one another. This is the very reason why the legislators, to honour marriage with some imaginary resemblance of this divine union, prohibit all gifts between the husband and wife; by which they would have it inferred that all they both had ought to be the property of each, and that they have nothing of which to make a separate dividend.

If, in the friendship of which I treat, the one could give to the other, he who received the favour would thereby lay his companion under the obligation. For each of them seeking above all things to be useful to one another, he that furnishes the matter and the occasion is the liberal man, in giving his friend the satisfaction of doing that for him which he does most desire. When the philosopher Diogenes wanted money, he said that he re-demanded it of his friends, and not demanded it.* And, to let you see a full proof of this practice, I will here relate an instance of it in ancient history, which is very singular. Eudamidas, a Corinthian, who was a poor man, had two friends who were wealthy—viz., Charixenus, a Syconian, and Aretheus, a Corinthian—to whom, on his death-bed, he left these legacies, by his last will and testament—viz.,† “I leave it to Aretheus to keep my mother and to maintain her in her old age; to Charixenus to provide a husband for my daughter, and to give her as good a portion as he can; and in case one of these friends happens to die, I substitute the survivor in his place.” They who first saw this will made themselves very merry with it, but the executors being made acquainted with it accepted of the

* Diog. Laert., in the Life of Diogenes the Cynic, vi, 46.

† This instance is taken from a dialogue of Lucian entitled Toxaris.

trust with a particular pleasure, and one of them, viz., Charixenus, dying within five days after, Aretheus, on whom the charge of both thereby devolved, took special care of the mother, and, of five talents, which he had in bank, he gave two and a half in marriage with an only daughter he had of his own, and the other two and a half in marriage with the daughter of Eudamidas, and the nuptials of both were solemnised on the same day.

Perfect friendship is indivisible. This instance is very full to the point, were it not for one objection—viz., the number of friends. For the perfect friendship whereof I am speaking is indivisible. Each of the two gives himself up so entirely to his friend that he has nothing left to dispose of elsewhere: on the contrary, he is sorry that he is not double, treble, or quadruple, and that he has not a plurality of souls and of wills, to confer them all upon this one object.

Ordinary friendships may be shared by many persons. As for the ordinary friendships, they are divisible. One may love the beauty of this, the courtesy of that person, the liberality of a third, the paternal affection of one, the brotherly love of another, and so of the rest; but as for this friendship which engrosses the whole soul, and governs it with absolute sway, it is impossible it should be twofold. If two at the same time should call on you for help, to which of them would you run? If they desired contrary offices of you, how would you order it? Should the one charge you with the keeping of a secret, which it was proper they both should know, how would you come off?

The friendship which is of the singular and sovereign kind dissolves all other obligations. The secret which I

have sworn not to reveal to another I may without perjury communicate to him who is not another, but myself. It is miraculous enough for a man to double himself, but they who talk of trebling themselves know not what they say. Nothing is extreme that has its like. And whoever presupposes that, of two persons, I love one as much as the other, and that they mutually love one another, and love me as much as I love them, he multiplies into a fraternity the greatest and most single of units, of which one alone is also the rarest thing in the world to find. The remaining part of this story agrees very well with what I was saying; for Eudamidas, as a grace and favour to his friends, employs them in his necessity, and leaves them heirs to this liberality of his, which consists in giving them an opportunity of doing him a good office. And, without doubt, the power of friendship is more eminently apparent in this action of his than in that of Aretheus. In fine, these are effects not to be imagined by such as have not had experience of them, and therefore I highly honour the answer of the young soldier to Cyrus, who, when he asked him what he would take for a horse with which he had just won the prize at a race, and whether he would exchange him for a kingdom, "No, truly, sir," said he; "but I would freely part with him to gain a friend, could I find a man worthy of such a relation."* He was right enough in saying "could I find," for though it is an easy matter to find persons qualified for a superficial acquaintance, yet, in such a league of friendship as this,

A singular and prime friendship dissolves all other obligations.

* Cyropædia, viii, 3.

wherein the negotiation is carried on from the very bottom of the heart, without any reserve, it is requisite that all the springs and movements of it should be clear and perfectly sure.

What is necessary in confederacies. In confederacies which hold but by one end, or have but one point to serve, there needs nothing more than to make provision for the imperfections which particularly concern that end. It can be of no moment what religion my physician is of, or my lawyer, this being a consideration quite foreign to the offices of friendship which they owe me.

And in domestic acquaintance. And I am altogether as indifferent as to my domestic acquaintance with my servants: I am not so inquisitive to know whether my footman be chaste as whether he be diligent, and am not so much in fear that my chairman is a gamester as that he is weak, or my cook a swearer as that he is ignorant. I do not take upon me to dictate what others should do; there are enough that are guilty of this. I only give an account of what I do in my own house. *Mihi sic usus est: tibi, ut opus est facto, face.**

In table-talk I prefer the merry man before the wise one, and in common conversation the most able speaker, even though he does not always mean what he says; and so of other things. If he that was found riding on a hobby-horse,† at play with his children, desired the man who surprised him at it to say nothing of the matter till he came to be a father

* Terence, Heaut., act i, scene 1, v, 28.

† Agesilaus, who was found playing thus with his children. Plutarch, in the Life of Agesilaus.

himself, imagining that the passion of fondness which would then arise in his soul would render him a more proper judge of such an action, so I would wish to be read by such as have had experience of what I say; but, knowing how different such friendship is from the way of the world, and how hard it is to be found, I do not expect to meet with any person qualified to be a judge of the thing. For even those discourses left us on this subject by the ancients are flat and languid, according to my notion of the matter. And in this point the effects surpass the precepts of philosophy. *Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico*,* “There is no pleasure equal to that given by a pleasant friend.” Menander† pronounced that man happy who had the good fortune to meet with the shadow of a friend; and, indeed, he had good reason for saying so, if he spoke by experience. For, in truth, if I compare all the rest of my life, though, God be thanked, I have always lived easy and pleasant, and (excepting the loss of such a friend) exempt from any grievous affliction, and in great tranquillity of mind, having been contented with my natural and original conveniences, without being solicitous for others—if I compare it all, I say, to those four years that I had the enjoyment of the sweet conversation of this excellent man, it is all but smoke and one dark tedious night. From the day that I lost him—

—————“*Quem semper acerbum,*

Semper honoratum (sic Dî voluistis!) habebō.”‡

“This, though bitter, is Heaven’s decree, and I revere it”—
I have only languished in life, and the very pleasures that

* Hor., Sat. i, 44.

† Plutarch, Brotherly Love.

‡ Æneid, v, 49.

present themselves to me, instead of comforting me, double my affliction for the loss of him. We were half sharers in everything; and, methinks, by outliving him, I defraud him of his share.

“Nec jus esse ulla me voluptate hic frui
Decrevi, tantisper dum ille abest, meus particeps.”*

“And this against myself I have decreed,
Nothing of pleasure ought my soul to feed
Whilst he is absent from my dear embrace
Who in all joys my dear co-partner was.”

I was actually so constituted, and so accustomed to be his second part at all times and places, that, methinks, I have but one half of myself left.

“Illam meæ si partem animæ tulit
Maturior vis, quis moror altera?
Nec carius æque, nec superstes
Integer. Ille dies utramque
Duxit ruinam”†

“Should she be taken, why should I remain? Let the last day be the same to both of us.” There is no action or imagination of mind wherein I do not miss him, as much as if he had been really created for me; for, as he infinitely surpassed me in virtue, and every other accomplishment, he also did the same in the devoirs of friendship.

“Quis desiderio sit pudor, aut modus
Tam cari capitis?‡

“O misero frater adempte mihi!
Omnia tecum unâ perierunt gaudia nostra,

* Montaigne has here made some little variation in Terence's words, for the sake of applying them to his subject. Terence, *Heaut.*, act i, scene 1, v. 97, 98.

† Hor., *Ode ii*, 17, 5.

‡ Hor., *Ode i*, 24, 1.

Quæ tuus in vitâ, dulcis alebat amor.
 Tu mea, tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater ;
 Tecum una tota est nostra sepulta anima.*

“ Ah ! brother, what a life did I commence,
 From that sad day when thou wast snatch'd from hence !
 Those joys are gone which, while thou tarriedst here,
 By thy reviving converse nourish'd were.
 With thee departing, my good fortune fled,
 And all my soul with thee was buried ;
 The Muses at thy funeral I forsook,
 And of all joy my leave for ever took.
 Dearer than life ! am I so wretched then,
 Never to hear, or speak to thee again ?
 Nor see those lips now frozen up by death ?
 Yet I will love thee to my latest breath !”

But let us hear a little what this lad of sixteen years of age says : “ Having discovered that those memoirs upon the famous edict of January [mentioned towards the beginning of this chapter] are already printed, and with a bad design, by some who make it their business to molest and to subvert the state of our government, not caring whether they amend it or no, and that they have published them in a miscellany of other pieces of their own writing, I desisted from my design of inserting them here. And to the end that the memory of the author may not suffer with such as were not intimate enough with him to have a thorough knowledge of his opinions and his performances, I hereby give them to understand that this subject was treated by him in his youth, and that only by way of exercising his genius, it being a common subject that has been canvassed by writers in a

* Catullus, lxxviii.

thousand places. I make no doubt but he himself believed what he wrote, being so very conscientious that he would not be guilty of telling a lie, even in jest; and I know, moreover, that, if it had been put to his choice, he had rather have been born at Venice than at Sarlac; and he had reason. But he had another maxim deeply imprinted in his mind—very religiously to obey and submit to the laws under which he was born. There never was a better subject, nor a greater well-wisher to the tranquillity of his country, nor one that more opposed the commotions and innovations of the time he lived in; so that he would much rather have employed his talents to suppress them than to have inflamed them more; for he had a mind formed after the model of other times than these..





OF CANNIBALS.

WHEN King Pyrrhus entered Italy, and saw the order of the Roman army that was sent to meet him, "I know not," said he, "what kind of barbarians" (for so the Greeks call other nations) "these may be, but the disposition of the army which I now see has nothing of the barbarian in it." The same was said by the Greeks concerning the army which Flaminius sent into their country; and by Philip, when he discovered from an eminence the order and distribution of the Roman camp in his kingdom, under Publius Sulpicius Galba. By this it appears how cautious men ought to be of taking things upon trust from vulgar opinion, and that we are to judge by the eye of reason, and not from common report.

I had a man with me a long time who had lived ten or twelve years in that other world lately discovered, in that part of it which Villegaignon went after, which he surnamed Antarctic France. This discovery of so vast a country seems to be of very great importance; and we are not sure that there may not be another discovered hereafter, so many greater men than we having been deceived in this. I am afraid that our eyes

The discovery of the New World.

are bigger than our bellies, and that our curiosity is greater than our capacity. We grasp at everything, and catch nothing but air.

The island of Atlantis. Plato brings in Solon* telling a story which he had heard from the priests of Saïs, in Egypt, that in the old times, even before the flood, there was a great island called Atlantis, directly at the mouth of the Strait of Gibraltar, which was bigger than Africa and Asia both together, and that the kings of this same country, who not only possessed this island, but had extended themselves so far into the continent that it extended the breadth of Africa as far as Egypt, and the length of Europe as far as Tuscany, attempted to encroach even upon Asia, and to subdue all the nations bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, as far as the gulf of the Black Sea, and for this purpose traversed Spain, Gaul, and Italy, even to Greece, where they were checked by the Athenians; but that, some time after, both the Athenians and they, with their island, were swallowed by the deluge.

Deluges the cause of great alterations in the habitable world. It is very probable that extraordinary rising inundations made strange alterations in the habitations of the earth, as it is said that Sicily was rent by the sea from the mainland of Italy:—

“Hæc loca, vî quondam et vastâ convulsa ruinâ,
Dissiluisse ferunt, cum protenus utraqûe tellus,
Una foret,”†

* Timæus.

† *Æneid*, iii, 414, 416, 417. Florio has a rugged but quaint translation of this passage:—

“Men say, sometimes, *this* land by *that* forsaken,
And *that* by *this*, were split and ruin-shaken,
Whereas till then both lands as one were taken.”

—Cyprus from Syria; the isle of Negropont from the mainland of Bœotia; and in other parts joined lands together that before were separate, filling up the channels that were betwixt them with mud and sand :

———“Sterilisque diu palus, aptaque remis,
Vicinas urbes alit, et grave sentit aratrum.”*

“A barren marsh, fit for boats, now bears cities, and feels the ploughshare.” But it is not very probable that the new world lately discovered was that island, for it almost touched upon Spain; and that that inundation should have forced such a prodigious tract so far off as about twelve hundred leagues from it is incredible; besides that, our modern navigators have already, in a manner, discovered it to be no island, but terra firma, and joining to the East Indies on one side, and with the lands under the two poles on the other side; or, if it be separated from them, that it is by too narrow a strait and interval to deserve the name of an island. It seems that in those great bodies, as it is in ours, there are two motions, some natural, others febrific. When I consider the impression that has been made in my time by our river Dordoigne towards the right hand side as it runs down, and that, in these twenty years past, it has gained so much, and sapped the foundation of many buildings, I plainly see it to be owing to some extraordinary agitation; for, if it had always taken this course, or was to do so hereafter, the present figure of the world would be totally changed. But rivers are apt to alter their course: sometimes they overflow on one side, sometimes on the other, and

* Hor. Art. Poet., 65.

at other times quietly keep their channels. I do not speak of sudden inundations, the cause of which we clearly know. In Medoc, by the sea-side, my brother, the Sieur d'Arsac, sees an estate he had there buried under the sands thrown up by the sea, where the tops of some houses are yet to be seen; his revenues and domains are converted into poor pastures. The inhabitants say that for some years past the sea has drove so vehemently upon their coast that they have lost four leagues of land. These sands are harbingers of its approach. And we now see great shoals of moving sands that roll on half a league before it, and make a lodgment on the country.

An island discovered by the Carthaginians. The other testimony of antiquity which some produce for this discovery is in Aristotle—at least if that little history of unheard miracles be his. He there says that certain Carthaginians, having crossed the Atlantic Seas beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, after a long navigation, discovered a great fruitful island, covered all over with wood, and watered with broad deep rivers, far remote from any mainland; and that they, and others after them, allured by the goodness and fertility of the soil, went thither with their wives and children, and began to plant a colony. But the senate of Carthage, perceiving their country by degrees to grow thin of people, issued out an express prohibition that no more should transport themselves thither, upon pain of death, and also expelled the new inhabitants, for fear, as it is said, lest, in process of time, they should multiply to such a degree as to supplant themselves and ruin their state. But this relation of Aristotle's no more agrees with our new-found country than the other. This man-

servant* of mine is a plain honest fellow, and therefore the more likely to tell truth. Your men of fine parts, indeed, are much more curious in their observations, and discover more particulars ; but then they make comments upon them, and to give the better air to their glosses, and to gain them a credit, they cannot help making a little alteration in the story. They never represent things to you simply as they are, but turn and wind them according to the light they appeared in to themselves ; and, in order to gain a reputation to their judgment, and to draw you in to trust it, they are apt to lengthen and amplify the subject with something of their own invention. Either a man must be of undoubted veracity, or so simple that he has not wherewithal to contrive to give an air of truth to fiction ; and he must be wedded to no opinion. Such a one was my man, and, besides, he has divers times showed me several sailors and merchants who went the same voyage with him. Therefore I content myself with his information, without inquiring what the cosmographers say of it. We would have topographers to give us a particular account of the places where they were. But, because they have had this advantage over us of seeing the Holy Land, they would have the privilege, forsooth, of telling us stories of all the other parts of the world. I would have every one write what he knows, and as much as he knows of it, not only on this, but

*Qualities
requisite in
a historian.*

*Advice to
authors to
write only
on a sub-
ject which
they know.*

* *Cet homme que j'avois estoit homme simple et grossier.* Florio translates *homme* "servant," Hazlitt as "man." In the superfine English of the eighteenth century he becomes "this Domestick."

on all other subjects.* For a man may have some particular knowledge or experience of the nature of such a river, or such a spring, who, as to other things, knows no more than what everybody does, and nevertheless, for the sake of propagating this smattering knowledge of his, he will undertake to write a whole history of natural philosophy : a vice which is the source of several great inconveniences.

What barbarism is taken for. Moreover, I find, to return to my subject, by what I am told of it, that there is nothing wild and barbarous in this nation, excepting that every one gives the denomination of barbarism to what is not the custom of his country. As, indeed, we have no other level for aiming at truth and reason but the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the country wherein we live. There is always the true religion, there is perfect government, and there the use of all things is complete and perfect. There the people are wild, just as we call fruits wild which nature produces of itself, and in its ordinary progress ; whereas in truth we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice and diverted from the common order. In the former, their genuine and most useful and natural virtues and properties are vigorous and sprightly ; but the latter are degenerated, by our accommodating them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And yet our palates ever find a flavour and delicacy, excellent even to emulation of the best of ours, in several fruits of those countries that grow without cultivation. It is not reasonable

* It would be a great thing to have a critical Review conducted on this principle.

that art should gain the pre-eminence of our great and powerful mother, Nature. We have so surcharged the beauty and richness of her works by our own inventions that we have almost smothered her. Yet, wherever she shines in her own pure lustre, she wonderfully disgraces our vain and frivolous attempts.

“Et veniunt hederæ sponte suâ melius ;
Surgit et in solis formosior arbutus antris ; . . .
Et volucres nullâ dulcius arte canunt.”*

“The ivy thrives best when left to itself; the wild strawberry in rocky shades; and wild birds sing better than art can teach them.” With all our skill, we are not able to frame such a nest as that of the least of the small birds, neither for its contexture, beauty, nor convenience; nor can we weave such a web as the poor spider does. All things, says Plato,† are produced either by nature, or by chance, or by art. The largest and the most beautiful by one or other of the two first, the least and imperfect ones by the last.

These nations, then, seem to me to be so far barbarous as very little care has been taken to form their minds, and as their native simplicity is still unimproved. They are still governed by the laws of nature, as yet very little adulterated by ours, but remaining in such purity that I am sometimes sorry that we were not acquainted with the people sooner, when there were men better able to judge of them than we are. I am vexed that Lycurgus and Plato had no knowledge of them; for, in my opinion, what we see in those nations by experience does

* Propert., i, Eleg. 2, 10.

† De Legibus, 665.

not only surpass all the paintings with which the poets have embellished the golden age, and all their inventions in representing the then happy state of mankind, but also the conception and desire of philosophy itself. Such a native and pure simplicity, as we see in them by experience, could never enter into their imagination, nor could they ever believe that society could be maintained with so little human artifice and cement.

Excellency of their policy. Should I say to Plato, it is a nation wherein there is no sort of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no title of magistracy or of political superiority; no use of service, riches or poverty; no contracts, no successions, no dividends, no occupations but idle ones; no respect of kindred, but all common; no clothes, no agriculture, no metal, no use of wine or corn, and that they never heard the mention of such words as signify lying, treason, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, and pardon, how far would he find his imaginary republic short of this perfection! *Viri a diis recentes*,* "Fresh from God's hands." *Hos natura modos primum dedit*,† "Nature first showed us the way." For the rest, they live in a very pleasant country and temperate climate; so that, as my authors tell me, it is rare to see a man sick there; and they assured me they never saw any of the natives either paralytic, blear-eyed, toothless, or decrepit with age. The situation of their country is all along by the sea-shore, being shut up on the land side by great high mountains,

* This quotation is not found in the old editions, but was added in the copy corrected by Montaigne.

† Virg. Georg., ii, 20.

from which it is one hundred leagues or thereabouts to the sea. Here are fish and flesh in abundance that have no resemblance with what comes to our tables; and they use no cookery, but plain boiling, broiling, roasting, or baking on the coals. The first man that ever came to them on horseback, though he had made an acquaintance with them by several voyages, so frightened them by his appearance of half man and half horse, that they killed him with their arrows before they discovered their mistake. Their *Their* buildings, which are very long, and capable of *buildings.* entertaining 200 or 300 people, are made of the bark of tall trees, fixed with one end to the ground, and leaning to and supporting one another at the top, like some of our barns, the roof of which descends almost to the ground, and serves instead of the side walls. They have wood so hard that they cleave it and make swords of it, and grills to broil their meat on. Their beds, which are of cotton, are hung up to the roof, like our seamen's hammocks, and hold but one person; for the wives lie apart from their husbands. They rise with the sun, and immediately fall to eating, *Their* when they make one meal, which serves them for *meals,* the whole day. They do not then drink (as *drink, and* Suidas reports of some people of the East, who *bread.* never drank at their meals), but they drink several times in a day, and to a hearty pitch. Their liquor is made of a certain root, and is of the colour of claret; and they always drink it lukewarm. It will not keep above two or three days, has a brisk savour, is not at all heady, is very good for the stomach, but proves laxative to those who are not used to it, though to those who are it is a very pleasant beverage.

Instead of bread, they make use of a certain white compound, like coriander comfits, which I have tasted, and found to be *Their pas-* sweet, but a little flat. They spend the whole *times.* day in dancing. The young men go out to hunt the wild beast with bows and arrows. Part of their women, in the meantime, are employed in warming their drink, which is their chief employment. One of their old men, in the morning before they fall to eating, preaches to the whole household in common, walking from one end of the house to the other, several times repeating the same sentences, till he has gone all round the family (for their buildings are at least 100 yards long), to whom he only recommends two things—valour against their enemies, and love to their wives. And they never fail to put them in mind how much they are the more obliged to the latter, because it is the women who provide them their drink warm, and well relished. In several places, and at my house amongst others, may be seen the form of their beds, swords, and wooden gauntlets, with which they guard their wrists in battle, and their canes hollow at one end, by the sound of which they keep time in their dancing. They shave all their hairy parts, and much more nicely than we, without any razor but what is of wood or stone. They believe the soul to be eternal, and that those who have deserved well of the gods are lodged in that part of the heaven where the sun rises, and the damned on the western side.

Priests and prophets, their morality, and how they are treated. They have I know not what kind of priests and prophets, who live in the mountains, and are seldom seen by the people. Whenever they come down to them there is a great festival, and a solemn assembly of the people from many villages

(or barns, as I have described them), which are about a French league from one another. The prophet then speaks to them in public, exhorting them to their virtue and their duty; but their whole system of morality consists in these two articles—resolution in war, and affection to their wives. He also foretells to them things to come, and what they must expect will be the event of their enterprises, and he either persuades them to or dissuades them from war; but woe be to him if he does not guess right! for if it happens to them otherwise than he foretold, they condemn him for a false prophet, and, if they can catch him, cut him in a thousand pieces. For this reason, if any one finds himself mistaken, he keeps out of sight. Divination is a gift of God; therefore to abuse it is an imposture that ought to be punished.

Among the Scythians, when their diviners failed in their predictions, they were bound hand and foot, and laid on a cart laden with furze, and drawn by oxen, on which they were burnt to death.*

False prophets burnt by the Scythians.

They who only meddle with things within the sphere of human capacity are excusable in doing the best they can; but as for those other people that come and delude us with assurances of an extraordinary faculty beyond our understanding, ought they not to be punished for not making good their promise, and for the temerity of their imposture?

They have wars with the nations that are beyond their mountains, farther within the mainland, to which they go stark naked, without any weapons but bows or wooden

* Herodot., iv.

swords, pointed at the end like the heads of our javelins. Their obstinacy in battles is wonderful, as they never end without great effusion of blood ; for they know not what it is to be frightened and to run away. Every one brings home for a trophy the head of some enemy that he has killed, *They eat* which he sets up over the door of his house. *their pri- soners.* After having treated their prisoners a good while in the handsomest manner they can think of, the person who has the property of them invites a great number of his acquaintance, and when they are come ties a cord to one of the prisoner's arms, by one end of which he holds him some paces distance, that he may not hurt him, and gives to the friend he loves best the other arm to hold in the same manner, and then they two, in presence of the whole assembly, run him through the body with their swords. This done, they roast him and eat him in common, and send some slices of him to their absent friends. They do not do this, as it is imagined, for the sake of nourishment, as the Scythians did of old, but to denote the last degree of revenge ; as will appear by this. For, perceiving that, when the Portuguese had taken any prisoners, they inflicted another sort of death upon them, which was to set them in the earth up to the waist, to let fly their arrows at the upper part, and then to hang them, they were of opinion that these people of the other world (as they had made their neighbours acquainted with a great many vices, and far outstripped them in all sorts of mischief) had a reason for taking this sort of revenge, and that it must be more severe than theirs, and so began to leave their old way and to follow this. I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous

cruelty of such an action, but rather that, while we judge so nicely of their faults, we are so blind to our own. I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than when he is dead; in tearing a body limb from limb, by racks and torments, while it has the sense of feeling; in roasting it by degrees, in causing it to be bit and worried by dogs and swine (as we have not only read but lately seen, not between veteran enemies, but between neighbours and fellow-citizens, and what is worse, under pretence of piety and religion), than in roasting and eating it after it is dead. Chrysippus* and Zeno, the two heads of the Stoical sect, were of opinion that there was no hurt in making use of our dead bodies to any purpose whatsoever, to serve our occasions and even for our nourishment, as our ancestors, when besieged by Cæsar in the city Alexia, resolved to keep themselves from being starved to death by the bodies of their old men, women, and other persons incapable of bearing arms.

“Vascones, ut fama est, alimentis talibus usi
Produxere animas.”†

“’Tis said the Gascons prolonged their lives with such nourishment.” And the physicians scruple not to make use of human flesh every way, either inwardly or outwardly, for our health. But the savages here treated of never maintained any opinion so enormous as to excuse treason, disloyalty, tyranny, and cruelty, which are our familiar vices. We may, therefore, style them barbarous, with an eye to the laws of reason, but not in respect to ourselves, who exceed them in all kinds of barbarity.

* Diog. Laert., Chrysippus, vii, sect. 188.

† Juv. Sat., xv, 93.

Their warfare is quite noble and generous, and is as excusable and commendable as that human malady is capable of, it having no foundation with them but the sole jealousy of virtue. They do not contend for the conquest of new lands ; for those they possess still enjoy their natural fertility, which furnishes them, without labour and toil, with such an abundance of all necessaries that they have no need to enlarge their borders. They are also happy in this circumstance, that they desire no more than what the necessities of nature demand, everything beyond that being to them superfluous. Men of the same age generally call one another brothers, those who are younger children, and the old men are fathers to all. These leave to their heirs in common the full possession of their goods and chattels, without any division or any other title than what Nature bestows upon her creatures at bringing them into the world. If their neighbours come over the mountains to attack them, and obtain a victory over them, all that the conquerers gain by it is glory, and the advantage of proving their superiority in valour and prowess ; for they take no spoils from the vanquished, but return home to their own country, where they have no want of any necessaries, nor of that happy knowledge how to live contentedly in their condition. And these in their turn do the same. They demand no other ransom of the prisoners they take than the confession and acknowledgment of being vanquished. But there is not a man of them to be found in a whole century who had not rather perish than abate an ace of the grandeur of his invincible courage, either by a look or word. There is not one who had not rather be killed and eaten than so

much as open his mouth to desire he may not be so treated. They indulge them with full liberty, that their lives may be so much the dearer to them, yet commonly accost them with menaces of their approaching death, of the torments which they are to suffer, of the preparations making for that purpose, of the mutilation of their members, and of the feast that is to be made on their carcases. And all this they do for no other purpose but to extort some gentle or submissive word from them, or to put it into their heads to make their escape, for the sake of gaining the advantage of having terrified them, and shaken their constancy. And, indeed, if the thing be rightly considered, it is in this point only that true victory consists.

———“Victoria nulla est,
Quam quæ confessos animo quoque subjugat hostes.”*

‘There is no victory so complete as when the vanquished own its justice.’ That warlike nation the Hungarians did not pursue their point formerly beyond reducing the enemy to beg quarter; for after they had forced them to this submission, they let them go without injury, or ransom, or any greater demand upon them than their promise not to bear arms against them for the future. We have several advantages over our enemies that are borrowed and not our own. To have stronger arms and legs than another man is a qualification for a porter, but not for a man of true valour. The disposition of soldiers in battle array is a lifeless corporeal quality; if our enemy stumble, or his eyes are dazzled with the light of the sun, it is owing to fortune; and to be a

* Claudian, De Sexto Consulatu Honorii, 248.

good fencer is a qualification of art and science that may be attained to by a coward and a poltroon.

The true merit of a man and his superiority over his fellows. The estimation and value of a man consist in the heart and the will ; and therein lies his true honour. Valour is the stability, not of legs and arms, but of courage and the mind ; it does not consist in the goodness of our horse, or our armour, but in ourselves. The man who falls obstinately courageous, *si succiderit, de genu pugnât*,* if his legs fail him, will fight upon his knees. He who does not flinch, be he in ever such imminent danger of death, and who, when giving up the ghost, looks his enemy in the face with a stern and disdainful countenance, he is conquered not by us, but by fortune ; nay, he is killed, not conquered ; the most valiant being sometimes the most unfortunate. There are *Certain defeats more meritorious than the greatest victories.* actually some defeats which may compare even with victories for triumph. As for those four sister victories, the most signal which the sun ever beheld with its eyes—viz., those of Salamis, Platea, Mycale, and Sicily—they durst not set all their glory united in opposition to that of the defeat of King Leonidas and his army at the pass of Thermopylæ. Who ever ran with a more glorious emulation or ambition to the winning than the Captain Ischolas did to the losing of a battle ? Who ever found out a more ingenious and curious stratagem for his self-preservation than he did for his own destruction ? He was commissioned to defend a certain pass of the Peloponnesus against the Arcadians ; but finding

* Senec., De Providentiâ.

it impossible for him to do it, upon observation of the nature of the place, and the inequality of his forces to those of the enemy, and being sure that no man who faced the enemy there must ever expect to come back ; and, on the other hand, thinking it would be a reproach to his valour and magnanimity, and to the Lacedæmonian name, to fail in his commission, he chose a medium betwixt the two extremes, after this manner.* The youngest and most active of his soldiers he reserved for the defence and service of their country, and sent them home ; and with the rest, whose loss would not be of so much consequence, he resolved to maintain this pass, and, by the death of them, to make the enemy to pay as dear a purchase as possible for their entry, as it accordingly fell out : for, being instantly surrounded on all sides by the Arcadians, after having made a great slaughter of them, he and his men were all put to the sword. Is any trophy erected to the victors which is not rather due to the vanquished ? The true way to victory is by fighting, not by coming off ; and the honour of valour consists in the battle, not in the defeat.

To return to my story. These prisoners are so far from being humbled by anything done to them, that, on the contrary, during the two or three months that they are kept under guard, they appear with a brisk countenance, urge their keepers to make haste to bring them to the test, defy, rail at them, reproach them with cowardice, and with the number of battles they

The constancy of savages taken prisoners.

* Diodorus Siculus, xv, 7, where the action of Ischolas is compared to that of King Leonidas, which Montaigne extols above the most celebrated victories.

have lost. I have a song made by one of these prisoners, wherein he says, "They shall be welcome to meet, one and all, to dine upon him, and thereby eat their fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh had served to feed and nourish him. These muscles," says he, "this flesh, and these veins, they are your own. Poor souls as you are! you little think that the substance of the limbs of your ancestors is here still. Do but mind the taste, and you will perceive the relish of your own flesh." This is a composition that has nothing of the taste of barbarism. They who paint him dying after being stabbed, paint the prisoner spitting in the faces of his executioners, and making mouths at them; and, in truth, they never cease to brave and defy them, both by looks and language, to the very last gasp. Now, without any lying, these men, compared to us, are very savage; for, in good faith, either they must needs be such, or else we must, there being a wonderful difference betwixt their manners and ours.

Their wives and the nature of their jealousy. The men here have a plurality of wives, and the more eminent they are for their valour, the more wives they have. There is one very extraordinary thing to be observed in their married state—viz., that, as the jealousy of our wives excites them to hinder us from the friendship and favour of other women, their wives have the same emulation to procure that happiness for their husbands; for, being more careful to promote the honour of their husbands than of any one thing besides, they seek out very eagerly for as many companions as they can find for the husband, it being a testimony of his valour. Our wives will say this is monstrous; but it is not so. It is a virtue truly

matrimonial, though of the highest form. We find in the Bible that Sarah the wife of Abraham, and Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, furnished their husbands with their beautiful maids; and Livia favoured Augustus to her own prejudice; while Stratonice,* the wife of King Dejotarus, not only did so, but carefully brought up all the children he thus had, and helped† them to succeed to their father's dominions. And, lest it should be thought that all this is done merely from a servile obligation to their customs, and by the impression of the authority of their ancient practice, without reason and without judgment, and for want of sense to take another course, it is necessary in this place to give some touches of their capacity. Besides what I just now repeated from one of their military songs, *Love-songs of an American savage.* I have another, a love-song of theirs, which begins in this manner—viz., “Stay, adder, stay, that by thy likeness my sister may draw the fashion and work of a rich belt for me to make a present of to my sweetheart, by which means thy beauty and thy disposition may at all times give thee the preference before all other serpents.” The first couplet, “Stay, adder,” etc., makes the burden of the song. Now I converse enough with poetry to judge thus much, that not only there is nothing barbarous in this thought, but that it is perfectly Anacreontic. Their language, moreover, is soft, and of a pleasing accent, resem-

* Plutarch, in his treatise of the virtuous deeds of women.

† “Presta non seulement à l'usage de son mary un fort belle ieune fille de chambre qui la servoit, mais en nourrit soigneusement les enfans, et leur fait l'espaule à succeder aux estats de leur pere.”

bling the termination of the Greek. Three of these people, *What some of the savages who came to France thought of our manners.* foreseeing how dear the knowledge of the corruption of this part of the world would one day cost their happiness and repose, and that this correspondence would in the end prove their ruin, as I suppose it to be already in a fair way of doing so (wretched men ! to suffer themselves to be deluded with desire of novelty, and to leave their own serene sky to come and gaze at ours), were at Roan when the late King Charles IX was there. The monarch himself talked to them a good while, and they were made to see our fashions, our pomp, and the form of a fine city ; after which somebody asked their opinion, and wanted to know of them what things they most admired of all they had seen. To which they made answer, three things, of which I am sorry I have forgot the third, but two I yet remember. They said, in the first place, they thought it very strange that so many tall men, wearing great beards, strong and well armed about the king's person (by whom it is like they meant his Swiss guards), should submit to obey a child, and did not rather choose out one among themselves to command ; secondly, that they had taken notice of men amongst us who were fat and crammed with all manner of good things, whilst their halves* were begging at the gates, lean and half starved with hunger and poverty ; and they wondered how these necessitous halves could put up with such unjust fare, and not take the others by the throat or set fire to their houses.

I talked with one of them a good while, but I had so

* It is an idiom in the Indian language to call men the half of one another.

sorry an interpreter, who was so perplexed by his stupidity to apprehend my meaning, that I could get nothing of any moment out of him. Asking of what advantage his superiority over the people was to him (for he was a captain, and our mariners stiled him king), he told me, "To march at the head of them to war." And demanding further of him how many men he had to follow him, he showed me a space of ground, to signify as many as could stand in such a compass, which might be four or five thousand men. Then putting the question to him whether or no his authority expired with the war, he told me, "This part of it remained, that when he went to visit the villages of his dependence, they made paths for him through their thickest woods, so that he could pass from one place to another with ease." And, upon the whole, this was not a bad thing. If you ask why, I answer, because they wear no breeches.*

* "Tout cela ne va pas trop mal ; mais quoi ! ils ne portent point de hault de chausses." Florio has it, "All that is not verie ille ; but what of that ? they wear no kind of breeches nor hosen."





OF DEMOCRITUS AND HERACLITUS.



THE judgment is a tool,* or rather a touchstone to try all subjects by, and will have an oar in every boat ; which is the reason that in these Essays I take hold of all occasions to exercise it. If it

The judgment active in every-thing.

happen to be a subject I do not understand, I try, however, sounding at a distance, and, finding it too deep for my stature, I keep on the shore ; and this knowledge, that a man can proceed no further, is one effect of its operation, even in those who are the most conceited. One while, in an idle and frivolous subject, I try if it will find out matter whereof to compose a body, and then to prop and support it. Another while I employ it in a noble but knotty subject, wherein the judgment has nothing to introduce of its own, the way being so trodden that it must of necessity walk in the steps of another. In such a case the judgment is to take the way that seems best, and of a thousand paths to determine that this or that was the best chosen. I take that argument which Fortune first presents me ; they are all alike to me ; I never design to go through any of them, for I

* *Est un util à tous subjects, et se mesle partout*, "is an instrument," says Florio. I have preserved Cotton's translation, as being more easily understood.

never see the whole of anything ; neither do they who promise to let us see it. Of a hundred members and faces that everything has, I take one sometimes to look it over only, another while to rip up the skin, and sometimes to pinch it to the bones. I give a stab, not very wide, but as deep as I can, and am for the most part tempted to take it in hand by some absolute gracefulness I discover in it. Did I know myself less, and was I mistaken in my inability, I might, perhaps, venture to handle something or other to the bottom ; but, sprinkling here one word and there another, patterns from several pieces and scattered without design and without a promise, I am not responsible for them or obliged to keep close to them without deviating at my own liberty and pleasure, and giving up myself to doubt and uncertainty, and to my own predominant ignorance.* Every mo-
 tion lays us open. The very same soul of Cæsar
 that discovered itself so plainly in marshalling the
 battle of Pharsalia was as conspicuous in indolent
 and amorous affairs. We judge of a horse not only by his gallop, but by his very walk—nay, by seeing him stand in the stable. Amongst the functions of the soul there are some of a low form. He who does not see her in those inferior offices also does not fully discover her ; and peradventure she is best known when she moves her own natural pace. The winds of the passions take most hold of her in her high flights ; and, moreover, she wholly applies herself to, and

The mind is discovered in all its motions.

* *Et à ma maistresse forme, qui est l'ignorance.* Hazlitt changes this to "my own governing method, ignorance." Florio has it "mistresse-forme." Perhaps by "maistresse forme" the author meant original mould or matrix.

exercises herself entirely upon every subject, and never handles more than one thing at a time, and that not according to it, but according to herself.

Things taken apart have, peradventure, their weights, measures, and conditions ; but, when we once take them into us, the soul forms them as she conceives of them. Death is terrible to Cicero, desirable by Cato, and indifferent to Socrates. Health, conscience, authority, knowledge, riches, beauty, and their contraries, do all strip themselves at their entering into us, and receive a new robe, and of another fashion, from every distinct soul ; and of what colour, as brown, bright, green, dark, and of what quality, as sharp, sweet, deep, or superficial, best pleases them : for they are not yet agreed upon any common standard of forms, rules or proceedings ; every one is a queen in her own dominions. Let us therefore no more excuse ourselves upon the external qualities of things ; it belongs to us to give ourselves an account of them. Our good or ill has no other dependence but on ourselves. It is there that our offerings and our vows are due, and not to Fortune, which has no power over our manners ; on the contrary, they draw her in their train, and cast her in their own mould.

Montaigne's opinion of the game of chess. Why shall I not judge of Alexander ranting and drinking, as he sometimes did at table ? Or, if he played at chess, what string of his soul was not touched and employed by this idle, childish game ? I hate and avoid it, because it is not merry enough, but too serious a diversion ; and I am ashamed to spend as much thought upon that as would serve to much better uses. He did not more pump his brains to form his glorious expe-

dition to the Indies ; and another took not more pains to clear a passage upon which depends the safety of all mankind. Do but see how we confound this silly diversion if the soul be not all attention to it, and what a field is hereby opened for every one to know and to make a right judgment of himself. I do not more thoroughly sift myself in any other posture. What passion are we exempted from in this game? Anger, spite, malice, impatience, and a vehement desire of getting the better in a concern wherein it were more excusable to be ambitious of being overcome ; for to be eminent and to excel above the common rate in frivolous things is not graceful in a man of honour. What I say in this example may be said in all others. Every particle, every employment of man does exalt or accuse him equally with any other.

*The game
may help
us to know
ourselves.*

Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of whom the first, finding man's estate ridiculous and vain, never appeared abroad but with a jeering and laughing countenance. Whereas Heraclitus, commiserating this condition of ours, appeared always with a sorrowful look and tears in his eyes.

“ One always, when he o'er his threshold stept,
Laugh'd at the world ; the other always wept. ”*

I am clearly for the first humour ; not because it is more pleasant to laugh than to weep, but because it is more scornful, and condemns us more than the other. I think we can never be sufficiently despised to our desert. Compassion and bemoaning seem to imply some esteem for the thing bemoaned ; whereas the things we laugh at we judge of no

* Juv., x. 28.

value. I do not think that we are so unhappy as we are vain, nor so malicious as silly ; so mischievous as trifling, nor so miserable as we are vile. Therefore Diogenes, who passed away his time in rolling himself in his tub, and snuffed up his nose at the great Alexander, esteeming us flies or bladders puffed up with wind, was a more penetrating judge, and consequently more to my taste than Timon, surnamed the man-hater ; for what a man hates he lays to heart. This last was an enemy to all mankind, did passionately wish our ruin, and avoided our conversation, as dangerous, wicked, and proceeding from depraved nature. The other valued us so little that we could neither trouble nor infect him by our contagion, and left us to herd with one another, not out of fear, but from contempt of our society, concluding us as incapable of doing good as ill.

Of the same strain was Statilius's answer, when Brutus courted him into the conspiracy against Cæsar : " He thought the enterprise was just ; but he did not think mankind so considerable as to deserve a wise man's concern." According to the doctrine of Hegesias,* who said that a wise man ought to do nothing but for himself, forasmuch as he only was worthy of it and also to the saying of Theodorus, that it was not reasonable a wise man should hazard himself for the good of his country, and endanger his wisdom for the sake of fools, our condition is as ridiculous as risible.†

* Laertius, *in Vita*.

† " Nostre condition est autant *ridicule* que *risible*." Thus Montaigne ends : " ridicule," meaning to be laught at, " risible," to be laught over, or giving occasion of laughter. Florio has it " as ridiculous as risible ; as much to be laught at as able to laugh." This essay is in Montaigne's best style, and is a key-note of his book.



OF PRAYERS.

I PROPOSE formless and undetermined fancies, like those who publish subtle questions to be disputed upon in the schools, not to establish truth, but to seek it; and I submit them to the better judgment of those whose office it is to regulate, not my writings and actions only, but my opinions. Let what I here set down meet with correction or applause, it will be alike welcome and useful to me, who condemn it for absurd and impious if anything should be found, through ignorance or inadvertency, couched in this rhapsody contrary to the sacred resolutions and prescriptions of the Roman Catholic church, in which I was born, and in which I will die. And yet, always submitting to the authority of their censure who have an absolute power over me, I thus venture at random to treat of everything as I do of the present subject.

I know not if I am deceived, but since, by a special favour of the Divine goodness, a certain form of prayer has been prescribed and dictated to us, word by word, from the mouth of God himself, I have ever been of opinion that we ought to have it in more frequent use than we yet have; and, if I were worthy to advise, at the sitting down to and rising from

*Christians
ought constantly to
use the
Lord's
Prayer.*

our tables, at our rising from and going to bed, and in every particular action wherein it is a custom to pray, I would that Christians should make use of the Lord's Prayer, if not alone, yet at least always. The Church may lengthen and diversify prayers, according to the necessity of our instruction; for I know very well that it is always the same in substance and the same thing. But yet such a preference ought to be given to that prayer that the people should have it continually in their mouths; for it is most certain that all necessary petitions are comprehended in it, and that it is infinitely proper for all occasions. It is the only prayer I use in all places, and what I repeat instead of changing; whence it also happens that I have no other by heart so much as that.

*Men ought
not to call
upon God
upon all
occasions.*

It just now comes into my mind from whence we should derive that error of having recourse to God in all our designs and enterprises, of applying to Him in all our wants, and in all places where our weakness stands in need of support, without considering whether the occasion be just or otherwise, and of invoking His name and power in what estate soever we are, or what action we are engaged in, how vicious soever. He is, indeed, our sole protector, and can do all things for us. But, though He is pleased to honour us with His paternal care, He is, notwithstanding, as just as He is good and mighty; for He oftener exercises His justice than His power, and favours us according to that, and not according to our petitions.

Plato, in his Laws, makes three credenda injurious to the gods: 1, That there are none; 2, That they concern themselves about our affairs; and, 3, That they never deny any-

thing to our vows, offerings, and sacrifices.* The first of these errors (according to his opinion) did never continue invincible in any man from his infancy to his old age: the other two, he confesses, men might be obstinate in. God's justice and his power are inseparable; and therefore in vain we invoke His power in an unjust cause. We are to have our souls pure, *at that moment, at least, wherein we pray to Him, and free from all vicious passions;* otherwise we ourselves present Him the rods wherewith to chastise us. Instead of repairing anything we have done amiss, we double the wickedness and the offence, whilst we offer to Him to whom we are to sue for pardon an affection full of irreverence and hatred. And this makes me not very apt to applaud those whom I observe to be so frequent on their knees, if the actions bordering upon the prayer do not give me some evidence of reformation and amendment.

—————“ Si, nocturnus adulter,
Tempora Santonico velas adoperta cucullo.”†

And the state of a man that mixes devotion with an execrable life seems, in some sort, more to be condemned than that of a man who is all of a piece and dissolute throughout; yet our church denies admittance to, and communion with, men obstinate and incorrigible in any notorious impiety.

We pray by custom and for fashion's sake; or rather we read or pronounce our prayers aloud, which is no better than a show of devotion. And I am scandalised to see a man cross himself thrice at the *Benedicite*, and as often at saying grace

The soul must be quite pure when it prays to God.

Praying to God only for fashion sake, wherein blameable.

* Plato, De Legibus, x.

† Juven., viii, 145.

(and the more because it is a sign which I have in great veneration and constant use, even when I yawn and stretch), and yet to employ the rest of the day in malice, avarice, and injustice; devoting one hour to God, the rest to the Devil, as if by commutation and composition. It is a wonder to see actions so various in themselves linked in such a chain as not to suffer any alteration, even upon the very confines and passes from the one to the other. What a prodigious conscience must that be that can be at quiet within itself, whilst it harbours in the same breast both the crime and the judge without their jarring! A man whose brain is continually working upon lasciviousness, which he knows to be odious in the sight of God, what does he say when he addresses Him? He draws back, but suddenly relapses. If the awe of the Divine justice and the presence of his Maker did, as he pretends, strike and chastise his soul, how short soever the repentance might be, the very fear of offending Him would so often present itself to his imagination, that he would instantly subdue those vices that are most natural and habitual to him.

Prayers of those who obstinately persist in vice.

But what shall we say of those who settle their whole course of life upon the profit and emolument of a sin which they know to be mortal? How many trades and vocations have we admitted and

countenanced amongst us whose very essence is vicious? And he that confessed to me that he had all his lifetime professed and practised a religion in his opinion damnable and contrary to his conscience, only to preserve his credit and the honour of his employment, how could his courage bear such a conviction? What can men say of the Divine justice upon

this subject? Their repentance consisting in a visible and sensible reparation, they have no way to prove it both to God and man. Are they so impudent as to sue for remission, without making satisfaction, and without repentance? I look upon these in the same condition with the first; but the obstinacy is not here so easy to be overcome. This contrariety and volubility of opinion, so sudden and violent as they feign it to be, is a kind of miracle to me. They represent to us the state of an intolerable anxiety of mind. It seemed to me a fantastic imagination in those who, some years past, were wont to reproach every man of shining parts who made profession of the Roman Catholic religion, that it was but feigned; maintaining, moreover, to do him honour forsooth, that, whatever he might pretend to the contrary, he could not but in his heart be of their reformed opinion. An untoward disease, that a man should be so riveted to his own belief, as to fancy that it is impossible to believe otherwise than he does; and yet worse in this, that he should entertain an opinion that any man so qualified should prefer any present disparity of fortune before the promises of eternal life and the menaces of eternal damnation. They may believe me; could anything have tempted my youth, the ambition of encountering the danger and difficulties that attended the late commotions had not been one of the least motives.

It is not without very good reason, in my *David's Psalms*. opinion, that the Church interdicts the promiscuous, rash, and indiscreet use of the sacred and divine songs with which the Holy Ghost inspired King David. We ought not to mix God in our actions but with the highest

reverence and honour. That pocsy is too divine to be employed only to exercise the lungs, and to delight our ears. It ought to come from the soul, and not from the tongue. It is not fit that a boy in a shop, amongst his vain and frivolous thoughts, should be permitted to entertain and divert himself with psalmody.* Neither is it right to see the Holy Bible, containing the sacred mysteries of our belief, thrown about in a hall or a kitchen. They were formerly mysteries, but are now become things of sport and pastime. It is too serious and too venerable a study to be exercised cursorily and hastily. The reading of the Scripture ought to be a temperate and premeditated act, and to which men should always add this devout preface, *Sursum corda*, preparing even the body to so humble and composed a gesture and countenance, as to evidence a particular veneration and attention. Neither is it a book for every one to study, but those only who are devoted to it by the Divine call. The wicked and ignorant grow worse and worse by it. It is not a story to tell, but a history to fear, reverence, and adore. Are not they, then, pleasant men, who think they have rendered this fit for the people's handling, by translating it into the vulgar tongue? Does the understanding of all therein contained only stick at words? I venture to say further, that, by this little approach to it, they are the further off. Pure ignorance and implicit faith in another's exposition were wiser and more salutiferous than this vain and verbal knowledge, which has only proved the nurse of temerity and presumption. And I do further believe that

* This is a capital argument against the modern fashion of making the Holy Bible a class book.

the liberty every one has taken to disperse so sacred and important a writ into so many idioms, carries with it a great deal more of danger than utility. The Jews, Mahometans, and almost all others, have espoused and reverence the language wherein their mysteries were originally conceived, and have, not without colour of reason, forbid the version or alteration of them into any other. Are we sure that in Biscay and in Brittany there are competent judges of this affair to establish this translation into their own language? The Catholic Church has not a more difficult and solemn judgment to make. In preaching and speaking the interpretation is vague, free, mutable, and of only a part; consequently, it is not the same. One of our Greek historians justly blames the age he lived in, because the secrets of the Christian religion were dispersed through his country into the hands of the meanest mechanics, to argue upon and determine according to their own sense; and that we ought to be much ashamed, we, who by God's grace enjoy the pure mysteries of piety, to suffer them to be profaned by the mouths of the ignorant vulgar; considering that the Gentiles expressly forbid Socrates, Plato, and the other sages, to inquire into or talk of the things committed to the priests of Delphi. The same historian says, moreover, that the factions of princes, upon theological points, are not armed with zeal, but fury; that zeal partakes of the Divine wisdom and justice, and governs itself with regularity and moderation, but degenerates into hatred and envy, and produces tares and nettles, instead of corn and wine, when it is conducted by human passions. And it was truly said of another, who advising the Emperor Theodosius, told him

that disputes did not so much rock the schisms of the Church asleep as it roused them, and animated heresies ; that therefore all contentions and logical disputations were to be avoided, and men were absolutely to acquiesce in the prescriptions and formulas of faith established by the Ancients. And the Emperor Andronicus, finding some great men at high words in his palace with Lapodius about one of our articles of great importance, gave them a severe check, and threatened to cause them to be thrown into the river, if they did not desist. The very women and children, now-a-days, take upon them to dictate to the oldest and most experienced men about the ecclesiastical laws ; whereas the first of those of Plato* forbids them to inquire so much as into the civil laws, which were to take place as divine ordinances. And, allowing the old men to confer amongst themselves, or with the magistrate, about those things, it adds, provided it be not in the presence of young and profane persons. A bishop has left in writing, that at the other end of the world there is an isle, by the Ancients called Dioscorides,† bearing all sorts of trees and fruits, and in a healthy air ; the inhabitants of which are Christians, having churches and altars that are only adorned with crucifixes, without any other images, great observers of fasts and feasts, exact payers of tythes to the priests, and so chaste, that none of them are permitted more than one wife.‡ As to the

* De Legibus, i, 569.

† An island of the Red Sea, supposed to be the same with that now called Zocotora. See Bayle's Dictionary, article *Dioscorides*.

‡ This is not quite what the author wrote ; but it is what Goullart, from whom he quotes, said. The passage was added in the second edition of the Essays.

rest, so content are they with their condition, that, though environed with the sea, they know nothing of navigation; and so simple, that they understand not one syllable of the religion wherein they are so devout. And, though it is incredible to such as do not know it, the Pagans, who are such zealous idolaters, know nothing more of their gods than their bare names and their statues. The ancient beginning of *Menalippus*, a tragedy of Euripides, ran thus:* "O, Jupiter, thy name alone, not what thou art, to me is known." I have known, also, in my time, some men's writings found fault with for being purely human and philosophical, without any mixture of divinity; and yet whoever would, on the contrary, say that divine doctrine, as queen and regent of the rest, better keeps her state apart; that she ought to be sovereign throughout, not subsidiary and suffragan: and that, peradventure, grammatical, rhetorical, and logical examples may elsewhere be more suitably chosen, as also the arguments for the stage and public entertainments, than from so sacred a matter; that divine arguments are considered with greater veneration and attention when by themselves and in their own proper style than when mixed with human discourses; that it is a fault much more often observed that the divines write too humanly than that the humanists write not theologically enough? Philosophy, says St. Chrysostom, has long been banished the holy schools, as a handmaid altogether useless, and thought unworthy to peep so much as in passing by the door into the repository of the sacred treasures of celestial

* Plutarc', On Love.

doctrines, and that the human way of speaking is of a much lower form, and ought not to be clothed with the dignity, authority, and majesty of divine eloquence; I say, whoever, on the contrary, should object to all this, would not be without some reason on his side. Let who will, *verbis indisciplinatus*,* talk of fortune, destiny, accident, good and evil hap, the gods, and other such like phrases, according to his humour; I, for my part, propose fancies merely human, and merely my own, and that simply and separately considered as human fancies, not as determined by any decree of heaven, and incapable of doubt or dispute; matters of opinion, not matters of faith; things which I discourse of according to my own capacity, not what I believe according to God; which, also, I do after a laical, not clerical, and yet always after a very religious manner, as lads compose their exercises, not to instruct, but to be instructed. And it were as rational to affirm that an edict enjoining all people (perhaps enjoining silence on me too) but such as are public professors of it to be very reserved in writing of religion, would carry with it some show of utility and justice.

God's name ought not to be used in common discourse. I have been told that even those who are not of our church do nevertheless amongst themselves expressly forbid the name of God to be used in common discourse; not so much as by way of interjection, exclamation, affirmation, or comparison; and I think them in the right. And upon what occasion soever we call upon God to accompany and assist us, it ought always to be done with the greatest reverence and devotion.

* In vulgar and unhallowed terms. These two words are taken from St. Augustin de Civitate Dei, x, 29.

There is, if I mistake not, a passage in Xenophon, where he tells us that we ought the more seldom to call upon God,* because it is hard to compose our souls to such a degree of calmness, penitency, and devotion as it ought to be in at such time, otherwise, our prayers are not only vain and fruitless, but vicious; "Forgive us," we say, "our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." What do we say by this petition but that we present him a soul free from all rancour and revenge? And yet we invoke God's assistance in our vices, and invite Him in our unjust designs. *Quæ nisi seductis nequeas committere divis,*† For to the gods we whisper the wishes of the heart.

God ought to be seldom prayed to, and why.

The covetous man prays for the vain and superfluous preservation of his riches; the ambitious for victory and the conduct of his fortune; the thief calls God to his assistance to deliver him from the dangers and difficulties that obstruct his wicked designs, or returns him thanks for the facility he has met with in cutting a traveller's throat. At the door of the house they are going to storm, or break into by force of a petard, they fall to prayers for success, having their intention and hopes full of cruelty, avarice, and luxury.

"Hoc igitur quo tu Jovis aurem impellere tentas,
Dic agedum, Staio; proh Jupiter! o bone, clamet,
Jupiter! at sese non clamet Jupiter ipse?"‡

Margaret, Queen of Navarre, tells of a young prince (who

* Coleridge in early life had also some such idea as this, *i.e.*, that prayer was unnecessary, because God knew all our wants.

† Pers. Sat., ii, 4.

‡ Ib., ii, 21.

though she does not name him, is easily enough, by his great quality to be known) who going to an assignation with an advocate's wife of Paris, his way thither being through a church, he never passed that holy place, going to or returning from this exercise, but he always kneeled down to pray. What it was he implored the divine favour for, while his soul was full of such virtuous meditations, I leave you to judge; this, nevertheless, the queen instances for a testimony of singular devotion. But this is not the only proof that women are not very fit to treat of theological points. True prayer, and a religious reconciling of ourselves to Almighty God, cannot enter into an impure soul, which is at that very instant subject to the dominion of Satan. He who calls God to his assistance whilst he is in a train of vice, does as if a cutpurse should call a magistrate to help him, or like those who bring in the name of God to the attestation of a lie. *Tacito mala vota susurro concipimus*,* "We make our guilty prayers in a whisper." Few men durst publish the secret petitions they make to God.

"Haud cuivis promptum est, murmurque humilesque susurros
Tollere de templis, et aperto vivere voto."†

And this is the reason why the Pythagoreans would have their prayers always public, to be heard by every one, to the end they might not petition for things indecent or unjust, as he did,

—————"Clare cum dixit, Apollo,
Labra movet metuens audiri: pulchra Laverna,
Da mihi fallere, da justum sanctumque videri,
Noctem peccatis, et fraudibus objice nubem."‡

* Lucan, v, 104. † Persius, ii, 106. ‡ Hor., i, Epist. 16.

“Bright Apollo, cries one to that god, hear my petition ; make me capable of deceiving ; cover my sins by night, and my frauds by a cloud.” The Gods did severely punish the wicked prayers of Œdipus, in granting them. He had prayed that his children might amongst themselves determine the succession to his throne by arms ; and was so miserable as to see himself taken at his word. We are not to pray that all things may go as we would have them, but as it shall please the Divine wisdom.

We seem, in truth, to make use of our prayers as *Prayer,* of a kind of gibberish, and as those who employ *how* holy words about sorceries and magical operations ; *abused.* and as if we made account that the effect of them depended upon the contexture, sound and series of words, or upon the composing of the countenance. For having the soul contaminated with concupiscence, not touched with repentance, or comforted by any late reconciliation with Almighty God, we go to present him such words as the memory suggests to the tongue, and hope from thence to obtain the remission of our sins. There is nothing so easy, so mild, and so favourable as the Divine law ; it calls us to it, guilty and abominable as we are, extends its arms and receives us into its bosom, as foul and polluted as we at present are, and are like to be for the future. But then, in return, we are to look upon it with a respectful eye, we are to receive this pardon with thanksgiving, and, for that instant at least wherein we address ourselves to God, to have the soul sorry for its faults and at variance with those passions that seduced her to offend him ; for neither the gods nor good men (says Plato) will accept the present of a wicked man.



OF AGE.



CANNOT allow of our way of establishing the duration of life. I see that the wise shorten it very much in comparison of the common opinion. "What," said the younger Cato to those who would prevent him from killing himself, "am I now of an age to be reproached that I go out of the world too soon?"* And yet he was but forty-eight years old. He thought that to be a mature and really an advanced age, considering how few arrive to it; and they who, soothing their thoughts with I know not what course, which they call natural, promise themselves some years beyond it, could they be privileged from the fatal accidents to which every one is by nature exposed, might have some reason so to do. What an idle conceit it is to expect to die of a mere decay of strength attending extreme old age, and to propose to ourselves no shorter lease of life than that, considering it as a kind of death of all others the most rare and uncommon. We call this only a natural death, as if it were contrary to nature to see a man break his neck with a fall, be drowned in shipwreck at sea, or snatched away with a pleurisy, or the

* Plutarch, Life of Cato of Utica, 20.

plague, and as if our ordinary condition of life did not expose us to all these inconveniences. Let us no more flatter ourselves with these fine words ; we ought rather, at a venture, to call that natural which is general, common, and universal. To die of old age is a death rare, *To die of extraordinary, and singular, and therefore by so much the less natural than the other deaths. It is the last and extremest sort of dying ; and the more remote from us it is the less to be hoped for. It is, indeed, the boundary of life beyond which we are not to pass, and which the law of nature has pitched for a limit not to be exceeded. But it is withal a privilege she is rarely seen to give us to last till then. It is a lease it only grants by particular favour, perhaps to one only in the space of two or three ages ; discharging him from all the crosses and difficulties she has strewed in the midway of this long career. And therefore my opinion is, that when once forty years old we should consider our time of life as an age to which very few arrive ; for seeing that men do not usually last so long, it is a sign that we are pretty well advanced ; and since we have exceeded the bounds which make the true measure of life, we ought not to expect to go much further. Having escaped so many pits of death whereinto we have seen so many other men to fall, we should acknowledge that so extraordinary a fortune as that which has hitherto kept us above ground beyond the ordinary term of life is not likely to continue long.*

It is a false notion that our very laws are guilty of, which do not allow that a man is capable of managing his own estate till he be twenty-five years old, whereas he will have

much ado to manage his life so long. Augustus* cut off five years from the ancient Roman standard, and declared that thirty years was an age sufficient to be a judge. Servius Tullius excused gentlemen of above forty-seven years of age from the fatigues of war ; Augustus dismissed them at forty-five. Though methinks it seems a little unreasonable that men should be sent home to their firesides 'till fifty-five or sixty years of age. I should be of opinion that our vocation and employment should be as far as possible extended for the public good ; but I think it a fault, on the other hand, that we are not employed soon enough. This emperor was arbiter of the whole world at nineteen, and yet would have a man to be thirty before he could be fit to bear the lowest office. For my part, I believe our understandings are ripe at twenty, such as they ought to be, and ever will be capable of. A mind that did not by that time give evident earnest of its force never after gave proof of it. Natural parts and excellencies produce what they have of vigorous and fine by that term or never. They say in Dauphiny,

“Se l'espine nou picque quand nai,
A pene que pique iamai.”

“If the thorn does not prick then, it will scarce ever prick.”†

What age is capable of the finest actions. Of all the great actions of man I ever heard or read of, of what sort soever, I have observed, both in former ages and our own, more performed before the age of thirty than after ; and often too in the

* Suetonius, Augustus, sect. 32.

† Modern examples of Wolfe, Pitt, Nelson, Napoleon Buona-
parte, Keats, Byron, and many others, might be adduced ; and on
the contrary, several great instances, such as Cromwell, Franklin,
and Washington, could be quoted.

lives of the very same men. May I not safely instance in those of Hannibal and his great adversary Scipio? The better half of their lives they lived upon the glory they had acquired in their youth; they were great men after, it is true, in comparison of others, but by no means in comparison of themselves. As to my own part, I do certainly believe that since that age both my understanding and my constitution have rather decayed than improved, and retired rather than advanced. It is possible that those who make the best use of their time, knowledge, and experience, may increase with their years; but the vivacity, quickness, and steadiness, and other parts of us, of much greater importance and much more essentially our own, languish and decay.

“Ubi jam validis quassatum est viribus ævi,
Corpus et obtusis ceciderunt viribus artus,
Claudicat ingenium, delirat linguaque mensque.”*

“When the body is shaken by the blows of time, and the members have lost their vigour, the spirit grows weaker, the mind slumbers, and the tongue babbles.” Sometimes the body is the first to grow old, sometimes the soul, and I have seen enough whose brains have failed them, and had a weakness before their stomach and legs; and as it is a disease of no great pain to the patient, and of obscure symptoms, the greater the danger is. And for this reason it is that I complain of our laws, not that they keep us too long to our work, but that they set us at work too late. For the frailty of life considered, and to how many common and natural shocks it is exposed, methinks we should not spend so great a part of it in squabbles about birthright, in idleness and in education.

* Lucret. iii, 452.



TO-MORROW FOR BUSINESS.*



OF all our French writers, Jaques Amiot, in my opinion, deserves the palm, not only for the propriety and purity of his language, in which he surpasses all others, nor for his constant perseverance in so long a labour, nor for the depth of his knowledge, having so happily unravelled the intricacies of so difficult an author (for people may say what they please, though I understand nothing of Greek, yet I perceive a sense so well connected and maintained throughout his whole translation, that surely he must have perfectly known the author's true thoughts, or, by being long conversant with him, must have had a general idea of Plutarch's mind strongly imprinted in his soul, forasmuch as he has delivered nothing from him that in the least derogates from nor contradicts him), but, above all, I am pleased with him for having singled out a book so proper, so worthy for a present to his country.† We dunces had

* Montaigne's title is *A demain les affaires*, a kind of proverbial saying with French *bon vivants*, and also with the Greeks. Florio turns it into "To-morrow is a new day," and Cotton and Peter Coste follow him. Hazlitt alters the heading to "Business to-morrow."

† This is a noble eulogium on a good translator; alas; every one is not so grateful as Montaigne to him who provides him with that best of acquaintances, a good book.

been sunk in the mire, had not this book lifted us out of it. By this favour of his, we venture now both to speak and write; by it the ladies can dispute with the schoolmasters;* it is our prayer book. If this good man be yet living, I would recommend him to do as much by Xenophon; it is a more easy task than the other, and therefore more proper for a gentleman so far advanced in years. And then, I know not how it is, but methinks, though he very briskly and clearly recovers himself when he has made a trip, yet his style is more his own when it is not embarrassed and runs on at its ease.

I was just now reading that passage in Plutarch† where he says of himself that Rusticus, while present at a declamation of his at Rome, received a packet from the emperor, but delayed to open it till all was ended; for which, said he, the whole audience highly applauded this person's gravity. It is true that as I am on the subject of curiosity and that eager and ravenous appetite for news which makes us, with so much indiscretion and impatience, abandon everything to entertain a novelty, and, without any manner of respect or civility, break open, in what company soever, all letters that are brought to us, he had reason to applaud the gravity of Rusticus upon this occasion, and might, moreover, have commended his civility and courtesy in not interrupting the course of his declamation. But I doubt whether his prudence is to be commended, for as the letters came to

* In Peter Coste's edition, the translator has it, "the very ladies read it to the schoolmasters," for which last word Florio, otherwise correct, substitutes "masters of arts."

† In the Treatise of Curiosity, 14. Amiot's translation.

him unexpected, and especially from an emperor, it might have fallen out that the deferring to read them would have been very prejudicial. The vice opposite to curiosity is indifference or negligence, to which I certainly have a natural propensity by my constitution, and to which I have seen some men so extremely addicted, that they have kept letters in their pockets unopened for three or four days together.* I never open any letters, neither those committed to my care, nor those which pass through my hands by accident; and I am uneasy with myself if my eyes inadvertently catch any contents of letters of importance that a great man is reading when I am close by him. Never was a man less inquisitive, or less prying into other people's affairs.

Negligence the opposite vice to curiosity. In our father's days, M. de Boutieres had like to have lost Turin, because, being in good company at supper, he deferred to read an advertisement which was sent him of the treason that was plotted against the said city, of which he was governor. And this very Plutarch has given us to understand that Julius Cæsar had saved himself if he had read a paper that was presented to him as he went to the Senate, on that very day he was killed by the conspiritors. He also tells the story of Archias, the tyrant of Thebes, that the night before Pelopidas put his plot into execution for killing him, in order to restore his country's liberty, he had a circumstantial account of the whole conspiracy sent him in writing by another Archias, an Athenian, and that the packet having been delivered to him

* As did Napoleon for a fortnight, and was then delighted to find how many letters had answered themselves.

while he sat at supper, he deferred the opening of it, saying, what afterwards turned to a proverb in Greece, "To-morrow for business."*

A wise man may, in my opinion, for the sake of another person, either for fear, like Rusticus, of indecently disturbing the company, or of breaking off another affair of importance, put off the reading or hearing any new thing that is brought to him ; but if a man, for his own particular interest or pleasure, even though he hold a public office, will not interrupt his dinner, nor be awakened out of his nap, he is inexcusable. And there was anciently at Rome the Consular Place, which they called the most honourable at table, for being a seat which was most at liberty, and was of the easiest access to those who came to speak with him who was placed in it ; which is a proof that though they were at table they did not abandon the concern for other affairs and incidents. But, when all is said that can be said, it is difficult, in human actions, to prescribe so just a rule by rational arguments that Fortune will not maintain her right in them.

The consular place at table the most accessible.

* Plutarch, *On the Daemon of Socrates.*





OF CONSCIENCE.

TRAVELLING one day, during the civil wars, my brother the Sieur de la Brousse and I, we met a gentleman of good fashion who was of the contrary party to us, though I knew nothing of it, for he pretended to be of ours; and the mischief of it is, that, in wars of this sort, the cards are so shuffled, your enemy not being distinguished from yourself by any apparent mark, either of language or carriage, being bred up under the same laws, air, and manners, it is difficult to avoid disorder, and confusion. This made me afraid, myself, of meeting with any of our troops in a place where I was not known, that I might not be forced to tell my name, and for fear of something worse, perhaps, as happened to me once, when, by such a mistake, I lost both men and horses, and, amongst others, an Italian, my page, whom I had bred up with care, was miserably killed; a fine lad, and one that was very promising. But the gentleman we met had so strange a terror upon him, and was so mortified at the meeting with any horsemen, and travelling through towns which held out for the king, that I at length guessed he was alarmed by his conscience. The poor man seemed to be in such a con-

dition, that, through his vizor and the crosses on his cassock,* one might have penetrated into his heart, and read his secret intentions. So wonderful is the force of conscience, that it makes us betray, accuse, and fight with ourselves; and, for want of other evidence, she produces against us, *Occultum quatiēte animo tortore flagellum*,† “In the trembling mind, as in the hands of an executioner, a secret whip.” The tale that follows is in the mouths of children: Bessus, a Pæonian, being reproached with having wantonly pulled down a sparrow’s nest and killed the young ones,‡ said he had reason for *Strange* it, because those little birds were continually chat-
discovery of tering a falsehood, that he had murdered his
a parricide. father. This parricide had till then been undiscovered and unknown, but the revengeful furies of his conscience caused it to be discovered by himself, who was justly to suffer for it.

Hesiod corrects§ Plato’s assertion that punishment follows close at the heels of sin, for, he says, it is born at the same instant with sin. Whosoever expects punishment already suffers it, and whosoever has deserved it expects it.¶ Wickedness contrives tortures for itself. *Malum consilium con-*

* “Il sembloit à ce pauvre homme qu’au travers de son masque, et des croix de sa *casaque*.” I think the last word might be *casque*, and it would then read, “it seemed to this poor man that through his vizor and the pierced cross (breathing holes) of his helmet, one might have read his secret intentions.” How they could read them through the badge of a cross on his surcoat I don’t know. Florio says, “It seemed unto this seely man that both through his blushing self-accusing countenance and the cross he wore on his upper garments one might have read, etc.”

† Juv., xiii, 195.

‡ See Plutarch’s treatise *On Divine Justice*, ch. 8.

§ *Ib.*, ch. 9.

¶ Senec., epist. 105.

sultori pessimum,* "He that gives bad counsel suffers most by it." As the wasp stings and hurts another, but most of all itself; for it thereby loses its sting and its strength for ever: *Vitasque in vulnere ponunt*,† "And throws its life into the wound." The Spanish fly, or cantharides, has in itself some particle, which, by the contrariety of its nature, serves as an antidote to its own poison. In like manner, at the same instant that a man feels a pleasure in vice, there is a sting at the tail of it in the conscience which tortures us, sleeping and waking, with many racking thoughts:

"Quippe ubi se multi per somnia sæpe loquentes,
Aut morbo delirantes, protrâxe ferantur,
Et celata diu in medium peccata dedisse."‡

"Sinners seldom keep their own counsel, and either in sleep or by disease tell of their guilt." Apollodorus dreamed that he saw himself flayed by the Scythians, and then boiled in a cauldron; and that his heart muttered these words: "I am the cause of all these evils."§ Epicurus said, "No lurking hole could hide the wicked, because they could not assure themselves of being concealed whilst their consciences discovered them to themselves."

———"Prima est hæc ultio, quod, se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur."||

"The first revenge that sin takes is, that although a man is his own judge, he cannot acquit himself." As an evil conscience possesses us with fear, a good one gives

* Aul. Gel., iv, 5.

‡ Lucret., v, 1157.

† Virg. Georg., iv, 238.

§ Plutarch's *Divine Justice*, ch. 9.

|| Juv. Sat., xiii, 2, 3.

Confidence resulting from a good conscience. us assurance and confidence. And I can truly say, I have faced several dangers with the more boldness, in consideration of the secret knowledge I had of my own will, and of the innocency of my intentions :

“Conscia mens ut cuique sua est, ita concipit intra
Pectora pro facto spemque, metumque suo.”*

“As a man’s conscience is, so hath he hope or fear.” Of this there are a thousand examples, of which it may suffice to produce three of one and the same person. Scipio, having a heavy accusation laid against him one day before the people of Rome, instead of excusing himself, or soothing his judges, “It will well become you,” said he to them, “to sit in judgment upon the man from whom you derive the power you have to judge all the world.”† And, another time, all the answer he gave to some impeachments brought against him by a tribune of the people, instead of pleading his cause, “Let us go,” said he, “my fellow-citizens, and give thanks to the gods for the victory which they granted me over the Carthaginians on this day.”‡ And advancing first towards the temple himself, the whole assembly, not excepting his accuser, followed in his train. And Petilius§ having been instigated by Cato to demand an account of the money which had passed through his hands in the province of Antioch, Scipio, who came to the senate for this purpose, produced a book from under his robe, wherein, he told them, was an exact account of his receipts and disbursements; but being required to deliver it to the registrar, he refused it, saying he would not so far disgrace himself; and he tore the

* Ovid, *Fast.*, i, 25, 26. † Valer. Maxim., iii, 7, *in Romanis*.

† Plutarch, *On Self Praise*, ch. 5. § Tit. Liv., xxxviii, 54, 55.

book to pieces with his own hands in the presence of the senate. I cannot suppose that the most seared conscience could have counterfeited such an assurance. "He had naturally too high a spirit," says Livy,* "and was accustomed to too great fortune to know how to be criminal, and to descend to the meanness of defending his own innocence."

The inconveniences of the rack. The rack is a pernicious invention, and seems to be rather a proof of a man's patience than of the truth; which, indeed, is concealed both by him who can bear it and by him who cannot. For why should pain sooner make me confess what is the real truth than force me to say what is not? And, on the contrary, if he who is not guilty of that whereof he is accused has the patience to undergo these torments, why should not he who is guilty have as much, when so fair a reward as his life is set before him? What will not a man say, what will he not do, rather than suffer such a painful torture? *Etiam innocentes cogit mentiri dolor*,† "Pain makes even the innocent to lie." From hence it comes to pass that he whom the judge has put to the rack, with a view that he may not die innocent, makes him die both innocent and racked. Thousands have burthened their consciences by it with false confessions; in the number of whom I place Philotas,‡ considering the circumstances of the process that Alexander commenced against him, and the progress of his torture. But so it is, say they, that it is

* Lib., xxxviii, 52.

† *Ex Mimis Publicanis.* Such is the reference in the best French editions; Florio refers us to the Proverbs of Seneca, Hazlitt to the maxims of Publius Syrus, where upon search I found it.

‡ Q. Curtius, vi, 7.

the least evil human weakness could have invented ; yet, in my opinion, the invention was very inhuman, and to very little purpose. Several nations, not so barbarous in this respect as the Greeks and Romans, by whom they were called barbarians, think it horrible and cruel to torment and pull a man to pieces for a fault of which you are as yet in doubt. Is he to blame for your ignorance? Are not you unjust, that, because you would not kill him without a cause, you do worse than kill him? And that this is the case, do but observe how often men choose to die without reason, rather than to pass through this inquisition more painful than execution, and so acute that it often despatches them before it. I know not where I had this story,* but it is an exact representation of the conscience of our justice: A country-woman accused a soldier to the general of the army (who was a grand justiciary, and therefore determined all civil and criminal causes in his precinct) of having taken from her children the little boiled meat she had left to keep them from starving, the army having pillaged everything they could find. There was no proof of this fact; therefore the general cautioned the woman to take good heed of what she said, forasmuch as she would incur the guilt of her own accusation if she was found in a lie; but she persisting in her charge, he caused the soldier's belly to be ripped open, in order to be sure of the truth of the fact; and it appeared that the woman was in the right. An instructive condemnation this!

* The story is in Froissart.



OF HONOURS AND REWARDS.*

THOSE who wrote the life of Augustus Cæsar remark this: that in his military discipline he was wonderfully liberal of his gifts to men of merit, but that he was altogether as sparing of rewards merely honorary; † yet he had himself been gratified by his uncle with all the military rewards before he had ever been at war. It was a pretty invention, and received in most governments in the world, to establish certain vain and cheap distinctions to honour and recompense virtue; such as crowns of laurel, oak, and myrtle; the particular fashion of some garment; the privilege to ride about the city in a coach, or to have a torch in the night; some particular seat in the public assemblies; the prerogative of some surnames and titles; certain distinctions in their coats of arms, and the like; the use of which has been variously received, according to the humours of the several nations, and it still remains. We, as also several of our neighbours, have certain orders of knighthood that are instituted only for this end. And, in

Knighthood a laudable institution.

* *Des Recompenses d'Honneur.*

† Suetonius, in the Life of Augustus, 25.

truth, it is a good and a profitable custom to find out a way to acknowledge the worth of rare and excellent men, and to satisfy them with rewards that are not at all chargeable, either to the people or to the prince. And that which has been always found, both by ancient experience and what we ourselves may also have observed in former times, viz., that the men of quality are fonder of such rewards than of those that bring gain and profit, is founded on a reason that is very apparent. If, with a reward which ought to be purely honorary, riches, or other emoluments were mingled, such mixture, instead of augmenting esteem, would debase and diminish it.

The order of St. Michael,* which has been so long in repute amongst us, had no greater advantage than that it communicated no profit; which produced this effect—that heretofore there was no office nor rank whatsoever to which the gentry aspired with so much desire and affection as they did to this order; nor any class which brought with it more respect and grandeur—virtue being more eager to embrace and to aspire to a reward purely its own, and rather honourable than profitable. For, in truth, there is not such a dignity in the use of other rewards, by reason they are employed on all manner of occasions. With money a man pays the wages of a servant, the diligence of a courier, the dancer, the tumbler, the tongue-pad,† and the vilest offices that are done

Order of St. Michael, much esteemed at first, how fallen.

* With which Montaigne was decorated.

† *Le pailleur*. Cotton has “tongue-pad.” Florio expands the matter bravely: “With riches a man doth reward the hopping of a dancer, the tricks of a vaulter, the tongue of a lawyer, and the basest offices a man may receive.”

for us ; nay, vice is rewarded with it, as flattery, debauchery, and treachery. It is no wonder, therefore, if virtue is not so fond of receiving or being paid in this common coin, as in that which is proper and peculiar to it, altogether noble and generous. Augustus had reason to be far more thrifty and sparing of this than the other, forasmuch as honour is a privilege which is principally esteemed for its rarity, as is the case with virtue itself : “ *Cui malus est nemo, quis bonus esse potest ?* * “ Who can seem good to him who thinks none bad ? ” It is not remarked as a condemnation of a man that he takes care of the education of his children, by reason it is a common act, how just soever it be, no more than we praise a tall tree where the whole forest consists of the same. I do not think that any citizen of Sparta boasted of his valour, it being the universal virtue of that nation ; or that he valued himself a whit the more for his fidelity and contempt of riches. Even a great reward, if it be customary, can be no reward for virtue ; and I know not, withal, whether we can ever call a thing great when it is common. Therefore, since these honorary rewards are of no other value and esteem than in their being enjoyed only by a few, the being liberal of them is the ready way to make them none at all. Though there should be more men found worthy of this order now than in former times, nevertheless the honour of it should not be debased by being made too common. And that more do deserve it now than then may easily be the case, for there is no virtue that expands itself so easily as military valour. There is another true virtue, perfect and philo-

* Martial, xii, ep. 82.

sophical, of which I do not treat (and only use the term as it is commonly taken), much greater than this, and fuller; which is a fortitude and courage of the soul equally contemning all cross accidents whatsoever, even, uniform, and constant, of which ours is but a very small ray. Usage, institution, example, and custom are capable of doing anything in the establishment of that whereof I am treating, and with great facility render it vulgar, as by the experience of our civil war is to us very manifest. And whoever could at this instant unite us into one body, and set all our people upon one joint enterprise, our ancient reputation in arms would flourish again. It is very certain that in time past the order was not barely a reward for valour, but had a further prospect; it never was the recompense of a valiant soldier, but of some famous general. The science of obedience was not reckoned worthy of such a mark of honour. Anciently there was a more universal expertness in arms required, which comprehended the most rare talents and the greatest qualities of a military man (*Neque enim eædem, militares et imperatoriæ, artes sunt*, "For the arts of the common soldier and of the commander are not the same") who was, moreover, of a condition to which such a dignity was suitable. But, I say, though more men should be worthy of it now than heretofore, yet it ought not to be ever the more liberally distributed; and that it were better to fall short, in not giving it to all to whom it is due, than for ever to lose, as we have lately done, the fruit of so useful an invention. No man of spirit will vouchsafe to avail himself of what is in common to many; and such of the present time as have least deserved this reward pretend the more to disdain

it, in order by that means to rank themselves with those to whom so much wrong has been done by the unworthy conferring and debasing of that mark of honour which was particularly due to them.

Now to expect, by obliterating or abolishing this, to create a like custom, and to bring it into credit all on a sudden, is not an undertaking proper for a season so licentious and sick at heart as the present is ; and the consequence will be, that the last will, from its origin, incur the same inconveniences that have just ruined the other. The rules for the dispensing of this new order had need be extremely strict and severe, in order to give it authority ; whereas, in these boisterous times, such a short tight curb will not do ; besides that, before this can be brought into repute, it is necessary that the memory of the first, and of the contempt into which it is fallen, should be totally lost.

Valour chief among French virtues. This place might naturally enough admit of some discourse upon the consideration of valour, and of the difference of this virtue from others ; but Plutarch has touched upon this subject so often, that it will be to no purpose for me to repeat what he has said of it. This is worth considering, that our nation places valour in the highest class of the virtues, as its name shows, which is derived from *value* ; and that, according to our way of speaking, when we mean a man is worth a great deal of money, or a man of substance, in the style of our court and gentry, it is only saying he is a valiant man, after the manner of the Romans ; for the general appellation of virtue, with them, derives its etymology from *vis*, force. The proper, sole, and essential form of the noblesse in France is

the profession of arms. It is probable that the first virtue which discovered itself amongst men, and which gave advantage to some over others, was this, by which the strongest and most courageous have lorded it over the weaker, and acquired a particular rank and reputation, from whence it had that honour and dignity of language ; or else that these, being very warlike nations, gave the pre-eminence to that of the virtues which was most familiar to them, and to which they had the best title ; just so it is owing to our passion, and the feverish solicitude we have of the chastity of women, that a good woman, a woman of worth, and a woman of honour and virtue, signify no more with us than a chaste woman ; as if, to oblige them to this duty, we were indifferent to all the rest, and gave them the reins to all other faults whatever, on condition they would not be guilty of incontinence.





OF BOOKS.



MAKE no doubt but I often happen to speak of things that are much better and more truly handled by those who are masters of the profession. Indeed, this is purely an essay of my natural faculties, and not of those acquired. And whoever shall catch me tripping in my ignorance will do me no manner of harm; for I, who am not responsible to myself for my writings, nor pleased with them, should be loth to be answerable for them to another. He that seeks after knowledge, let him fish for it where it is to be found; there being nothing which I so little possess. These are fancies of my own, by which I do not aim to discover things, but myself. They will, peradventure, be known to me one day or other, or have formerly been so, according as my fortune brought me to the places where they were manifested; but now I have forgotten them. And, though I am a man of some reading, yet I am a man of no retention; so that I can promise nothing certain, unless it be to discover at what degree the scientific barometèr of my knowledge now stands. Let not the subjects I write on be so much attended to, as my manner of treating them. Let it be observed whether, in

what I borrow from others, I have chose what tends to set off or support the invention, which is always my own. For I make others say for me what, either for want of language or of sense, I cannot myself so well express. I do not count what I borrow, but I weigh it. And if I had aimed to make a merit by the quantity, I should have borrowed twice as much as I have. They are all, or within a few, such celebrated ancient authors as, I think, are too well known for me to mention them.*

In reasons, comparisons, and arguments, if I *Montaigne did not choose to name his authors.* transplant any from elsewhere into my soil, and confound them with my own, I purposely conceal the author, to check the presumption of those hasty censures that are cast upon all kind of writings, particularly the juvenile ones, of men still living, and composed in the vulgar tongue, which capacitates every man to speak of them, and seems to intimate that there is nothing but what is vulgar, both as to design and conception, in those works. I am content that they give Plutarch a rap upon my knuckles, and that they burn their fingers by lashing Seneca through my sides. There was a necessity of screening my weakness by those great characters. I shall love the man that can strip me of my plumage—I mean, by the clearness of the discernment, and by the sole distinction of the strength and beauty of the arguments. For I, who, for want of memory,† am, every now and then, at a loss to choose them by an exact knowledge of the places where they

* It was not till after Montaigne's death that his editors undertook to assign the citations from the authors whom he had quoted.

† See *ante*, pp. 24 and 88.

are not to be found in the originals, am yet wise enough to know, by the measure of my own abilities, that my soil is incapable of producing any of those rich flowers that I see planted there, and that they are worth more than all the fruits of my own growth. For this I hold myself responsible, though the confession tells against me, if there be any vanity and vice in my discourses, which I do not of myself perceive, or which I am not capable of perceiving when pointed out to me by another. For many faults escape our eye, but the infirmity of judgment consists in not being able to discern them when detected to us by another. We may possess knowledge and truth without judgment, and judgment without either; nay, the confession of ignorance is one of the fairest and surest testimonies of judgment that I know of. I have no herald to marshal my essays but chance. As fast as thoughts come into my head, which sometimes they do in whole bodies, and sometimes in single files, I pile them one upon another. I am content that every one should see my natural and ordinary pace, be it ever so much out of the way. I suffer myself to jog on in my old track. Nor are these such subjects that a man shall be condemned for being ignorant of them, and for treating them casually and presumptuously. I could wish to have a more perfect knowledge of things, but I do not care to purchase it at so dear a rate. I would fain pass the remainder of my days easily, and not laboriously. There is nothing that I choose to cudgel my brains about,* no, not even for science, how valuable soever she be.

* "Il n'est rien pour quoy ie me vueille rompre la teste." Hazlitt translates this queerly, "I will not *break* my brain about."

All that I read books for is to divert myself by an honest amusement; or, if I study, it is for no other science than what teaches me to know myself, and how to live and die well. *Has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus,** "This is the only course at which I wish to give my horse a sweating." If any difficulties occur in reading, I do not bite my nails about them, but, after an essay or two to explain them, I give them over. Should I insist upon them, I should lose both myself and my time; for I have a genius that is extremely volatile, and what I do not discern at the first essay becomes the more obscure to me the longer I pore on it. I do nothing without gaiety. Continuation, and a too obstinate contention, darkens, stupefies, and tires my judgment. My sight is therein confounded and dissipated. I must withdraw it, and leave it to make new discoveries, just as, in order to judge rightly of the lustre of scarlet, we are ordered to pass it lightly with the eye, and to run it over at several sudden repeated views. If one book does not please me, I take another, but never meddle with any, except at such times when I begin to be weary of doing nothing.

I do not much relish the writings of the *Montaigne's* moderns, because I think the ancients fuller and more substantial; neither am I fond of the Greek *preference for ancient* authors, my knowledge in that language being too *writers.* superficial to read them with delight. Among the books that are merely entertaining, I think, of the moderns, Boccaccio's Decameron, Rabelais, and the Basia of Johannes Secundus (if these may be ranged under that title) are

* Propert., iv, 1, 70.

worth reading. As to Amadis de Gaul, and such kind of writings, they have not the credit to take with me so much as in my childish years. I will say, moreover, whether boldly or rashly, that this old dull fancy of mine is now no longer tickled with Ariosto, nor even with honest *Ovid*. His easy style and his imaginations, with which I was formerly charmed, are scarce of any entertainment to me now. I speak my mind freely of all things, nay, of those that perhaps exceed my reach, and which I do not comprehend to be at all within my sphere. And the opinion I give of them is to show the extent of my sight, and not the measure of its objects. When I find myself disgusted with the *Axiochus* of Plato,* as a performance which, with all due respect to such an author, has no spirit, I am not sure that my judgment is right. It is not so conceited of itself as to set up against the authority of so many other famous judges of antiquity, whom it esteems as its regents and masters, and with whom it had rather be mistaken. In such a case it reproves and condemns itself, either for stopping at the outward bark, for want of power to penetrate to the pith, or for considering the thing by some false light. It is contented with securing itself only from trouble and irregularity; and as to its own weakness, it is sensible of it, and frankly confesses it. It thinks it gives a just interpretation by the appearances formed in its conception: but they are weak and imperfect. Most of the fables of *Æsop* have several senses and meanings, of which the mythologists choose some one that tallies well with the

* Critics ascribe this dialogue, not to Plato, but to *Æschines*.

fable ; but, for the most part, it is only what presents itself at the first view and is superficial, there being others more lively, essential, and internal, into which they have not been able to penetrate ; and the case is the very same with me.

But to proceed on my subject. I always thought *The Latin* that in poetry Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus, and *poets.* Horace excel the rest by many degrees ; and especially Virgil, in his Georgics, which I esteem as the completest work in poetry, in comparison with which it is easy to discern some passages of the Æneid to which the author would have given a little more of the file had he had leisure. The fifth book of the Æneid seems to me to be the most perfect. I am also fond of Lucan, and often read him ; not so much for the sake of his style as for his own worth, and the truth of his opinions and judgments. As for Terence, I think the delicacy and elegance of his Latin so admirably adapted to represent our passions and manners to the life, that our actions make me have recourse to him every now and then ; and as often soever as I read him I still discover some new grace and beauty. Such as lived in the age near Virgil's were scandalized that any should compare Lucretius to him. I am, indeed, of opinion that the comparison is very unequal ; yet *Lucretius not to be compared to Virgil.* I can scarce settle myself in this belief when I am captivated with some of those fine passages in Lucretius. But, if they were so piqued at this comparison, what would they have said of the brutish and barbarous stupidity of those who, at this hour, compare Ariosto to him ? and what would Ariosto himself say of it ? *O seclum insipiens et*

*inficetum!** “O silly, senseless age!” I think the ancients had yet more reason to complain of those who compared Plautus with Terence (the latter being much more of the gentleman) than Lucretius with Virgil. It makes much for the honour and preference of Terence that the father of the Roman eloquence has him so often in his mouth, the only one of his rank that he mentions, as does the sentence which the chief judge of Roman poetry has passed upon the other.

I have often observed that those of our time who have taken upon them to write comedies (as the Italians, who are very happy in dramatic compositions) take in three or four arguments of those of Terence or Plautus to make one of theirs, and crowd five or six of Boccaccio's tales into one single comedy. That which makes them load themselves with so much matter is the diffidence they have of being able to support themselves by their own merit. They must find out somebody to lean upon, and, not having matter enough of their own to amuse us with, they supply the defect with some tale. But the case is quite contrary with our author,† the beauty and perfections of whose style make us lose the appetite for his plot. His elegancy and delicacy captivate us in every scene, and he is so pleasant throughout (*Liquidus, puroque simillimus amni*,‡ “Running smoothly, like a liquid stream”), and so possesses the soul with his graces of diction, that we forget those of his fable. This very consideration draws me on farther. I perceive that the

* Catul., Epigram. xliii, 8.

† Terence.

‡ Hor., ii ep. 2, 120.

good old poets avoided the affectation and pursuit not only of fantastic Spanish and Petrarchist's flights, but even of the softer and graver periods which have adorned all the poetry of the succeeding ages. Yet there is no good judge who will condemn this in those ancients, and who does not incomparably more admire the equal smoothness and that perpetual sweetness and beauty which flourish in the epigrams of Catullus than all the stings with which Martial has armed the tails of his. The reason is the same as I gave just now; and, as Martial said of himself, in Preface lib. viii, *minus illi ingenio laborandum fuit, in cujus locum materia successerat*, "his subject was so fruitful that he had the less need for the exercise of his wit." The epigrams of Catullus make themselves sufficiently felt without our being moved and disgusted. They have matter enough throughout to create laughter: they need not raise the laugh themselves. Martial's epigrams have need of foreign assistance; as they have the less wit, they must have the more bulk; they mount on horseback because they are not strong enough to stand on their own legs. Just so, in our balls, those men of low degree who teach to dance, because they cannot represent the port and decency of our gentry, endeavour to recommend themselves by dangerous leaps, and other odd motions practised by tumblers. And the ladies come off better in dances where there are several couplets and agitations of the body than in some other formal dances wherein they are only to move a natural pace, and to represent their ordinary grace and gesture. And so I have seen excellent tumblers, dressed in the clothes which they wear every day, and with their usual countenance, give us all the pleasure that their art is

capable of; while their apprentices, not yet arrived to such a degree of perfection, are fain to meal their faces, to disguise themselves, and to use wild motions and grimaces to make us laugh.

The Æneid and the Orlando Furioso. This conception of mine is nowhere so demonstrable as in the comparison of the Æneid and Orlando Furioso. The first we see with expanded wings soaring aloft, and always stretching to its

point; while the latter flutters and hops from tale to tale, as from branch to branch, not venturing to trust its wings but in very short flights, and perching at every turn, lest its breadth and strength should fail it. *Excursusque breves tentant,** "Short exercises please me best." As to my other

Books by which Montaigne regulated his opinion. reading, which mixes a little more profit with pleasure, and from whence I learn how to regulate my opinions and humours, the books which I apply to for this purpose are Plutarch (since he is translated into French) and Seneca. They are

both remarkably adapted to my temper, forasmuch as the knowledge which I there seek is communicated in loose pieces that are not very tedious to read; otherwise, I should not have patience to look in them. Such are Plutarch's Opuscula and the Epistles of Seneca, which are the most beautiful and profitable of all their writings. These I can take in hand and lay aside at pleasure; for they have no connection with, or dependence upon, one another.

These authors generally concur in such opinions as are useful and true; and there is this further parallel betwixt

* Georg., iv, 194.

them, that they happened to be born much about the same time, that they were both the preceptors of two Roman emperors, that both came from foreign countries, and that both were rich and both great men. Their lessons are the cream of philosophy, and are delivered after a plain and pertinent manner. Plutarch is more uniform and constant; Seneca more irregular and various. The latter toils with all his might to arm virtue against frailty, fear, and vicious appetites; the former seems not to think their power so great, and scorns to hasten his pace, and put himself upon his guard. Plutarch's opinions are Platonic, mild, and accommodated to civil society. The other's are Stoical and Epicurean, more remote from the common usage; but I think them more advantageous in particular, and more solid. It appears in Seneca that he leans a little to the tyranny of the emperors of his time, since I take it for granted that he spoke against his judgment when he condemns the generous deed of those who assassinated Cæsar. Plutarch is frank everywhere. Seneca abounds with flights and sallies of expression; Plutarch with facts. Seneca warms and rouses you most; but Plutarch gives you the most satisfaction and profit. This leads us; the other pushes us.

As to Cicero, those works of his that can be of any use to me are such as treat of philosophy, especially ethics, or moral philosophy. But, not to mince the matter (for when a man has passed the barriers of impudence, he is not to be curbed), his way of writing seems to me tedious, as does every other composition of the like kind. For the greatest part of his work is taken up in

prefaces, definitions, divisions, and etymologies. Whatever there is of life and marrow is smothered by the long-winded apparatus to it. After I have spent an hour in reading him (which is a great deal for me), and call to mind what juice and substance I have extracted from him, I find nothing in him but wind for most part of the time; for he is not yet come to the arguments that serve for his purpose, and to the reasons that are proper for loosing the knot which I want to have untied. For my own part, who only desire to become more wise, not more learned or eloquent, these logical and Aristotelian rules are of no use to me; I am for an author that comes at once to the main point. I know so much of death and pleasure that no man need be at the trouble of anatomising them to me. I look for good and solid reasons at the entrance, to instruct me how to stand the shock of them; to which purpose neither grammarian subtleties nor the ingenious contexture of words and argumentations are of any use. I am for discourses that enter immediately into the heart of the doubt, whereas Cicero's beat about the bush: they are proper for the schools, for the bar, and the pulpit, where we have leisure to nod for a quarter of an hour, and to awake time enough to recover the thread of the discourse. It is necessary to talk after this manner to judges whom a man would gain over to his side, be it right or wrong; to children, and to the vulgar, to whom a man must say all he can, and wait for the event of it. I would not have an author make it his business to render me attentive, and call out fifty times to me with an "Or oyez!" after the manner of our heralds. The Romans said in their religion, *Hoc age*, as we do in ours, *Sursum corda*; but to me these are so many words

lost. I come thither quite prepared from my lodging ; I need no allurement nor sauce ; I eat the meat quite raw ; and, instead of whetting my appetite by these prefaces and prologues, they overload and pall it. Will the license of this age excuse my sacrilegious boldness to censure *Plato's* the Dialogues of Plato himself as too long-winded, *Dialogues.* whilst his subject is much too stifled ; and to complain of the time spent in so many tedious and needless preliminary interlocutions by a man who had so many better things to say ? My ignorance of the Greek, to such a degree as not to perceive any beauty in his language, will be a better excuse for me. I am generally for books that make use of the sciences, not for those that set them off. Plutarch and Seneca, Pliny, and those of the same way of thinking, have no *Hoc age* ; they choose to have to do with men who are already instructed ; or, if they have a *Hoc age*, it is a substantial one, and that has a body by itself.

I am also in love with the Epistles to Atticus, not only because they contain a very ample account of the history and affairs of his own time, but much more because I therein discover the particular humours of the writer ; for I have a singular curiosity, as I have said elsewhere, to know the souls and genuine opinions of my authors. Their abilities are to be judged of by the writings which they publish to the world, but not their manners or their persons. I have a thousand times lamented the loss of the treatise which Brutus wrote upon virtue ; for it is good to learn the theory from those who understand the practice. But, forasmuch as there is a wide difference between the preacher and the sermon, I like as well to see Brutus in Plutarch as in a book of

his own writing. I would rather choose to be truly informed of the conference he had in his tent with some of his private friends the night before a battle than the harangue he made to his army the next day, and of what he did in his closet and his chamber rather than of his actions in the forum and the senate.

Character of Cicero. As for Cicero, I am of the common opinion that, setting aside his learning, he had no extraordinary genius. He was a good citizen, and of an affable temper, as all fat men, and such merry souls as his was, generally are ; but he loved his ease, and, to speak the real truth, had a very great share of vanity and ambition. Neither do I know how to excuse him for thinking his poetry good enough to be published. To make bad verses is no great imperfection, but it was an imperfection in him that he did not judge how unworthy his verses were of his glorious character. As for his eloquence, it is beyond all comparison, and I believe it will never be equalled. The younger Cicero, who resembled his father in nothing but his name, whilst a commander in Asia, had several strangers one day at his table, and in particular Cestius, seated at the lower end, as the open tables of the great are generally crowded. Cicero asked one of his waiters who that man was, and he readily told him his name ; but Cicero, as one who had his thoughts intent upon something else, and had forgot the name, asked him the same question again two or three times. The fellow, in order to be rid of the trouble of making the same answer over and over again, and to imprint the thing the more in his memory by some remarkable circumstance, "It is that very Cestius," said he, "who, as you have been

informed, makes no great account of your father's eloquence in comparison of his own." Cicero, being suddenly nettled at this, ordered poor Cestius to be seized, and caused him to be well whipped in his presence.* A very uncivil host! Even amongst those who, all things considered, have reckoned the eloquence of Cicero incomparable, there have been some who have not scrupled to find faults in it. As, for example, his friend the great Brutus, who called his eloquence *fractam et elumbem*, "shattered and feeble." The orators, also, in the next age to his, found fault with him for his affectation of a certain long cadence at the end of his sentences, and particularly took notice of the words *Esse videatur*, which he therein so often makes use of. For my own part, I am for a shorter cadence, formed in the iambic style; yet sometimes he shuffles the members of his sentence together very roughly, though it is very seldom. One instance of this dwells upon my ears in the phrase *Ego vero me minus diù senem esse mallet, quam esse senem ante quam essem*, "For my part, I had rather be old for a short time than to be old before I really am so."

The historians† are my chief diet, for they are pleasant and easy; and the knowledge of mankind in general, which is what I seek for, appears with them more clear and perfect than anywhere else. There is to be seen the variety and reality of their internal qualities, in general and in particular, with the diversity of methods contributing to their composition and the accidents that

*Montaigne
best pleased
with his-
tory.*

* Seneca, Suasor. viii.—"Voilà un mal courtois hoste!" Orig.

† "Les historiens sont ma droite balle."

threaten them. But they who write lives, by reason they take more notice of counsels than events, more of what proceeds from within doors than what happens without, are the fittest for my perusal; and therefore, of all others, Plutarch is my man. I am very sorry that we have not a dozen Laertiuses, or that he was not more extensively or better understood. For I am equally curious to know the lives and fortunes of those great preceptors of the world as to know the diversity of their doctrines and opinions. In the study of this kind of histories a man must tumble over without distinction, all sorts of authors, old or new, barbarous and French,* to learn the things of which they variously treat. But Cæsar does, in my opinion, singularly deserve to be studied, not for the knowledge of the history only, but for his own sake, he has so much perfection and excellence above all the rest, not excepting Sallust. In truth, I read this author with a little more respect and reverence than I pay to human compositions, considering him one while personally by his actions and his wonderful greatness, and another while by the purity and inimitable accuracy of his language, wherein he has not only surpassed all historians, as Cicero says, but perhaps even Cicero himself. For he speaks of his enemies with so much sincerity, that, setting aside the false colours with which he endeavours to palliate his bad cause, and the corruption of his pestilent ambition, I think the only thing for which he is to be blamed is his speaking too sparingly of himself; for so many great things could not have been

*Commen-
dation of
Cæsar's
Commen-
taries.*

* "Vieils et nouveaux, et barragouins et français."

performed under his conduct if he had not had a greater share in them than he attributes to himself. I love histories that are either very plain or of distinguished excellency. The plain historians, who have nothing of their own to insert, and who only take the care and pains to collect everything that comes to their notice, and to make a faithful register of all things, without choice or distinction, leave the discovery of the truth entirely to our own judgments. Such, for example, among others, is honest Froissart, who has pro-*Froissart* ceeded in his undertaking with such a frank plain-*com-*ness, that, when he has committed an error, he is *mended.* never afraid to confess and correct it in the place where it is pointed out to him, and who even represents to us the variety of rumours that were then spread abroad, and the different reports that were brought to him. Thus the matter of his history is naked and unadorned, and every one may profit by it, according to his share of understanding.

The very excellent historians have the capacity of selecting what is worthy to be known, and, of two reports, to single out that which is most likely to be true. From the condition of princes and their tempers they judge of their counsels, and attribute speeches to them that are therewith consistent; and such have a title for assuming the authority of regulating our belief by theirs; but certainly this is a privilege that belongs to very few. The historians of the *What his-*middle class (who are the most numerous) per-*torians to*vert us all. They aim to chew our bits of meat *be despised.* for us; they make it a law to themselves to judge of, and consequently to bend, the history to their own fancy; for, while the judgment leans on one side, the writer cannot

avoid turning and winding his narrative according to that bias. They undertake to choose things worthy to be known, yet often conceal from us such an expression, or such a private transaction, as would instruct us better. They omit as incredible such things as they do not understand, and some things, perhaps, too, because they know not how to express them in good language. Let them vaunt their eloquence and their reason with as much assurance as they please, and let them judge as they fancy ; but let them leave us something to judge of after them, and neither alter nor disguise anything of the substance of the matter by their abridgments and their own preference, but refer it to us pure and entire in all its dimensions. In these latter ages especially, the people who are most commonly appointed for this task are culled out from the common people, for no other merit but their good style ; as if we wanted them to teach us grammar ; and, as they are hired for no other end, and vent nothing but tittle-tattle, they are in the right to apply their thoughts chiefly to this point. Thus, with a fine flourish of words, they feed us with a curious chain of reports, which they pick up in the public places of the towns. The only good histories are such as have been written by the persons themselves who had the direction, or were sharers in the management of the affairs of which they write, or who happened, at least, to have the conduct of others of the same kind. Such are, in a manner, all the Greek and Roman historians. For several eye-witnesses having writ of the same affair (as this happened at a time when grandeur and literature commonly met in the same person), if there happened to be an error, it must of necessity

*The only
good his-
tories.*

be a very slight one, and about an event very dubious. What can one expect from a physician who treats of war, or from a student in his closet that undertakes to lay open the secrets of the cabinets of princes?

If we would take notice how religious the Romans were in this point, there needs no more than this instance of it. Asinius Pollio* found, even in Cæsar's Commentaries, a mistake which he had fallen into, either for not having his eyes in all the parts of his army at once, and giving credit to particular persons, who had not given him a true account, or else for not having been exactly informed by his lieutenants of what they had done in his absence. By this we may see how hard a matter it is to come at the truth, when one cannot depend for a right account of a battle upon the knowledge of the general who commanded in it, nor upon the very soldiers for what passed near them, unless, after the manner of examinations before a judge, the witnesses are confronted, and the objections admitted to the proof of the minutest circumstances of every event. In truth, the knowledge we have of our own affairs is very imperfect; but this has been sufficiently treated of by Bodin,† and according to my own way of thinking. In order to give some little assistance to my treacherous memory, which is so extremely defective that it has happened to me more than once to take books in my hand, as new, and altogether unknown to me, which I had read carefully a few years ago, and scribbled my notes in them,—I have made it a practice, for some time past, to

* In Suetonius's Life of Julius Cæsar, sect. 56; Pollio's criticism is more severe than Montaigne's.

† A celebrated juriconsult.

add at the end of every book (I mean of such as I desire never to use but once) the time that I finished the reading of it, and the judgment I had formed of it in gross ; to the end that this may, at least, represent to me the general air and idea which I had conceived of the author when I read him.

I will here transcribe some of those annotations for a specimen. I wrote what follows, about ten years ago, in my Guicciardini ; for in what language soever my books accost

Reflections upon Guicciardini. me, I speak to them in my own : " He is a diligent historiographer, and one from whom, in my opinion, we may know the truth of the affairs of

his time as exactly as from any other ; for in most of them he was himself an actor, and in an honourable rank. There is no appearance that he has disguised things out of hatred, favour, or vanity, of which we have ample testimony in the free censures he has passed upon the great men, and especially those by whom he was advanced and employed in offices of trust—viz., Pope Clement VII. in particular. As to that part for which he seems to have valued himself most—viz., his digressions and paraphrases—he has, indeed, some very good ones, and enriched with beautiful expressions, but he is too fond of them. For, because he would leave nothing unsaid, as he had a subject so copious and a field so ample and almost boundless, he becomes flat, and has a little smack of the scholastic prattle. I have also made this remark, that, of so many men and things, so many motives and counsels, on which he passes his judgment, he does not so much as attribute a single motive to virtue, religion, and conscience, as if they were all quite extinct in the world ; and he ascribes the cause of all actions, how fair

soever they appear in themselves, to some vicious occasion, or view of profit. It is impossible to imagine that, amongst such an infinite number of actions of which he gives his judgment, there may not have been one that was conducted by reason. No corruption could have so universally infected men but some one must have escaped the contagion; which makes me suspect that his own taste was a little vitiated, and that it might happen he judged of other men by himself."

In my Philip de Comines there is this written: *Philip de Comines*. "You will here find the language smooth and agreeable, with an artless simplicity; the narration pure, and in which the author's regard for truth is fully displayed; free from vanity when he speaks of himself, and from partiality and envy when he speaks of others. His reasonings and exhortations are accompanied with more zeal and truth than with any exquisite sufficiency, and with all that authority and gravity throughout the whole which show him to be a man of a good family, and one who has had no ordinary education."

And this in my Memoirs of M. du Bellay: *Memoirs of Du Bellay*. "It is always pleasant to read things that are written by those who have experienced how they ought to be carried on; but it cannot be denied that in those two lords (William and Martin du Bellay) there is a great declension from that free and unconstrained manner of writing which is so conspicuous in the ancients of their profession; such as M. de Jouinville, domestic to St. Louis; Eginhard, chancellor to Charlemagne; and Philip de Comines, of later date. This book is rather an apology for King Francis against the Emperor Charles V, than a

history. I am not inclined to think that they have falsified anything as to fact in general ; but they are dexterous at wresting the judgment of events to our advantage, though often contrary to reason, and of omitting whatever is of a ticklish nature in the life of their sovereign ; witness the affairs of Messieurs de Montmorency and Brion, which are here omitted ; nay, the name of Madame d'Estampes is not so much as once mentioned. Secret actions may be concealed by an historian, but to pass over in silence what is known to all the world, and things, too, that have produced effects of such consequence, is a defect not to be excused. In fine, whoever would have a perfect knowledge of King Francis, and the affairs of his time, must, if he will take my advice, look for it elsewhere. The only advantage he can reap from this work is by the particular account of the battles and military achievements in which those gentlemen were present, certain expressions and private actions of some princes of their time, and the practices and negotiations carried on by the Lord de Langeay, wherein there are throughout things worthy to be known, and reasonings above the vulgar strain."





OF CRUELTY.

IT seems to me that virtue is a thing other and more noble than the inclinations that arise from the goodness which is in us. Those souls that are well tempered and truly generous pursue the same track ; and their actions wear the same face as the virtuous. But the word *virtue* imports something—I know not what—that is more great and active than a man's suffering himself, with a happy constitution, to be gently and quietly conducted by reason. The person who, from a mildness and sweetness in his temper, should despise injuries received would perform a thing very amiable and commendable ; but the man who, being provoked and enraged to the last degree by some offence, should arm himself with the weapons of reason against a furious thirst of revenge, and after a great struggle with himself should at last master his own passion, would undoubtedly do much more. The first would do well, and the latter virtuously. One action might be called good-nature, the other virtue. For methinks the very name of virtue presupposes difficulty and opposition, and cannot be exercised without something to contend with. And it is for this reason, perhaps, that we

Virtue is superior to goodness of nature.

Virtue not practised without difficulty.

call God good, mighty, bountiful, and just; but we do not call him virtuous, his works being all natural and without effort. The philosophers, not only the Stoics, but also the Epicureans—(and this addition I borrow from the vulgar opinion, which is false, notwithstanding the witty conceit of Arcesilaus, who, being reproached that many scholars went from his school to the Epicurean, but never any from thence to his school, said in answer, “I believe it indeed; numbers of capons being made out of cocks, but never any cocks out of capons.”* For, in truth, the Epicurean sect is not at all inferior to the Stoic in steadiness and the rigour of opinions and precepts. And a certain stoic discovering more honesty than those disputants who, in order to quarrel with Epicurus, and to throw the game into their own hands, make him say what he never thought, putting a wrong construction upon his words, clothing his sentences, by the strict rules of grammar, with another meaning, and a different opinion from that which they knew he entertained in his mind and in his morals—the stoic, I say, declared that he abandoned the Epicurean sect upon this, among other considerations, that he thought their way too lofty and inaccessible; *et ii, qui φιλήδονοι vocantur, sunt φιλόκαλοι et φιλοδίκαιοι, omnesque virtutes et colunt, et retinent,* “and those whom we call lovers of pleasure, being, in effect, lovers of honour and justice, cultivate and practise all the virtues”—several, I say, of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers thought that it was not enough to have the soul in a good frame, tempered, and disposed to virtue; that it was

* Diog. Laert., Arcesilaus, iv, 43.

not enough to have our resolutions and our reasonings fixed above all the efforts of Fortune ; but that it was ever necessary to seek occasions to make trial of them. They were for going in quest of pain, necessity, and contempt, in order to combat them, and to keep the soul in exercise : *multum sibi adjicit virtus lacessita*.* It is one of the reasons why Epaminondas, who was also of a third sect,† refuses the wealth which Fortune puts into his hand by very fair means, “because,” said he, “I may be able to fence with poverty ;” in which extreme he always stood his ground. Socrates, methinks, put himself to a severer trial, keeping for his exercise a shrew of a wife, which was a trial with a vengeance.‡ Metellus, the only one of all the Roman senators who attempted, by the strength of his virtue, to support himself against Saturninus, the tribune of the people of Rome, who was resolved by all means to get an unjust law passed in favour of the commonalty, having by such opposition incurred the capital punishments which Saturninus had established for the recusants—this very Metellus said to the persons who, in this extremity, were leading him to the place of execution, that it was a very easy and a base thing to commit evil, and that to do good where there was no danger was common ; but to do good where there was danger was the proper office of a man of virtue.§ These words of Metellus clearly show what I would make out, that virtue refuses ease for its companion, and that the gentle ascent, that soft smooth way in which those take their steps

* Seneca, ep. 13.

† Of the Pythagorean.

‡ “Qui est un essay à fer esmoulu.”

§ Plutarch, in the Life of Marius.

who are regulated by a natural inclination to goodness, is not the path of true virtue. This requires a rugged thorny passage, and will have either difficulties from without to struggle with (like that of Metellus), by means whereof Fortune delights to interrupt the speed of our career, or else internal difficulties that are introduced by the disorderly appetites and imperfections of our condition. I am come *In noble* thus far at my ease, but it just now falls into my *souls virtue* imagination that the soul of Socrates, the most *becomes* perfect that ever has come to my knowledge, *easy through* would, by this rule, have little to recommend *habit.* it ; for I cannot perceive in this person any effort of a vicious desire. In the course of his virtue I cannot imagine there was any difficulty or constraint. I know his reason had so much sway and authority over him that it never would have suffered a vicious appetite so much as to rise in him. To a virtue so sublime as his I can set nothing in opposition. Methinks I see it pass by, with a victorious and triumphant pace, in pomp, and at ease, without molestation or disturbance. If virtue cannot shine but by struggling with contrary appetites, shall we therefore say that she cannot subsist without the assistance of vice, and that it is from thence she derives her reputation and honour? What would become, also, of that brave and generous Epicurean pleasure which pretends to nourish and cherish virtue in its lap, giving it shame, sickness, poverty, death, and hell for toys to play with? If I presuppose that perfect virtue is known by contending with and patiently bearing pain, and even fits of the gout, without being moved in its seat, if I give it roughness and difficulty for its necessary object, what will become of a

virtue elevated to such a degree as not only to despise pain, but to rejoice in it, and to be delighted with the racking stitches of a violent colic, as is the quality of that virtue which the Epicureans have established, and of which many of them, by their actions, have left very evident proofs? As have many others who, I find, have surpassed the very rules of their discipline. Witness the younger Cato. When I see him dying, and tearing out his own entrails, I cannot be contented simply to believe that his soul was at that time wholly exempt from trouble and fear. I cannot think that he only supported himself in this step, which was prescribed to him by the laws of the Stoic sect, quite serenely, without emotion or passion. There was, methinks, in that man's virtue too much sprightliness and youth to stop there. I make no doubt but he felt a pleasure and delight in so noble an action, and that it was more agreeable to him than anything he ever did in his life. *Sic abiit e vitâ, ut causam moriendi nactum se esse gauderet*, "He went out of life as if he was glad he had found a cause for dying."* And I really question whether he would have been glad to have been deprived of the occasion of so brave an exploit. And if that good-nature of his, which made him espouse the public benefit rather than his own, did not restrain me, I should be ready to believe that he thought himself obliged to Fortune for having put his virtue to so severe a trial, and for having favoured the robber† in trampling the ancient liberty of his country under his feet. Methinks I read in this action I know not what exultation in his soul, and an extraordinary

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., i, 30.

† Julius Cæsar.

and manly emotion of pleasure, when he looked upon the nobleness and sublimity of his undertaking. *Deliberata morte ferocior.** Not stimulated by any hope of glory, as the vulgar and effeminate judgments of some men have concluded—for the consideration is too mean to touch a mind so generous, so aspiring, and so obstinate—but for the very beauty of the thing in itself, which he, who had the management of its springs, discerned more clearly, and in its perfection, than we are able to do. It gives me a pleasure to find it is the judgment of philosophy that so brave an action would have been indecent in any other life than Cato's, and that it only became his to have such a period. However, as reason required, he commanded his son, and the senators who accompanied him, to take another course. *Catoni quum incredibilem natura tribuisset gravitatem, eamque ipse perpetuâ constantiâ roboravisset, semperque in proposito consilio permansisset, moriendum potius, quam tyranni vultus aspiciendus, erat,* "Cato having been endowed by Nature with an incredible gravity, which he had fortified by a perpetual constancy, without ever departing from what he had once determined, he must, of necessity, rather die than see the face of the tyrant." Every man's death is proportionable to his life. We do not become other men by dying. I always judge of the death by the life preceding; and if any one tells me of a death that in appearance was accompanied with fortitude, after a life that was feeble, I conclude the cause that produced it to be feeble, and suitable to the life before it. The easiness, therefore, of this death, and the

* Hor., i, ode xxxvii, 29.

facility which he had acquired in dying by the vigour of his mind, shall we say that it ought to be the least abatement of the lustre of his virtue? And who that has his brain ever so little tinctured with true philosophy can be content to imagine Socrates only free from fear and passion in the accident of his prison, fetters, and condemnation? And who is there that does not discover not only his stability and constancy (which was his common quality), but, moreover, I know not what fresh satisfaction and a joyous alacrity in his last words and actions? At the start he gave, with the pleasure of scratching his leg, after his irons were taken off, does he not discover the like serenity and joy of his soul to find himself disengaged from the past inconveniences, and on the point of entering into the knowledge of futurity? Cato may be pleased to pardon me when I say his death was more tragical and lingering, but yet that of Socrates was, I know not how, more desirable, insomuch that Aristippus, hearing some pitying the manner of his death, said, "May the gods grant me such a death!"* We discern in the souls of these two great men, and their imitators (for I very much doubt whether they ever had their equals), so perfect a habit in virtue that it was constitutional to them. It is not that painful virtue, nor the law of reason, to preserve which the soul must be, as it were, on the rack, but it is the very essence of their souls, their natural and common practice. They have rendered it such by a long adherence to the precepts of philosophy, imbibed by a rich genius and a generous nature. The vicious passions that

* Diog. Laert., Aristippus, ii, 76.

are born in us can find no entrance into their breasts. The fortitude and steadiness of their souls stifle and extinguish carnal appetites as soon as they begin to move and stir.

*Different
degrees of
virtue.*

Now that it is not more noble, by a sublime and divine resolution, to hinder the birth of temptations, and to be so formed to virtue that the very seeds of the vices may be eradicated, than by mere force to hinder their growth, and, by giving way to the first motions of the passions, be obliged to arm and to oppose their progress, and to conquer them, and that this second effect is not also much more noble than to be only furnished with an easy debonair temper, disgusted of itself with debauchery and vice, I do not think can be doubted. As to this third and last sort of virtue, it seems, indeed, to render a man innocent, but not virtuous; free from doing ill, but not apt enough to do good. Besides, this is a condition so near approaching to imperfection and frailty that I know not very well how to distinguish and separate the confines. The very names of goodness and innocence are, for this reason, in some sort names of contempt. I perceive that several virtues, as chastity, sobriety, and temperance, may happen to us through bodily defects. Constancy in danger (if it must be so called), the contempt of death, patience under misfortunes, may happen, and are often found in men, for want of well judging of such accidents, and of conceiving of them as they really are. The dulness of apprehension and stupidity are, therefore, sometimes the counterfeit of virtuous deeds. As I have often seen it happen that men have had praise for what deserved censure. An Italian nobleman once made this remark in my presence, to the disadvantage

of his countrymen—viz., that the Italians were *Why the Italians are not brave.* so subtle, and so quick of apprehension, that they foresaw dangers and accidents which might happen to them at so great a distance that it is not to be thought strange if they often went to war to provide for their security, even before they had discovered the danger; that we (the French) and the Spaniards, who were not so cunning, were still more to be blamed, for that we must both see and feel the danger before it could alarm us, and that even then we were not resolute; but that the Germans and the Swiss, being more heavy and dull of apprehension, had not the sense to look around them, even when the blows were dealt about their ears. Peradventure he only talked at this rate by way of banter; yet certain it is that, in the trade of war, those who have not yet learned it often rush into dangers with more temerity than they do after they are well warmed in it.

“Haud ignarus quantum . . . nova gloria in armis,
Et prædulce decus, primo certamine, possit.”*

“Not being ignorant how much the soldier is excited by the sweet hope of glory.” For that reason, therefore, when we would give judgment of any particular action, we must consider the several circumstances and the whole man by whom it is performed before we give it a name.

To say one word of myself, I have sometimes known my friends commend that for prudence in me which was mere fortune, and ascribe that to courage and patience which was owing to judg- *In what Montaigne's virtue consisted.*

* Æneid, xi, 154, 155.

ment and opinion, giving me one title for another, sometimes to my advantage, at other times to my detriment. As to the rest, I am so far from being arrived at this first and more perfect degree of excellence, where virtue is become a habit, that I have scarce made any trial of the second. I have made no great efforts to curb the desires by which I have been importuned. My virtue is virtue, or rather casual and accidental innocence. If I had been born of a more irregular constitution, I fear my case would have been very lamentable; for I have scarce ever experienced a fortitude of mind to resist passions that were ever so little vehement. I know not how to nourish quarrels and debates in my own breast; so that I owe no thanks to myself if I am exempt from several vices.

“Si vitis mediocribus et mea paucis
Mendosa est natura, alioqui recta; velut si
Egregio inspersos reprehendas corpore nævos.”*

“If trivial faults deform my upright soul,
Like a fair face when blemish'd with a mole,”

I owe it more to my fortune than to my reason. I happened to be descended from a race famous for probity, and from a very good father. I know not whether he has entailed any of his humours upon me, or whether domestic examples, and the good instruction I received in my infancy, have insensibly contributed to it, or else whether I was born so.

“Seu Libra, seu me Scorpius aspicit
Formidolosus, pars violentior
Natalis horæ, seu tyrannus
Hespericæ Capricornus undæ.”†

* Hor., sat. i, 6, 65.

† Ibid., ode ii, 17, 17.

“Whether I was born under Libra, or the Scorpion, a malign star, the most terrible to the birth-hour, or under Capricorn, which rules the western waves.” So it is that I have a natural abhorrence for most of the vices. The answer which Antisthenes made to one who asked him what was the best thing to learn, viz., “to unlearn evil,”* seems very similar to this representation. I have them in abhorrence. I say, from an opinion so natural and so much my own that the very instinct and impression of them, which I brought with me from my nurse, I still retain, no motive whatsoever having been effectual to make me alter it; nay, not my own discourses, which, by rambling in some things from the common road, might easily license me to commit actions which such natural inclination gives me an aversion to.

What I am going to say is monstrous, yet I will say it. I find myself in many things more curbed and regulated by my manners than my opinion, and my desire is not so debauched as my reason. Aristippus established such bold opinions in favour of pleasure and riches as made all the philosophers declaim against him. But as to his manners, Dionysius the tyrant having presented three beautiful slaves to him for his choice of one, he made answer that he would have them all, and that Paris was in the wrong for preferring one before her other two companions. But, when he carried them home to his house, he sent them back unharmed. His servant finding the money which he carried after him too heavy a load for him,† he ordered him to pour it out in

* Diog. Laert., Antisthenes, vi, sect. 7.

† Ibid., Aristippus, ii, 67, 77, and Hor. ii, sat. iii, 100.

the road, and there leave that which encumbered him. And Epicurus, whose doctrines were irreligious and effeminate, lived very devoutly and laboriously. He wrote to a friend of his that he lived upon nothing but baked bread and water, and desired him to send him a little cheese, against the time he had a mind to make a sumptuous feast. Must it be true that, in order to be perfect, we must be so by an occult, natural, and universal propriety, without law, reason, or example? The irregularities of which I have been guilty are not, I thank God, of the worst sort, and I have condemned myself for them in proportion to the guilt of them, for they never infected my judgment. On the contrary, I condemn them more severely in myself than in another; but that is all, for, as to the rest, I oppose too little resistance, and too easily suffer myself to incline to the other scale of the balance, only I moderate and prevent them from mixing with other vices, which are apt to entwine with and hang to one another, if a man does not take care. I have contracted and curtailed mine, to make them as simple and uncompounded as I could. *Nec ultra errorem foveo*,* "Nor do I indulge my error further." For as to the opinion of the Stoics, who say that the wise man, when he works, operates by all the virtues together, though one be most apparent, according to the nature of the action (and, as to this, the similitude of the human body might be of some service to them, because choler cannot operate without the assistance of all the humours, though choler be predominant), if from thence

One vice does not render a man liable to all.

* Juv. viii, 194.

they would likewise infer that, when the wicked man acts wickedly, he acts by all the vices together, I do not believe it to be merely so, or else I do not understand them, for, indeed, I find the contrary. These are some of those acute but trifling subtilities which philosophy sometimes insists on. I am addicted to some vices, but I fly from others, as much as a saint would do. The Peripatetics also disown this indissoluble connection and complication ; and Aristotle is of opinion that a man may be prudent and just, and at the same time intemperate and incontinent. Socrates confessed to some who had discovered, in his physiognomy, an inclination to a certain vice, that he had indeed a natural inclination to it, but that he had, by discipline, corrected it.* And Stilpo, the philosopher's familiar friend, used to say that he was born with an appetite both to wine and debauchery, but that by study he had learned to abstain from both.† What I have good I ascribe it, on the contrary, to the fortune of my birth, and am not beholden for it either to law, precept, or any other instruction. My innocence is perfectly simple, with little vigour and less art. Among other vices, I mortally hate cruelty, both by nature and judgment, as the extreme of all vices. But, withal, I am so tender-hearted that it grieves me to see the neck of a fowl twisted,‡ nor can I bear to hear the cry of a hare in the teeth of my dogs, though hunting is my most chief pleasure. Such as have sensual pleasure to encounter with willingly make use of this argument to show that it is altogether vicious and

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., iv, 37.

† Cic., de Fato, c. 5.

‡ "Je ne vois pas esgorger un poulet."

unreasonable, and that when it is at the height it masters us to such a degree that reason can have no access to it.

He could resist the strongest impressions of pleasure. I know, however, that it may be otherwise, and that sometimes a man has it in his power, if he will, to turn his mind, even in the critical minute, to other thoughts; but then it must be bent to it deliberately and of set purpose. I know that a man may triumph over the utmost effort of pleasure. I have experienced this myself, and have not found rapture so imperious as many, and some more reformed persons than myself, declare her to be. I fancy that the diversion of hunting would be proper for an experiment, in which, though the pleasure be less, yet the rapture and surprise are the greater, when our reason, being astonished, has not such leisure to prepare itself for the encounter, when, after a long search, the beast starts up on a sudden, and, perhaps, in a place where we least of all expected it. This shock, and the shouts of the hunters, strike us to such a degree, that it would be difficult for such as are fond of this kind of chase to think of anything else at that very instant. And the poets make Diana triumphant over the torch and arrows of Cupid.

“Quis non malarum quas amor curas habet,
Hæc inter obliviscitur?”*

His tender-heartedness. “Who is there does not forget the cares and wrongs of love?” To return to my subject. I have a very tender compassion for the afflictions of other persons, and should readily cry, for company, if, upon

* Hor. Epod., ode ii, 37, 38.

any occasion whatsoever, I could cry at all. Nothing tempts my tears but to see tears shed by others, whether they are real, or only feigned or counterfeit. I do not much lament the dead, and should rather envy them; but I very much lament those who are dying. The savages do not so much offend me in roasting and eating the bodies of the dead, as those who torment and persecute the living. I do not like to be a spectator of executions, how just soever they are. A person having undertaken to set forth the clemency of Julius Cæsar, "He was," said he, "moderate in his revenge; for, having forced the pirates to surrender to him, those very pirates who had before taken him prisoner and put him to ransom, and having sworn to hang them on a gibbet, he did, indeed, condemn them to it, but it was after he had caused them to be strangled. Nor did he punish his secretary Philemon, who had attempted to poison him, with any greater severity than merely putting him to death." Without naming the Latin author* who durst allege as a mark of clemency the killing of those by whom we have been offended, it is easy to guess that he was struck with the horrid and inhuman examples of cruelty practised by the Roman tyrants.

As for me, I think that, even in the executions *The execu-*
of justice, whatever exceeds simple death is mere *tions of*
cruelty, and especially in us, who ought to have *justice*
so much respect to the souls as to dismiss them *ought to be*
in a good state, which cannot be when they are discomposed *simple.*
and rendered desperate by intolerable torments. Not long

* Suet., in Cæsar., cap. 74.

since, a soldier, who was imprisoned for some crime, perceiving from the tower wherein he was confined that the people were assembling at the place of execution, and that the carpenters were very busy, he thought that all their preparation was for his execution, and therefore resolved to kill himself, but could find nothing to do it withal, except an old rusty cart-nail, which he chanced to light upon. With this he first gave himself two great wounds in his throat, but, finding this was not sufficient, he soon after gave himself a third wound in the belly, where he left the nail stuck up to the head. The first of his keepers that came into his room found him thus mangled, and, though still alive, yet fallen on the floor, near expiring by his wounds. They therefore made haste to pass sentence on him before he should die, and thereby defeat the law. When he heard his sentence, and that it was only to be beheaded, he seemed to take fresh courage, took a glass of wine which he had before refused, and thanked his judges for the unexpected mildness of their sentence, saying that he had taken a resolution to despatch himself, for fear of being put to a kind of death more severe and insupportable, having believed, from the preparations he had seen making in the place of execution, that he was to be put to some horrible torture. And the man seemed to be, as it were, delivered from death by the change of it from the manner in which he apprehended it. I would advise that these examples of severity, which are with a design to keep people in their duty, might be exercised upon the dead bodies of the criminals ; for depriving them of burial, and quartering and boiling them, that would impress the vulgar almost as much as the pains they

see inflicted upon the living ; though, in effect, this is next to nothing : as God says, "They kill the body, but after that have nothing more that they can do" (Luke xii, 4).* One day, while I was at Rome, I happened to be going by just as they were executing Catena, a notorious robber. The spectators saw him strangled with indifference ; but when they proceeded to quarter him, at every blow struck by the executioner they gave a doleful groan, and made such an outcry, as if every one had lent his sense of feeling to the miserable carcass. These inhuman excesses ought to be exercised upon the bark, and not upon the pith. Thus, in a case much of the same nature, Artaxerxes moderated the severity of the ancient laws of Persia by an order that the nobility who debased themselves, instead of being lashed as they used to be, should be stripped, and their vestments whipped for them, and that, instead of having the hair of their heads plucked off, as was the practice, they should only take off their high-crowned tiaræ.† The Egyptians, who affected to be so devout, thought they fully satisfied the justice of God by sacrificing swine to him, in picture and effigy.‡ A bold invention, to think to please the Divine Being, a substance so essential, with picture and shadow !

I live in times that abound with incredible instances of this vice, owing to the licentiousness of our civil wars ; and I may challenge the ransackers of the ancient histories to produce any passage more

*Instances
of extreme
cruelty.*

* "Qui corpus occidunt, et postea non habent quod faciant."

† Plutarch, Apoth.

‡ Herodotus (lib. ii) says this was only done by the poor, who made swine in dough, which they baked, and then offered in sacrifice.

extraordinary than what we experience of it every day ; yet I am not at all reconciled to it. I could scarce believe, till I had seen it, that there could be such savage monsters, who could commit murder purely for the delight they took in it, and that, from that motive only, could hack and lop off the limbs of their fellow-creatures, and rack their brains to find out unusual torments and new deaths, without enmity, without gain, and for this end only, to feast their eyes and ears with the distressful gestures and motions, and the lamentable cries and groans, of a man in the agonies of death. For this is the utmost point to which cruelty can attain, *Ut homo hominem, non iratus, non timens, tantum spectaturus, occidat*, "That one man should kill another, without being pushed upon it by anger or fear, but only by a desire of seeing him die." For my own part, it always gives me pain to see a harmless beast, which is incapable of making its defence, and gives us no offence, pursued and worried to death. And, as it often happens that the stag, when hunted till it has lost its breath and strength, finding no other remedy, throws itself down and surrenders itself to its pursuers, begging mercy from us unto tears,

— "Questuque, cruentus,
Atque imploranti similis,"*

"and, sobbing, seems to ask our pity," I ever thought it a very displeasing sight. I scarce take any beast alive but I turn it abroad again. Pythagoras bought of the fishermen and fowlers to do likewise.

—— "Primoque a cæde ferarum
Incaluisse puto maculatum sanguine ferrum."†

* *Æneid*, vii, 501.

† *Ovid*, *Metam.*, xv, fab. 2, v. 47.

“For with slaughter of wild beasts the sword began.” They that thirst for the blood of beasts discover a natural inclination to cruelty. After they had accustomed themselves, at Rome, to spectacles of the slaughter of animals, they proceeded to that of men, and the combats of gladiators. Nature itself, I fear, has planted in man a kind of instinct to inhumanity. Nobody is fond of seeing beasts play with and caress one another; nor should anybody take a pleasure in seeing them dismember and worry one another. And, that I may not be jeered for my sympathising with them, we are enjoined to have some pity for them by theology itself; and, considering that one and the same Master has lodged us in this world for his service, and that they are of his family as well as we, it had reason to command us to show some regard and affection for them. Pythagoras borrowed the doctrine of the metempsychosis from the Egyptians; but it was afterwards received by several nations, and particularly by our Druids.

*Doctrine of
the trans-
migration
of souls.*

“Morte carent animæ; semperque, priore relictâ
Sede, novis domibus vivunt, habitantque receptæ.”*

“Souls never die, but, having left one seat,
Into new houses they admittance get.”

The religion of our ancient Gauls maintained that souls, being eternal, never ceased to remove and shift their stations from one body to another; it mixed, moreover, with this fancy some consideration of the Divine justice: for, according as the soul had behaved whilst it had been in Alexander, they said that God ordered it to inhabit another body, more or less uneasy, and suitable to its condition.

* Ovid, *Metam.*, xvi, fab. 3, v. 6.

———"Muta ferarum

Cogit vincla pati ; truculentos ingerit ursis,
Prædonesque lupis ; fallaces vulpibus addit. . . .
Atque ubi per varios annos, per mille figuras
Egit, Lethæo purgatos flumine, tandem
Rursus ad humanæ revocat primordia formæ."*

"He made them wear the shape of brutes : bloodthirsty souls became bears ; the rapacious, wolves ; the cunning, foxes ; and, after many years, and a thousand shapes, the soul, purged in Lethe, was restored to its primordial form."

"Ipse ego, nam memini, Trojani tempore belli,
Panthoïdes Euphorbus eram."†

"I remember that in the days of the Trojan war I was Euphorbus." As to the kindred betwixt us and the beasts. I lay no great stress on it, nor on the practice of several nations, and some, too, the most noted for antiquity and dignity, said to have not only admitted brutes to their society and company, but to have also preferred them to a rank far above themselves ; some esteeming them as familiars and favourites of their gods, and paying them respect and veneration more than human, while others acknowledged no god nor deity but them. *Belluæ a barbaris propter beneficium consecratæ*,‡ "The barbarians consecrated beasts for the benefit they received by them ; *Crocodilon adorat*, etc., "One part of the world worships the crocodile, another the ibis, fed with poisonous serpents' flesh ; at another a monkey has a statue of gold ; here they worship a fish, and there whole towns bow to a dog."§ And the very construction

* Claudian, in Rufin., ii, 482, etc.

† Pythagoras speaks thus of himself ; Ovid, *Met.*, xv, fab. 3, v. 8, 9.

‡ Cíc. de Nat. Deorum, i, 36.

§ Juv., xv, 2.

that Plutarch puts upon this error, which is very well fancied, is also to their honour. For he says that it was not the cat nor the ox (for example) that the Egyptians adored, but that, in those brutes, they revered some image of the Divine faculties :* in the ox, patience and profit ; in the cat, vivacity, or, like our neighbours the Burgundians, with all the Germans, an impatience to see itself shut in, by which they represented the liberty they loved and adored beyond every other faculty; and so of the others. But when, amongst the more moderate opinions, I meet with arguments that endeavour to demonstrate the near resemblance betwixt us and animals,† and what a share they have in our greatest privileges, and with what probability they are compared to us, it really very much abates my presumption, and I am ready to resign that imaginary royalty which is ascribed to us over the other creatures. Be all this as it will, there is, nevertheless, a certain kind of respect, *We ought to have some regard for* and a general obligation of humanity, which attaches us, not only to the beasts that have life *beasts.* and a sense of feeling, but even to trees and plants.

We owe justice to men, and favour and good usage to other creatures that are susceptible of it. There is a certain correspondence and a mutual obligation betwixt them and us ; I fear not to declare the tenderness of my nature to be so puerile that I cannot well refuse to play with my dog when he caresses me, or desires it, though it be out of season.

The Turks have almshouses and hospitals for beasts.

* Isis and Osiris.

† By those who anticipated Mr. Darwin and Professor Huxley.

The Romans made public provision for the nourishment of geese, after the watchfulness of one of them had saved their capitol. The Athenians made a decree that the mules which had been employed in the building of the temple called Hecatompodon should be free, and allowed to graze anywhere without molestation.* It was the common practice of the Agrigentines to give solemn interment to their favourite beasts, as horses of some rare qualities, dogs, and birds, which they made a profit of, and even such as had served for the diversion of their children.† And the magnificence which they commonly displayed in all other things appeared particularly in the number of costly monuments erected to this very purpose which remained for a show several ages after. The Egyptians interred wolves, bears, crocodiles, dogs, and cats in sacred places, embalmed their bodies, and wore mourning at their death.‡ Cimon gave an honourable burial to the mares with which he had won three prizes at the Olympic races.§ Old Xantippus caused his dog to be buried on a promontory near the sea-side, which has ever since retained its name.|| And Plutarch says that he made conscience of selling and sending to the shambles, for a small profit, an ox that had served him a good while.¶

* Plutarch, Cato the Censor. † Diod. Sic., xiii, 17.

‡ Diod. Sic., xiii, 17.

§ Father of Miltiades, Herodot., vi.

|| Plutarch, Cato the Censor. ¶ Ibid.





EXCERPTS FROM THE APOLOGY FOR
RAIMOND SEBOND.

THE VANITY OF WISDOM.

THE plague of mankind is the opinion of wisdom, which is the reason that ignorance is so much recommended to us by our religion, as proper to faith and obedience. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world."* All the philosophers, of all sects, agree in this, that the sovereign good consists in the tranquillity of the soul and body. But where do we find it?

"Ad summum, sapiens uno minor est Jove, dives,
Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum :
Præcipuè sanus, nisi quum pituita molesta est."†

"To sum up, the wise man is only less than Jupiter ; he is free, honoured, handsome, a king indeed of kings, especially when healthy—unless a cough disturb him." It seems to me, in truth, that nature has given us presumption only for

* Coloss. ii, 8.

† Hor., i, epist. 1, v. 106.

the consolation of our wretched forlorn state. "It is," as Epictetus says, "that man has nothing properly his own but the use of his opinions." We have nothing but wind and smoke for our portion. The gods have health in essence, says philosophy, and sickness in intelligence; man, on the contrary, possesses his goods in fancy, and his ills in essence. We have had reason to extol the strength of our imagination, for all our happiness is only in dream. Hear the bravado of this poor calamitous animal: "There is nothing," says Cicero, "so charming as the knowledge of literature, of that branch of literature, I mean, which enables us to discover the infinity of things, the immensity of nature, the heavens, the earth, and the seas. This is that branch which has taught us religion, moderation, magnanimity, and that has rescued our soul from obscurity, to make her see all things above and below, first and last, and between both; it is this that furnishes us wherewith to live well and happily, and guides us to pass our lives without displeasure and without offence."* Would not one think he was describing the condition of the ever-living and almighty God? But, in fact, there are a thousand poor women, in the country villages, whose lives have been more regular, more agreeable, and uniform than his.

"Deus ille fuit Deus, inclyte Memmi,
 Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam, quæ
 Nunc appellatur Sapiëntia; quique per artem
 Fluctibus e tantis vitam, tantisque tenebris,
 In tam tranquillâ et tam clarâ luce locavit."†

"That deity was indeed God, noble Memmius, who first found reason, now called wisdom, and by his art placed life, hidden

* Cic., Tusc. Quæst., i, 26.

† Lucret., v, 8.

in tempests and darkness, in so clear and calm a light." These were very fine pompous words ; but a very slight accident reduced the understanding of this man to a worse state than that of the meanest shepherd,* notwithstanding this his preceptor god and this divine wisdom. Of the same impudent stamp is that preface to Democritus's book, " I am going to treat of all things ;"† and that foolish title which Aristotle gives us, " Of the Mortal Gods";‡ and that opinion of Chrysippus, that Dion was as virtuous as God.§ And my Seneca owns, says he, that God gave him life, but that it was of himself to live well ; which is of a piece with that other assertion, *In virtute verè gloriamur ; quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo, non a nobis haberemus,*|| " We truly glory in our virtue ; which would not be the case if it was given us by God, and not of ourselves." This is also from Seneca,¶ that the wise man has fortitude equal with God, but attended with human frailty, wherein he surmounts him. There is nothing so common as to meet with passages of so much presumption. There is not one of us who would be so much offended at being placed on a par with God, as to find himself undervalued by being levelled to the rank of the other animals ; so much more jealous are we of our own interest than of that of

* Lucretius ; a love-potion was given him by his wife or his mistress, which disturbed his reason and at last made him kill himself.

† *Qui ita sit ausus ordiri hæc loquor de universis.*—Cic., Acad. Quæst., ii, 23.

‡ *Sic hominem ad duas res, ut ait Aristoteles, intelligendum et agendum, esse natum, quasi mortalem Deum.*—Cic., de Fin. Bon. et Mal., ii, 13.

§ Plutarch, Concep. of the Stoics, c. 30.

|| Cic., Nat. Deor., iii, 36.

¶ Epist. 53, sub finem.

our Creator. But we must trample this foolish vanity under foot, and quickly and boldly shake the ridiculous foundations on which these false opinions are founded. So long as man shall be of opinion that he has any means or power of his own, he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Maker. He will reckon his chickens before they are hatched, as the saying is ; we must, therefore, strip him to his shirt.

THAT IT IS PLEASANT TO SEARCH AFTER
TRUTH.

IT must not be thought strange if men, though they despair of overtaking the prey, do nevertheless take a pleasure in the pursuit ; study being of itself a pleasant employment, so delightful that, amongst the other pleasures, the Stoics also forbid that which proceeds from the exercise of the understanding, are actually for curbing it, and think too much knowledge intemperance.

Democritus's passion for inquiries into natural philosophy. Democritus, having eaten figs at his table which tasted of honey,* fell immediately to considering within himself from whence they derived that uncommon sweetness, and, to be satisfied in it, was about to rise from the table to see the place where the figs were gathered. His servant, being

* Plutarch, Table-talk, ques. 13. Bayle's Critical Dictionary, article *Democritus*, Note 1. According to Plutarch, Democritus ate τὸν σικυρον, a cucumber, and not τὸν σῦκον, a fig, as Montaigne has it from Amyot.

informed what was the cause of this bustle, said to him, with a smile, that he need give himself no trouble about it, for she had put them into a vessel in which there had been honey. He was vexed at the discovery, because it had deprived him of the opportunity of finding out the cause himself, and robbed his curiosity of matter to work upon. "Go thy way," said he to her; "thou hast done me an injury; but, however, I will seek out the cause of it as if it was natural;" and he would fain have found out some true cause of an effect that was false and imaginary. This story of a famous and great philosopher does very clearly represent to us the studious passion that amuses us in the pursuit of the things which we despair of acquiring. Plutarch gives a like example of one who would not be set right in a matter of doubt, because he would not lose the pleasure of seeking it, and of another person who would not suffer his physician to allay the thirst of his fever, because he would not lose the pleasure of quenching it by drinking. *Satius est supervacua discere quam nihil*,* "It is better to learn more than is necessary than nothing at all."

As, in all sorts of feeding, the pleasure of eating is very often single and alone, and as many things which we take that are pleasant to the palate are neither nourishing nor wholesome, in like manner, what our understanding extracts from science is, nevertheless, pleasant, though it is neither nutritive nor salutary. What they say is this: "The consideration of nature is food proper for our minds; it elevates and puffs

The consideration of nature is food for the mind of man.

* Senec., Epist. 88.

us up, makes us disdain low and terrestrial things, in comparison with things that are sublime and celestial. The inquisition into great and occult things is very pleasant, even to him who acquires nothing by it but the reverence and awe of judging it." Those are the terms of their profession. The vain image of this sickly curiosity is yet more manifest by this other example, which they are often fond of urging. Eudoxus wished, and prayed to the gods, that he might once see the sun near at hand, to comprehend the form, magnitude, and beauty of it, though he should be suddenly burnt by it. He was desirous, at the peril of his life, to acquire a knowledge of which the use and possession should be taken from him at the same instant, and, for the sake of this sudden and transitory knowledge, lose all the other knowledge he had then, or might have acquired hereafter. I cannot easily persuade myself that

Atoms of
Epicurus,
Ideas of
Plato, and
Numbers of
Pythagoras.

their Atoms, Ideas, and Numbers for articles of our faith. They were too wise to establish things so uncertain and so disputable for their credenda.

But, in the then obscure and ignorant state of the world, each of those great men endeavoured to strike out some image of light, whatever it was, and racked their brains for inventions that had at least a pleasant and subtle appearance, provided that, however false they were, they might be able to stand their ground against opposition :
"Unicuique ista pro ingenio finguntur, non ex scientiæ vi,"
 "Those are things which every one imagines by his wit, not by the virtue of knowledge."

* Senec., Suasoriarum, i, 4.

One of the ancients, being reproached that he professed philosophy, but, nevertheless, in his own opinion, made no great account of it, made answer that this was the true way of philosophising. They wished to consider all and weigh everything, and they found this an employment suited to our natural curiosity. Something they have written for the use of public society, as their religions; and, for that consideration, as it was but reasonable, they were not willing to sift the common notions too finely, that they might not obstruct the common obedience to the laws and customs of their country. Plato treats this mystery with unbridled raillery; for, where he writes according to his own method, he gives no certain rule. When he personates the legislator, he assumes a style that is magisterial and dogmatical, and yet therewith boldly mixes the most fantastical of his inventions, as fit to persuade the vulgar as they are too ridiculous to be believed by himself, knowing very well how fit we are to receive all manner of impressions, especially the most cruel and immoderate. And yet in his Laws he takes great care that nothing be sung in public but poetry, of which the fabulous fictions tend to some useful purpose; it being so easy to imprint all phantasms in the human mind, that it were injustice not to feed it with profitable lies rather than with those that are unprofitable and prejudicial. He says without any scruple, in his Republic, that it is very often necessary for men's good to deceive them. It is easy to distinguish the sects that have most adhered to truth, and those that have most view to profit, by which the latter have gained credit. It is the misery of our condition that it often happens that the thing

*What is
true philo-
sophy.*

which appears to our imagination to be the most true does not appear to be the most profitable in life. The boldest sects, as the Epicurean, Pyrrhonian, and the new Academic, are constrained, after all is said and done, to submit to the civil law. There are other subjects which they have discussed, some on the right, others on the left; and each sect endeavours to give them some countenance, be it right or wrong. For, finding nothing so abstruse which they would not venture to treat of, they were very often forced to forge weak and ridiculous conjectures; not that they themselves looked upon them as any foundation for establishing any certain truth, but merely for the exercise of their study. *Non tam id sensisse quod dicerent, quam exercere ingenia materiae difficultate videntur voluisse*, "Not that they seem to have been persuaded of the truth of what they said, but rather that they were willing to exercise their talents by the difficulty of the subject." And, if it be not taken in this light, how shall we palliate such great inconstancy, variety, and vanity of opinions, as we see have been produced by those excellent and admirable souls? As, for instance, what can be more vain than to offer to define God by our analogies and conjectures; to regulate him and the world by our capacities and our laws; to make use of that little scantling of knowledge which he has been pleased to allow to our state of nature to his detriment; and, because we cannot extend our sight to his glorious throne, to bring him down to a level with our corruption and our miseries?

HUMAN IGNORANCE.

THE wisest man that ever was,* being asked what he knew, made answer that he knew this, that he knew nothing. By this he verified the assertion that the greatest part of what we know is the least of what we do not know ; that is to say, that even that which we think we know is but a portion, and a very small portion, of our ignorance. We know things in dreams, says Plato, and are ignorant of them in reality. *Omnes pene veteres, nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse dixerunt; angustos sensus, imbecilles animos, brevia curricula vitæ,*† “Almost all the ancients have declared that there is nothing to be known, nothing to be perceived nor understood ; that the senses are too limited, minds too weak, and the time of life too short.” And of Cicero himself, whose merit was all owing to his learning, Valerius says that in his old age he began to despise letters, and that, when he applied to study, it was without dependence upon any one sect, following what he thought probable, now in one sect, then in another, evermore wavering under the doubts of the Academy. *Dicendum est, sed ita ut nihil affirmem; quæram omnia, dubitans plerumque, et nihil diffidens,*‡ “Something I must assert,” as he told his brother, “but without affirming anything ; I inquire into all things, but am generally doubting and diffident of myself.” I should have too much of the best of the argument were I to consider man in his common way of living and in the gross ; and yet

* Socrates ; Cic., Acad. Quæst., i, 4. † Cic., Acad. Quæst., i, 12.

‡ Cic. de Div., ii, 3.

I might do it by his own rule, which is to judge of truth, not by the weight, but by the number of votes. There we will leave the vulgar,—

“ Qui vigilans stertit,
Mortua cui vita est propè jam, vivo atque videnti,”*

“ Who snores when he wakes, and whose life is rather death than life,”—who neither feel nor judge themselves, and let most of their natural faculties lie idle.

Knowledge attained by study and art. I will take man in his sublimest state. Let us view him in that small number of excellent and select men who, having been endowed with a curious and particular natural talent, have, moreover, hardened and whetted it by care, study, and art, and raised it to the highest pitch of wisdom to which it can possibly arrive. They have adjusted their souls to all senses and all biases, have propped and supported them with all the foreign assistance proper for them, and enriched and adorned them with all that they could borrow for their advantage, both from within and without the world. Those are they in whom resides human nature to the utmost degree of perfection. They have regulated the world with polity and laws. They have instructed it in the arts and sciences, and also by the example of their admirable manners. I shall bring to my account those men only, their testimony and experience. Let us see how far they have proceeded, and on what they depended. The maladies and defects that we shall find amongst these men the world may boldly declare to be purely their own. Whoever enters upon the

* Lucret., iii, 1061, 1059. Montaigne has transposed these two verses of Lucretius to adapt them the more nicely to his subject.

search of any thing comes at last to this point :* *All philosophy divided into three kinds.* he either says that he has found it, or that it is not to be found, or that he is still in quest of it. The whole of philosophy is divided into these three kinds. Its design is to seek out truth, knowledge, and certainty. The Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others have thought they have found it. These established the sciences which we have, and have treated of them as of certainties. Clitomachus, Carneades, and the Academics despaired in their search, and were of opinion that truth could not be conceived by our understandings. These place all to the account of human frailty and ignorance. This sect has had the most numerous and the most noble followers. Pyrrho, and other sceptics or doubters, whose doctrines were held by many of the ancients as deduced from Homer, the seven wise men, Archilochus, Euripides, Zeno, Democritus, and Xenophon, say that they are still in the search of truth. *What was the profession of the Pyrrhonians.* These judge that they who think they have found it are vastly deceived, and that it is also too daring a vanity in the second sort to affirm that it is not in the power of man to attain to it. For this establishing the measure of our strength, to know and judge of the difficulty of things, is a great degree of knowledge, of which they doubt whether man is capable.

“Nil sciri si quis putat, id quoque nescit
An sciri possit quo se nil scire fatetur,”†

* Sextus Empiricus, the Pyrrhonian, from whom Montaigne has taken many things, thus begins his treatise of the Pyrrhonian hypothesis.

† Lucret., iv, 471.

“ He who says nothing can be known cannot be certain for that, since he confesses that, knowing nothing, he knows not even that.” The ignorance that knows itself, that judges and condemns itself, is not total ignorance, which to be, it must be ignorant of itself. So that the profession of the Pyrrhonians is to waver, doubt, and inquire, to be sure of nothing, and to be answerable for nothing. Of the three operations of the soul, the imagination, the appetite, and the consent, they admit of the two first, but as for the last, they support and maintain it ambiguously, without inclination or approbation either of one thing or another, it is so trivial. Zeno described the state of his imagination according to this division of the faculties of the mind. “ The hand extended and open, indicated *appearance*; the hand half shut, and the fingers a little crooked, showed *consent*; the right fist clenched, *comprehension*; and when with the left hand he yet pressed the fist closer, *knowledge*.”*

*Advantage
of Pyrrho-
nism.*

state of the opinion of the Pyrrhonians, receiving all objects, without application or consent, leads them to their ataraxy, which is a peaceable state of life, composed and exempt from the agitations which we receive by the impression of that opinion and knowledge which we think we have of things : from whence arise fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, the love of novelty, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and most of the bodily evils. Nay, and by that they exempt themselves from the jealousy of their discipline. For they debate after a very gentle manner, and in their disputes fear

* Cic., Acad. Quæst., iv, 47.

no revenge. When they say that weight presses downwards, they would be sorry to be believed, and want to be contradicted, for the sake of creating doubt and suspense of judgment, which is their ultimate end. They only advance their propositions to oppose such as they imagine have gained our belief. If you admit theirs, they are altogether as ready to maintain the contrary. It is all one to them. They have no choice. If you maintain that snow is black, they will argue, on the contrary, that it is white. If you say that it is neither the one nor the other, their business is to maintain that it is both. If you adhere to the opinion that you know nothing of the matter, they will maintain that you do ; yea, and if by an affirmative axiom you assure them that you doubt of a thing, they will argue that you do not doubt of it, or that you cannot be sure that you do doubt of it. And by this extremity of doubt, which shocks itself, they separate and divide themselves from many opinions, even of those who have, in many forms, maintained doubt and ignorance. Why shall it not be allowed to them, say they, as it is to the Dogmatists, one to say green, another yellow, and even to doubt of these? Can anything be proposed to us to acknowledge or deny which is not allowable for us to consider as ambiguous?





OF GIVING THE LIE.*



WELL but," some one will say to me, "this design of making one's self the subject of his writing were excusable in rare and famous men, who, by their reputation, had given others a curiosity to be fully informed of them." It is most true, I confess it, and I know very well that an artificer will scarce lift his eyes from his work to look at an ordinary man, when workpeople will forsake their work and shops to stare at an eminent person when he comes to town. It misbecomes any person to give his own character, except he has qualities worthy of imitation, and whose life and opinions may serve for a model. The great actions of Cæsar and Xenophon were a just and solid basis on which to fix and found their narratives; and it were also to be wished that we had the journals of Alexander the Great, and the commentaries that Augustus, Cato, Sylla, Brutus, and others have left of their actions. We love and contemplate the very statues of such personages, both in copper and marble. This remonstrance is very true, but it very little

* "Du Desmentir."

concerns me. *Non recito cuiquam, nisi amicis, idque rogatus,** etc., "I do not read this in all places, nor to all persons, but merely to my friends, and that indeed when they ask me, which is far different from those who recite their works in public places, and even in the public baths." I do not here form a statue to erect in the centre of a city, in the church, or any public quadrangle.

"With pompous trash to swell the frothy line
Is not, indeed, my friend, what I design;
Whatever be the secrets I indite,
To you I trust, to you alone I write."†

It is for the corner of a library, or to entertain a neighbour, a kinsman, or a friend that has a mind to renew his acquaintance and familiarity with me in this my picture. Others have been encouraged to speak of themselves because they found the subject worthy and rich; I, on the contrary,‡ am the bolder, by reason my subject is so poor and sterile that I cannot be suspected of ostentation. I judge freely of the actions of others; I give few of my own to judge of, because of their nothingness: I am not so conscious of any good in myself as to tell it without blushing. What contentment would it be to me to hear any thus relate to me the manners, faces, countenances, the ordinary words and fortunes of my ancestors? How attentively should I listen to it! In truth it would be ill-nature to despise even the pictures of our friends and predecessors, the fashion of their clothes, and of

* Hor., i, sat. 4, 73. Instead of *coactus*, as Horace has it, Montaigne has substituted *rogatus*, which exactly expresses his thought.

† Pers., sat. v, 19.

‡ "Moy, au rebours, pour l'avoir trouvé si sterile et si maigre." Is or is not this something of the pride that apes humility?

their arms. I preserve my father's writings, his seal, and one particular sword of his, and have not thrown out of my closet the long staves he used to carry in his hand. *Paterna vestis, et annulus, tanto carior est posteris, quanto erga parentes major affectus,** "A father's robe and ring are so much the dearer to his posterity in proportion to the affection they retain for him." If those who come after me, nevertheless, shall be of another mind, I shall be even with them; for they cannot care less for me than I shall then do for them. All the traffic that I have in this with the public is, that I borrow their writing tackle,† as it is more easy, and at hand; and, in recompense, shall peradventure keep a dish of butter from melting in the market. *Ne toga cordyllis, ne penula desit olivis;‡ Et laxas scombris sæpe dabo tunicas,§* "I may serve to wrap up olives or to cover mackerel." And though nobody should read me, have I lost my time in entertaining myself so many idle hours in thoughts so pleasing and useful? In moulding this figure upon myself, I have been so oft constrained to curry and turn myself as it were inside out, that the copy is truly taken, and has, in some sort, formed itself. But, as I paint for others, I represent myself in more exquisite colouring than in my own natural complexion. I am as much formed by my book as my book is by me: it is a book consubstantial with the author, of a peculiar tenor, a member of my life, and whose business is not designed for others, as that of all other books is. In giving so continual and so curious an account of myself,

* Aug. de Civitate Dei, i, 13.

† "C'est que j'emprunte les utils de son escriture."

‡ Mart., xiii, ep. i, 1.

§ Catul., ep. xcv, 8.

have I lost any time? For he who sometimes cursorily surveys himself only doth not so strictly examine himself, nor penetrate so deep, as he who makes it his business, his study, and his whole employment; who intends to give a lasting record, with all his fidelity, and with all his force. The most delicious pleasures, however digested internally, avoid leaving any trace of themselves, and shun the sight, not only of the people, but of any other man. How oft has this affair diverted me from uneasy thoughts! And all that are frivolous should be reputed so. Nature has presented us with a large faculty of entertaining ourselves apart, and oft calls us to it, to teach us that we owe ourselves in part to society but chiefly to ourselves. In order to habituate my fancy, even to meditate in some method, and to some end, and to keep it from losing itself and roving at random, it is but to give it a body, and to register all the pretty thoughts that present themselves to it. I give ear to my whimsies, because I am to record them. How oft has it fallen out that, being displeas'd at some actions which civility and reason did not permit me openly to reprove, I have here disgorged myself of them, not without design of public instruction; and yet these poetical lashes,

“Zon sur l'œil, zon sur le groin,
Zon sur le dos du Sagoin,”*

“A blow on the eye, a lash on the groin,
A blow on the back of Sagoin,”

imprint themselves better upon paper than upon the most

* Marot, in the Epistle called *Fripelippes, valet de Marot, à Sagoin*.

sensible flesh. What if I listen to books a little more attentively than ordinary, since I watch if I can purloin anything that may adorn or support my own? I have not at all studied to make a book; but I have in some sort studied, because I had made it, if it be studying to scratch and pinch, now one author, and then another, either by the head or foot; not with any design to steal opinions from them, but to assist, second, and to fortify those I had before embraced. But who shall we believe in the report he makes of himself, in so corrupt an age, considering there are so few, if any at all, whom we can believe, when speaking of others, where there is less interest to lie? The first step to the corruption of manners is banishing of truth; for, as Pindar says, "To be sincerely true is the beginning of a great virtue," and the first article that Plato requires in the government of his Republic. The truth of these days is not that which really is such, but what every man persuades himself or another to believe; as we generally give the name of money, not only to lawful coin, but to the counterfeit also, if it be current. Our nation has long been reproached with this vice; for Salvianus Massiliensis, who lived in the time of the emperor Valentinian, says that lying and perjury is not a vice with the French, but a way of speaking. He that would enhance upon this testimony might say that it is now a virtue with them. Men form and fashion themselves to it, as to an exercise of honour; for dissimulation is one of the most notable qualities of this age. I have often considered whence comes this custom that we so religiously observe, of being more highly offended with the reproach of a vice so familiar to us than with

*Untruth to
truth, an
odious vice.*

any other, and that it should be the highest injury that can, in words, be done us to reproach us with a lie. Upon examination, I find that it is natural to disclaim those faults most with which we are most tainted ; it seems as if, by resenting, and being moved at the accusation, we in some sort acquitted ourselves of the fault : if we are guilty of it in fact, we condemn it, at least in appearance : may it also not be that this reproach seems to imply cowardice and meanness of spirit ? Of which can there be a more manifest sign than for a man to eat his own words ? What, to lie against a man's own knowledge ? Lying is a base vice ; a vice that one of the ancients paints in the most odious colours, when he says that it is to manifest a contempt of God, and withal a fear of man. It is not possible more copiously to represent the horror, baseness, and irregularity of it ; for what can be imagined more vile than a man who is a coward towards man so courageous as to defy his Maker ? Our intelligence being conveyed one another only by words, he who falsifies them betrays public society : it is the only method by which we communicate our thoughts and wills to one another : it is the interpreter of the soul, and if it fails us, we no longer know nor have any farther tie upon one another. If that deceive us, it breaks all our correspondence, and dissolves all the bands of our government. Certain nations of the new-discovered Indies (no matter for naming them, since they are no more ; for, by a wonderful and unheard-of example, the desolation of that conquest extended to the utter abolition of names and the ancient knowledge of places) offered to their gods human blood, " but only such as was drawn from the tongue

*Why men
are so
stung by
being called
liars.*

and ears, to atone for the sin of lying, as well heard as pronounced." The good fellow of Greece* was wont to say that children were amused with rattles, and men with words. As to the various usages of our giving the lie, and the laws of honour in that case, and the alterations they have received, I shall refer saying what I know of them to another time, and shall learn, if I can, in the meanwhile, at what time the custom took beginning of so exactly weighing and measuring words, and of engaging our honour to them ; for it is easy to judge that it was not anciently amongst the Greeks and Romans ; and I have often thought it strange to see them rail at and give one another the lie, without any farther quarrel. The laws of their duty steered some other course than ours. Cæsar is sometimes called thief, and sometimes drunkard, to his teeth. We see the large license of invectives which they made use of one against the other. I allude to the greatest chiefs and warriors of either nation, where words were only revenged by words, and brought with them no other consequence.

* Lysander, Plutarch. "Ce bon compaignon de Grece." Montaigne quotes, as usual, from Amyot's translation.





WE TASTE NOTHING PURE.



THE weakness of our condition ordains that things cannot be used by us in their natural simplicity and purity; the elements that we enjoy are changed, even metals themselves; and gold must be debased by some alloy to fit it for our service. Neither has virtue, so simple as that which Aristo, Pyrrho, and also the Stoics have made, the principal end of life, nor the Cyrenaic and Aristippic pleasure been useful to it without a mixture. Of the pleasure and goods that we enjoy, there is not one exempt from some mixture of evil and inconvenience.

*Nothing
without its
inconveni-
ence.*

——— “Medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat.”*

“Our extremest pleasure has some air of groaning and complaining in it.” Would you not say that it is dying of anguish? Nay, when we forge the image of it, in its excellence, we paint it with sickly and painful epithets, languor, softness, feebleness, faintness, *morbidezza*, a great testimony of their consanguinity and consubstantiality. Profound joy has more of severity than gaiety in it; the extremest and

* Lucret., iv, 1126.

fullest contentment, more of the sedate than of the merry. *Ipsa felicitas, se nisi temperat, premit,** "Even felicity, unless it moderate itself, oppresseth." Pleasure preys upon us, according to the old Greek verse, which says that the gods sell us all the good they give us; that is to say, that they give us nothing pure and perfect, and which we do not purchase but at the price of some evil. Labour and pleasure, very unlike in nature, associate, nevertheless, by I know not what natural conjunction. Socrates says that some god tried to mix in one mass and to confound pain and pleasure, but, not being able to do it, he bethought him at least to couple them by the tail.† Metrodorus said that in sorrow there is some mixture of pleasure.‡ I know not whether or no he intended anything else by that saying; but, for my part, I am of opinion that there is design, consent, and complacency in giving a man's self up to melancholy; I say that, besides ambition, which may also have a stroke in the business, there is some shadow of delight and delicacy which smiles upon and flatters us even in the very lap of melancholy. Are there not some complexions that feed upon it? *Est quedam flere voluptas,§* "A certain kind of pleasure 'tis to weep." And one Attalus, in Seneca, says that the memory of our deceased friends is as grateful to us as the bitterness in very old wine is to the palate: ||

"Thou, boy, that fill'st the old Falernian wine,
The bitterest pour into the bowl that's mine;"¶

and as apples that have a sweet tartness. Nature dis-

* Senec., ep. 74.

† Metrodorus, Senec., ep. 99.

‡ Senec., epist. 63.

§ In Plato's Phædon.

¶ Ovid, el. iii, 37.

¶ Catul., xxv, 1, 2.

covers this confusion to us. Painters hold that the same motions and screwings of the face that serve for weeping serve for laughter too; and, indeed, before the one or the other be finished, do but observe the painter's conduct, and you will be in doubt to which of the two the design does tend. And the extremity of laughter is mixed with tears. *Nullum sine auctoramento malum est,** "No evil is without its compensation." When I imagine man surrounded with all the conveniences that are to be desired, let us put the case that all his members were always seized with the feeling of pleasure in its most excessive height; I fancy him melting under the weight of his delight, and see him utterly unable to support so pure, so continual, and so extreme a pleasure. Indeed, he is running away from this, and naturally makes haste to escape as from a place where he cannot stand firm, and where he is afraid of sinking.

*Constant
pleasure
not to be
borne.*

When I religiously confess myself, I find that the best good quality I have has in it some tincture of vice, and am afraid that Plato, in his purest virtue (I, who am as sincere and perfect a lover of him and of the virtues of that stamp as any other whatever), if he laid his ear close to himself (and he *did* lay his ear close), he would have heard some jarring sound of human mixture,† but so obscure as only to be perceived by himself. Man is wholly and throughout

* Senec., epist. 69.

† Excellently translated by Cotton. "S'il y eust escouté de prez, comme sans doute il faisoit, y eust senty quelque ton gauche de mixtion humaine." Florio is by no means so successful: "If he had merely listened unto it (and sure he listened very neere), he would therein have heard some harshe-tune oi human mixture."

but a patched and varied composition. Even the laws of justice themselves cannot subsist without some mixture of injustice; insomuch that Plato says *Just laws have some mixture of injustice.* "They undertake to cut off the hydra's head who pretend to purge the laws of all inconvenience."

Omne magnum exemplum habet aliquid ex iniquo quod contra singulos utilitate publicâ rependitur, "Every great example of justice has in it some mixture of injustice, which recompenses the wrong done to particular men by its public utility," says Tacitus.* It is likewise true that, for the busi-

Common understanding more proper for affairs than what is most refined.

ness of life and the service of public commerce, there may be some excesses in the purity and perspicacity of our mind; that penetrating light has too much of subtlety and curiosity: it must be a little stupefied and blunted, to be rendered more obedient to example and practice, and a little veiled and obscured, to bear the better proportion to this dark and terrestrial life.

And yet common and less speculative souls are found to be more proper and more successful in the management of affairs; and the elevated and exquisite opinions of philosophy are unfit for business. This acute vivacity of the mind, and the supple and restless volubility of it disturb our negotiations. We are to manage human enterprises more superficially and roughly, and leave a great part to the prerogatives of Fortune. It is not necessary to examine affairs with so much subtlety, and so deeply. A man loses himself in the consideration of so many contrary lustres and various forms.

* Annal., xiv, c. 44.

*Voluntibus res inter se pugnantes, obtorpuerant . . . animi,**
 “Whilst they considered of things so inconsistent in themselves, they were astonished.” It is what the ancients say of Simonides, that by reason his imagination suggested to him, upon the question King Hiero had put to him (to answer which he had many days to consider it), several witty and subtle arguments, whilst he doubted which was the most likely, he totally despaired of the truth.† He that dives into and, in his inquisition, comprehends all circumstances and consequences, hinders his choice. A little engine, well handled, is sufficient for executions of less or greater weight and moment. The best managers are those who are least able to tell us why they are so; and the greatest talkers, for the most part, do nothing to purpose. I know one of this sort of men, and a most excellent manager in theory, who has miserably let an hundred thousand livres yearly revenue slip through his hands. I know another, who says that he is able to give better advice than any of his council, and there is not in the world a fairer show of a soul and of a good understanding than he has; nevertheless, when he comes to the test, his servants find him quite another thing; and this I say without counting his ill-luck against him.‡

* Livy, xxxii, 20.

† Hiero had desired him to define God.—Cic., de Nat. Deor., i, 22.

‡ “Je dis sans mettre le malheur en compte.” Cotton misses the meaning of this. Florio turns it thus: “This I say without mentioning or accounting his ill-luck.”



OF POSTS.*

I HAVE been none of the weakest in this exercise, which is proper for men of my pitch, well-set and short ; but I give it over : it shakes us too much to continue it long. I was just now reading that King Cyrus, to have news brought him the better from all parts of the empire, which was of a vast extent, caused it to be tried how far a horse could go in a day without baiting ; and at that distance appointed men whose business it was to have horses always in readiness for all such as came to them.† And some say that this swift way of travelling is equal to the flight of cranes. Cæsar‡ says that Lucius Vibulus Rufus, being in great haste *They were used by the Romans.* to carry intelligence to Pompey, rid day and night, often taking fresh horses for the greater speed ; and himself, as Suetonius reports,§ travelled a hundred miles a day in a hired coach ; but he was a furious courier, for, where rivers stopped his way, he always passed them by swimming, without turning out of his way to look for either bridge or ford. Tiberius Nero, going to see his brother Drusus, who was sick in Germany, travelled two

* “Of running posts, or curners.”—Florio. † Xen. Cyro., viii, 6.
‡ De Bello Civ., iii, 4. § In Cæsar., s. 57.

hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours, having three coaches. In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy, by horses purposely laid on the road, rid, with almost incredible speed, in three days from Amphissa to Pella.* And it appears that they were established posts, and not just ordered for this occasion.

Cecinna's invention, to send back news to his family, was performed with much more speed; for he took swallows along with him from home, and turned them out towards their nests when he would send back any news, setting a mark of some colour upon them to signify his meaning according to what he and his people had before agreed upon.† At the theatre at Rome masters of families carried pigeons in their bosoms, to which they tied letters, when they had a mind to send any orders to their people at home, and the pigeons were trained up to bring back an answer. D. Brutus made use of the same device when besieged in Mutina; and others, elsewhere, have done the same.‡

In Peru they rid posts upon men's shoulders, *How they travelled post in Peru.* who took them up in a kind of litter and ran with full speed, the first bearers throwing their load to the second without making any stop, and so on. I understand that the Wallachians, who are the Grand Seignior's couriers, perform wonderful diligences; by reason they have liberty to dismount the first horseman they meet on the road, giving him their own tired horse. To keep alert, they gird themselves tight about the middle with a broad belt, as many others do, but I could never find any relief by it.

* Tit. Liv., xxxvii, 7. † Plin. Nat. Hist., x, 24. ‡ Id., x, 37.



OF BAD MEANS EMPLOYED TO A GOOD END.

THERE is a wonderful relation and correspondence in this universal system of the works of nature, which makes it plainly appear that it is neither accidental nor carried on by divers masters. The diseases and conditions of our bodies are also manifest in the states and governments of the world ; kingdoms and republics rise, flourish, and decay with age, as we do. We are subject to a repletion of humours that are useless and dangerous, either of those that are good (for even those the physicians are afraid of ; and, since we have nothing in us that is stable, they say that a too brisk and vigorous perfection of health must be lowered and abated by art, lest, as our nature cannot rest in any certain situation, and has not whither to rise to mend itself, it should make too sudden and too disorderly a retreat, and therefore they prescribe to wrestlers to purge and bleed to take down that superabundant health) or else a repletion of evil humours, which is the ordinary cause of maladies. States are very often sick of the like repletion, and therefore divers sorts of purgations have commonly been used.

Sometimes a great multitude of families are turned out to clear the country, who seek out new abodes elsewhere, or live upon others. After this manner our ancient Franks came from the heart of Germany, seized upon Gaul, and drove thence the first inhabitants; so was that infinite deluge of men formed that came into Italy under the conduct of Brennus and others—so the Goths and Vandals; also the people who now possess Greece left their native country to go and settle abroad, where they might have more room; and there are scarce two or three little corners of the world that have not felt the effect of such removals. The Romans by this means erected their colonies; for, perceiving their city to increase beyond measure, they eased it of the most unnecessary people, and sent them to inhabit and cultivate the lands by them conquered. Sometimes, also, they purposely fomented wars with some of their enemies, *Why the Romans chose to make wars.* not only to keep their men in action—for fear lest idleness, the mother of corruption, should bring some worse inconvenience upon them—

“Et patimur longæ pacis mala; sævior armis,
Luxuria incumbit,”*

“We suffer the evils of a long peace; and luxury is more deadly to us than arms”—but also to serve for a blood-letting to their republic, and a little to evaporate the too vehement heat of their youth, to prune and clear the branches from the too luxuriant trunk; and to this end it was that they formerly maintained so long a war with Carthage.

In the treaty of Brittany, Edward the Third, King of

* Juv., Sat. vi, 292.

England, would not, in the general peace he then made with our king, comprehend* the controversy about the duchy of Brittany, so that he might have a place wherein to discharge himself of his soldiers, and that the vast number of English he had brought over to serve him in that expedition might not return back into England. And this was also one reason why our King Philip consented to send his son John on the expedition beyond sea, that he might take along with him a great number of hot-brained young fellows that were then in his troops. In our times there are many who talk at this rate, wishing that this hot commotion that is now amongst us might discharge itself in some neighbouring war, for fear lest the peccant humours which now reign in this politic body of ours, if not diffused farther, should keep the fever still raging, and end in our total ruin ; and, in truth, a foreign is much more supportable than a civil war. But I do not believe that God will favour so unjust a design as to offend and quarrel with others for our own advantage.

“ Nil mihi tam valde placeat, Rhamnusia virgo,
Quod temerè invitis suscipiatur heris.”†

“ Nothing, O Nemesis ! pleases me so much that I would wrong its true owners to possess it.” And yet the weakness of our condition does often push us upon the necessity of making use of ill means to a good end. Lycurgus, the most virtuous and perfect legislator that ever was, invented this unjust practice of making the Helots, who were their

* Froissart, tom. i.

† Catul., Carm. lxvi, 78.

slaves, drunk by force; by so doing to teach his people temperance, to the end that the Spartans, seeing them so demolished and drowned in wine, might abhor the excess of this vice.* And yet they were more to blame who, of old, gave leave that criminals,† to what sort of death soever they were condemned, should be dissected alive by the physicians, that they might make a discovery of our inward parts in the life, and build their art upon greater certainty. For, if we must run into excesses, it is more excusable to do it for the health of the soul than that of the body; as the Romans trained up the people to valour and the contempt of dangers and death, by those furious spectacles of gladiators and fencers, who fought it out till the last, cut and killed one another in their presence.

“Quid vesani aliud sibi vult ars impia ludi,
Quid mortes juvenum, quid sanguine pasta voluptas?”‡

“Of what use was that love of a cruel sport which was formerly indulged in; and what pleasure was there in seeing young men slain and blood shed?” And this custom continued till the Emperor Theodosius’s time.

“Prince, take the honours destin’d for thy reign,
Inherit of thy father what remain;
Henceforth let none at Rome for sport be slain,
Let none but beasts’ blood stain the theatre,
And no more homicides be acted there.”

It was, in truth, a wonderful example, and of great advantage for the instruction of the people, to see every day before their eyes a hundred, two hundred—nay, a thousand

* Plutarch, Lycurgus. † Corn. Celsi, Medicina, in Præfat.

‡ Prudent., Adv. Symmac., ii, 643.

couples of men, armed against one another, cut one another to pieces with such intrepidity that they were never heard to utter so much as one syllable of weakness or commiseration, never seen to turn back, nor so much as to make one cowardly motion to evade a blow, but rather exposed their necks to their adversaries' sword, and presented themselves to receive the stroke. And many of them, when mortally wounded, have sent to ask the spectators if they were satisfied with their behaviour; and then they lay down to die. It was not enough for them to fight and die bravely, but cheerfully too, insomuch that they were hissed and cursed if they made any dispute about receiving their death. The very virgins and young girls egged them on. 10
50

———"Consurgit ad ictus:

Et, quoties victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa," etc.*

"The modest maide, when wounds are given, upriseth
When victor's sword the vanquisht throat surpriseth:
She saies it is hir sport, and doth command
T' embrace the conquer'd breast by signe of hand."

The ancient Romans only employed criminals in this lesson; but they afterwards employed innocent slaves in the work, and even freemen too, who sold themselves to this effect; nay, moreover, senators and knights of Rome, and also women.

"Nunc caput in mortem vendunt, et funus arenæ,

Atque hostem sibi quisque parat quum bella quiescunt."†

"They sold themselves to death, exposed themselves in the

* Prudent., Adv. Symmac., ii, 617. Translated by Florio. The "signe of hand" was by turning up the thumb: *Virgo modesta jubet convertito pollice rumpi.*

† Manil. Astron., iv, 225.

arena; and, though the wars had ceased, yet each found himself an enemy."

"Hos inter fremitus, novosque lusus
Stat sexus rudis, insciusque ferri,
Et pugnas capit improbus viriles."*

"In the midst of these tumults and strange games, the women, unfitted for the sword, took arms and fought with the fury of men;" which I should think strange and incredible, if we were not accustomed every day to see, in our own wars, many thousands of men of other nations staking their blood and their lives for money, often in quarrels wherein they have no manner of concern.

* Statius, Syl. i, 6, 52.





NOT TO COUNTERFEIT SICKNESS.

THERE is an epigram in Martial, which is amongst his good ones—for he has them of all sorts—wherein he pleasantly tells the story of Cælius, who, to avoid making his court to some great men of Rome, to go to their levee, and to attend them abroad, pretended to have the gout ; and the better to colour it, anointed his legs, had them swathed up, and perfectly counterfeited both the gesture and countenance of a gouty person ; till, in the end, Fortune did him the kindness to give him the gout in earnest.

“Tantum cura potest, et ars doloris !
Desit fingere Cælius podagram.”*

“The power of counterfeiting is so great that Cælius need no longer counterfeit the gout.” I think I have read, somewhere in Appian, a story like this, of one who, to escape the proscriptions of the Triumviri of Rome, and the better to be concealed from the discovery of those who pursued him, having masked himself in a disguise, did also add this inven-

* Mart., lib. vii, epig. 38.

tion, to counterfeit having but one eye ; but, when he came to have a little more liberty, and went to take off the plaister he had a great while worn over his eye, he found he had totally lost the sight of it. It is possible that the action of sight was dulled for having been so long without exercise and that the optic power was wholly retired into the other eye ; for we evidently perceive that the eye we keep shut sends some part of its virtue to its fellow, which thereby swells and grows bigger ; moreover, the sitting still, with the heat of the ligatures and plaisters, might very well have brought some gouty humour upon this dissembler in Martial. Reading in Froissart the vow of a company of young English gallants, to carry their left eyes bound up till they were arrived in France, and had performed some notable exploit against us, I have often been tickled with the conceit of its befalling them as it did the before-named Roman, and that they found they had but one eye apiece when they returned to their mistresses, for whose sakes they had entered into this ridiculous vow. Mothers have reason to rebuke their children when they counterfeit having but one eye, squinting, lameness, or other such personal defects ; for, besides that their bodies, being then so tender, may be subject to take an ill bent, Fortune, I know not how, sometimes seems to delight to take us at our word ; and I have heard several instances of people who have become really sick by only feigning to be so. I have always used, whether on horseback or on foot, to carry a stick in my hand, and so as to affect doing it with a grace. Many have threatened me that this affected hobbling would

*Ridiculous
vow of some
English
gallants.*

*Children to
be hindered
from coun-
terfeiting.*

one day be turned into a necessity, that is, that I should be the first of my family to have the gout.

But let us lengthen this chapter, and checker it with another piece concerning blindness.* Pliny reports of one that, dreaming he was blind, found himself so next day, without any preceding malady.† The force of imagination might assist in this case, as I have said elsewhere, and Pliny seems to be of the same opinion; but it is more likely that the motions of the body felt within (whereof the physicians, if they please, may find out the cause), which took away his sight, were the occasion of his dream.

Let us add another story, of much the same nature, which Seneca relates in one of his Epistles: "You know," says he, writing to Lucilius, "that Harpaste, my wife's fool, is thrown upon my family as an hereditary charge; for I have naturally an aversion to those monsters, and, if I have a mind to laugh at a fool, I need not seek him far: I can laugh at myself. This fool has suddenly lost her sight. I tell you a strange, but a very true thing: she is not sensible that she is blind, but eternally importunes her keeper to take her abroad, because she says my house is dark. But believe me that what we laugh at in her happens to every one of us. No one knows himself to be avaricious; besides, the blind call for a guide, but we wander of our own accord. I am not ambitious, we say, but a man cannot live otherwise at

* "Et le bigarrons d'une aultre peice, à propos de la cecité." Cotton reads "etch it out;" Florio, "patch it up with another peece;" Hazlitt, "vary it." *Bigarrer* is to variegate, checker, diversify with ill-suited colours or styles, and, as applied to his own writing, is admirably and modestly used by Montaigne.

† Nat. Hist., vii, 50.

Rome ; I am not wasteful, but the city requires a great expense ; it is not my fault if I am choleric ; and, if I have not yet established any certain course of life, it is the fault of youth. Let us not look abroad for our disease : it is in us, and planted in our very bowels. And our not perceiving ourselves to be sick even renders us more hard to be cured. If we do not betimes begin to dress ourselves, when shall we have done with so many wounds and evils that afflict us ? And yet we have a most pleasant medicine in philosophy ; of all others we are not sensible of the pleasure till after the cure ; this pleases and heals at the same time." This is what Seneca says, who has carried me from my subject ; but there is profit in the change.





OF THUMBS.



ACITUS* reports that, amongst certain barbarian kings, their manner was, when they would make a firm obligation, to join their right hands close together and twist each other's thumbs; and when, by force of pressure, the blood appeared in the ends, they lightly pricked them with some sharp instrument and mutually sucked them. Physicians *Etymology* say that the thumb is the master-finger of each *of the* hand, and that the Latin etymology is derived from *Latin word* *pollex.* *pollere.* The Greeks called it ἀντιχειρ, as who should say "another hand." And it seems that the Latins also sometimes take it, in this sense, for the whole hand.

When the thumbs denoted favour and when disgust. It was at Rome a signification of favour to turn down and clap in the thumbs: *Fautor utroque tuum laudabit pollice ludum,*† "Thy patron will applaud thy game with both thumbs;" and of disfavour to lift them up and thrust them outward—

———"Converso pollice vulgi,
Quemlibet occidunt populariter."‡

"The population turned up their thumbs when any gladiator,

* Annal., lib. xii. † Horat., i, 18, 66. ‡ Juv. iii, 36.

to please them, was to be slain." The Romans exempted from war all such as were maimed in the thumbs, as persons not able to bear arms. Augustus confiscated the estate of a Roman knight who had maliciously cut off the thumbs of two young children he had, to excuse them from going into the armies ;* and, before him, the senate, in the time of the Italian war, condemned Caius Vatienus to perpetual imprisonment, and confiscated all his goods, for having purposely cut off the thumb of his left hand to exempt himself from that expedition.† Some one, whose name I do not remember,‡ having won a naval battle, cut off the thumbs of all his vanquished enemies, to render them incapable of fighting and of handling the oar. The Athenians also caused the thumbs of those of Ægina to be cut off, to deprive them of the preference in the art of navigation.§ And, in Lacedæmonia, pedagogues chastised their scholars by biting their thumbs.

*Thumbs of
the van-
quished
enemy cut
off.*

* Suet. in Cæsar. Augusto, 24.

† Val. Max., v, 3, s. 3.

‡ Philocles, an Athenian general in the Peloponnesian war.

§ Val. Max., ix, in externis, sect. 8.





OF A CHILD MONSTER.



SHALL tell the story simply, and leave it to the physicians to reason upon it. The day before yesterday, I saw a child which two men and a nurse, who called themselves the father, the uncle, and the aunt of it, carried about to get money by showing, because it was so strange a creature. It was, as to all the rest, of a common form, and could stand upon its feet, walk, and gabble something like other children of the same age ; it had never, as yet, taken any other nourishment but from the nurse's breasts, and what, in my presence, they tried to put into its mouth it only chewed a little, and rejected without swallowing. The cry of it seemed, indeed, a little odd and particular ; and it was just fourteen months old. Under the breast it was joined to another child, that had no head, and that had the spine of the back stopped up, the rest entire ; it had one arm shorter than the other, because it had been broken by accident at the birth ; they were joined breast to breast, as if a lesser child was to clasp its arms about the neck of one somewhat bigger. The part where they were joined together was not above four fingers broad, or thereabouts ; so that, if you turn up the imperfect

child, you might see the navel of the other below it, and the joining was betwixt the breasts and the navel. The navel of the imperfect child could not be seen, but all the rest of the belly ; so that all the rest that was not joined of the imperfect one, as arms, haunches, thighs, and legs, hung leaning upon the other to the middle of the thigh. The nurse, moreover, told us that both bodies had simultaneous action ; and also that the members of the other were nourished and as sensible as of that she gave suck to, excepting that they were shorter and less. This double body, and the several limbs relating to one head, might be interpreted as a favourable prognostic to the king, of maintaining those various parts of our state under the union of his laws ; but, lest the event should prove otherwise, it is better to let it alone, for in things already past there is no divination. *Ut quum facta sunt, tum ad conjecturam aliquâ interpretatione revocentur,** “So as, when they have come to pass, they should then, by some interpretation, be recalled to conjecture.” As it is said of Epimenides, that he always prophesied of things past.† * * * Those whom we call monsters are not so to God, who sees, in the immensity of His work, *Whether the infinite forms that He has therein comprehended. And it is to be believed that this figure which does astonish us has relation to some other of the same kind unknown to man. From a God of all wisdom, nothing but good, frequent and duly regulated, pro-* *monsters are properly so called.*

* Cic., de Divin., ii, 31.

† Aristotle's Rhetoric, iii, 12, where he tells us that Epimenides not only exercised his divination on matters to come, but also on those which had passed.

ceeds ; but we do not discern the disposition and relation of things. *Quod crebrò videt, non miratur, etiamsi cur fiat, nescit : quod antè non videt, id, si evenerit, ostentum esse censet,** “What man often sees, he does not wonder at, though he be ignorant how it comes to pass ; but when a thing happens he never saw before, that he looks upon as a prodigy.” What falls out contrary to custom, we say is against nature ; but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her. Let, therefore, this universal and natural reason expel the error and astonishment from us that novelty brings along with it.

* Cic., de Divin., ii, 22.





OF ANGER.

DLUTARCH is admirable throughout, but chiefly where he judges of human actions. What fine things does he say in the comparison of Lycurgus and Numa, upon the subject of our great folly in abandoning children to the care and government of their fathers? "The most of our civil governments," as Aristotle says, "leave to every one, after the manner of the Cyclops, the ordering of their wives and children, according to their own foolish and indiscreet fancy; and the Lacedæmonian and Cretan are almost the only governments that have committed the discipline of children to the laws." Who does not see that in a state all depends upon their nurture and education? And yet they are indiscreetly left to the mercy of the parents, let them be as foolish and ill-natured as they will. Amongst other things, how oft have I, as I have passed along the streets, had a good mind to write a farce,* to revenge the little boys, whom I have seen flayed, knocked down, and almost murdered by some father or mother, when in their

Of the indiscretion of parents.

* *De dresser une farce pour venger des garçonnetts.*

fury and mad with rage. You see them come out with fire and fury sparkling in their eyes,—*Rabie jecur incendente feruntur*,* etc.—(and, according to Hippocrates, the most dangerous maladies are they that disfigure the countenance), with a sharp and roaring voice, very often against those that are but newly come from nurse, and there they are lamed and stunned with blows, whilst our justice takes no cognisance of it ; as if these were not the maims and dislocations of the members of our commonwealth.

“ Gratum est, quòd patriæ civem, populoque dedisti,
Si facis ut patriæ sit idoneus.”†

“ One is grateful for the gift of a citizen to the commonwealth, if you have made him fit for his country, for agriculture, for peace, and for war.” There is no passion that so much perverts men’s true judgment as anger. No one would demur upon punishing a judge with death who should condemn a criminal from a motive of anger. Why, then, should fathers and schoolmasters be any more allowed to whip and chastise children in their rage? This is not correction, but revenge. Chastisement is instead of physic to children ; and should we bear with a physician that was animated against and enraged at his patient ?

If we would do well, we should never lay a hand upon our servants whilst our anger lasts ; whilst the pulse beats high, and that we feel an emotion in ourselves, let us defer the business, for it is passion that commands, and passion that speaks then, not we. But faults seen through passion appear much greater to us than they really are, as bodies do, being

* Juvenal, Sat. vi, 548.

† Idem, xiv, 71.

seen through a mist. He that is hungry uses meat ; but he that will make use of correction should have no appetite, neither of hunger or thirst, to it. And, moreover, chastisements that are inflicted with weight and discretion are much better received, and with greater benefit by him who suffers them. Otherwise he will not think himself justly condemned by a man transported with anger and fury, and will allege his master's excessive passion, his inflamed countenance, his unusual oaths, his turbulence, and precipitous rashness, for his own justification.

“Ora tument irâ, nigrescunt sanguine venæ,
Lumina Gorgoneo sævius igne micant.”*

“Rage puffs up the face, the veins grow black with blood, the eyes sparkle with fire, like those of a Gorgon.” Suetonius reports† that, Caius Rabirius having been condemned by Cæsar, the thing that most prevailed upon the people (to whom he had appealed) to determine the cause in his favour was the animosity and vehemency that Cæsar had manifested in that sentence. Saying is one thing and doing is another ; we are to consider the sermon and the preacher separately from each other. Those men thought themselves much in the right who in our times have attempted to shake the truth of our

*Digression
on Plu-
tarch's good
nature and
equity.*

Church by the vices of her ministers ; but she extracts her evidence from another source, for that is a foolish way of arguing, and would throw all things into confusion. A man whose morals are good may hold false opinions, and a wicked man may preach truth, nay, though he believe it not

* Ovid, de Art., iii, 503.

† Sueton., in Jul. Cæs., sect. 12.

himself. It is doubtless a fine harmony when doing and saying go together; and I will not deny but that saying, when actions follow it, is of greater authority and efficacy, as Eudamidas said, hearing a philosopher talk of military affairs, "These things are finely said; but he that speaks them is not to be believed, for his ears have not been used to the sound of the trumpet."* And Cleomenes, hearing an orator declaiming upon valour, burst out into laughter, at which the other being angry, "I should," said he to him, "do the same if it were a swallow that spoke of this subject; but if it were an eagle I should willingly hear him." I perceive, methinks, in the writings of the ancients, that he who speaks what he thinks strikes much more home than he that only dissembles. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty: hear Brutus speak of it; you may judge by his style that he was a man who would purchase it at the price of his life.

Cicero and Seneca. Let Cicero, the father of eloquence, treat of the contempt of death, and let Seneca do the same; the first does languishingly draw it out, so that you perceive he would make you resolve upon a thing on which he is not resolved himself. He inspires you not with courage, for he himself has none; the other animates and inflames you. I never read an author, even of those who treat of virtue and of duties, † that I do not curiously examine what a kind of man he was himself. For the Ephori at Sparta, seeing a dissolute fellow propose wholesome advice to the people, commanded him to hold his peace, and entreated a virtuous

* Plutarch, Apoth.

† In the edition of 1595 these stood "et des actions," which Montaigne corrected to "et des offices."

man to attribute the invention to himself, and to propose it.* Plutarch's writings, if well understood, sufficiently speak their author; and I think I know his very soul; and yet I could wish that we had some better account of his life. And I am thus far wandered from my subject, upon the account of the obligation I have to Aulus Gellius, for having left us in writing this story of his manners,† that brings me back to my story of anger: "A slave of his, a vicious, ill-conditioned fellow, but who had the precepts of philosophy sometimes rung in his ears, having, for some offence of his, been stripped by Plutarch's command, whilst he was being whipped, muttered at first that it was without cause, and that he had done nothing to deserve it; but at last, falling in good earnest to exclaim against and to rail at his master, he reproached him that he did not act as became a philosopher; that he had often heard him say it was indecent to be angry, nay, had writ a book to that purpose; and that causing him to be so cruelly beaten, in the height of his rage, totally gave the lie to his writings. To which Plutarch calmly and coldly answered, 'How, clodpole,‡ said he, 'by what dost thou judge that I am now angry? Does either my face, my colour, my voice, or my speech, give any manifestation of my being moved? I do not think my eyes look fierce, that my countenance is disturbed, or that my voice is dreadful. Do I redden? Do I foam? Does any word escape my lips of which I ought to repent? Do I start? Do I tremble

* Aul. Gel., xviii, 3.

† Noct. Attic., i, 26.

‡ *Rustru*, rustic. Hazlitt has knave; Cotton ruffian; Florio "thou raskall."

with wrath? For these, I tell thee, are the true signs of anger.' And so, turning to the fellow that was whipping him, 'Lay on,' said he, 'whilst this gentleman and I dispute.'" This is the story. Archytas Tarentinus, returning from a war wherein he had been captain-general, found all things in his house in very great disorder, and his lands uncultivated, through the bad husbandry of his

Correction
ought not to
be given in
anger. receiver, whom having sent for, "Go," said he, "if I were not in wrath I would soundly drub you."* Plato, likewise, being highly offended with one of

his slaves, gave Speusippus order to chastise him, excusing himself from doing it, because he was in anger.† And Carillus, a Lacedemonian, to a helot who carried himself insolently and audaciously towards him, "By the gods," said he, "if I were not in a great rage, I would immediately cause thee to be put to death."‡

Anger sub-
ject to self-
flattery. It is a passion that is pleased with and flatters itself. How oft, when we have been wrongfully misled, have we, on the making of a good defence or excuse, been in a passion at truth and innocence itself? In proof of which I remember a marvellous example of antiquity. Piso, otherwise a man of very eminent virtue, being moved against a soldier of his, for that, returning alone from forage, he could give him no account where he had left his comrade, took it for granted that he had killed him, and presently condemned him to death. He was no sooner mounted upon the gibbet, but behold his strayed companion arrives, at which all the army were exceeding

* Tusc. Quæst., iv, 36.

† Senec. de Irâ, iii, 12.

‡ Plutarch, Apoth.

glad ; and, after many caresses and embraces of the two comrades, the hangman carried both into Piso's presence, all the spectators believing it would be a great pleasure even to him himself ; but it proved quite contrary ; for, through shame and spite, his fury, which was not yet cool, redoubled ; and, by a subtlety which his passion suddenly suggested to him, he made three criminal for having found one innocent, and caused them all to be dispatched ; the first soldier, because sentence had passed upon him ; the second, who had lost his way, because he was the cause of his companion's death ; and the hangman, for not having obeyed his order.

Such as have had to do with testy women may *The fury* have experienced into what a rage it puts them to *of women.* see their anger treated with silence and coldness, and that a man disdains to nourish it. The orator Celius was wonderfully choleric by nature, insomuch that when a certain man supped in his company, of a gentle and sweet conversation, and who, that he might not move him, was resolved to approve and consent to all he said, he, impatient that his ill-humour should thus spend itself without aliment, "for God's sake," said he, "contradict me in something, that we may fall out."* Women, in like manner, are only angry that others may be angry with them again, in imitation of the laws of love. Phocion, to one that interrupted his speaking by sharp abuse, made no other return than silence, and gave him full scope to vent his spleen ; and then, without any mention of this interruption, he proceeded in his discourse

* Senec. de Irâ, iii, 8. "Enfin que nous soyons deux."

where he had left off before. No answer can nettle a man like such a contempt.

It is better to vent anger than harbour it secretly. Of the most choleric man I know in France (anger being always an imperfection, but more excusable in a soldier, for in that profession it cannot sometimes be avoided), I often say that he is the most patient in bridling his passion, it agitates him with so great violence and fury—*Magno veluti cum flamma sonore*,* “As when a flame rises under a pot with a crackling noise, the water bubbles and foams within, and the vapour escapes in a thick cloud”—that he must of necessity cruelly constrain himself to moderate it; and, for my part, I know no passion which I could with so much violence to myself attempt to cover and support. I would not set wisdom at so high a price; and do not so much consider what he does, as how much it costs him not to do worse. Another boasted himself to me of his good-nature and behaviour, which is in truth very singular; to whom I replied: “That it was indeed something, especially in persons of so eminent quality as himself, upon whom every one had their eyes, to appear always well-tempered to the world; but that the principal thing was to make provision for within, and for himself; and that it was not, in my opinion, very well to order his business inwardly to fret himself, which I was afraid he did, for the sake of maintaining this mask and moderation in outward appearance.” A man incorporates anger by concealing it, as Diogenes told Demosthenes, who, for fear of being seen in a tavern, withdrew himself the further into it,

* *Æneid*, vii, 662, etc.

“The more you recede, the further you enter in.”* I would rather advise that a man should give his servant a box of the ear a little unseasonably than torture his mind by putting on such a sedate countenance; and had rather discover my passions than brood over them at my own expense; they grow less by being vented and expressed; and it is much better their point should operate outwardly than be turned towards ourselves. *Omnia vitia in aperto leviora sunt: et tunc perniciosissima, quum simulatâ sanitate subsidunt,*† “All vices are less dangerous when open to be seen, and then most pernicious when they lurk under a simulated health.”

I admonish all who have authority to be angry in my family, in the first place, to be sparing of their anger, and not to lavish it upon every occasion; for that both lessens the weight and hinders the effect of it. Loud exclamation is so customary that every one despises it; and that your clamour at a servant for a theft is not minded, because it is no more than what he has seen you make a hundred times against him, for having ill-washed a glass or misplaced a stool. Secondly, that they do not spend their breath in vain, but make sure that their reproof reach the person in fault; for ordinarily they are apt to bawl before he comes into their presence, and continue scolding an age after he is gone. *Et secum petulans amentia certat,*† “And peevish madness with itself contends.” They quarrel with their own shadows,

* Diog. Laert., Life of Diogenes, vi, 34. † Senec., epist. 56.

‡ Claudian, in Eutrop., i, 237.

and push the storm in a place where no one is either chastised or interested, but in the clamour of their voice, which is unavoidable. I likewise, in quarrels, condemn those who huff and vapour without an adversary; such rhodomontades are to be reserved to discharge upon the offending party.

“Mugitus veluti cum pr̄ma in pr̄lia taurus
Terrificos ciet, atque irasci in cornua tentat,
Arboris obnixus trunco, ventosque lacessit
Ictibus, et sparsa ad pugnam proludit arena.”*

“As a bull about to fight bellows and roars, and transported with fury butts with his horns at trees or at the air, and scatters the earth about with his feet.” When I am angry, my anger is very sharp, but withal very short, and as private as possible. I am, indeed, hasty and violent, but never am beside myself so that I throw out all manner of injurious words at random and without choice, and never consider properly to dart my raillery where I think it will give the deepest wound; for I commonly make use of no other weapon in my anger than my tongue. My servants have a better bargain of me in great occasions than in little ones; the latter surprise me; and the mischief of it is that, when you are once upon the precipice, it is no matter who gives you the push, for you are sure to go to the bottom; the fall urges, moves, and makes haste of itself. In great occasions, this satisfies me, that they are so just every one expects a warrantable indignation in me, and then I am proud of deceiving their expectation. Against these I gird and prepare myself; they

*Montaigne's
anger on
great and
little
occasions.*

* Æneid, xii, 103, etc.

disturb my head, and threaten to crack my brain, should I give way to them. I can easily contain myself from entering into one of these passions, and am strong enough, when I expect them, to repel their violence, be the cause never so great; but if a passion once prepossess and seize me, it carries me away, be the cause ever so small; which makes me thus indent with those who may contend with me, viz., when they see me first moved, let me alone, right or wrong, I will do the same for them. The storm is only begot by the concurrence of resentments, which easily spring from one another, and are not born together. Let every one have his own way, and we shall be always at peace. A profitable advice, but hard to practise. Sometimes, also, it falls out that I put on a seeming anger, for the better governing of my family, without any real emotion. As age renders my humours more sharp, I study to oppose them; and will, if I can, order it so, that for the future I may be so much the less peevish and hard to please, the more excuse and inclination I have to be so, although I have heretofore been reckoned amongst those that have the greatest patience. One word to wind up.* Aristotle says that anger sometimes serves to arm virtue and valour. It is likely it may be so; nevertheless, they who contradict him pleasantly answer that it is a weapon of novel use; for we move other arms, this moves us; our hands guide it not, it is it that guides our hands; it holds us, we hold it not.

*Whether
wrath is
proper to
animate
virtue and
valour.*

* "Encores un mot pour clore ce pas." Florio, to whom Cotton and Hazlitt have been more indebted than they acknowledge, translates this to "conclude this chapter," in which he has been followed by both subsequent translators.



OF THREE GOOD WOMEN.



HEY are not to be found in dozens,* as every one knows, and notably in the duties of marriage ; for that is a bargain full of so many thorny circumstances, that it is hard for a woman's will to keep it long. Men, though their condition be something better under that tie, have yet enough to do. The true touchstone and test of a happy marriage respects the time of their cohabitation only, whether it has been constant, mild, loyal, and commodious. In our age, women commonly reserve the publication of their good offices, and their vehement affection for their husbands, till they have lost them, or, at least, then it is that they deign give proofs of their goodwill ; a too slow testimony, and that comes too late, by which they rather manifest that they never loved them till dead : life is full of combustion ; death full of love and courtesy. As fathers conceal their affections from their children, women likewise conceal theirs from their husbands to maintain a modest respect. This is a mystery which is not to my

* "Il n'en est pas à douzaines," which Cotton dryly translates, "they don't run thirteen to the dozen."

taste ; they may well tear themselves and their hair. I whisper in a waiting woman's or a secretary's ear, How were they? How did they live together? I always have that saying in my head, *Factantiùs mœrent, quæ minus dolent*, "They make the most ado who are least concerned." Their whimpering is offensive to the living and vain to the dead. We should willingly give them leave to laugh after we are dead, provided they will smile upon us whilst we are alive. Is it not enough to make a man revive in spite, that she who would spit in my face whilst I was, shall come to kiss my feet when I am no more? If there be any honour in lamenting a husband, it only appertains to those who smiled upon them whilst they had them; let those who wept during their lives laugh at their deaths, as well outwardly as inwardly. Moreover, never regard those blubbered eyes and that pitiful voice; but consider her deportment, her complexion, and the plumpness of her cheeks, under all those formal veils; it is there the discovery is to be made. There are few who do not mend upon it, and health is a quality that cannot lie. That starched and ceremonious countenance looks not so much back as forward, and is rather intended to get a new husband than to lament the old. When I was a boy, a very beautiful and virtuous lady, who is yet living, and the widow of a prince, had, I know not what, more ornament in her dress than our laws of widowhood will well allow; which being reproached withal as a great indecency, she made answer that it was because she was not cultivating more friendships, and would never marry again.

That I may not dissent from our custom, I have here made choice of three women who have also expressed the

utmost of their goodness and affections about their husbands' deaths ; yet they are examples of another kind than are now in use, and so severe as will hardly be drawn into imitation.

The younger Pliny* had near a house of his in Italy a neighbour who was exceedingly tormented with certain ulcers. His wife, seeing him languish so long, entreated that he would give her leave to look at, and at leisure to consider of the state of his disease ; adding that she would freely tell him what she thought of it. This permission being obtained, she curiously examined the business, found it impossible he could ever be cured, and that all he was to expect was a great while to linger out a painful and miserable life ; and therefore, as the most sure and sovereign remedy, she resolutely advised him to kill himself. But finding him a little tender and backward in so rude an attempt, " Do not think, my dear," said she, " that I have not an equal feeling of the torments which I see thou endurest, and that, to deliver myself from them, I will not myself make use of the same remedy I have prescribed to thee. I will accompany thee in the cure, as I have done in the disease ; fear nothing, but believe that we shall have pleasure in this passage that is to free us from so many miseries, and go off happily together." Having said this, and roused up her husband's courage, she resolved that they should throw themselves headlong into the sea, out of a window that leaned over it ; and that she might maintain to the last the loyal and vehement affection wherewith she had embraced him during his life, she would yet

* Ep. 24, lib. 6.

have him die in her arms ; but, for fear they should fail, and lest they should leave their hold in the fall, and through fear, she tied herself fast to him by the waist, and so gave up her own life to procure her husband's repose. This was a woman of a mean family ; and, even amongst that condition of people, it is no very new thing to see some example of uncommon good nature.

—————“*Extrema per illos
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.*”*

“From hence did Justice take her flight, and here
The prints of her departing steps appear.”

The other two are noble and rich, where examples of virtue are rarely lodged. Arria, the wife of Cecina Pætus, a consular person, was the mother of another Arria, the wife of Thræsea Pætus, whose virtue was so renowned in the time of Nero, and, by means of this son-in-law, the grandmother of Fannia ; for the resemblance of the names of these men and women, and their fortunes, has led many into a mistake. This first Arria (her husband Cecina Pætus having *The death* been made prisoner by some of the emperor *of Arria*. Claudius's people, after Scribonianus's defeat, whose party he had embraced in the war) begged of those who were carrying him prisoner to Rome that they would take her into their ship, where she would be of much less charge and trouble to them than a great many persons they must otherwise have to attend her husband, and that she alone would undertake to serve him in his chamber, in cooking and all other offices.† But they refused her ; wherefore she put

* Virg. Georg., ii, 473.

† Plin., Ep. 16, iii.

herself into a fishing-boat she hired on a sudden, and in that manner followed him from Sclavonia. Being come to Rome, Junia, the widow of Scribonianus, one day considering the resemblance of their fortunes, and accosting her in the emperor's presence in a familiar way, she rudely repulsed her with these words : " Shall I," said she, " speak to thee, or give ear to anything thou sayest; to thee, in whose lap Scribonianus was slain, and thou yet alive?" These words, with several other signs, gave her friends to understand that she would undoubtedly despatch herself, impatient of supporting her husband's fortune. And Thræsea, her son-in-law, beseeching her not to throw away herself, and saying to her, " What if I should run the same fortune that Cecina has done? would you that your daughter, my wife, should do the same?" " Would I!" replied she; " yes, yes, I would, if she had lived as long and in as good agreement with thee as I have done with my husband." These answers made them more careful of her, and to have a more watchful eye on her deportment. One day, having said to those that looked to her, " It is to much purpose that you take all this pains to prevent me; you may, indeed, make me die an ill death, but to keep me from dying is not in your power;" and, suddenly rushing from a chair wherein she sat, she ran her head madly, with all her force, against the next wall, by which blow being laid in a swoon, and very much wounded, after they had with much ado brought her to herself, " I told you," said she, " that if you refused me some easy way of dying, I should find out another, howsoever painful it might be." The conclusion of so admirable a virtue was thus. Her husband Pætus not having resolution enough of his own

to despatch himself, as he was by the emperor's cruelty enjoined, one day, amongst others, having first employed all the reasons and exhortations which she thought most prevalent to persuade him to it, she snatched the dagger he wore from his side, and holding it ready in her hand, to make short of her admonitions, "Do thus, Pætus," said she, and in the same instant gave herself a mortal stab in her breast, and then, drawing it out of the wound, presented it to him, ending her life with this noble, generous, and immortal saying, *Pæte, non dolet*, "Pætus, it hurts me not;" having only strength to pronounce those never-to-be-forgotten words.

"Casta suo gladium quum traderet Arria Pæto,
 Quem de visceribus traxerat ipsa suis :
 Si qua fides, vulnus quod feci non dolet, inquit ;
 Sed quod tu facies, id mihi, Pæte, dolet."*

"When the chaste Arria to her Pætus gave
 The sword which pierced her to her tender heart,
 'My Pætus, 'tis no pain,' she softly said :
 'The wound which shall pierce thee bears all the smart."

The action was much more noble in itself, and of a finer sense than the poet could express it; for she was so far from being deterred by her husband's wound and death, and her own, that she had been the promotress and adviser of both; but, having performed this high and courageous enterprise for her husband's only convenience, she had, even in the last gasp of her life, no other concern but for him, and for dispossessing him of the fear of dying with her. Pætus presently struck himself to the heart with the same weapon,

* Mart., i, 14.

ashamed, in my opinion, to have stood in need of so dear and precious an example.

Pompeia Paulina, a young and very noble Roman lady, had married Seneca in his extreme old age. Nero, his hopeful pupil,* sent his guards to denounce the sentence of death to him, which was performed after this manner. When the Roman emperors of those times had condemned any man of quality, they sent to him, by their officers, to choose what death he would, and to make that election within such or such a time, which was limited, according to the mettle of their indignation, to a shorter or longer respite, that they might therein have leisure to dispose of their affairs, sometimes depriving them of the means of doing so, by the shortness of the time; and if the condemned seemed unwilling to submit to the order, they had people ready at hand to execute it, either by cutting the veins of the arms and legs, or by compelling them to swallow a draught of poison. But persons of honour would not stay this necessity, and made use of their own physicians and surgeons for this purpose.† Seneca, with a calm and steady countenance, heard the charge, and then called for paper to write his will, which being by the captain denied, he turned himself towards his friends, saying to them, "Since I cannot leave you any other acknowledgment of the obligation I have to you, I leave you, at least, the best thing I have, namely, the image of my life and manners, which I entreat you to keep in memory of me, that, so doing, you may acquire the glory of sincere and

* "Son beau disciple." The present translation is better than that of Florio, "Nero his faire disciple."

† Tacit., *Annal.*, xv, 61-62.

true friends." And therewithal, one while appeasing the sorrow he saw them in with gentle words, and then raising his voice to reprove them, "What," said he, "are become of all our fine precepts of philosophy? What are become of all the provisions we have so many years laid in against the accidents of fortune? Was Nero's cruelty unknown to us? What could we expect from him who had murdered his mother and his brother, but that he should put his governor to death, who had bred him up and educated him?" After having spoken these words in general, he turned himself towards his wife, and, embracing her fast in his arms, as, her heart and strength failing her, she was ready to sink down with grief, he begged of her, for his sake, to bear this accident with a little more patience, telling her that now the hour was come wherein he was to show, not by any more argument and reason, but by effect, the fruit he had reaped from his studies, and that he really embraced his death, not only without grief, but with joy. "Wherefore, my dearest," said he, "do not dishonour it with thy tears, that it may not seem as if thou lovest thyself more than my reputation. Moderate thy grief, and comfort thyself in the knowledge thou hast had of me and of my actions, leading the remainder of thy life in the same virtuous manner thou hast hitherto done." To this Paulina, having a little recovered her spirits, and warmed her great soul with a most generous affection, replied, "No, Seneca, I am not a woman to suffer you to go without my company in such a necessity; I will not have you to think that the virtuous examples of your life have not yet taught me how to die well; and when can I better or more decently do it, or

more to my own desire, than with you? And therefore assure yourself I will go along with you." Seneca, taking this so amiable and glorious resolution of his wife exceeding kindly at her hands, and being also willing to free himself from the fear of leaving her exposed to the mercy and cruelty of his enemies after his death, "I have, Paulina," said he, "sufficiently instructed thee in what would serve thee happily to live; but thou more covetest, I see, the honour of dying. In truth, I will not grudge it thee; the constancy and resolution in our common end may be the same, but the beauty and glory of thy part is greater."* This said, the surgeons at the same time cut the veins of both their arms; but, because those of Seneca, being more shrunk up, as well with old age as with abstinence, made his blood flow too slowly, he moreover commanded them to open the veins of his thighs, and, lest the torments he endured from it might pierce his wife's heart, and also to free himself from the affliction of seeing her in so sad a condition, after having taken a very affectionate leave of her, he entreated she would suffer them to carry her into the next room, which they accordingly did. But all these incisions being not enough to make him die, he commanded Statius Annæus,† his physician, to give him a draught of poison, which had not much better effect; for, by reason of the weakness and coldness of his limbs, it could not reach to his heart; wherefore they were forced to superadd a very hot bath; and then, feeling his end approach, whilst he had breath he continued excellent discourses upon the subject of his present con-

* Tacit., *Annal.*, xv, 63.† *Idem*, c. 64.

dition, which his secretaries wrote down, as long as they could hear his voice ; and his last words were long after in high honour and esteem amongst men (it was a great loss to us that they were not reserved down to our times). Then, feeling the last pangs of death, with the bloody water of the bath he bathed his head, saying, "This water I dedicate to Jupiter the deliverer." Nero being presently advertised of all this, and fearing lest the death of Paulina, who was one of the best-descended ladies of Rome, and against whom he had no particular enmity, should turn to his reproach, he sent back orders,* in all haste, to bind up her wounds, which her attendants, without his knowledge, had done before—she being already half dead, and without any manner of sense. Thus, though she lived, contrary to her own design, it was very honourably, and consistent with her own virtue, showing by her blanched visage ever afterwards how much of her life she had let run away through her wounds.

Here, then, are my three very true stories, *Tragic* which I think I find as diverting and as tragic *writers* as any of those we make of our own heads† *must have* wherewith to entertain the people ; and I wonder *recourse to* that they who are addicted to such relations do not rather cull out ten thousand very fine stories which are to be found in very good authors, that would save them the trouble of invention, and be more useful and entertaining. And who-soever would build up an entire story from them would need

* Tacit., Annal., xv, 64.

† "Que nous forgeons à nostre poste." "We devise at our pleasure," Florio ; evidently at our desk, or literary employment.

to add nothing of his own but the connection only, as it were the solder of metal, and might by this means compile a great many true events of all sorts, disposing and diversifying them according as the beauty of the work should require, after the same manner almost as Ovid has sewn and patched up his *Metamorphoses*, of a great number of various fables.

Seneca's affection for his wife. In this last couple this is, moreover, worthy of consideration, that Paulina voluntarily offered to

lose her life for the love of her husband, and that her husband had formerly also forbore dying for love of her. There is no mighty counterpoise in this exchange as to us; but, according to his stoical humour, I presume he thought he had done as much for her in prolonging his life upon her account as if he had died for her. In one of the letters he wrote to Lucilius, after he has given him to understand that, being seized with an ague in Rome, he presently took coach to go to a house he had in the country, contrary to his wife's opinion, who would by all means persuade him to stay, and that he told her that the ague he was seized with was not a fever of the body, but of the place, he thus continues: "She let me go with giving me a strict charge of my health. Now I, who know that her life is involved in mine, begin to make much of myself, that I may preserve her; and I lose the privilege my age has given me of being more constant and resolute in many things, when I call to mind that there is a young lady who is interested in this old man's health; and, since I cannot persuade her to love me more courageously, she makes me more solicitously to love myself; for we must allow something to honest affections, and some-

times, though occasions importune us to the contrary, we must call back life, even though it be with torment ; we must hold the soul with our teeth, since the rule of living amongst good men is not so long as they please, but as long as they ought. He that loves not his wife and his friend so well as to prolong his life for them, but will obstinately die, is too delicate and too effeminate. The soul must impose this upon itself, when the utility of our friends does so require. We must sometimes lend ourselves to our friends, and, when we would die for ourselves, must break that resolution for their sakes. It is a testimony of a noble courage to return to life for the sake of another, as many excellent persons have done. And it is a mark of singular good-nature to preserve old age (of which the greatest convenience is a carelessness for its duration, and a more courageous and disdainful use of life) when a man perceives that this office is pleasing, agreeable, and useful to some person whom he is very fond of. And a man reaps a very pleasing reward from it ; for what can be more delightful than to be so dear to one's wife as, upon her account, to become dear to one's self? Thus has my Paulina imputed to me not only her fears, but my own ; it has not been sufficient for me to consider how resolutely I could die, but I have also to consider how unable she would be to bear it. I am enforced to live ; and sometimes to live is magnanimity." These are his words,—excellent, as is usual with him.





OF THE MOST EXCELLENT MEN.



If one were to ask me whom I would choose of all the men that have come to my knowledge, I should answer that I think three more excellent than all the rest.

One is Homer. Not but Aristotle and Varro, for example, were peradventure as learned as he ; and possibly *Homer preferred to the greatest.* Virgil might compare with him, even in his own art. I leave this to be determined by such as know them both. I, who, for my part, understand but one of them, can only say this, according to my poor talent, that I do not believe the Muses themselves ever surpassed the Roman.

“Tale facit carmen doctâ testudine, quale
Cynthius impositis temperat articulis.”*

“He sings to his learned lyre verse which Apollo himself might have uttered.” And yet in this judgment we are not to forget that it is chiefly from Homer that Virgil derives his excellence ; that he is his guide and teacher ; and that the Iliad only has supplied him with body and matter out of which to compose his great and divine Æneid. I do not

* Propert., ii, eleg. xxxiv, 79, So.

reckon upon that alone, but take in several other circumstances that render this poet admirable to me, even as it were above human condition ; and, in truth, I often wonder that he who has erected and by his authority given so many deities reputation in the world was not deified himself, being both blind and poor, and so well acquainted with the sciences, before they were reduced into rule, and certain observations, that all those who have since taken upon them to establish governments, to carry on wars, and to write either of philosophy or religion, of what sect soever, or of the arts, have made use of him, as of a most perfect instructor, in the knowledge of all things, and of his books as a nursery of all sorts of learning.

“Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo ac Crantore dicit,”*

“Who hath shown what is brave, what is base, what is hurtful, and what is good clearer than Crantor and Chrysippus ;” and, as this other says—

—————“A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis,”†

“Whence poets, from an inexhaustible spring, draw water for their own works ;” and the other—

“Adde Heliconiadum comites, quorum unus Homerus,
Sceptra potitus,”‡

“Homer is, of all the poets, alone judged the most worthy ;” and another—

* Hor., i, epist. 2, v. 3.

† Ovid, Amor., iii, 9.

‡ Lucret., iii, 1050.

—————“Cujusque ex ore profuso
 Omnis posteritas latices in carmina duxit,
 Amnemque in tennes ausa est deducere rivos,
 Unius fœcunda bonis.”*

“From whose profuse utterance succeeding poets have fertilised their verses, cutting this large river into a thousand little streams.”

It is contrary to the order of nature that he has made the most excellent production that can possibly be: for the ordinary birth of things is imperfect: they thrive and gather strength by growing; whereas he has rendered even the infancy of poesy, and of several other sciences, mature, perfect, and complete. And for this reason he may be called the first and the last of the poets, according to the fair testimony antiquity has left us of him, “that, as there was none before him whom he could imitate, so there has been none since that could imitate him.”† His words, according to Aristotle,‡ are the only words that have motion and action, and are the only substantial words. Alexander the Great, having found a small and rich casket amongst Darius's spoils,§ gave order that it should be reserved for him to keep his Homer in, saying, that he was the best and most faithful counsellor he had in his military affairs.|| For the same reason it was that Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandrides, said that he was the Lacedæmonian poet, because he was the best master for the discipline of war.¶ This singular and particular commendation is also left of him in the

* Manil. Astron., ii, 8, *et seq.*

† Arist. de Politicâ, c. 24.

|| Plutarch, Alexander, c. 2.

† Velleii Paterculi, i, 5.

§ Plin. Nat. Hist., vii, 29.

¶ In the Apoth. Laced.

judgment of Plutarch : " He is the only author in the world that never glutted nor disgusted his readers, presenting himself in different lights, and always flourishing in some new grace."* That merry droll † Alcibiades, having asked one who pretended to learning for a book of Homer, gave him a box on the ear because he had none, which he thought as scandalous as we should for one of our priests to be without a breviary. ‡ Xenophanes complained one day to Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, that he was so poor he had not wherewithal to maintain two servants. The tyrant replied, " Homer, who was much poorer than you are, keeps above ten thousand now he is dead." § What did Panætius leave unsaid when he called Plato the Homer of philosophers? || Besides, what glory can be compared to his? Nothing is so frequent in men's mouths as his name and works; nothing so known and received as Troy, Helen, and the war about her, which things, perhaps, never existed. Our children are still called by names that he feigned above three thousand years ago. Who is ignorant of the story of Hector and Achilles? Not only some particular families, but most nations seek their original in his inventions. Mahomet, the second of that name, emperor of the Turks, writing to our Pope Pius II, " I am astonished," says he, " that the Italians should appear against me, considering that we have our common descent from the Trojans, and that it concerns me, as well as it does them, to revenge the blood of Hector upon the Greeks, whom they countenance against me." Is it not a

* Plutarch, *Loq.*, c. 5. † " Ce follastre." " That wagge," Florio.

‡ Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, c. 3. § Idem, *Hiero*.

|| *Cic. Tusc. Quæst.*, i, 32.

noble farce wherein kings, republics, and emperors have so many ages played their parts, and to which all this vast universe serves for a theatre? Seven Grecian cities contended for his birth, so much honour did he derive even from his obscurity—"Smyrna, Rhodus, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, Athenæ."*

The second (of my three) is Alexander the Great. For whoever will consider the age at which he began his enterprises; the small means by which he effected so glorious a design; the authority he obtained, at so slender an age, with the greatest and most experienced captains of the world, by whom he was followed, and the extraordinary favour wherewith Fortune embraced him and favoured so many hazardous, I had almost said rash, designs of his—

"Impellens quicquid sibi summa petenti
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruinâ;"†

"Overthrowing all that opposed him, and opening his way over the ruins he had created"—the grandeur to have, at the age of thirty-three years, passed victorious through the whole habitable earth, and in half a life to have attained to the utmost effort of human nature, so that you cannot imagine its legitimate duration, and the continuance of his increase in virtue and fortune, even to a due maturity of age, but that you must withal imagine something more than man; to have made so many royal branches to spring from his soldiers, leaving the world, at his death, divided amongst

* Aul. Gel., iii, 11; where, by the way, we have "Ios," instead of "Chios."

† Lucan, i, 149, 150.

four successors, who were no better than captains of his army, whose posterity have so long continued and maintained that vast possession ; so many excellent virtues as he was possessed of—justice, temperance, liberality, truth in his word, love towards his own people, and humanity towards those he overcame ; for his manners in general seem, in truth, incapable of any just reproach, though some particular and extraordinary action of his may, peradventure, fall under censure. But it is impossible to carry on so great things as he did within the strict rules of justice : such as he are willing to be judged in gross, by the governing motive of their actions. The ruin of Thebes, the murder of Menander* and of Hephæstion's physician,† the massacre of so many Persian prisoners at once, of a troop of Indian soldiers,‡ not without prejudice to his word, and of the Cossæans,§ so much as to the very children, are sallies that are not well to be excused. For, as to Clytus, the fault was more than recompensed in his repentance ; and that very action, as much as any other whatever, manifests the gentleness of his nature, a nature excellently formed to goodness ; and it was ingeniously said of him that he had his virtues from Nature and his vices from Fortune.|| As to his being a little given to boasting, and a little too impatient of hearing himself ill spoken of, and as to those mangers, arms, and bits he caused to be scattered in India—all these little vanities, methinks, may very well be allowed to his youth, and the prodigious prosperity of his fortune. And who will

* Plutarch, Alexander, 18. † Idem, *ibid.*, 22. Q. Curt., ii, 4.

‡ Plutarch, 18.

§ Idem, *ibid.*, 22.

|| Q. Curtius, x, 5.

consider, withal, his many military virtues, his diligence, foresight, patience, discipline, subtlety, magnanimity, resolution, and good fortune, wherein (though we had not the authority of Hannibal to assure us) he was the chief of men ; the uncommon beauty and state of his person, even to a miracle ; his majestic port and awful deportment, in a face so young, so ruddy, and so radiant—

“Qualis, ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer undâ,
 Quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignes,
 Extulit os sacrum cœlo, tenebrasque resolvit ;”*

“ Like the day-star, dear to Venus, rising from the ocean ;” whoever, moreover, considers the excellency of his knowledge and capacity, the duration and grandeur of his glory, pure, clear, without spot or envy, and that, even long after his death, it was a religious belief that his very medals brought good fortune to all that carried them about them, and that more kings and princes have writ his acts than other historians have written the acts of any other king or prince whatever, and that, to this very day, the Mahometans, who despise all other histories, admit of and honour his alone, by a special privilege—whoever, I say, will seriously consider all these particulars, will confess that I had reason to prefer him before Cæsar himself, who alone could make me doubtful in my choice. And it cannot be denied but that there was more of his own conduct in his exploits, and more of fortune in those of Alexander. They were in many things equal, and, peradventure, Cæsar had the advantage in some particular qualities. They were

* *Æneid*, viii, 589.

as two fires, or two torrents, to ravage the world by several ways :

“Et velut immissi diversis partibus ignes
Arentem in sylvam.”*

“As when on divers sides a fire is ’plied
To crackling bay shrubs, or to woods well dried,
Or as when foaming streames from mountaines hie,
With downefalle swifte resound and to sea flie,
Each one does havoc out his way thereby.”†

But, though Cæsar’s ambition was in itself more moderate, it was so mischievous, having the ruin of his country and the universal devastation of the world for its abominable object, that, all things collected together and put into the balance, I cannot but incline to Alexander’s side.

The third and, in my opinion, the most excellent of all is Epaminondas. Of glory he has *The third and the most excellent.* not near so much as the other two (which also is *excellent.* but a part of the substance of the thing). Of valour and resolution, not of that sort which is pushed on by ambition, but of that which wisdom and reason can plant in a regular soul, he had all that could be imagined. Of this virtue of his, he has, in my thoughts, given as ample proof as Alexander himself or Cæsar. For, although his military exploits were neither so frequent nor so renowned, they were yet, if duly considered in all their circumstances, as important, as vigorous, and carried with them as manifest a testimony of boldness and military capacity as those of any whatever.

* Æneid, xii, 521.

† Translated by Florio; the two later translators make mere nonsense of their verse. The illustration is very vivid.

*His honour
by the
Greeks.* The Greeks have done him the honour, without contradiction, to pronounce him the greatest man of their nation; and to be the first man of Greece is easily to be the first of the world. As to his knowledge and capacity, we have this ancient judgment of him, "that never any man knew so much and spake so little as he."* For he was of the Pythagorean sect. But, when he did speak, never any man spake better; being an excellent and most persuasive orator. But, as to his manners and conscience, *His man-
ners.* he has vastly surpassed all men that ever undertook the management of affairs; for in this one thing, which ought chiefly to be considered, which alone truly denotes us for what we are, and which alone I counterbalance with all the rest put together, he comes not short of any philosopher whatever, not even of Socrates himself. Innocency, in this man, is a quality, peculiar, sovereign, constant, uniform, and incorruptible; compared to which it appears, in Alexander, subaltern,† uncertain, variable, effeminate, and accidental. Antiquity has judged that, in *His con-
summate
and uni-
form vir-
tue.* roughly sifting all the other great captains, there is found, in every one, some peculiar quality that illustrates him. In this man only there is a full and equal virtue and sufficiency throughout, that leaves nothing to be wished for in him, in all offices of human life, whether in private or public employments, either of peace or war, in order for living and dying with grandeur and glory. I do not know any form or fortune of a man that

* Plutarch, On the Dæmon of Socrates, 23.

† *Subaltern*, subject to something else.

I so much honour and love. It is true that I look upon his obstinate poverty as it is set out by his best friends—a little too scrupulous and nice. And this is the only action, though high in itself, and well worthy of admiration, that I find so unpleasant as not to desire to imitate myself, to the degree it was in him. Scipio Æmilianus, could any attribute to him as brave and magnificent an end, and as profound and universal a knowledge of the sciences, is the only person fit to be put into the other scale of the balance. Oh! what a mortification has time given us, to deprive us of the sight of two of the most noble lives which, by the common consent of all the world, one the greatest of the Greeks and the other of the Romans, are in the whole of Plutarch! What matter to work on! What a workman!

For a man that was no saint, but, as we say, a *The figure* gallant man, of civil and ordinary manners, and of *which* a moderate eminence, the richest life that I know, *Alcibiades* made, and full of the most valuable and desirable qualities, all things considered, is that of Alcibiades, in my opinion.

But, as to Epaminondas, for the example of an excessive goodness, I will add some of his opinions. He asserted that the greatest satisfaction he ever had in his whole life was the pleasure he gave his father and mother by his victory at Leuctra; wherein his complaisance is great, preferring their pleasure before his own, so just, and so full of so glorious an action. He did not think it lawful to kill any man for no crime, even though it were to restore the liberty of his country;* which made him so cold in the enterprise

* Plutarch, On the Dæmon of Socrates, c. 4.

of his companion Pelopidas for the relief of Thebes. He was also of opinion that men in battle ought to avoid attacking a friend that was on the contrary side, and to spare him.* And his humanity, even towards his enemies themselves, having rendered him suspected to the Bœotians—for that, after he had miraculously forced the Lacedæmonians to open to him the pass which they had undertaken to defend at the entrance of the Morea, near Corinth, he contented himself with having charged through them, without pursuing them to the utmost,—for this he had his commission of general taken from him, which was very honourable for such an account, and for the shame it was to them, upon necessity, afterwards to restore him to his command, and to own how much depended their safety and honour upon him. Victory, like a shadow, attending him wherever he went, the prosperity of his country, as being from him derived, died with him.†

* Plutarch, On the Dæmon of Socrates, c. 17.

† Corn. Nepos, in the Life of Epaminondas. “La prospérité de son païs mourut aussi (luy mort) comme elle estoit née avecque luy.” Florio puts it thus: “was borne by and with him, and so it died by and with him.”





OF THE RESEMBLANCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS.*

THIS fagoting up of so many different pieces is done in this manner : I never set pen to paper but when too much rascally laziness oppresses me, and never anywhere but at home ; so that it is the work of several pauses and intervals, as occasions keep me sometimes many months abroad. As to the rest, I never correct my first by any second conceptions ; I peradventure may alter a word or so, but it is only to vary the phrase, and not to cancel my meaning. I have a mind to represent the progress of my humours, that every piece, as it comes from the brain, may be seen. I could wish I had begun sooner, and taken notice of the course of my mutations. A valet of mine that I employed to transcribe for me, thought he would make a prize by stealing several pieces from me which best pleased his fancy ; but it is my comfort that he will be no greater a gainer than I shall be a loser by the theft. I am grown older by seven or eight years since I began ; neither has it been without some new

* The early part of this Essay is so eminently characteristic of the author that the reader would do well to mark it.

Montaigne's acquisition. I have in that time become acquainted with the colic, by the liberality of my *patience in* years ; and a long course of years does not pass *disease.* easily without some such fruit. I could have been glad that, of other infirmities age has to present long-lived men, it had chosen some one that would have been more welcome to me ; for it could not possibly have laid upon me a disease for which, even from my infancy, I have had a greater horror, and it is, in truth, of all the accidents of old age, the very distemper of which I have ever been most afraid. I have often thought with myself that I went on too far, and that, in so long a voyage, I should infallibly, at last, meet with some severe shock. I perceived, and oft enough declared, that it was time to be off, and that life was to be cut to the quick, according to the surgeon's rule in the amputation of a limb ; and that Nature usually made him pay very dear interest who did not in due time restore the principal. And yet I was so far from being then ready, that in the eighteen months' time, or thereabouts, that I have been in this uneasy condition, I have inured myself to it, I have compounded with this colic, and have found therein to comfort myself and to hope. So much are men enslaved to their miserable being, that there is no condition so wretched that they will not accept for preserving it. According to Mœcenas :

“ Debilem facito manu,
 Debilem pede, coxâ ;
 Lubricos quate dentes :
 Vita dum superest, bene est ;”*

“ Let me be weak in hand, foot, back, loin, and teeth ; what

* Senec., epist. 101.

does it matter so that life remains?" And Tamerlane, with a foolish humanity, palliated the fantastic cruelty he exercised upon lepers, when he put all he could hear of to death, by pretending to deliver them from a painful life; for there was not one of them who would not rather have undergone a triple leprosy than to be deprived of their being. Antisthenes, the Stoic,* being very sick, and crying out, "Who will deliver me from these evils?" Diogenes, who was come to visit him, "This," said he, presenting him a knife, "presently, if thou wilt." "I do not say from my life," he replied, "but from my disease."† The sufferings that only attack the mind I am not so sensible of as most other men, and that partly out of judgment. For the world looks upon several things as dreadful, or to be avoided at the expense of life, that are almost indifferent to me; partly through a stupid and insensible complexion I have in accidents which do not hit me point-blank; and that insensibility I look upon as one of the best parts of my natural constitution; but essential and corporeal sufferings I am very sensible of. And yet, having long since foreseen them, though with a sight weak and delicate, and softened with the long and happy health and quiet that God has been pleased to give me the greatest part of my time, I had in my imagination fancied them so insupportable, that, in truth, I was more afraid than I have since found I had cause; by which I am still more fortified in this belief, that most of the faculties of the soul, as we employ them, more disturb the repose of life than any way promote it.

* Rather, the Cynic, of which sect he was the chief.

† Diog. Laertius, Antisthenes, v, 18, 19.

I am in conflict with the worst, the most sudden, the most painful, the most mortal, and the most incurable of all diseases. I have already had five or six very long and painful fits ; and yet I either flatter myself, or there is even in this estate what is very well to be endured by a man who has his soul free from the fear of death, and from the menaces, conclusions, and consequences which we are alarmed with by physic. But the effect of the pain itself is not so very acute and intolerable as to drive a solid man into fury and despair. I have, at least, this advantage by my colic, that what I could not hitherto wholly prevail upon myself to resolve upon, as to reconciling and acquainting myself with death, it will perfect ; for, the more it presses upon and importunes me, I shall be so much the less afraid to die. I have already gone so far as only to love life for life's sake, but my pain will also dissolve this correspondence ; and God grant that, in the end, should the sharpness of it prove greater than I shall be able to bear, it may not throw me into the other not less vicious extreme, to desire and wish to die. *Summum nec metuas diem, nec optes.**

These are the two passions to be feared, but the one has its remedy much nearer at hand than the other. As to the rest, I have always found the precept which so strictly enjoins a constant good countenance, and a disdainful and serene comportment in the toleration of pain, to be merely ceremonial. Why should philosophy, which only has respect to life and its effects, trouble itself about these external appearances ? Let it leave that care to stage-players and masters of rhetoric,

*Complaint
may freely
be indulged
in the
agony of
pain.*

* Mart., lib. x, epig. 47, v. ult.

so much practised in our gestures. Let it, in God's name, allow this vocal frailty,* if it be neither cordial nor stomachic to the disease, and permit the ordinary ways of expressing grief by sighs, sobs, palpitations, and turning pale, that Nature has put out of our power to hinder. And, provided the courage be undaunted, and the expressions not sounding of despair, let it be satisfied. What matters it though we wring our hands, if we do not wring our thoughts? Philosophy forms us for ourselves, not for others; to be, not to seem. Let it be satisfied with governing our understandings, which it has taken the care of instructing, that, in the fury of the colic, it may maintain the soul in a condition to examine itself, and to follow its accustomed way. Contending with and supporting, not meanly crouching under the pain; moved and heated by the struggle, not dejected and demolished, but capable of conversation and other amusements, to a certain degree. In accidents so extreme it is cruelty to require of us a frame so very composed. It is no great matter what faces we make, if we find any ease by it. If the body find itself relieved by complaining, well and good. If agitation eases it, *let it tumble and toss at pleasure*; if it finds the disease evaporated (as some physicians hold that it helps those in labour) by crying out extremely, or if it amuses in torment, *let it roar aloud*. Let us not command the voice to sally, but permit it. Epicurus does not only forgive his wise man for crying out in torments, but advises him to it. "When men fight, they groan in laying on, because all the strength of the body is exerted with the voice, and the blow is laid on with greater force."† We have enough to do to deal

* "Cette lascheté voyelle."

† Cic. Tusc., ii, 14.

with the disease without troubling ourselves with these superfluous rules. I say this in excuse of those whom we ordinarily see impatient in the assaults and shocks of this *Montaigne* infirmity; for as to myself, I have passed it over *kept his* hitherto, with a little better countenance, and *temper in* contented myself with grunting, without roaring out. *pain.* Not, however, that I put any great task upon myself to maintain this exterior decency; for I make little account of such an advantage. I allow herein as much as the pain requires, but either my pains are not so excessive, or I have more than ordinary resolution to support them. I complain and fret in a very sharp fit, but not to such a degree of despair as he who with "howling, roaring, and groaning, expressed his torment."* I have noticed myself in the worst of my fits, and have always found that I was in a capacity to speak, think, and give as rational an answer as at any other time, but not with such steadiness, being troubled and interrupted by the pain. When I am looked upon by my visitors to be almost spent, and that they therefore forbear to talk, I oft try my own strength, and broach some discourse myself on subjects the most remote I can contrive from my present condition. I can do anything by a sudden effort, but not to hold long. In the intervals from this excessive torment I presently recover my wonted state, forasmuch as my soul takes no other alarm but what is sensible and corporeal, which I certainly owe to the care I have had of preparing myself by reason against such accidents. "Nothing new in evil can trouble me now. I am prepared for anything that may happen."† I am roughly handled for a learner, and, with a sudden and sharp

* Cic. Tusc., ii, 14.

† Æneid, vi, 103.

alteration, have fallen in an instant from a very easy and happy condition of life into the most uneasy and painful that can be imagined. For, besides that it is a disease very much to be feared in itself, it begins with me after a more sharp and severe manner than it used to do. My fits come so thick upon me that I am scarce ever in health ; and yet I have hitherto kept my mind in such a frame that, provided I can continue it, I find myself in a much better condition of life than a thousand others who have no fever nor other disease but what they create to themselves for want of reasoning. There is a certain sort of subtle humility that springs from presumption ; as this, for example, that we confess our ignorance in many things, and are so courteous as to acknowledge that there are, in the works of Nature, some qualities and conditions that are imperceptible by us, and of which our understanding cannot discover the means and causes. By this honest declaration we hope that people shall also believe us in those that we say we do understand. We need not trouble ourselves to seek miracles and strange difficulties ; methinks there are wonders among the things that we see that surpass all miracles. What a wonderful thing it is that that from which we are produced should carry in itself the impression not only of the bodily form, but even of the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers ! Wherein can that matter contain that infinite number of forms ? And how do they carry on these resemblances with so precipitant and irregular a progress that the grandson shall be like his great grandfather, the nephew like his uncle ? In the family of Lepidus at Rome “there were three, *not successively, but by intervals*, that were born

A resemblance that passes to children.

with one and the same eye covered with a web."* At Thebes there was a race that carried, from their mothers, the mark of the head of a lance, and those who were not born so were looked upon as illegitimate. And Aristotle says that, in a certain nation, where the wives were in common, they assigned the children to their fathers by their resemblance. It is to be believed that I derive this infirmity from my father; for he died wonderfully tormented with a *great stone*. He was never sensible of his disease till the sixty-seventh year of his age, and, before that, had never felt any symptoms of it, and had lived till then in a happy state of health, little subject to infirmities; and, having lived seven years in this disease, he died a very painful death. I was born about twenty-five years before this distemper seized him, and, in his most healthful state of body, was his third child in order of birth. Where could this malady lurk all that while? He himself being so far from the infirmity at my birth, how do I carry away so great an impression of its share? And how was it so concealed that, till forty-five years after, I did not begin to be sensible of it; being the only one to this hour amongst so many brothers and sisters, and all of one mother, that was ever troubled with it? He that can satisfy me in this point I will believe him in as many miracles as he pleases; always provided that, as the manner is, he does not give me a doctrine much more intricate and fantastic than the thing itself. Let the physicians a little excuse the *Montaigne's contempt of physic.* liberty I take; for it is by this same infusion and fatal insinuation that I have received a hatred and contempt of their doctrine. The antipathy I have

* Plin. Nat. Hist., vii, 12.

against their art is hereditary to me. My father lived seventy-four years, my grandfather sixty-nine, my great grandfather almost fourscore years, without ever tasting any sort of physic ; and, with them, whatever was not ordinary diet was instead of a drug. Physic is grounded upon experience and examples, so is my opinion. And is not this an express and very advantageous experience? I do not know that they can find me, in all their records, three that were born, bred, and died under the same roof who have lived so long by their own conduct. It must here, of necessity, be confessed, "that, if reason be not, fortune at least is on my side;" and with physicians fortune goes a great deal further than reason. Let them not take me now at this disadvantage ; let them not threaten me in the demolished condition I now am ; for that were foul play. And, to say truth, I have got so much the better of them by these domestic examples that they should rest satisfied. Human things are not usually so constant ; it has been two hundred years, save eighteen, that this trial has lasted in our family ; for the first of them was born in the year 1402. It is now, indeed, very good reason that this experience should begin to fail us. Let them not, therefore, reproach me with the infirmities under which I now suffer ; is it not enough, for my part, that I have lived forty-seven years in perfect health? Though it should be the end of my career, it is of the longest. My ancestors had an aversion to physic by some secret and natural instinct ; for the very sight of a potion was loathsome to my father. The Seigneur de Gaviac, my paternal uncle, a churchman, and sickly from his birth, yet one who made that crazy life to hold out to sixty-seven years, being once fallen into a violent fever, it was ordered by the physicians

he should be plainly told that, if he did not make use of help (for so they call that which is very often a hinderance), he would infallibly be a dead man. The good man, though terrified with this dreadful sentence, yet replied, "Then I am one already." But God soon after proved this prognostic false. The youngest of the brothers, which were four, and by many years the youngest, the Sieur de Bussaget, was the only man of the family that made use of medicine; by reason, I suppose, of the commerce he had with the other arts, for he was a counsellor in the Court of Parliament, and it succeeded so ill with him that, being in outward appearance of the strongest constitution, he yet died before any of the rest, the Sieur St. Michael only excepted. It is possible

His reason for making so very light of physic. I may have derived this natural antipathy to physic from them; but, had there been no other consideration in the case, I would have endeavoured to have overcome it. For all conditions that spring in us without reason are vicious, and are a kind of disease that we are to wrestle with. It may be I had naturally this propension; but I have supported and fortified it by arguments and reasons, which have established in me the opinion I have of it. For I also hate the consideration of refusing physic for the nauseous taste. I should hardly be of their humour who find health worth purchasing by all the most painful cauteries and incisions that can be applied. And, according to Epicurus, I conceive that pleasures are to be avoided if greater pains be the consequence, and pains to be coveted that will terminate in greater pleasures. [Health is a precious thing, and the only one, in truth, meriting that a man should lay out, not only his time, work, labour, and goods, but also his life itself to obtain it, forasmuch as

without it life is a burden to us.] Pleasure, wisdom, learning, and virtue, without it, wither and vanish ; and to the most laboured and solid discourses that philosophy would imprint in us to the contrary, we need no more but oppose the idea of Plato being struck with an epilepsy or apoplexy, and, in this presupposition, to defy him to call the rich faculties of his soul to his assistance. All means that conduce to health I can neither think painful nor dear. But I have some other appearances that make me strangely suspect all this merchandise. I do not deny but there may be some art in it ; and that there are not, amongst so many works of nature, some things proper for the preservation of health, that is most certain. I very well know that there are some simples that moisten and others that dry ; I experimentally know that radishes are windy, and that senna occasions laxity ; and several other such experiences I have which I am as sure of as I am that mutton nourishes and wine warms me. And Solon would say that eating was, like other drugs, physic against the disease of hunger. I do not disapprove the use we make of things the earth produces, nor doubt, in the least, of the power and fertility of Nature, and disapprove not the application of what she affords to our necessities. I very well see that pikes and swallows thrive by its laws ; but I mistrust the inventions of our wit, knowledge, and art, to countenance which we have abandoned Nature and her rules, and wherein we keep no bounds nor moderation. As we call the modification of the first laws that fall into our hands Justice, and their practice and dispensation often very foolish and very unjust ; and as those who scoff at and accuse it do not mean, nevertheless, to wrong that noble virtue, but only condemn the abuse and

profanation of that sacred title ; so in physic I very much honour that glorious name, and the end it is studied for, and what it promises to the service of mankind ; but its prescriptions I neither honour nor esteem.

In the first place, experience makes me dread it ; for, *Experience* amongst all of my acquaintance, I see no race of *not very favourable to medicine.* people so soon sick, and so long before they are well, as those who are slaves to physic. Their very health is altered and corrupted by the regimen they are constrained to. Physicians are not content to deal only with the sick, but they change health into sickness, for fear men should at any time escape their authority. Do they not, from a continual and perfect health, infer an argument of some great sickness to ensue ? I have been sick often enough, and have, without their aid, found my maladies as easy to be supported (though I have made trial of almost all sorts) and as short as those of any other, without swallowing their nauseous doses. The health I have is full and free, without other rule or discipline than my own custom and pleasure. I never disturb myself that I have no physician, no apothecary, nor any other assistance, which I see most men more afflicted at than they are with their disease. What, do the physicians themselves, by the felicity and duration of their own lives, convince us of the apparent effect of their skill ?





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CONTENTS:—The Angelic Doctor, Nostradamus, Thomas à Kempis, Dr. John Faustus, Quevedo, Mad. Guyon, Paracelsus, Howell the Traveller, Michael Scott, Lodowick Muggleton, Sir Thomas Browne, George Psalmanazar, The Highwaymen, The Spirit World.

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IX.

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* * * This work affords an immediate reference to any passage in any edition of Milton's Poems, to which it may be justly termed an indispensable Appendix.

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X.

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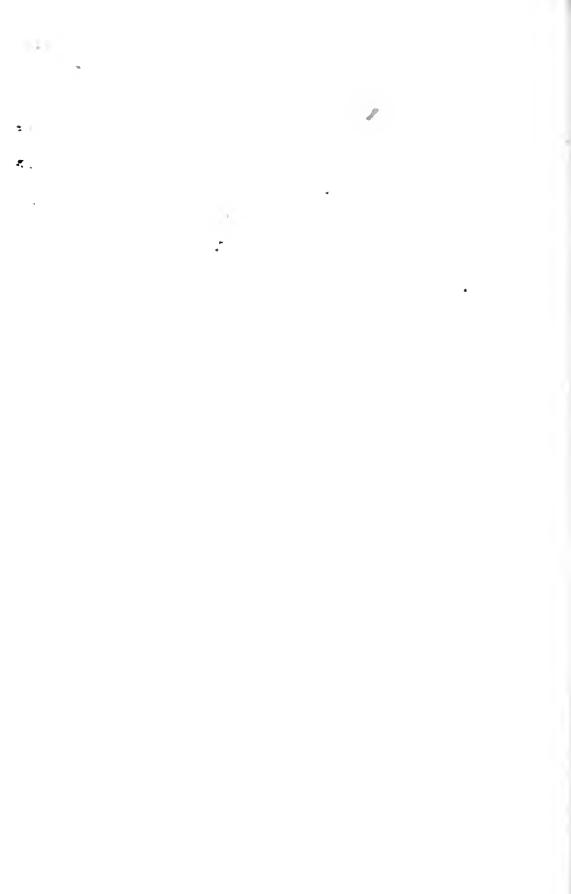
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