

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 02 eBook

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 02 by Michel de Montaigne

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CHAPTER I

That men by various ways arrive at the same end.

The most usual way of appeasing the indignation of such as we have any way offended, when we see them in possession of the power of revenge, and find that we absolutely lie at their mercy, is by submission, to move them to commiseration and pity; and yet bravery, constancy, and resolution, however quite contrary means, have sometimes served to produce the same effect.—[Florio's version begins thus: "The most vsuall waie to appease those minds wee have offended, when revenge lies in their hands, and that we stand at their mercie, is by submission to move them to commiseration and pity: Nevertheless, courage, constancie, and resolution (means altogether opposite) have sometimes wrought the same effect."—] [The spelling is Florio's D.W.]

Edward, Prince of Wales [Edward, the Black Prince. D.W.] (the same who so long governed our Guienne, a personage whose condition and fortune have in them a great deal of the most notable and most considerable parts of grandeur), having been highly incensed by the Limousins, and taking their city by assault, was not, either by the cries of the people, or the prayers and tears of the women and children, abandoned to slaughter and prostrate at his feet for mercy, to be stayed from prosecuting his revenge; till, penetrating further into the town, he at last took notice of three French gentlemen,—[These were Jean de Villemure, Hugh de la Roche, and Roger de Beaufort.—Froissart, i. c. 289. {The city was Limoges. D.W.}]—who with incredible bravery alone sustained the power of his victorious army. Then it was that consideration and respect unto so remarkable a valour first stopped the torrent of his fury, and that his clemency, beginning with these three cavaliers, was afterwards extended to all the remaining inhabitants of the city.

Scanderbeg, Prince of Epirus, pursuing one of his soldiers with purpose to kill him, the soldier, having in vain tried by all the ways of humility and supplication to appease him, resolved, as his last refuge, to face about and await him sword in hand: which behaviour of his gave a sudden stop to his captain's fury, who, for seeing him assume so notable a resolution, received him into grace; an example, however, that might suffer another interpretation with such as have not read of the prodigious force and valour of that prince.

The Emperor Conrad *iii.* having besieged Guelph, Duke of Bavaria,—[In 1140, in Weinsberg, Upper Bavaria.]—would not be prevailed upon, what mean and unmanly satisfactions soever were tendered to him, to condescend to milder conditions than that the ladies and gentlewomen only who were in the town with the duke might go out without violation of their honour, on foot, and with so much only as they could carry about them. Whereupon they, out of magnanimity

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of heart, presently contrived to carry out, upon their shoulders, their husbands and children, and the duke himself; a sight at which the emperor was so pleased, that, ravished with the generosity of the action, he wept for joy, and immediately extinguishing in his heart the mortal and capital hatred he had conceived against this duke, he from that time forward treated him and his with all humanity. The one and the other of these two ways would with great facility work upon my nature; for I have a marvellous propensity to mercy and mildness, and to such a degree that I fancy of the two I should sooner surrender my anger to compassion than to esteem. And yet pity is reputed a vice amongst the Stoics, who will that we succour the afflicted, but not that we should be so affected with their sufferings as to suffer with them. I conceived these examples not ill suited to the question in hand, and the rather because therein we observe these great souls assaulted and tried by these two several ways, to resist the one without relenting, and to be shook and subjected by the other. It may be true that to suffer a man's heart to be totally subdued by compassion may be imputed to facility, effeminacy, and over-tenderness; whence it comes to pass that the weaker natures, as of women, children, and the common sort of people, are the most subject to it but after having resisted and disdained the power of groans and tears, to yield to the sole reverence of the sacred image of Valour, this can be no other than the effect of a strong and inflexible soul enamoured of and honouring masculine and obstinate courage. Nevertheless, astonishment and admiration may, in less generous minds, beget a like effect: witness the people of Thebes, who, having put two of their generals upon trial for their lives for having continued in arms beyond the precise term of their commission, very hardly pardoned Pelopidas, who, bowing under the weight of so dangerous an accusation, made no manner of defence for himself, nor produced other arguments than prayers and supplications; whereas, on the contrary, Epaminondas, falling to recount magniloquently the exploits he had performed in their service, and, after a haughty and arrogant manner reproaching them with ingratitude and injustice, they had not the heart to proceed any further in his trial, but broke up the court and departed, the whole assembly highly commending the high courage of this personage.—[Plutarch, How far a Man may praise Himself, c. 5.]

Dionysius the elder, after having, by a tedious siege and through exceeding great difficulties, taken the city of Reggio, and in it the governor Phyton, a very gallant man, who had made so obstinate a defence, was resolved to make him a tragical example of his revenge: in order whereunto he first told him, "That he had the day before caused his son and all his kindred to be drowned." To which Phyton returned no other answer but this: "That they were then by one day happier than he."

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After which, causing him to be stripped, and delivering him into the hands of the tormentors, he was by them not only dragged through the streets of the town, and most ignominiously and cruelly whipped, but moreover vilified with most bitter and contumelious language: yet still he maintained his courage entire all the way, with a strong voice and undaunted countenance proclaiming the honourable and glorious cause of his death; namely, for that he would not deliver up his country into the hands of a tyrant; at the same time denouncing against him a speedy chastisement from the offended gods. At which Dionysius, reading in his soldiers' looks, that instead of being incensed at the haughty language of this conquered enemy, to the contempt of their captain and his triumph, they were not only struck with admiration of so rare a virtue, but moreover inclined to mutiny, and were even ready to rescue the prisoner out of the hangman's hands, he caused the torturing to cease, and afterwards privately caused him to be thrown into the sea.—[Diod. Sic., xiv. 29.]

Man (in good earnest) is a marvellous vain, fickle, and unstable subject, and on whom it is very hard to form any certain and uniform judgment. For Pompey could pardon the whole city of the Mamertines, though furiously incensed against it, upon the single account of the virtue and magnanimity of one citizen, Zeno,—[Plutarch calls him Stheno, and also Sthemnus and Sthenis]—who took the fault of the public wholly upon himself; neither entreated other favour, but alone to undergo the punishment for all: and yet Sylla's host, having in the city of Perugia —[Plutarch says Preneste, a town of Latium.]—manifested the same virtue, obtained nothing by it, either for himself or his fellow-citizens.

And, directly contrary to my first examples, the bravest of all men, and who was reputed so gracious to all those he overcame, Alexander, having, after many great difficulties, forced the city of Gaza, and, entering, found Betis, who commanded there, and of whose valour in the time of this siege he had most marvellous manifest proof, alone, forsaken by all his soldiers, his armour hacked and hewed to pieces, covered all over with blood and wounds, and yet still fighting in the crowd of a number of Macedonians, who were laying on him on all sides, he said to him, nettled at so dear-bought a victory (for, in addition to the other damage, he had two wounds newly received in his own person), "Thou shalt not die, Betis, as thou dost intend; be sure thou shall suffer all the torments that can be inflicted on a captive." To which menace the other returning no other answer, but only a fierce and disdainful look; "What," says Alexander, observing his haughty and obstinate silence, "is he too stiff to bend a knee! Is he too proud to utter one suppliant word! Truly, I will conquer this silence; and if I cannot force a word from his mouth, I will, at least, extract a groan from his heart." And thereupon converting his anger

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into fury, presently commanded his heels to be bored through, causing him, alive, to be dragged, mangled, and dismembered at a cart's tail.—[Quintus Curtius, iv. 6. This act of cruelty has been doubted, notwithstanding the statement of Curtius.]—Was it that the height of courage was so natural and familiar to this conqueror, that because he could not admire, he respected it the less? Or was it that he conceived valour to be a virtue so peculiar to himself, that his pride could not, without envy, endure it in another? Or was it that the natural impetuosity of his fury was incapable of opposition? Certainly, had it been capable of moderation, it is to be believed that in the sack and desolation of Thebes, to see so many valiant men, lost and totally destitute of any further defence, cruelly massacred before his eyes, would have appeased it: where there were above six thousand put to the sword, of whom not one was seen to fly, or heard to cry out for quarter; but, on the contrary, every one running here and there to seek out and to provoke the victorious enemy to help them to an honourable end. Not one was seen who, however weakened with wounds, did not in his last gasp yet endeavour to revenge himself, and with all the arms of a brave despair, to sweeten his own death in the death of an enemy. Yet did their valour create no pity, and the length of one day was not enough to satiate the thirst of the conqueror's revenge, but the slaughter continued to the last drop of blood that was capable of being shed, and stopped not till it met with none but unarmed persons, old men, women, and children, of them to carry away to the number of thirty thousand slaves.

CHAPTER II

OF SORROW

No man living is more free from this passion than I, who yet neither like it in myself nor admire it in others, and yet generally the world, as a settled thing, is pleased to grace it with a particular esteem, clothing therewith wisdom, virtue, and conscience. Foolish and sordid guise! —["No man is more free from this passion than I, for I neither love nor regard it: albeit the world hath undertaken, as it were upon covenant, to grace it with a particular favour. Therewith they adorne age, vertue, and conscience. Oh foolish and base ornament!" Florio, 1613, p. 3] —The Italians have more fitly baptized by this name —[La tristezza]— malignity; for 'tis a quality always hurtful, always idle and vain; and as being cowardly, mean, and base, it is by the Stoics expressly and particularly forbidden to their sages.

But the story—[Herodotus, iii. 14.]—says that Psammenitus, King of Egypt, being defeated and taken prisoner by Cambyses, King of Persia, seeing his own daughter pass by him as prisoner, and in a wretched habit, with a bucket to draw water, though his friends about him were so concerned as to break out into tears and lamentations, yet he himself remained unmoved, without uttering a word, his eyes fixed upon the



ground; and seeing, moreover, his son immediately after led to execution, still maintained the same countenance; till spying at last one of his domestic and familiar friends dragged away amongst the captives, he fell to tearing his hair and beating his breast, with all the other extravagances of extreme sorrow.

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A story that may very fitly be coupled with another of the same kind, of recent date, of a prince of our own nation, who being at Trent, and having news there brought him of the death of his elder brother, a brother on whom depended the whole support and honour of his house, and soon after of that of a younger brother, the second hope of his family, and having withstood these two assaults with an exemplary resolution; one of his servants happening a few days after to die, he suffered his constancy to be overcome by this last accident; and, parting with his courage, so abandoned himself to sorrow and mourning, that some thence were forward to conclude that he was only touched to the quick by this last stroke of fortune; but, in truth, it was, that being before brimful of grief, the least addition overflowed the bounds of all patience. Which, I think, might also be said of the former example, did not the story proceed to tell us that Cambyses asking Psammenitus, "Why, not being moved at the calamity of his son and daughter, he should with so great impatience bear the misfortune of his friend?" "It is," answered he, "because only this last affliction was to be manifested by tears, the two first far exceeding all manner of expression."

And, peradventure, something like this might be working in the fancy of the ancient painter,—[Cicero, *De Orator.*, c. 22 ; Pliny, xxxv. 10.]— who having, in the sacrifice of Iphigenia, to represent the sorrow of the assistants proportionably to the several degrees of interest every one had in the death of this fair innocent virgin, and having, in the other figures, laid out the utmost power of his art, when he came to that of her father, he drew him with a veil over his face, meaning thereby that no kind of countenance was capable of expressing such a degree of sorrow. Which is also the reason why the poets feign the miserable mother, Niobe, having first lost seven sons, and then afterwards as many daughters (overwhelmed with her losses), to have been at last transformed into a rock—

"Diriguissè malis,"

["Petrified with her misfortunes."—Ovid, *Met.*, vi. 304.]

thereby to express that melancholic, dumb, and deaf stupefaction, which benumbs all our faculties, when oppressed with accidents greater than we are able to bear. And, indeed, the violence and impression of an excessive grief must of necessity astonish the soul, and wholly deprive her of her ordinary functions: as it happens to every one of us, who, upon any sudden alarm of very ill news, find ourselves surprised, stupefied, and in a manner deprived of all power of motion, so that the soul, beginning to vent itself in tears and lamentations, seems to free and disengage itself from the sudden oppression, and to have obtained some room to work itself out at greater liberty.

"Et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est."

["And at length and with difficulty is a passage opened by grief for utterance."—*Æneid*, xi. 151.]

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In the war that Ferdinand made upon the widow of King John of Hungary, about Buda, a man-at-arms was particularly taken notice of by every one for his singular gallant behaviour in a certain encounter; and, unknown, highly commended, and lamented, being left dead upon the place: but by none so much as by Raisciac, a German lord, who was infinitely enamoured of so rare a valour. The body being brought off, and the count, with the common curiosity coming to view it, the armour was no sooner taken off but he immediately knew him to be his own son, a thing that added a second blow to the compassion of all the beholders; only he, without uttering a word, or turning away his eyes from the woeful object, stood fixedly contemplating the body of his son, till the vehemency of sorrow having overcome his vital spirits, made him sink down stone-dead to the ground.

“Chi puo dir com’ egli arde, a in picciol fuoco,”

["He who can say how he burns with love, has little fire"
—Petrarca, Sonetto 137.]

say the Innamoratos, when they would represent an 'insupportable passion.

“Misero quod omneis
Eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi, nihil est super mi,
Quod loquar amens.
Lingua sed torpet: tenuis sub artus
Flamma dimanat; sonitu suopte
Tintinant aures; gemina teguntur
Lumina nocte.”

["Love deprives me of all my faculties: Lesbia, when once in thy presence, I have not left the power to tell my distracting passion: my tongue becomes torpid; a subtle flame creeps through my veins; my ears tingle in deafness; my eyes are veiled with darkness." Catullus, Epig. li. 5]

Neither is it in the height and greatest fury of the fit that we are in a condition to pour out our complaints or our amorous persuasions, the soul being at that time over-burdened, and labouring with profound thoughts; and the body dejected and languishing with desire; and thence it is that sometimes proceed those accidental impotencies that so unseasonably surprise the lover, and that frigidity which by the force of an immoderate ardour seizes him even in the very lap of fruition. —[The edition of 1588 has here, "An accident not unknown to myself."]— For all passions that suffer themselves to be relished and digested are but moderate:

“Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.”

["Light griefs can speak: deep sorrows are dumb."
—Seneca, Hippolytus, act ii. scene 3.]

A surprise of unexpected joy does likewise often produce the same effect:

"Ut me conspexit venientem, et Troja circum
Arma amens vidit, magnis exterrita monstis,
Diriguit visu in medio, calor ossa reliquit,
Labitur, et longo vix tandem tempore fatur."

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["When she beheld me advancing, and saw, with stupefaction, the Trojan arms around me, terrified with so great a prodigy, she fainted away at the very sight: vital warmth forsook her limbs: she sinks down, and, after a long interval, with difficulty speaks."—Aeneid, iii. 306.]

Besides the examples of the Roman lady, who died for joy to see her son safe returned from the defeat of Cannae; and of Sophocles and of Dionysius the Tyrant,—[Pliny, vii. 53. Diodorus Siculus, however (xv. c. 20), tells us that Dionysius “was so overjoyed at the news that he made a great sacrifice upon it to the gods, prepared sumptuous feasts, to which he invited all his friends, and therein drank so excessively that it threw him into a very bad distemper.”]—who died of joy; and of Thalna, who died in Corsica, reading news of the honours the Roman Senate had decreed in his favour, we have, moreover, one in our time, of Pope Leo X., who upon news of the taking of Milan, a thing he had so ardently desired, was rapt with so sudden an excess of joy that he immediately fell into a fever and died.—[Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, vol. xiv.]—And for a more notable testimony of the imbecility of human nature, it is recorded by the ancients—[Pliny, 'ut supra']—that Diodorus the dialectician died upon the spot, out of 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 nice argument that was propounded to him. I, for my part, am very little subject to these violent passions; I am naturally of a stubborn apprehension, which also, by reasoning, I every day harden and fortify.

CHAPTER III

THAT OUR AFFECTIONS CARRY THEMSELVES BEYOND US

Such as accuse mankind of the folly of gaping after future things, and advise us to make our benefit of those which are present, and to set up our rest upon them, as having no grasp upon that which is to come, even less than that which we have upon what is past, have hit upon the most universal of human errors, if that may be called an error to which nature herself has disposed us, in order to the continuation of her own work, prepossessing us, amongst several others, with this deceiving imagination, as being more jealous of our action than afraid of our knowledge.

We are never present with, but always beyond ourselves: fear, desire, hope, still push us on towards the future, depriving us, in the meantime, of the sense and consideration of that which is to amuse us with the thought of what shall be, even when we shall be no more.—[Rousseau, Emile, livre ii.]

“Calamitosus est animus futuri auxius.”

["The mind anxious about the future is unhappy."
—Seneca, Epist., 98.]

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We find this great precept often repeated in Plato, “Do thine own work, and know thyself.” Of which two parts, both the one and the other generally, comprehend our whole duty, and do each of them in like manner involve the other; for who will do his own work aright will find that his first lesson is to know what he is, and that which is proper to himself; and 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 thoughts and propositions. As folly, on the one side, though it should enjoy all it desire, would notwithstanding never be content, so, on the other, wisdom, acquiescing in the present, is never dissatisfied with itself. —[Cicero, *Tusc. Quae.*, 57, v. 18.]—Epicurus dispenses his sages from all foresight and care of the future.

Amongst those laws that relate to the dead, I look upon that to be very sound by which the actions of princes are to be examined after their decease.—[Diodorus Siculus, i. 6.] — They are equals with, if not masters of the laws, and, therefore, what justice could not inflict upon their persons, ’tis but reason should be executed upon their reputations and the estates of their successors—things that we often value above life itself. ’Tis a custom of singular advantage to those countries where it is in use, and by all good princes to be desired, who have reason to take it ill, that the memories of the wicked should be used with the same reverence and respect with their own. We owe subjection and obedience to all our kings, whether good or bad, alike, for that has respect unto their office; but as to esteem and affection, these are only due to their virtue. Let us grant to political government to endure them with patience, however unworthy; to conceal their vices; and to assist them with our recommendation in their indifferent actions, whilst their authority stands in need of our support. But, the relation of prince and subject being once at an end, there is no reason we should deny the expression of our real opinions to our own liberty and common justice, and especially to interdict to good subjects the glory of having reverently and faithfully served a prince, whose imperfections were to them so well known; this were to deprive posterity of a useful example. And such as, out of respect to some private obligation, unjustly espouse and vindicate the memory of a faulty prince, do private right at the expense of public justice. Livy does very truly say,—[xxxv. 48.]— “That the language of men bred up in courts is always full of vain ostentation and false testimony, every one indifferently magnifying his own master, and stretching his commendation to the utmost extent of virtue and sovereign grandeur.” Some may condemn the freedom of those two soldiers who so roundly answered Nero to his beard; the one being asked by him why he bore him ill-will?

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"I loved thee," answered he, "whilst thou wert worthy of it, but since thou art become a parricide, an incendiary, a player, and a coachman, I hate thee as thou dost deserve." And the other, why he should attempt to kill him? "Because," said he, "I could think of no other remedy against thy perpetual mischiefs." —[Tacitus, Annal., xv. 67.]—But the public and universal testimonies that were given of him after his death (and so will be to all posterity, both of him and all other wicked princes like him), of his tyrannies and abominable deportment, who, of a sound judgment, can reprove them?

I am scandalised, that in so sacred a government as that of the Lacedaemonians there should be mixed so hypocritical a ceremony at the interment of their kings; where 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 that ever they had;—[Herodotus, vi. 68.]—by this means attributing to his quality the praise that only belongs to merit, and that of right is due to supreme desert, though lodged in the lowest and most inferior subject.

Aristotle, who will still have a hand in everything, makes a 'quaere' upon the saying of Solon, that none can be said to be happy until he is dead: "whether, then, he who has lived and died according to his heart's desire, if he have left an ill repute behind him, and that his posterity be miserable, can be said to be happy?" Whilst we have life and motion, we convey ourselves by fancy and preoccupation, whither and to what we please; but once out of being, we have no more any manner of communication with that which is, and it had therefore been better said by Solon that man is never happy, because never so, till he is no more.

"Quisquam

Vix radicitus e vita se tollit, et eicit;
Sed facit esse sui quiddam super inscius ipse,
Nec removet satis a projecto corpore sese, et
Vindicat."

["Scarcely one man can, even in dying, wholly detach himself from the idea of life; in his ignorance he must needs imagine that there is in him something that survives him, and cannot sufficiently separate or emancipate himself from his remains" —Lucretius, iii. 890.]

Bertrand de Guesclin, dying at the siege of the Castle of Rancon, near unto Puy, in Auvergne, the besieged were afterwards, upon surrender, enjoined to lay down the keys of the place upon the corpse of the dead general. Bartolommeo d'Alviano, the Venetian General, happening to die in the service of the Republic in Brescia, and his corpse being to be carried through the territory of Verona, an enemy's country, most of the army

were inclined to demand safe-conduct from the Veronese; but Theodoro Trivulzio opposed

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the motion, rather choosing to make his way by force of arms, and to run the hazard of a battle, saying it was by no means fit that he who in his life was never afraid of his enemies should seem to apprehend them when he was dead. In truth, in affairs of the same nature, by the Greek laws, he who made suit to an enemy for a body to give it burial renounced his victory, and had no more right to erect a trophy, and he to whom such suit was made was reputed victor. By this means it was that Nicias lost the advantage he had visibly obtained over the Corinthians, and that Agesilaus, on the contrary, assured that which he had before very doubtfully gained over the Boeotians. —[Plutarch, *Life of Nicias*, c. ii.; *Life of Agesilaus*, c. vi.]

These things might appear strange, had it not been a general practice in all ages not only to extend the concern of ourselves beyond this life, but, moreover, to fancy that the favour of Heaven does not only very often accompany us to the grave, but has also, even after life, a concern for our ashes. Of which there are so many ancient examples (to say nothing of those of our own observation), that it is not necessary I should longer insist upon it. Edward I., King of England, having in the long wars betwixt him and Robert, King of Scotland, had experience of how great importance his own immediate presence was to the success of his affairs, having ever been victorious in whatever he undertook in his own person, when he came to die, bound his son in a solemn oath that, so soon as he should be dead he should boil his body till the flesh parted from the bones, and bury the flesh, reserving the bones to carry continually with him in his army, so often as he should be obliged to go against the Scots, as if destiny had inevitably attached victory, even to his remains. John Zisca, the same who, to vindication of Wicliffe's heresies, troubled the Bohemian state, left order that they should flay him after his death, and of his skin make a drum to carry in the war against his enemies, fancying it would contribute to the continuation of the successes he had always obtained in the wars against them. In like manner certain of the Indians, in their battles 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 carry about with them, in their wars, the relics of valiant men who have died in battle, to incite their courage and advance their fortune. Of which examples the first reserve nothing for the tomb but the reputation they have acquired by their former achievements, but these attribute to them a certain present and active power.

The proceeding of Captain Bayard is of a better composition, who finding himself wounded to death with an harquebuss shot, and being importuned to retire out of the fight, made answer that he would not begin at the last gasp to turn his back to the enemy, and accordingly still fought on, till feeling himself too faint and no longer able to sit on his horse, he commanded his steward to set him down at the foot of a tree, but so that he might die with his face towards the enemy, which he did.

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I must yet add another example, equally remarkable for the present consideration with any of the former. The Emperor Maximilian, great-grandfather to the now King Philip,—[Philip *ii.* of Spain.]—was a prince endowed throughout with great and extraordinary qualities, and amongst the rest with a singular beauty of person, but had withal a humour very contrary to that of other princes, who for the despatch of their most important affairs convert their close-stool into a chair of State, which was, that he would never permit any of his bedchamber, how familiar soever, to see him in that posture, and would steal aside to make water as religiously as a virgin, shy to discover to his physician or any other whomsoever those parts that we are accustomed to conceal. I myself, who have so impudent a way of talking, am, nevertheless, naturally so modest this way, that unless at the importunity of necessity or pleasure, I scarcely ever communicate to the sight of any either those parts or actions that custom orders us to conceal, wherein I suffer more constraint than I conceive is very well becoming a man, especially of my profession. But he nourished 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 so soon as he should be dead; to which, methinks, he would have done well to have added that he should be blindfolded, too, that put them on. The charge that 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,—[Xenophon, *Cyropedia*, viii. 7.]—I attribute to some superstitious devotion of his; for both his historian and himself, amongst their great qualities, marked the whole course of their lives with a singular respect and reverence to religion.

I was by no means pleased with a story, told me by a man of very great quality of a relation of mine, and one who had given a very good account of himself both in peace and war, that, coming to die in a very old age, of excessive pain of the stone, he spent the last hours of his life in an extraordinary solicitude about ordering the honour and ceremony of his funeral, pressing all the men of condition who came to see him to engage their word to attend him to his grave: importuning this very prince, who came to visit him at his last gasp, with a most earnest supplication that he would order his family to be there, and presenting before him several reasons and examples to prove that it was a respect due to a man of his condition; and seemed to die content, having obtained this promise, and appointed the method and order of his funeral parade. I have seldom heard of so persistent a vanity.

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Another, though contrary curiosity (of which singularity, also, I do not want domestic example), seems to be somewhat akin to this, that a man shall cudgel his brains at the last moments of his life to contrive his obsequies to so particular and unusual a parsimony as of one servant with a lantern, I see this humour commended, and the appointment of Marcus. Emilius Lepidus, who forbade his heirs to bestow upon his hearse even the common ceremonies in use upon such occasions. Is it yet temperance and frugality to avoid expense and pleasure of which the use and knowledge are imperceptible to us? See, here, an easy and cheap reformation. If instruction were at all necessary in this case, I should be of opinion that in this, as in all other actions of life, each person should regulate the matter according to his fortune; and the philosopher Lycon prudently ordered his friends to dispose of his body where they should think most fit, and as to his funeral, to order it neither too superfluous nor too mean. For my part, I should wholly refer the ordering of this ceremony to custom, and shall, when the time comes, accordingly leave it 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 to be contemned by us, but not to be neglected by our friends.”—Cicero, Tusc. i. 45.]— and it was a holy saying of a saint, “Curatio funeris, conditio sepultura: pompa exequiarum, magis sunt vivorum solatia, quam subsidia mortuorum.”—[“The care of death, the place of sepulture, the pomps of obsequies, are rather consolations to the living than succours to the dead.” August. De Civit. Dei, i. 12.]—Which made Socrates answer Crito, who, at death, asked him how he would be buried: “How you will,” said he. “If I were to concern myself beyond the present about this affair, I should be most tempted, as the greatest satisfaction of this kind, to imitate those who in their lifetime entertain themselves with the ceremony and honours of their own obsequies beforehand, and are pleased with beholding their own dead countenance in marble. Happy are they who can gratify their senses by insensibility, and live by their death!”

I am ready to conceive an implacable hatred against all popular domination, though I think it the most natural and equitable of all, so oft as I call to mind the inhuman injustice of the people of Athens, who, without remission, 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 they had obtained over the Lacedaemonians near the Arginusian Isles, the most bloody and obstinate engagement that ever the Greeks fought at sea; because (after the victory) they followed up the blow and pursued the advantages presented to them by the rule of war, rather than stay to gather up and bury their dead. And the execution is yet rendered more

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odious by the behaviour of Diomedon, who, being one of the condemned, and a man of most eminent virtue, political and military, after having heard the sentence, advancing to speak, no audience till then having been allowed, instead of laying before them his own cause, or the impiety of so cruel a sentence, only expressed a solicitude for his judges' preservation, beseeching the gods to convert this sentence to their good, and praying that, for neglecting to fulfil the vows which he and his companions had made (with which he also acquainted them) in acknowledgment of so glorious a success, they might not draw down the indignation of the gods upon them; and so without more words went courageously to his death.

Fortune, a few years after, punished them in the same kind; for Chabrias, captain-general of their naval forces, having got the better of Pollis, Admiral of Sparta, at the Isle of Naxos, totally lost the fruits of his victory, one of very great importance to their affairs, in order not to incur the danger of this example, and so that he should not lose a few bodies of his dead friends that were floating in the sea, gave opportunity to a world of living enemies to sail away in safety, who afterwards made them pay dear for this unseasonable superstition:—

“Quaeris, quo jaceas, post obitum, loco?
Quo non nata jacent.”

["Dost ask where thou shalt lie after death?
Where things not born lie, that never being had."]
Seneca, Tyoa. Choro ii. 30.

This other restores the sense of repose to a body without a soul:

“Neque sepulcrum, quo recipiatur, habeat: portum corporis, ubi,
remissa human, vita, corpus requiescat a malis.”

["Nor let him have a sepulchre wherein he may be received, a haven
for his body, where, life being gone, that body may rest from its
woes.”—Ennius, ap. Cicero, Tusc. i. 44.]

As nature demonstrates to us that several dead things retain yet an occult relation to life; wine changes its flavour and complexion in cellars, according to the changes and seasons of the vine from whence it came; and the flesh of—venison alters its condition in the powdering-tub, and its taste according to the laws of the living flesh of its kind, as it is said.

CHAPTER IV

That the soul expends its passions upon false objects, where the true are wanting

A gentleman of my country, marvellously tormented with the gout, being importuned by his physicians totally to abstain from all manner of salt meats, was wont pleasantly to reply, that in the extremity of his fits he must needs have something to quarrel with, and that railing at and cursing, one while the Bologna sausages, and another the dried tongues and the hams, was some mitigation to his pain. But, in good earnest, as the arm when it is advanced to strike, if it miss the blow, and goes by the wind, it pains us; and as also, that, to make a pleasant prospect, the sight should not be lost and dilated in vague air, but have some bound and object to limit and circumscribe it at a reasonable distance.

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"Ventus ut amittit vires, nisi robore densa
Occurrant sylvae, spatio diffusus inani."

["As the wind loses its force diffused in void space, unless it in
its strength encounters the thick wood."—Lucan, iii. 362.]

So it seems that the soul, being transported and discomposed, turns its violence upon itself, if not supplied with something to oppose it, and therefore always requires an object at which to aim, and whereon to act. Plutarch says of those who are delighted with little dogs and monkeys, that the amorous part that is in us, for want of a legitimate object, rather than lie idle, does after that manner forge and create one false and frivolous. And we see that the soul, in its passions, inclines rather to deceive itself, by creating a false and fantastical a subject, even contrary to its own belief, than not to have something to work upon. After this manner brute beasts direct their fury to fall upon the stone or weapon that has hurt them, and with their teeth a even execute revenge upon themselves for the injury they have received from another:

"Pannonis haud aliter, post ictum saevior ursae,
Cui jaculum parva Lybis amentavit habena,
Se rotat in vulnus, telumque irata receptum
Impetit, et secum fugientem circuit hastam."

["So the she-bear, fiercer after the blow from the Lybian's thong-
hurled dart, turns round upon the wound, and attacking the received
spear, twists it, as she flies."—Lucan, vi. 220.]

What causes of the misadventures that befall us do we not invent? what is it that we do not lay the fault to, right or wrong, that we may have something to quarrel with? It is not those beautiful tresses you tear, nor is it the white bosom that in your anger you so unmercifully beat, that with an unlucky bullet have slain your beloved brother; quarrel with something else. Livy, speaking of the Roman army in Spain, says that for the loss of the two brothers, their great captains:

"Flere omnes repente, et offensare capita."

["All at once wept and tore their hair."—Livy, xxv. 37.]

'Tis a common practice. And the philosopher Bion said pleasantly of the king, who by handful pulled his hair off his head for sorrow, "Does this man think that baldness is a remedy for grief?"—[Cicero, Tusc. Quest., iii. 26.]—Who has not seen peevish gamblers chew and swallow the cards, and swallow the dice, in revenge for the loss of their money? Xerxes whipped the sea, and wrote a challenge to Mount Athos; Cyrus employed a whole army several days at work, to revenge himself of the river Gyndas,

for the fright it had put him into in passing over it; and Caligula demolished a very beautiful palace for the pleasure his mother had once enjoyed there.

—[Pleasure—unless 'plaisir' were originally 'deplaisir'—must be understood here ironically, for the house was one in which she had been imprisoned.—Seneca, *De Ira*. iii. 22]—

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I remember there was a story current, when I was a boy, that one of our neighbouring kings—[Probably Alfonso xi. of Castile]—having received a blow from the hand of God, swore he would be revenged, and in order to it, made proclamation that for ten years to come no one should pray to Him, or so much as mention Him throughout his dominions, or, so far as his authority went, believe in Him; by which they meant to paint not so much the folly as the vainglory of the nation of which this tale was told. They are vices that always go together, but in truth such actions as these have in them still more of presumption than want of wit. Augustus Caesar, having been tossed with a tempest at sea, fell to defying Neptune, and in the pomp of the Circensian games, to be revenged, deposed his statue from the place it had amongst the other deities. Wherein he was still less excusable than the former, and less than he was afterwards when, having lost a battle under Quintilius Varus in Germany, in rage and despair he went running his head against the wall, crying out, “O Varus! give me back my legions!” for these exceed all folly, forasmuch as impiety is joined therewith, invading God Himself, or at least Fortune, as if she had ears that were subject to our batteries; like the Thracians, who when it thunders or lightens, fall to shooting against heaven with Titanian vengeance, as if by flights of arrows they intended to bring God to reason. Though the ancient poet in Plutarch tells us—

“Point ne se faut courouer aux affaires,
Il ne leur chault de toutes nos choleres.”

[“We must not trouble the gods with our affairs; they take no heed of our angers and disputes.”—Plutarch.]

But we can never enough decry the disorderly sallies of our minds.

CHAPTER V

*Whether the governor of A place besieged ought himself
to go out to parley*

Quintus Marcius, the Roman legate in the war against Perseus, King of Macedon, to gain time wherein to reinforce his army, set on foot some overtures of accommodation, with which the king being lulled asleep, concluded a truce for some days, by this means giving his enemy opportunity and leisure to recruit his forces, which was afterwards the occasion of the king’s final ruin. Yet the elder senators, mindful of their forefathers’ manners, condemned this proceeding as degenerating from their ancient practice, which, they said, was to fight by valour, and not by artifice, surprises, and night-encounters; neither by pretended flight nor unexpected rallies to overcome their enemies; never making war till having first proclaimed it, and very often assigned both the hour and place of battle. Out of this generous principle it was that they delivered up to Pyrrhus his treacherous physician, and to the Etrurians their disloyal schoolmaster.

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This was, indeed, a procedure truly Roman, and nothing allied to the Grecian subtlety, nor to the Punic cunning, where it was reputed a victory of less glory to overcome by force than by fraud. Deceit may serve for a need, but he only confesses himself overcome who knows he is neither subdued by policy nor misadventure, but by dint of valour, man to man, in a fair and just war. It very well appears, by the discourse of these good old senators, that this fine sentence was not yet received amongst them.

“Dolus, an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?”

[“What matters whether by valour or by strategem we overcome the enemy?”—Aeneid, ii. 390]

The Achaians, says Polybius, abhorred all manner of double-dealing in war, not reputing it a victory unless where the courage of the enemy was fairly subdued:

“Eam vir sanctus et sapiens sciet veram esse victoriam, quae, salva fide et integra dignitate, parabitur.”—[“An honest and prudent man will acknowledge that only to be a true victory which shall be obtained saving his own good faith and dignity.”—Florus, i. 12.]—Says another:

“Vosne velit, an me, regnare hera, quidve ferat,
fors virtute experiamur.”

[“Whether you or I shall rule, or what shall happen, let us determine by valour.”—Cicero, De Offic., i. 12]

In the kingdom of Ternate, amongst those nations which we so broadly call barbarians, they have a custom never to commence war, till it be first proclaimed; adding withal an ample declaration of what means they have to do it with, with what and how many men, what ammunitions, and what, both offensive and defensive, arms; but also, that being done, if their enemies do not yield and come to an agreement, they conceive it lawful to employ without reproach in their wars any means which may help them to conquer.

The ancient Florentines were so far from seeking to obtain any advantage over their enemies by surprise, that they always gave them a month’s warning before they drew their army into the field, by the continual tolling of a bell they called Martinella.—[After St. Martin.]

For what concerns ourselves, who are not so scrupulous in this affair, and who attribute the honour of the war to him who has the profit of it, and who after Lysander say, “Where the lion’s skin is too short, we must eke it out with a bit from that of a fox”; the most usual occasions of surprise are derived from this practice, and we hold that there are no moments wherein a chief ought to be more circumspect, and to have his eye so



much at watch, as those of parleys and treaties of accommodation; and it is, therefore, become a general rule amongst the martial men of these latter times, that a governor of a place never ought, in a time of siege, to go out to parley. It was for this that in our fathers' days the Seigneurs de Montmord and de l'Assigni, defending Mousson against the Count of Nassau, were so highly

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censured. But yet, as to this, it would be excusable in that governor who, going out, should, notwithstanding, do it in such manner that the safety and advantage should be on his side; as Count Guido di Rangone did at Reggio (if we are to believe Du Bellay, for Guicciardini says it was he himself) when the Seigneur de l'Escut approached to parley, who stepped so little away from his fort, that a disorder happening in the interim of parley, not only Monsieur de l'Escut and his party who were advanced with him, found themselves by much the weaker, insomuch that Alessandro Trivulcio was there slain, but he himself follow the Count, and, relying upon his honour, to secure himself from the danger of the shot within the walls of the town.

Eumenes, being shut up in the city of Nora by Antigonus, and by him importuned to come out to speak with him, as he sent him word it was fit he should to a greater man than himself, and one who had now an advantage over him, returned this noble answer. "Tell him," said he, "that I shall never think any man greater than myself whilst I have my sword in my hand," and would not consent to come out to him till first, according to his own demand, Antigonus had delivered him his own nephew Ptolomeus in hostage.

And yet some have done very well in going out in person to parley, on the word of the assailant: witness Henry de Vaux, a cavalier of Champagne, who being besieged by the English in the Castle of Commercy, and Bartholomew de Brunes, who commanded at the Leaguer, having so sapped the greatest part of the castle without, that nothing remained but setting fire to the props to bury the besieged under the ruins, he requested the said Henry to come out to speak with him for his own good, which he did with three more in company; and, his ruin being made apparent to him, he conceived himself singularly obliged to his enemy, to whose discretion he and his garrison surrendered themselves; and fire being presently applied to the mine, the props no sooner began to fail, but the castle was immediately blown up from its foundations, no one stone being left upon another.

I could, and do, with great facility, rely upon the faith of another; but I should very unwillingly do it in such a case, as it should thereby be judged that it was rather an effect of my despair and want of courage than voluntarily and out of confidence and security in the faith of him with whom I had to do.

CHAPTER VI

THAT THE HOUR OF PARLEY DANGEROUS

I saw, notwithstanding, lately at Mussidan, a place not far from my house, that those who were driven out thence by our army, and others of their party, highly complained of

treachery, for that during a treaty of accommodation, and in the very interim that their deputies were treating, they were surprised and cut to pieces: a thing that, peradventure, in another age, might have had some colour of foul play; but,

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as I have just said, the practice of arms in these days is quite another thing, and there is now no confidence in an enemy excusable till the treaty is finally sealed; and even then the conqueror has enough to do to keep his word: so hazardous a thing it is to entrust the observation of the faith a man has engaged to a town that surrenders upon easy and favourable conditions, to the licence of a victorious army, and to give the soldier free entrance into it in the heat of blood.

Lucius AEmilius Regillus, the Roman praetor, having lost his time in attempting to take the city of Phocaea by force, by reason of the singular valour wherewith the inhabitants defended themselves, conditioned, at last, to receive them as friends to the people of Rome, and to enter the town, as into a confederate city, without any manner of hostility, of which he gave them all assurance; but having, for the greater pomp, brought his whole army in with him, it was no more in his power, with all the endeavour he could use, to restrain his people: so that, avarice and revenge trampling under foot both his authority and all military discipline, he there saw a considerable part of the city sacked and ruined before his face.

Cleomenes was wont to say, “that what mischief soever a man could do his enemy in time of war was above justice, and nothing accountable to it in the sight of gods and men.” And so, having concluded a truce with those of Argos for seven days, the third night after he fell upon them when they were all buried in sleep, and put them to the sword, alleging that there had no nights been mentioned in the truce; but the gods punished this subtle perfidy.

In a time of parley also; and while the citizens were relying upon their safety warrant, the city of Casilinum was taken by surprise, and that even in the age of the justest captains and the most perfect Roman military discipline; for it is not said that it is not lawful for us, in time and place, to make advantage of our enemies’ want of understanding, as well as their want of courage.

And, doubtless, war has naturally many privileges that appear reasonable even to the prejudice of reason. And therefore here the rule fails, “Neminem id agere ut ex alte rius praedetur inscitia.”—[“No one should preys upon another’s folly.”—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 17.]—But I am astonished at the great liberty allowed by Xenophon in such cases, and that both by precept and by the example of several exploits of his complete emperor; an author of very great authority, I confess, in those affairs, as being in his own person both a great captain and a philosopher of the first form of Socrates’ disciples; and yet I cannot consent to such a measure of licence as he dispenses in all things and places.

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Monsieur d'Aubigny, besieging Capua, and after having directed a furious battery against it, Signor Fabricio Colonna, governor of the town, having from a bastion begun to parley, and his soldiers in the meantime being a little more remiss in their guard, our people entered the place at unawares, and put them all to the sword. And of later memory, at Yvoy, Signor Juliano Romero having played that part of a novice to go out to parley with the Constable, at his return found his place taken. But, that we might not scape scot-free, the Marquess of Pescara having laid siege to Genoa, where Duke Ottaviano Fregosa commanded under our protection, and the articles betwixt them being so far advanced that it was looked upon as a done thing, and upon the point to be concluded, the Spaniards in the meantime having slipped in, made use of this treachery as an absolute victory. And since, at Ligny, in Barrois, where the Count de Brienne commanded, the emperor having in his own person beleaguered that place, and Bertheville, the said Count's lieutenant, going out to parley, whilst he was capitulating the town was taken.

"Fu il vincer sempremai laudabil cosa,
Vincasi o per fortuna, o per ingegno,"

["Victory is ever worthy of praise, whether obtained by valour or wisdom."—Ariosto, xv. l.]

But the philosopher Chrysippus was of another opinion, wherein I also concur; for he was used to say that those who run a race ought to employ all the force they have in what they are about, and to run as fast as they can; but that it is by no means fair in them to lay any hand upon their adversary to stop him, nor to set a leg before him to throw him down. And yet more generous was the answer of that great Alexander to Polypercon who was persuading him to take the advantage of the night's obscurity to fall upon Darius. "By no means," said he; "it is not for such a man as I am to steal a victory, 'Malo me fortunae poeniteat, quam victoria pudeat.'"—"I had rather complain of ill-fortune than be ashamed of victory." Quint. Curt. iv. 13]—

"Atque idem fugientem baud est dignatus Orodem
Sternere, nec jacta caecum dare cuspide vulnus
Obvius, adversoque occurrit, seque viro vir
Contulit, haud furto melior, sed fortibus armis."

["He deigned not to throw down Orodas as he fled, or with the darted spear to give him a wound unseen; but overtaking him, he confronted him face to face, and encountered man to man: superior, not in stratagem, but in valiant arms."—Aeneid, x. 732.]

CHAPTER VII

THAT THE INTENTION IS JUDGE OF OUR ACTIONS

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'Tis a saying, "That death discharges us of all our obligations." I know some who have taken it in another sense. Henry *vii.*, King of England, articted with Don Philip, son to Maximilian the emperor, or (to place him more honourably) father to the Emperor Charles V., that the said Philip should deliver up the Duke of Suffolk of the White Rose, his enemy, who was fled into the Low Countries, into his hands; which Philip accordingly did, but upon condition, nevertheless, that Henry should attempt nothing against the life of the said Duke; but coming to die, the king in his last will commanded his son to put him to death immediately after his decease. And lately, in the tragedy that the Duke of Alva presented to us in the persons of the Counts Horn and Egmont at Brussels, — [Decapitated 4th June 1568]—there were very remarkable passages, and one amongst the rest, that Count Egmont (upon the security of whose word and faith Count Horn had come and surrendered himself to the Duke of Alva) earnestly entreated that he might first mount the scaffold, to the end that death might disengage him from the obligation he had passed to the other. In which case, methinks, death did not acquit the former of his promise, and that the second was discharged from it without dying. We cannot be bound beyond what we are able to perform, by reason that effect and performance are not at all in our power, and that, indeed, we are masters of nothing but the will, in which, by necessity, all the rules and whole duty of mankind are founded and established: therefore Count Egmont, conceiving his soul and will indebted to his promise, although he had not the power to make it good, had doubtless been absolved of his duty, even though he had outlived the other; but the King of England wilfully and premeditatedly breaking his faith, was no more to be excused for deferring the execution of his infidelity till after his death than the mason in Herodotus, who having inviolably, during the time of his life, kept the secret of the treasure of the King of Egypt, his master, at his death discovered it to his children.—[Herod., ii. 121.]

I have taken notice of several in my time, who, convicted by their consciences of unjustly detaining the goods of another, have endeavoured to make amends by their will, and after their decease; but they had as good do nothing, as either in taking so much time in so pressing an affair, or in going about to remedy a wrong with so little dissatisfaction or injury to themselves. They owe, over and above, something of their own; and by how much their payment is more strict and incommodious to themselves, by so much is their restitution more just meritorious. Penitency requires penalty; but they yet do worse than these, who reserve the animosity against their neighbour to the last gasp, having concealed it during their life; wherein they manifest little regard of their own honour, irritating the party offended in their memory; and less to their the power, even out of to make their malice die with them, but extending the life of their hatred even beyond their own. Unjust judges, who defer judgment to a time wherein they can have no knowledge of the cause! For my part, I shall take care, if I can, that my death discover nothing that my life has not first and openly declared.

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CHAPTER VIII

OF IDLENESS

As we see some grounds that have long lain idle and untilled, when grown rich and fertile by rest, to abound with and spend their virtue in the product of innumerable sorts of weeds and wild herbs that are unprofitable, and that to make them perform their true office, we are to cultivate and prepare them for such seeds as are proper for our service; and as we see women that, without knowledge of man, do sometimes of themselves bring forth inanimate and formless lumps of flesh, but that to cause a natural and perfect generation they are to be husbanded with another kind of seed: even so it is with minds, which if not applied to some certain study that may fix and restrain them, run into a thousand extravagances, eternally roving here and there in the vague expanse of the imagination—

“Sicut aqua tremulum labris ubi lumen ahenis,
Sole reppersum, aut radiantis imagine lunae,
Omnia pervolat late loca; jamque sub auras
Ergitur, summique ferit laquearia tecti.”

[“As when in brazen vats of water the trembling beams of light, reflected from the sun, or from the image of the radiant moon, swiftly float over every place around, and now are darted up on high, and strike the ceilings of the upmost roof.”— AENEID, viii. 22.]

—in which wild agitation there is no folly, nor idle fancy they do not light upon:—

“Velut aegri somnia, vanae
Finguntur species.”

[“As a sick man’s dreams, creating vain phantasms.”—
Hor., De Arte Poetica, 7.]

The soul that has no established aim loses itself, for, as it is said—

“Quisquis ubique habitat, Maxime, nusquam habitat.”

[“He who lives everywhere, lives nowhere.”—Martial, vii. 73.]

When I lately retired to my own house, with a resolution, as much as possibly I could, to avoid all manner of concern in affairs, and to spend in privacy and repose the little remainder of time I have to live, I fancied I could not more oblige my mind than to suffer it at full leisure to entertain and divert itself, which I now hoped it might henceforth do, as being by time become more settled and mature; but I find—

“Variam semper dant otia mentem,”

[“Leisure ever creates varied thought.”—Lucan, iv. 704]

that, quite contrary, it is like a horse that has broke from his rider, who voluntarily runs into a much more violent career than any horseman would put him to, and creates me so many chimaeras and fantastic monsters, one upon another, without order or design, that, the better at leisure to contemplate their strangeness and absurdity, I have begun to commit them to writing, hoping in time to make it ashamed of itself.

CHAPTER IX

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OF LIARS

There is not a man living whom it would so little become to speak from memory as myself, for I have scarcely any at all, and do not think that the world has another so marvellously treacherous as mine. My other faculties are all sufficiently ordinary and mean; but in this I think myself very rare and singular, and deserving to be thought famous. Besides the natural inconvenience I suffer by it (for, certes, the necessary use of memory considered, Plato had reason when he called it a great and powerful goddess), in my country, when they would say a man has no sense, they say, such an one has no memory; and when I complain of the defect of mine, they do not believe me, and reprove me, as though I accused myself for a fool: not discerning the difference betwixt memory and understanding, which is to make matters still worse for me. But they do me wrong; for experience, rather, daily shows us, on the contrary, that a strong memory is commonly coupled with infirm judgment. They do, me, moreover (who am so perfect in nothing as in friendship), a great wrong in this, that they make the same words which accuse my infirmity, represent me for an ungrateful person; they bring my affections into question upon the account of my memory, and from a natural imperfection, make out a defect of conscience. "He has forgot," says one, "this request, or that promise; he no more remembers his friends; he has forgot to say or do, or conceal such and such a thing, for my sake." And, truly, I am apt enough to forget many things, but to neglect anything my friend has given me in charge, I never do it. And it should be enough, methinks, that I feel the misery and inconvenience of it, without branding me with malice, a vice so contrary to my humour.

However, I derive these comforts from my infirmity: first, that it is an evil from which principally I have found reason to correct a worse, that would easily enough have grown upon me, namely, ambition; the defect being intolerable in those who take upon them public affairs. That, like examples in the progress of nature demonstrate to us, she has fortified me in my other faculties proportionably as she has left me unfurnished in this; I should otherwise have been apt implicitly to have reposed my mind and judgment upon the bare report of other men, without ever setting them to work upon their own force, had the inventions and opinions of others been ever been present with me by the benefit of memory. That by this means I am not so talkative, for the magazine of the memory is ever better furnished with matter than that of the invention. Had mine been faithful to me, I had ere this deafened all my friends with my babble, the subjects themselves arousing and stirring up the little faculty I have of handling and employing them, heating and distending my discourse, which were a pity: as I have observed in several of my intimate friends, who, as their memories supply them with an

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entire and full view of things, begin their narrative so far back, and crowd it with so many impertinent circumstances, that though the story be good in itself, they make a shift to spoil it; and if otherwise, you are either to curse the strength of their memory or the weakness of their judgment: and it is a hard thing to close up a discourse, and to cut it short, when you have once started; there is nothing wherein the force of a horse is so much seen as in a round and sudden stop. I see even those who are pertinent enough, who would, but cannot stop short in their career; for whilst they are seeking out a handsome period to conclude with, they go on at random, straggling about upon impertinent trivialities, as men staggering upon weak legs. But, above all, old men who retain the memory of things past, and forget how often they have told them, are dangerous company; and I have known stories from the mouth of a man of very great quality, otherwise very pleasant in themselves, become very wearisome by being repeated a hundred times over and over again to the same people.

Secondly, that, by this means, I the less remember the injuries I have received; insomuch that, as the ancient said,—[Cicero, *Pro Ligar.* c. 12.]—I should have a register of injuries, or a prompter, as Darius, who, that he might not forget the offence he had received from those of Athens, so oft as he sat down to dinner, ordered one of his pages three times to repeat in his ear, “Sir, remember the Athenians”;—[Herod., v. 105.]—and then, again, the places which I revisit, and the books I read over again, still smile upon me with a fresh novelty.

It is not without good reason said “that he who has not a good memory should never take upon him the trade of lying.” I know very well that the grammarians—[Nigidius, Aulus Gellius, xi. ii; Nonius, v. 80.]—distinguish betwixt an untruth and a lie, and say that to tell an untruth is to tell a thing that is false, but that we ourselves believe to be true; and that the definition of the word to lie in Latin, from which our French is taken, is to tell a thing which we know in our conscience to be untrue; and it is of this last sort of liars only that I now speak. Now, these do either wholly contrive and invent the untruths they utter, or so alter and disguise a true story that it ends in a lie. When they disguise and often alter the same story, according to their own fancy, 'tis very hard for them, at one time or another, to escape being trapped, by reason that the real truth of the thing, having first taken possession of the memory, and being there lodged impressed by the medium of knowledge and science, it will be difficult that it should not represent itself to the imagination, and shoulder out falsehood, which cannot there have so sure and settled footing as the other; and the circumstances of the first true knowledge evermore running in their minds, will be apt to make them forget those that are illegitimate, and only, forged by their own fancy.

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In what they, wholly invent, forasmuch as there is no contrary impression to jostle their invention there seems to be less danger of tripping; and yet even this by reason it is a vain body and without any hold, is very apt to escape the memory, if it be not well assured. Of which I had very pleasant experience, at the expense of such as profess only to form and accommodate their speech to the affair they have in hand, or to humour of the great folks to whom they are speaking; for the circumstances to which these men stick not to enslave their faith and conscience being subject to several changes, their language must vary accordingly: whence it happens that of the same thing they tell one man that it is this, and another that it is that, giving it several colours; which men, if they once come to confer notes, and find out the cheat, what becomes of this fine art? To which may be added, that they must of necessity very often ridiculously trap themselves; for what memory can be sufficient to retain so many different shapes as they have forged upon one and the same subject? I have known many in my time very ambitious of the repute of this fine wit; but they do not see that if they have the reputation of it, the effect can no longer be.

In plain truth, lying is an accursed vice. We are not men, nor have other tie upon one another, but by our word. If we did but discover the horror and gravity of it, we should pursue it with fire and sword, and more justly than other crimes. I see that parents commonly, and with indiscretion enough, correct their children for little innocent faults, and torment them for wanton tricks, that have neither impression nor consequence; whereas, in my opinion, lying only, and, which is of something a lower form, obstinacy, are the faults which are to be severely whipped out of them, both in their infancy and in their progress, otherwise they grow up and increase with them; and after a tongue has once got the knack of lying, 'tis not to be imagined how impossible it is to reclaim it whence it comes to pass that we see some, who are otherwise very honest men, so subject and enslaved to this vice. I have an honest lad to my tailor, whom I never knew guilty of one truth, no, not when it had been to his advantage. If falsehood had, like truth, but one face only, we should be upon better terms; for we should then take for certain the contrary to what the liar says: but the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand forms, and a field indefinite, without bound or limit. The Pythagoreans make good to be certain and finite, and evil, infinite and uncertain. There are a thousand ways to miss the white, there is only one to hit it. For my own part, I have this vice in so great horror, that I am not sure I could prevail with my conscience to secure myself from the most manifest and extreme danger by an impudent and solemn lie. An ancient father says "that a dog we know is better company than a man whose language we do not understand."

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“Ut externus alieno pene non sit hominis vice.”

["As a foreigner cannot be said to supply us the place of a man."
—Pliny, Nat. Hist. vii. 1]

And how much less sociable is false speaking than silence?

King Francis I. vaunted that he had by this means nonplussed Francesco Taverna, ambassador of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, a man very famous for his science in talking in those days. This gentleman had been sent to excuse his master to his Majesty about a thing of very great consequence, which was this: the King, still to maintain some intelligence with Italy, out of which he had lately been driven, and particularly with the duchy of Milan, had thought it convenient to have a gentleman on his behalf to be with that Duke: an ambassador in effect, but in outward appearance a private person who pretended to reside there upon his own particular affairs; for the Duke, much more depending upon the Emperor, especially at a time when he was in a treaty of marriage with his niece, daughter to the King of Denmark, who is now dowager of Lorraine, could not manifest any practice and conference with us without his great interest. For this commission one Merveille, a Milanese gentleman, and an equerry to the King, being thought very fit, was accordingly despatched thither with private credentials, and instructions as ambassador, and with other letters of recommendation to the Duke about his own private concerns, the better to mask and colour the business; and was so long in that court, that the Emperor at last had some inkling of his real employment there; which was the occasion of what followed after, as we suppose; which was, that under pretence of some murder, his trial was in two days despatched, and his head in the night struck off in prison. Messire Francesco being come, and prepared with a long counterfeit history of the affair (for the King had applied himself to all the princes of Christendom, as well as to the Duke himself, to demand satisfaction), had his audience at the morning council; where, after he had for the support of his cause laid open several plausible justifications of the fact, that his master had never looked upon this Merveille for other than a private gentleman and his own subject, who was there only in order to his own business, neither had he ever lived under any other aspect; absolutely disowning that he had ever heard he was one of the King's household or that his Majesty so much as knew him, so far was he from taking him for an ambassador: the King, in his turn, pressing him with several objections and demands, and challenging him on all sides, tripped him up at last by asking, why, then, the execution was performed by night, and as it were by stealth? At which the poor confounded ambassador, the more handsomely to disengage himself, made answer, that the Duke would have been very loth, out of respect to his Majesty, that such an execution should have been performed by day. Any one may guess if he was not well rated when he came home, for having so grossly tripped in the presence of a prince of so delicate a nostril as King Francis.

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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, before he would give an answer, insisting upon the difficulties he should find in setting on foot so great a preparation as would be necessary to attack so potent a King, and urging some reasons to that effect, the ambassador very unseasonably replied that he had also himself considered the same difficulties, and had represented them to the Pope. From which saying of his, so directly opposite to the thing propounded and the business he came about, which was immediately to incite him to war, the King of England first derived the argument (which he afterward found to be true), that this ambassador, in his own mind, was on the side of the French; of which having advertised his master, his estate at his return home was confiscated, and he himself very narrowly escaped the losing of his head.—[Erasmi Op. (1703), iv. col. 684.]

CHAPTER X

OF QUICK OR SLOW SPEECH

“Onc ne furent a tous toutes graces donnees.”

[“All graces were never yet given to any one man.”—A verse in one of La Brebis’ Sonnets.]

So we see in the gift of eloquence, wherein some have such a facility and promptness, and that which we call a present wit so easy, that they are ever ready upon all occasions, and never to be surprised; and others more heavy and slow, never venture to utter anything but what they have long premeditated, and taken great care and pains to fit and prepare.

Now, as we teach young ladies those sports and exercises which are most proper to set out the grace and beauty of those parts wherein their chiefest ornament and perfection lie, so it should be in these two advantages of eloquence, to which the lawyers and preachers of our age seem principally to pretend. If I were worthy to advise, the slow speaker, methinks, should be more proper for the pulpit, and the other for the bar: and that because the employment of the first does naturally allow him all the leisure he can desire to prepare himself, and besides, his career is performed in an even and unintermitted line, without stop or interruption; whereas the pleader’s business and interest compels him to enter the lists upon all occasions, and the unexpected objections and replies of his adverse party jostle him out of his course, and put him, upon the instant, to pump for new and extempore answers and defences. Yet, at the interview betwixt Pope Clement and King Francis at Marseilles, it happened, quite contrary, that Monsieur Poyet, a man bred up all his life at the bar, and in the highest repute for eloquence, having the charge of making the harangue to the Pope committed

to him, and having so long meditated on it beforehand, as, so they said, to have brought it ready made along with him from Paris; the very day it was to have been pronounced,

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the Pope, fearing something might be said that might give offence to the other princes' ambassadors who were there attending on him, sent to acquaint the King with the argument which he conceived most suiting to the time and place, but, by chance, quite another thing to that Monsieur de Poyet had taken so much pains about: so that the fine speech he had prepared was of no use, and he was upon the instant to contrive another; which finding himself unable to do, Cardinal du Bellay was constrained to perform that office. The pleader's part is, doubtless, much harder than that of the preacher; and yet, in my opinion, we see more passable lawyers than preachers, at all events in France. It should seem that the nature of wit is to have its operation prompt and sudden, and that of judgment to have it more deliberate and more slow. But he who remains totally silent, for want of leisure to prepare himself to speak well, and he also whom leisure does noways benefit to better speaking, are equally unhappy.

'Tis said of Severus Cassius that he spoke best extempore, that he stood more obliged to fortune than to his own diligence; that it was an advantage to him to be interrupted in speaking, and that his adversaries were afraid to nettle him, lest his anger should redouble his eloquence. I know, experimentally, the disposition of nature so impatient of tedious and elaborate premeditation, that if it do not go frankly and gaily to work, it can perform nothing to purpose. We say of some compositions that they stink of oil and of the lamp, by reason of a certain rough harshness that laborious handling imprints upon those where it has been employed. But besides this, the solicitude of doing well, and a certain striving and contending of a mind too far strained and overbent upon its undertaking, breaks and hinders itself like water, that by force of its own pressing violence and abundance, cannot find a ready issue through the neck of a bottle or a narrow sluice. In this condition of nature, of which I am now speaking, there is this also, that it would not be disordered and stimulated with such passions as the fury of Cassius (for such a motion would be too violent and rude); it would not be jostled, but solicited; it would be roused and heated by unexpected, sudden, and accidental occasions. If it be left to itself, it flags and languishes; agitation only gives it grace and vigour. I am always worst in my own possession, and when wholly at my own disposition: accident has more title to anything that comes from me than I; occasion, company, and even the very rising and falling of my own voice, extract more from my fancy than I can find, when I sound and employ it by myself. By which means, the things I say are better than those I write, if either were to be preferred, where neither is worth anything. This, also, befalls me, that I do not find myself where I seek myself, and I light upon things more by chance than by any inquisition of my own judgment. I perhaps sometimes

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hit upon something when I write, that seems quaint and sprightly to me, though it will appear dull and heavy to another.—But let us leave these fine compliments; every one talks thus of himself according to his talent. But when I come to speak, I am already so lost that I know not what I was about to say, and in such cases a stranger often finds it out before me. If I should make erasure so often as this inconvenience befalls me, I should make clean work; occasion will, at some other time, lay it as visible to me as the light, and make me wonder what I should stick at.

CHAPTER XI

OF PROGNOSTICATIONS

For what concerns oracles, it is certain that a good while before the coming of Jesus Christ they had begun to lose their credit; for we see that Cicero troubled to find out the cause of their decay, and he has these words:

“Cur isto modo jam oracula Delphis non eduntur,
non modo nostro aetate, sed jam diu; ut nihil
possit esse contemptius?”

[“What is the reason that the oracles at Delphi are no longer uttered: not merely in this age of ours, but for a long time past, insomuch that nothing is more in contempt?” — Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 57.]

But as to the other prognostics, calculated from the anatomy of beasts at sacrifices (to which purpose Plato does, in part, attribute the natural constitution of the intestines of the beasts themselves), the scraping of poultry, the flight of birds—

“Aves quasdam . . . rerum augurandarum
causa natas esse putamus.”

[“We think some sorts of birds are purposely created to serve the purposes of augury.”—Cicero, *De Natura Deor.*, ii. 64.]

claps of thunder, the overflowing of rivers—

“Multa cernunt Aruspices, multa Augures provident,
multa oraculis declarantur, multa vaticinationibus,
multa somniis, multa portentis.”

["The Aruspices discern many things, the Augurs foresee many things, many things are announced by oracles, many by vaticinations, many by dreams, many by portents."—Cicero, *De Natura Deor.*, ii. 65.]

—and others of the like nature, upon which antiquity founded most of their public and private enterprises, our religion has totally abolished them. And although there yet remain amongst us some practices of divination from the stars, from spirits, from the shapes and complexions of men, from dreams and the like (a notable example of the wild curiosity of our nature to grasp at and anticipate future things, as if we had not enough to do to digest the present)—

"Cur hanc tibi, rector Olympi,
Sollicitis visum mortalibus addere curam,
Noscant venturas ut dira per omina clades?....
Sit subitum, quodcumque paras; sit coeca futuri
Mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti."

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["Why, ruler of Olympus, hast thou to anxious mortals thought fit to add this care, that they should know by, omens future slaughter?... Let whatever thou art preparing be sudden. Let the mind of men be blind to fate in store; let it be permitted to the timid to hope." —Lucan, ii. 14]

"Ne utile quidem est scire quid futurum sit;
miserum est enim, nihil proficientem angi,"

["It is useless to know what shall come to pass; it is a miserable thing to be tormented to no purpose."
—Cicero, *De Natura Deor.*, iii. 6.]

yet are they of much less authority now than heretofore. Which makes so much more remarkable the example of Francesco, Marquis of Saluzzo, who being lieutenant to King Francis I. in his ultramontane army, infinitely favoured and esteemed in our court, and obliged to the king's bounty for the marquisate itself, which had been forfeited by his brother; and as to the rest, having no manner of provocation given him to do it, and even his own affection opposing any such disloyalty, suffered himself to be so terrified, as it was confidently reported, with the fine prognostics that were spread abroad everywhere in favour of the Emperor Charles V., and to our disadvantage (especially in Italy, where these foolish prophecies were so far believed, that at Rome great sums of money were ventured out upon return of greater, when the prognostics came to pass, so certain they made themselves of our ruin), that, having often bewailed, to those of his acquaintance who were most intimate with him, the mischiefs that he saw would inevitably fall upon the Crown of France and the friends he had in that court, he revolted and turned to the other side; to his own misfortune, nevertheless, what constellation soever governed at that time. But he carried himself in this affair like a man agitated by divers passions; for having both towns and forces in his hands, the enemy's army under Antonio de Leyva close by him, and we not at all suspecting his design, it had been in his power to have done more than he did; for we lost no men by this infidelity of his, nor any town, but Fossano only, and that after a long siege and a brave defence.—[1536]

"Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte premit Deus,
Ridetque, si mortalis ultra
Fas trepidat."

["A wise God covers with thick night the path of the future, and laughs at the man who alarms himself without reason."
—Hor., *Od.*, iii. 29.]

"Ille potens sui
Laetusque deget, cui licet in diem
Dixisse vixi! cras vel atra

Nube polum pater occupato,
Vel sole puro.”

["He lives happy and master of himself who can say as each day passes on, 'I *have lived*:' whether to-morrow our Father shall give us a clouded sky or a clear day."—Hor., Od., iii. 29]

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“Laetus in praesens animus; quod ultra est,
Oderit curare.”

[“A mind happy, cheerful in the present state, will take good care
not to think of what is beyond it.”—Ibid., ii. 25]

And those who take this sentence in a contrary sense interpret it amiss:

“Ista sic reciprocantur, ut et si divinatio sit,
dii sint; et si dii lint, sit divinatio.”

[“These things are so far reciprocal that if there be divination,
there must be deities; and if deities, divination.”—Cicero, De
Divin., i. 6.]

Much more wisely Pacuvius—

“Nam istis, qui linguam avium intelligunt,
Plusque ex alieno jecore sapiunt, quam ex suo,
Magis audiendum, quam auscultandum, censeo.”

[“As to those who understand the language of birds, and who rather consult the livers of
animals other than their own, I had rather hear them than attend to them.” —Cicero, De
Divin., i. 57, ex Pacuvio]

The so celebrated art of divination amongst the Tuscans took its beginning thus: A labourer striking deep with his cutter into the earth, saw the demigod Tages ascend, with an infantine aspect, but endued with a mature and senile wisdom. Upon the rumour of which, all the people ran to see the sight, by whom his words and science, containing the principles and means to attain to this art, were recorded, and kept for many ages.—[Cicero, De Devina, ii. 23]—A birth suitable to its progress; I, for my part, should sooner regulate my affairs by the chance of a die than by such idle and vain dreams. And, indeed, in all republics, a good share of the government has ever been referred to chance. Plato, in the civil regimen that he models according to his own fancy, leaves to it the decision of several things of very great importance, and will, amongst other things, that marriages should be appointed by lot; attributing so great importance to this accidental choice as to ordain that the children begotten in such wedlock be brought up in the country, and those begotten in any other be thrust out as spurious and base; yet so, that if any of those exiles, notwithstanding, should, peradventure, in growing up give any good hope of himself, he might be recalled, as, also, that such as had been retained, should be exiled, in case they gave little expectation of themselves in their early growth.



I see some who are mightily given to study and comment upon their almanacs, and produce them to us as an authority when anything has fallen out pat; and, for that matter, it is hardly possible but that these alleged authorities sometimes stumble upon a truth amongst an infinite number of lies.

“Quis est enim, qui totum diem jaculans
non aliquando collineet?”

["For who shoots all day at butts that does not sometimes hit the
white?"—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 59.]

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I think never the better of them for some such accidental hit. There would be more certainty in it if there were a rule and a truth of always lying. Besides, nobody records their flimflams and false prognostics, forasmuch as they are infinite and common; but if they chop upon one truth, that carries a mighty report, as being rare, incredible, and prodigious. So Diogenes, surnamed the Atheist, answered him in Samothrace, who, showing him in the temple the several offerings and stories in painting of those who had escaped shipwreck, said to him, "Look, you who think the gods have no care of human things, what do you say to so many persons preserved from death by their especial favour?" "Why, I say," answered he, "that their pictures are not here who were cast away, who are by much the greater number."—[Cicero, *De Natura Deor.*, i. 37.]

Cicero observes that of all the philosophers who have acknowledged a deity, Xenophanes the Colophonian only has endeavoured to eradicate all manner of divination—[Cicero, *De Divin.*, i. 3.]—; which makes it the less a wonder if we have now and then seen some of our princes, sometimes to their own cost, rely too much upon these vanities. I had given anything with my own eyes to see those two great marvels, the book of Joachim the Calabrian abbot, which foretold all the future Popes, their names and qualities; and that of the Emperor Leo, which prophesied all the emperors and patriarchs of Greece. This I have been an eyewitness of, that in public confusions, men astonished at their fortune, have abandoned their own reason, superstitiously to seek out in the stars the ancient causes and menaces of the present mishaps, and in my time have been so strangely successful in it, as to make me believe that this being an amusement of sharp and volatile wits, those who have been versed in this knack of unfolding and untying riddles, are capable, in any sort of writing, to find out what they desire. But above all, that which gives them the greatest room to play in, is the obscure, ambiguous, and fantastic gibberish of the prophetic canting, where their authors deliver nothing of clear sense, but shroud all in riddle, to the end that posterity may interpret and apply it according to its own fancy.

Socrates demon might, perhaps, be no other but a certain impulsion of the will, which obtruded itself upon him without the advice or consent of his judgment; and in a soul so enlightened as his was, and so prepared by a continual exercise of wisdom-and virtue, 'tis to be supposed those inclinations of his, though sudden and undigested, were very important and worthy to be followed. Every one finds in himself some image of such agitations, of a prompt, vehement, and fortuitous opinion; and I may well allow them some authority, who attribute so little to our prudence, and who also myself have had some, weak in reason, but violent in persuasion and dissuasion, which were most frequent with Socrates,—[Plato, in his account of Theages the Pythagorean]—by which I have suffered myself to be carried away so fortunately, and so much to my own advantage, that they might have been judged to have had something in them of a divine inspiration.

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CHAPTER XII

OF CONSTANCY

The law of resolution and constancy does not imply that we ought not, as much as in us lies, to decline and secure ourselves from the mischiefs and inconveniences that threaten us; nor, consequently, that we shall not fear lest they should surprise us: on the contrary, all decent and honest ways and means of securing ourselves from harms, are not only permitted, but, moreover, commendable, and the business of constancy chiefly is, bravely to stand to, and stoutly to suffer those inconveniences which are not possibly to be avoided. So that there is no supple motion of body, nor any movement in the handling of arms, how irregular or ungraceful soever, that we need condemn, if they serve to protect us from the blow that is made against us.

Several very warlike nations have made use of a retreating and flying way of fight as a thing of singular advantage, and, by so doing, have made their backs more dangerous to their enemies than their faces. Of which kind of fighting the Turks still retain something in their practice of arms; and Socrates, in Plato, laughs at Laches, who had defined fortitude to be a standing firm in the ranks against the enemy. "What!" says he, "would it, then, be a reputed cowardice to overcome them by giving ground?" urging, at the same time, the authority of Homer, who commends in Aeneas the science of flight. And whereas Laches, considering better of it, admits the practice as to the Scythians, and, in general, all cavalry whatever, he again attacks him with the example of the Lacedaemonian foot—a nation of all other the most obstinate in maintaining their ground—who, in the battle of Plataea, not being able to break into the Persian phalanx, bethought themselves to disperse and retire, that by the enemy supposing they fled, they might break and disunite that vast body of men in the pursuit, and by that stratagem obtained the victory.

As for the Scythians, 'tis said of them, that when Darius went his expedition to subdue them, he sent, by a herald, highly to reproach their king, that he always retired before him and declined a battle; to which Idanthyrses,—[Herod., iv. 127.]—for that was his name, returned answer, that it was not for fear of him, or of any man living, that he did so, but that it was the way of marching in practice with his nation, who had neither tilled fields, cities, nor houses to defend, or to fear the enemy should make any advantage of but that if he had such a stomach to fight, let him but come to view their ancient places of sepulture, and there he should have his fill.

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Nevertheless, as to cannon-shot, when a body of men are drawn up in the face of a train of artillery, as the occasion of war often requires, it is unhandsome to quit their post to avoid the danger, forasmuch as by reason of its violence and swiftness we account it inevitable; and many a one, by ducking, stepping aside, and such other motions of fear, has been, at all events, sufficiently laughed at by his companions. And yet, in the expedition that the Emperor Charles V. made against us into Provence, the Marquis de Guast going to reconnoitre the city of Arles, and advancing out of the cover of a windmill, under favour of which he had made his approach, was perceived by the Seigneurs de Bonneval and the Seneschal of Agenois, who were walking upon the 'theatre aux ayenes'; who having shown him to the Sieur de Villiers, commissary of the artillery, he pointed a culverin so admirably well, and levelled it so exactly right against him, that had not the Marquis, seeing fire given to it, slipped aside, it was certainly concluded the shot had taken him full in the body. And, in like manner, some years before, Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, and father to the queen-mother—[Catherine de' Medici, mother of Henry *iii.*]—laying siege to Mondolfo, a place in the territories of the Vicariat in Italy, seeing the cannoneer give fire to a piece that pointed directly against him, it was well for him that he ducked, for otherwise the shot, that only razed the top of his head, had doubtless hit him full in the breast. To say truth, I do not think that these evasions are performed upon the account of judgment; for how can any man living judge of high or low aim on so sudden an occasion? And it is much more easy to believe that fortune favoured their apprehension, and that it might be as well at another time to make them face the danger, as to seek to avoid it. For my own part, I confess I cannot forbear starting when the rattle of a harquebuse thunders in my ears on a sudden, and in a place where I am not to expect it, which I have also observed in others, braver fellows than I.

Neither do the Stoics pretend that the soul of their philosopher need be proof against the first visions and fantasies that surprise him; but, as to a natural subjection, consent that he should tremble at the terrible noise of thunder, or the sudden clatter of some falling ruin, and be affrighted even to paleness and convulsion; and so in other passions, provided his judgment remain sound and entire, and that the seat of his reason suffer no concussion nor alteration, and that he yield no consent to his fright and discomposure. To him who is not a philosopher, a fright is the same thing in the first part of it, but quite another thing in the second; for the impression of passions does not remain superficially in him, but penetrates farther, even to the very seat of reason, infecting and corrupting it, so that he judges according to his fear, and conforms his behaviour to it. In this verse you may see the true state of the wise Stoic learnedly and plainly expressed:—

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“Mens immota manet; lachrymae voluntur inanes.”

["Though tears flow, the mind remains unmoved."
—Virgil, Aeneid, iv. 449]

The Peripatetic sage does not exempt himself totally from perturbations of mind, but he moderates them.

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks:*

Almanacs

Being dead they were then by one day happier than he
Books I read over again, still smile upon me with fresh novelty
Death discharges us of all our obligations
Difference betwixt memory and understanding
Do thine own work, and know thyself
Effect and performance are not at all in our power
Fantastic gibberish of the prophetic canting
Folly of gaping after future things
Good to be certain and finite, and evil, infinite and uncertain
He who lives everywhere, lives nowhere
If they chop upon one truth, that carries a mighty report
Impotencies that so unseasonably surprise the lover
Let it be permitted to the timid to hope
Light griefs can speak: deep sorrows are dumb
Look, you who think the gods have no care of human things
Nature of judgment to have it more deliberate and more slow
Nature of wit is to have its operation prompt and sudden
Nor have other tie upon one another, but by our word
Old men who retain the memory of things past
Pity is reputed a vice amongst the Stoics
Rather complain of ill-fortune than be ashamed of victory
Reverse of truth has a hundred thousand forms
Say of some compositions that they stink of oil and of the lamp
Solon, that none can be said to be happy until he is dead
Strong memory is commonly coupled with infirm judgment
Stumble upon a truth amongst an infinite number of lies
Suffer those inconveniences which are not possibly to be avoided
Superstitiously to seek out in the stars the ancient causes
Their pictures are not here who were cast away
Things I say are better than those I write
We are masters of nothing but the will
We cannot be bound beyond what we are able to perform
Where the lion's skin is too short