

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 07 eBook

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 07 by Michel de Montaigne

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A CONSIDERATION UPON CICERO

One word more by way of comparison betwixt these two. There are to be gathered out of the writings of Cicero and the younger Pliny (but little, in my opinion, resembling his uncle in his humours) infinite testimonies of a beyond measure ambitious nature; and amongst others, this for one, that they both, in the sight of all the world, solicit the historians of their time not to forget them in their memoirs; and fortune, as if in spite, has made the vanity of those requests live upon record down to this age of ours, while she has long since consigned the histories themselves to oblivion. But this exceeds all meanness of spirit in persons of such a quality as they were, to think to derive any great renown from babbling and prating; even to the publishing of their private letters to their friends, and so withal, that though some of them were never sent, the opportunity being lost, they nevertheless presented them to the light, with this worthy excuse that they were unwilling to lose their labours and lucubrations. Was it not very well becoming two consuls of Rome, sovereign magistrates of the republic that commanded the world, to spend their leisure in contriving quaint and elegant missives, thence to gain the reputation of being versed in their own mother-tongues? What could a pitiful schoolmaster have done worse, whose trade it was thereby to get his living? If the acts of Xenophon and Caesar had not far transcended their eloquence, I scarce believe they would ever have taken the pains to have written them; they made it their business to recommend not their speaking, but their doing. And could the perfection of eloquence have added a lustre suitable to a great personage, certainly Scipio and Laelius had never resigned the honour of their comedies, with all the luxuriances and elegances of the Latin tongue, to an African slave; for that the work was theirs, its beauty and excellence sufficiently declare; Terence himself confesses as much, and I should take it ill from any one that would dispossess me of that belief.

'Tis a kind of mockery and offence to extol a man for qualities misbecoming his condition, though otherwise commendable in themselves, but such as ought not, however, to be his chief talent; as if a man should commend a king for being a good painter, a good architect, a good marksman, or a good runner at the ring: commendations that add no honour, unless mentioned altogether and in the train of those that are properly applicable to him, namely, justice and the science of governing and conducting his people both in peace and war. At this rate, agriculture was an honour to Cyrus, and eloquence and the knowledge of letters to Charlemagne. I have in my time known some, who by writing acquired both their titles and fortune, disown their apprenticeship, corrupt their style, and affect ignorance in so vulgar a quality (which also our nation holds to be rarely seen in very learned hands), and to seek a reputation by better qualities. Demosthenes' companions in the embassy to Philip, extolling that prince as handsome, eloquent, and a stout drinker, Demosthenes said that those were commendations more proper for a woman, an advocate, or a sponge, than for a king':

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"Imperet bellante prior, jacentem
Lenis in hostem."

["In the fight, overthrow your enemy, but be merciful to him when fallen.—"Horace, Carm. Saec., v. 51.]

'Tis not his profession to know either how to hunt or to dance well;

"Orabunt causas alii, coelique meatus
Describent radio, et fulgentia sidera dicent;
Hic regere imperio populos sciat."

["Let others plead at the bar, or describe the spheres, and point
out the glittering stars; let this man learn to rule the nations."
—Aeneid, vi. 849.]

Plutarch says, moreover, that to appear so excellent in these less necessary qualities is to produce witness against a man's self, that he has spent his time and applied his study ill, which ought to have been employed in the acquisition of more necessary and more useful things. So that Philip, king of Macedon, having heard that great Alexander his son sing once at a feast to the wonder of the best musicians there: "Art thou not ashamed," said he to him, "to sing so well?" And to the same Philip a musician, with whom he was disputing about some things concerning his art: "Heaven forbid, sir," said he, "that so great a misfortune should ever befall you as to understand these things better than I." A king should be able to answer as Iphicrates did the orator, who pressed upon him in his invective after this manner: "And what art thou that thou bravest it at this rate? art thou a man at arms, art thou an archer, art thou a pikeman?"—"I am none of all this; but I know how to command all these." And Antisthenes took it for an argument of little value in Ismenias that he was commended for playing excellently well upon a flute.

I know very well, that when I hear any one dwell upon the language of my essays, I had rather a great deal he would say nothing: 'tis not so much to elevate the style as to depress the sense, and so much the more offensively as they do it obliquely; and yet I am much deceived if many other writers deliver more worth noting as to the matter, and, how well or ill soever, if any other writer has sown things much more materials or at all events more downright, upon his paper than myself. To bring the more in, I only muster up the heads; should I annex the sequel, I should trebly multiply the volume. And how many stories have I scattered up and down in this book that I only touch upon, which, should any one more curiously search into, they would find matter enough to produce infinite essays. Neither those stories nor my quotations always serve simply for example, authority, or ornament; I do not only regard them for the use I make of them: they carry sometimes besides what I apply them to, the seed of a more rich and a

bolder matter, and sometimes, collaterally, a more delicate sound both to myself who will say no more about it in this place, and to others who shall be of my humour.

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But returning to the speaking virtue: I find no great choice betwixt not knowing to speak anything but ill, and not knowing to speak anything but well.

“Non est ornamentum virile concimitas.”

["A carefully arranged dress is no manly ornament."
—Seneca, Ep., 115.]

The sages tell us that, as to what concerns knowledge, 'tis nothing but philosophy; and as to what concerns effects, nothing but virtue, which is generally proper to all degrees and to all orders.

There is something like this in these two other philosophers, for they also promise eternity to the letters they write to their friends; but 'tis after another manner, and by accommodating themselves, for a good end, to the vanity of another; for they write to them that if the concern of making themselves known to future ages, and the thirst of glory, do yet detain them in the management of public affairs, and make them fear the solitude and retirement to which they would persuade them, let them never trouble themselves more about it, forasmuch as they shall have credit enough with posterity to ensure them that were there nothing else but the letters thus written to them, those letters will render their names as known and famous as their own public actions could do. And besides this difference, these are not idle and empty letters, that contain nothing but a fine jingle of well-chosen words and delicate couched phrases, but rather replete and abounding with grand discourses of reason, by which a man may render himself not more eloquent, but more wise, and that instruct us not to speak, but to do well. Away with that eloquence that enchants us with itself, and not with actual things! unless you will allow that of Cicero to be of so supreme a perfection as to form a complete body of itself.

I shall farther add one story we read of him to this purpose, wherein his nature will much more manifestly be laid open to us. He was to make an oration in public, and found himself a little straitened for time to make himself ready at his ease; when Eros, one of his slaves, brought him word that the audience was deferred till the next day, at which he was so ravished with joy that he enfranchised him for the good news.

Upon this subject of letters, I will add this more to what has been already said, that it is a kind of writing wherein my friends think I can do something; and I am willing to confess I should rather have chosen to publish my whimsies that way than any other, had I had to whom to write; but I wanted such a settled intercourse, as I once had, to attract me to it, to raise my fancy, and to support me. For to traffic with the wind, as some others have done, and to forge vain names to direct my letters to, in a serious subject, I could never do it but in a dream, being a sworn enemy to all manner of falsification. I should have been more diligent and more confident had I had a judicious and indulgent friend whom to address,

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than thus to expose myself to the various judgments of a whole people, and I am deceived if I had not succeeded better. I have naturally a humorous and familiar style; but it is a style of my own, not proper for public business, but, like the language I speak, too compact, irregular, abrupt, and singular; and as to letters of ceremony that have no other substance than a fine contexture of courteous words, I am wholly to seek. I have neither faculty nor relish for those tedious tenders of service and affection; I believe little in them from others, and I should not forgive myself should I say to others more than I myself believe. 'Tis, doubtless, very remote from the present practice; for there never was so abject and servile prostitution of offers: life, soul, devotion, adoration, vassal, slave, and I cannot tell what, as now; all which expressions are so commonly and so indifferently posted to and fro by every one and to every one, that when they would profess a greater and more respectful inclination upon more just occasions, they have not wherewithal to express it. I mortally hate all air of flattery, which is the cause that I naturally fall into a shy, rough, and crude way of speaking, that, to such as do not know me, may seem a little to relish of disdain. I honour those most to whom I show the least honour, and where my soul moves with the greatest cheerfulness, I easily forget the ceremonies of look and gesture, and offer myself faintly and bluntly to them to whom I am the most devoted: methinks they should read it in my heart, and that the expression of my words does but injure the love I have conceived within. To welcome, take leave, give thanks, accost, offer my service, and such verbal formalities as the ceremonious laws of our modern civility enjoin, I know no man so stupidly unprovided of language as myself; and I have never been employed in writing letters of favour and recommendation, that he, in whose behalf it was written, did not think my mediation cold and imperfect. The Italians are great printers of letters; I do believe I have at least an hundred several volumes of them; of all which those of Annibale Caro seem to me to be the best. If all the paper I have scribbled to the ladies at the time when my hand was really prompted by my passion, were now in being, there might, peradventure, be found a page worthy to be communicated to our young innamoratos, that are besotted with that fury. I always write my letters post-haste—so precipitately, that though I write intolerably ill, I rather choose to do it myself, than to employ another; for I can find none able to follow me: and I never transcribe any. I have accustomed the great ones who know me to endure my blots and dashes, and upon paper without fold or margin. Those that cost me the most pains, are the worst; when I once begin to draw it in by head and shoulders, 'tis a sign that I am not there. I fall too without premeditation or design; the first word begets the

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second, and so to the end of the chapter. The letters of this age consist more in fine edges and prefaces than in matter. Just as I had rather write two letters than close and fold up one, and always assign that employment to some other, so, when the real business of my letter is dispatched, I would with all my heart transfer it to another hand to add those long harangues, offers, and prayers, that we place at the bottom, and should be glad that some new custom would discharge us of that trouble; as also of superscribing them with a long legend of qualities and titles, which for fear of mistakes, I have often not written at all, and especially to men of the long robe and finance; there are so many new offices, such a dispensation and ordering of titles of honour, that 'tis hard to set them forth aright yet, being so dearly bought, they are neither to be altered nor forgotten without offence. I find it equally in bad taste to encumber the fronts and inscriptions of the books we commit to the press with such.

CHAPTER XL

That the relish for good and evil depends in great measure upon the opinion we have of them

Men (says an ancient Greek sentence)—[Manual of Epictetus, c. 10.]— are tormented with the opinions they have of things and not by the things themselves. It were a great victory obtained for the relief of our miserable human condition, could this proposition be established for certain and true throughout. For if evils have no admission into us but by the judgment we ourselves make of them, it should seem that it is, then, in our own power to despise them or to turn them to good. If things surrender themselves to our mercy, why do we not convert and accommodate them to our advantage? If what we call evil and torment is neither evil nor torment of itself, but only that our fancy gives it that quality, it is in us to change it, and it being in our own choice, if there be no constraint upon us, we must certainly be very strange fools to take arms for that side which is most offensive to us, and to give sickness, want, and contempt a bitter and nauseous taste, if it be in our power to give them a pleasant relish, and if, fortune simply providing the matter, 'tis for us to give it the form. Now, that what we call evil is not so of itself, or at least to that degree that we make it, and that it depends upon us to give it another taste and complexion (for all comes to one), let us examine how that can be maintained.

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If the original being of those things we fear had power to lodge itself in us by its own authority, it would then lodge itself alike, and in like manner, in all; for men are all of the same kind, and saving in greater and less proportions, are all provided with the same utensils and instruments to conceive and to judge; but the diversity of opinions we have of those things clearly evidences that they only enter us by composition; one person, peradventure, admits them in their true being, but a thousand others give them a new and contrary being in them. We hold death, poverty, and pain for our principal enemies; now, this death, which some repute the most dreadful of all dreadful things, who does not know that others call it the only secure harbour from the storms and tempests of life, the sovereign good of nature, the sole support of liberty, and the common and prompt remedy of all evils? And as the one expect it with fear and trembling, the others support it with greater ease than life. That one complains of its facility:

“Mors! utinam pavidos vitae subducere nolles.
Sed virtus to sola daret!”

[“O death! wouldst that thou might spare the coward, but that
valour alone should pay thee tribute.”—Lucan, iv. 580.]

Now, let us leave these boastful courages. Theodorus answered Lysimachus, who threatened to kill him, “Thou wilt do a brave feat,” said he, “to attain the force of a cantharides.” The majority of philosophers are observed to have either purposely anticipated, or hastened and assisted their own death. How many ordinary people do we see led to execution, and that not to a simple death, but mixed with shame and sometimes with grievous torments, appear with such assurance, whether through firm courage or natural simplicity, that a man can discover no change from their ordinary condition; settling their domestic affairs, commending themselves to their friends, singing, preaching, and addressing the people, nay, sometimes sallying into jests, and drinking to their companions, quite as well as Socrates?

One that they were leading to the gallows told them they must not take him through such a street, lest a merchant who lived there should arrest him by the way for an old debt. Another told the hangman he must not touch his neck for fear of making him laugh, he was so ticklish. Another answered his confessor, who promised him he should that day sup with our Lord, “Do you go then,” said he, “in my room [place]; for I for my part keep fast to-day.” Another having called for drink, and the hangman having drunk first, said he would not drink after him, for fear of catching some evil disease. Everybody has heard the tale of the Picard, to whom, being upon the ladder, they presented a common wench, telling him (as our law does some times permit) that if he would marry her they would save his life; he, having a while considered her and perceiving that she halted: “Come, tie

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up, tie up," said he, "she limps." And they tell another story of the same kind of a fellow in Denmark, who being condemned to lose his head, and the like condition being proposed to him upon the scaffold, refused it, by reason the girl they offered him had hollow cheeks and too sharp a nose. A servant at Toulouse being accused of heresy, for the sum of his belief referred himself to that of his master, a young student, prisoner with him, choosing rather to die than suffer himself to be persuaded that his master could err. We read that of the inhabitants of Arras, when Louis XI. took that city, a great many let themselves be hanged rather than they would say, "God save the King." And amongst that mean-souled race of men, the buffoons, there have been some who would not leave their fooling at the very moment of death. One that the hang man was turning off the ladder cried: Launch the galley," an ordinary saying of his. Another, whom at the point of death his friends had laid upon a bed of straw before the fire, the physician asking him where his pain lay: "Betwixt the bench and the fire," said he, and the priest, to give him extreme unction, groping for his feet which his pain had made him pull up to him: "You will find them," said he, "at the end of my legs." To one who being present exhorted him to recommend himself to God: "Why, who goes thither?" said he; and the other replying: "It will presently be yourself, if it be His good pleasure." "Shall I be sure to be there by to-morrow night?" said he. "Do, but recommend yourself to Him," said the other, "and you will soon be there." "I were best then," said he, "to carry my recommendations myself."

In the kingdom of Narsingah to this day the wives of their priests are buried alive with the bodies of their husbands; all other wives are burnt at their husbands' funerals, which they not only firmly but cheerfully undergo. At the death of their king, his wives and concubines, his favourites, all his officers, and domestic servants, who make up a whole people, present themselves so gaily to the fire where his body is burnt, that they seem to take it for a singular honour to accompany their master in death. During our late wars of Milan, where there happened so many takings and retakings of towns, the people, impatient of so many changes of fortune, took such a resolution to die, that I have heard my father say he there saw a list taken of five-and-twenty masters of families who made themselves away in one week's time: an incident somewhat resembling that of the Xanthians, who being besieged by Brutus, fell—men, women, and children—into such a furious appetite of dying, that nothing can be done to evade death which they did not to avoid life; insomuch that Brutus had much difficulty in saving a very small number.—["Only fifty were saved."—Plutarch, Life of Brutus, c. 8.]

Every opinion is of force enough to cause itself to be espoused at the expense of life. The first article of that valiant oath that Greece took and observed in the Median war, was that every one should sooner exchange life for death, than their own laws for those of Persia. What a world of people do we see in the wars betwixt the Turks and the Greeks, rather embrace a cruel death than uncircumcise themselves to admit of baptism? An example of which no sort of religion is incapable.

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The kings of Castile having banished the Jews out of their dominions, John, King of Portugal, in consideration of eight crowns a head, sold them a retreat into his for a certain limited time, upon condition that the time fixed coming to expire they should begone, and he to furnish them with shipping to transport them into Africa. The day comes, which once lapsed they were given to understand that such as were afterward found in the kingdom should remain slaves; vessels were very slenderly provided; and those who embarked in them were rudely and villainously used by the passengers, who, besides other indignities, kept them cruising upon the sea, one while forwards and another backwards, till they had spent all their provisions, and were constrained to buy of them at so dear a rate and so long withal, that they set them not on shore till they were all stripped to the very shirts. The news of this inhuman usage being brought to those who remained behind, the greater part of them resolved upon slavery and some made a show of changing religion. Emmanuel, the successor of John, being come to the crown, first set them at liberty, and afterwards altering his mind, ordered them to depart his country, assigning three ports for their passage. He hoped, says Bishop Osorius, no contemptible Latin historian of these later times, that the favour of the liberty he had given them having failed of converting them to Christianity, yet the difficulty of committing themselves to the mercy of the mariners and of abandoning a country they were now habituated to and were grown very rich in, to go and expose themselves in strange and unknown regions, would certainly do it. But finding himself deceived in his expectation, and that they were all resolved upon the voyage, he cut off two of the three ports he had promised them, to the end that the length and incommmodity of the passage might reduce some, or that he might have opportunity, by crowding them all into one place, the more conveniently to execute what he had designed, which was to force all the children under fourteen years of age from the arms of their fathers and mothers, to transport them from their sight and conversation, into a place where they might be instructed and brought up in our religion. He says that this produced a most horrid spectacle the natural affection betwixt the parents and their children, and moreover their zeal to their ancient belief, contending against this violent decree, fathers and mothers were commonly seen making themselves away, and by a yet much more rigorous example, precipitating out of love and compassion their young children into wells and pits, to avoid the severity of this law. As to the remainder of them, the time that had been prefixed being expired, for want of means to transport them they again returned into slavery. Some also turned Christians, upon whose faith, as also that of their posterity, even to this day, which is a hundred years since, few Portuguese can yet rely; though custom and length of time are much more powerful counsellors in such changes than all other constraints whatever. In the town of Castelnaudari, fifty heretic Albigeois at one time suffered themselves to be burned alive in one fire rather than they would renounce their opinions.

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“Quoties non modo ductores nostri, sed universi etiam exercitus, ad non dubiam mortem concurrerunt?”

[“How often have not only our leaders, but whole armies, run to a certain and manifest death.”—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, i. 37.]

I have seen an intimate friend of mine run headlong upon death with a real affection, and that was rooted in his heart by divers plausible arguments which he would never permit me to dispossess him of, and upon the first honourable occasion that offered itself to him, precipitate himself into it, without any manner of visible reason, with an obstinate and ardent desire of dying. We have several examples in our own times of persons, even young children, who for fear of some little inconvenience have despatched themselves. And what shall we not fear, says one of the ancients—[Seneca, *Ep.*, 70.]—to this purpose, if we dread that which cowardice itself has chosen for its refuge?

Should I here produce a long catalogue of those, of all sexes and conditions and sects, even in the most happy ages, who have either with great constancy looked death in the face, or voluntarily sought it, and sought it not only to avoid the evils of this life, but some purely to avoid the satiety of living, and others for the hope of a better condition elsewhere, I should never have done. Nay, the number is so infinite that in truth I should have a better bargain on't to reckon up those who have feared it. This one therefore shall serve for all: Pyrrho the philosopher being one day in a boat in a very great tempest, shewed to those he saw the most affrighted about him, and encouraged them, by the example of a hog that was there, nothing at all concerned at the storm. Shall we then dare to say that this advantage of reason, of which we so much boast, and upon the account of which we think ourselves masters and emperors over the rest of all creation, was given us for a torment? To what end serves the knowledge of things if it renders us more unmanly? if we thereby lose the tranquillity and repose we should enjoy without it? and if it put us into a worse condition than Pyrrho's hog? Shall we employ the understanding that was conferred upon us for our greatest good to our own ruin; setting ourselves against the design of nature and the universal order of things, which intend that every one should make use of the faculties, members, and means he has to his own best advantage?

But it may, peradventure, be objected against me: Your rule is true enough as to what concerns death; but what will you say of indigence? What will you, moreover, say of pain, which Aristippus, Hieronimus, and most of the sages have reputed the worst of evils; and those who have denied it by word of mouth have, however, confessed it in effect? Posidonius being extremely tormented with a sharp and painful disease, Pompeius came to visit him, excusing himself that he had taken so unseasonable a time to come to hear him

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discourse of philosophy. “The gods forbid,” said Posidonius to him, “that pain should ever have the power to hinder me from talking,” and thereupon fell immediately upon a discourse of the contempt of pain : but, in the meantime, his own infirmity was playing his part, and plagued him to purpose; to which he cried out, “Thou mayest work thy will, pain, and torment me with all the power thou hast, but thou shalt never make me say that thou art an evil.” This story that they make such a clutter withal, what has it to do, I fain would know, with the contempt of pain? He only fights it with words, and in the meantime, if the shootings and dolours he felt did not move him, why did he interrupt his discourse? Why did he fancy he did so great a thing in forbearing to confess it an evil? All does not here consist in the imagination; our fancies may work upon other things: but here is the certain science that is playing its part, of which our senses themselves are judges:

“Qui nisi sunt veri, ratio quoque falsa sit omnis.”

["Which, if they be not true, all reasoning may also be false.
—“Lucretius, iv. 486.]

Shall we persuade our skins that the jerks of a whip agreeably tickle us, or our taste that a potion of aloes is vin de Graves? Pyrrho's hog is here in the same predicament with us; he is not afraid of death, 'tis true, but if you beat him he will cry out to some purpose. Shall we force the general law of nature, which in every living creature under heaven is seen to tremble under pain? The very trees seem to groan under the blows they receive. Death is only felt by reason, forasmuch as it is the motion of an instant;

“Aut fuit, aut veniet; nihil est praesentis in illa.”

["Death has been, or will come: there is nothing of the present in it.”—Estienne de la Boetie, Satires.]

“Morsque minus poenae, quam mora mortis, habet;”

["The delay of death is more painful than death itself.”
—Ovid, Ep. Ariadne to Theseus, v. 42.]

a thousand beasts, a thousand men, are sooner dead than threatened. That also which we principally pretend to fear in death is pain, its ordinary forerunner: yet, if we may believe a holy father:

“Malam mortem non facit, nisi quod sequitur mortem.”

["That which follows death makes death bad.”
—St. Augustin, De Civit. Dei, i. ii.]

And I should yet say, more probably, that neither that which goes before nor that which follows after is at all of the appurtenances of death.

We excuse ourselves falsely: and I find by experience that it is rather the impatience of the imagination of death that makes us impatient of pain, and that we find it doubly grievous as it threatens us with death. But reason accusing our cowardice for fearing a thing so sudden, so inevitable, and so insensible, we take the other as the more excusable pretence. All ills that carry no other danger along with them but simply the evils themselves, we treat as things of no danger: the toothache or the gout, painful as they are, yet being not reputed mortal, who reckons them in the catalogue of diseases?

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But let us presuppose that in death we principally regard the pain; as also there is nothing to be feared in poverty but the miseries it brings along with it of thirst, hunger, cold, heat, watching, and the other inconveniences it makes us suffer, still we have nothing to do with anything but pain. I will grant, and very willingly, that it is the worst incident of our being (for I am the man upon earth who the most hates and avoids it, considering that hitherto, I thank God, I have had so little traffic with it), but still it is in us, if not to annihilate, at least to lessen it by patience; and though the body and the reason should mutiny, to maintain the soul, nevertheless, in good condition. Were it not so, who had ever given reputation to virtue; valour, force, magnanimity, and resolution? where were their parts to be played if there were no pain to be defied?

“Avida est periculi virtus.”

[“Courage is greedy of danger.”—Seneca, *De Providentia*, c. 4]

Were there no lying upon the hard ground, no enduring, armed at all points, the meridional heats, no feeding upon the flesh of horses and asses, no seeing a man’s self hacked and hewed to pieces, no suffering a bullet to be pulled out from amongst the shattered bones, no sewing up, cauterising and searching of wounds, by what means were the advantage we covet to have over the vulgar to be acquired? ’Tis far from flying evil and pain, what the sages say, that of actions equally good, a man should most covet to perform that wherein there is greater labour and pain.

“Non est enim hilaritate, nec lascivia, nec risu, aut joco comite levitatis, sed saepe etiam tristes firmitate et constantia sunt beati.”

[“For men are not only happy by mirth and wantonness, by laughter and jesting, the companion of levity, but oftentimes the serious sort reap felicity from their firmness and constancy.” —Cicero, *De Finib.* ii. 10.]

And for this reason it has ever been impossible to persuade our forefathers but that the victories obtained by dint of force and the hazard of war were not more honourable than those performed in great security by stratagem or practice:

“Laetius est, quoties magno sibi constat honestum.”

[“A good deed is all the more a satisfaction by how much the more it has cost us”—Lucan, ix. 404.]

Besides, this ought to be our comfort, that naturally, if the pain be violent, ’tis but short; and if long, nothing violent:

“Si gravis, brevis;
Si longus, levis.”

Thou wilt not feel it long if thou feelest it too much; it will either put an end to itself or to thee; it comes to the same thing; if thou canst not support it, it will export thee:

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["Remember that the greatest pains are terminated by death; that slighter pains have long intermissions of repose, and that we are masters of the more moderate sort: so that, if they be tolerable, we bear them; if not, we can go out of life, as from a theatre, when it does not please us"—Cicero, *De Finib.* i. 15.]

That which makes us suffer pain with so much impatience is the not being accustomed to repose our chiefest contentment in the soul; that we do not enough rely upon her who is the sole and sovereign mistress of our condition. The body, saving in the greater or less proportion, has but one and the same bent and bias; whereas the soul is variable into all sorts of forms; and subject to herself and to her own empire, all things whatsoever, both the senses of the body and all other accidents: and therefore it is that we ought to study her, to inquire into her, and to rouse up all her powerful faculties. There is neither reason, force, nor prescription that can anything prevail against her inclination and choice. Of so many thousands of biases that she has at her disposal, let us give her one proper to our repose and conversation, and then we shall not only be sheltered and secured from all manner of injury and offence, but moreover gratified and obliged, if she will, with evils and offences. She makes her profit indifferently of all things; error, dreams, serve her to good use, as loyal matter to lodge us in safety and contentment. 'Tis plain enough to be seen that 'tis the sharpness of our mind that gives the edge to our pains and pleasures: beasts that have no such thing, leave to their bodies their own free and natural sentiments, and consequently in every kind very near the same, as appears by the resembling application of their motions. If we would not disturb in our members the jurisdiction that appertains to them in this, 'tis to be believed it would be the better for us, and that nature has given them a just and moderate temper both to pleasure and pain; neither can it fail of being just, being equal and common. But seeing we have enfranchised ourselves from her rules to give ourselves up to the rambling liberty of our own fancies, let us at least help to incline them to the most agreeable side. Plato fears our too vehemently engaging ourselves with pain and pleasure, forasmuch as these too much knit and ally the soul to the body; whereas I rather, quite contrary, by reason it too much separates and disunites them. As an enemy is made more fierce by our flight, so pain grows proud to see us truckle under her. She will surrender upon much better terms to them who make head against her: a man must oppose and stoutly set himself against her. In retiring and giving ground, we invite and pull upon ourselves the ruin that threatens us. As the body is more firm in an encounter, the more stiffly and obstinately it applies itself to it, so is it with the soul.

But let us come to examples, which are the proper game of folks of such feeble force as myself; where we shall find that it is with pain as with stones, that receive a brighter or a duller lustre according to the foil they are set in, and that it has no more room in us than we are pleased to allow it:

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“Tantum doluerunt, quantum doloribus se inseruerunt.”

["They suffered so much the more, by how much more they gave way to suffering."—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, i. 10.]

We are more sensible of one little touch of a surgeon's lancet than of twenty wounds with a sword in the heat of fight. The pains of childbearing, said by the physicians and by God himself to be great, and which we pass through with so many ceremonies—there are whole nations that make nothing of them. I set aside the Lacedaemonian women, but what else do you find in the Swiss among our foot-soldiers, if not that, as they trot after their husbands, you see them to-day carry the child at their necks that they carried yesterday in their bellies? The counterfeit Egyptians we have amongst us go themselves to wash theirs, so soon as they come into the world, and bathe in the first river they meet. Besides so many wenches as daily drop their children by stealth, as they conceived them, that fair and noble wife of Sabinus, a patrician of Rome, for another's interest, endured alone, without help, without crying out, or so much as a groan, the bearing of twins.—[Plutarch, *On Love*, c. 34.]—A poor simple boy of Lacedaemon having stolen a fox (for they more fear the shame of stupidity in stealing than we do the punishment of the knavery), and having got it under his coat, rather endured the tearing out of his bowels than he would discover his theft. And another offering incense at a sacrifice, suffered himself to be burned to the bone by a coal that fell into his sleeve, rather than disturb the ceremony. And there have been a great number, for a sole trial of virtue, following their institutions, who have at seven years old endured to be whipped to death without changing their countenance. And Cicero has seen them fight in parties, with fists, feet, and teeth, till they have fainted and sunk down, rather than confess themselves overcome:

["Custom could never conquer nature; she is ever invincible; but we have infected the mind with shadows, delights, negligence, sloth; we have grown effeminate through opinions and corrupt morality." —Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, v. 27.]

Every one knows the story of Scaevola, that having slipped into the enemy's camp to kill their general, and having missed his blow, to repair his fault, by a more strange invention and to deliver his country, he boldly confessed to Porsenna, who was the king he had a purpose to kill, not only his design, but moreover added that there were then in the camp a great number of Romans, his accomplices in the enterprise, as good men as he; and to show what a one he himself was, having caused a pan of burning coals to be brought, he saw and endured his arm to broil and roast, till the king himself, conceiving horror at the sight, commanded the pan to be taken away. What would you say of him that would not vouchsafe to respite his reading

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in a book whilst he was under incision? And of the other that persisted to mock and laugh in contempt of the pains inflicted upon him; so that the provoked cruelty of the executioners that had him in handling, and all the inventions of tortures redoubled upon him, one after another, spent in vain, gave him the bucklers? But he was a philosopher. But what! a gladiator of Caesar's endured, laughing all the while, his wounds to be searched, lanced, and laid open:

["What ordinary gladiator ever groaned? Which of them ever changed countenance? Which of them not only stood or fell indecorously? Which, when he had fallen and was commanded to receive the stroke of the sword, contracted his neck."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, ii. 17.]

Let us bring in the women too. Who has not heard at Paris of her that caused her face to be flayed only for the fresher complexion of a new skin? There are who have drawn good and sound teeth to make their voices more soft and sweet, or to place the other teeth in better order. How many examples of the contempt of pain have we in that sex? What can they not do, what do they fear to do, for never so little hope of an addition to their beauty?

"Vallere queis cura est albos a stirpe capillos,
Et faciem, dempta pelle, referre novam."

["Who carefully pluck out their grey hairs by the roots, and renew their faces by peeling off the old skin."—Tibullus, i. 8, 45.]

I have seen some of them swallow sand, ashes, and do their utmost to destroy their stomachs to get pale complexions. To make a fine Spanish body, what racks will they not endure of girding and bracing, till they have notches in their sides cut into the very quick, and sometimes to death?

It is an ordinary thing with several nations at this day to wound themselves in good earnest to gain credit to what they profess; of which our king, relates notable examples of what he has seen in Poland and done towards himself.—[Henry *iii.*]—But besides this, which I know to have been imitated by some in France, when I came from that famous assembly of the Estates at Blois, I had a little before seen a maid in Picardy, who to manifest the ardour of her promises, as also her constancy, give herself, with a bodkin she wore in her hair, four or five good lusty stabs in the arm, till the blood gushed out to some purpose. The Turks give themselves great scars in honour of their mistresses, and to the end they may the longer remain, they presently clap fire to the wound, where they hold it an incredible time to stop the blood and form the cicatrice; people that have been eyewitnesses of it have both written and sworn it to me. But for ten aspers—[A Turkish coin worth about a penny]—there are there every day fellows to be found that will give themselves a good deep slash in the arms or thighs. I am willing, however, to have the testimonies nearest

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to us when we have most need of them; for Christendom furnishes us with enough. After the example of our blessed Guide there have been many who have crucified themselves. We learn by testimony very worthy of belief, that King St. Louis wore a hair-shirt till in his old age his confessor gave him a dispensation to leave it off; and that every Friday he caused his shoulders to be drubbed by his priest with five small chains of iron which were always carried about amongst his night accoutrements for that purpose.

William, our last Duke of Guienne, the father of that Eleanor who transmitted that duchy to the houses of France and England, continually for the last ten or twelve years of his life wore a suit of armour under a religious habit by way of penance. Foulke, Count of Anjou, went as far as Jerusalem, there to cause himself to be whipped by two of his servants, with a rope about his neck, before the sepulchre of our Lord. But do we not, moreover, every Good Friday, in various places, see great numbers of men and women beat and whip themselves till they lacerate and cut the flesh to the very bones? I have often seen it, and 'tis without any enchantment; and it was said there were some amongst them (for they go disguised) who for money undertook by this means to save harmless the religion of others, by a contempt of pain, so much the greater, as the incentives of devotion are more effectual than those of avarice. Q. Maximus buried his son when he was a consul, and M. Cato his when praetor elect, and L. Paulus both his, within a few days one after another, with such a countenance as expressed no manner of grief. I said once merrily of a certain person, that he had disappointed the divine justice; for the violent death of three grown-up children of his being one day sent him, for a severe scourge, as it is to be supposed, he was so far from being afflicted at the accident, that he rather took it for a particular grace and favour of heaven. I do not follow these monstrous humours, though I lost two or three at nurse, if not without grief, at least without repining, and yet there is hardly any accident that pierces nearer to the quick. I see a great many other occasions of sorrow, that should they happen to me I should hardly feel; and have despised some, when they have befallen me, to which the world has given so terrible a figure that I should blush to boast of my constancy:

“Ex quo intelligitur, non in natura, sed in opinione,
esse aegritudinem.”

[“By which one may understand that grief is not in nature, but in opinion.”—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., iii. 28.]

Opinion is a powerful party, bold, and without measure. Who ever so greedily hunted after security and repose as Alexander and Caesar did after disturbance and difficulties? Teres, the father of Sitalces, was wont to say that “when he had no wars, he fancied there was no difference betwixt him and his groom.” Cato the consul, to secure

some cities of Spain from revolt, only interdicting the inhabitants from wearing arms, a great many killed themselves:

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“Ferox gens, nullam vitam rati sine armis esse.”

["A fierce people, who thought there was no life without war."
—Livy, xxxiv. 17.]

How many do we know who have forsaken the calm and sweetness of a quiet life at home amongst their acquaintance, to seek out the horror of uninhabitable deserts; and having precipitated themselves into so abject a condition as to become the scorn and contempt of the world, have hugged themselves with the conceit, even to affectation. Cardinal Borromeo, who died lately at Milan, amidst all the jollity that the air of Italy, his youth, birth, and great riches, invited him to, kept himself in so austere a way of living, that the same robe he wore in summer served him for winter too; he had only straw for his bed, and his hours of leisure from affairs he continually spent in study upon his knees, having a little bread and a glass of water set by his book, which was all the provision of his repast, and all the time he spent in eating.

I know some who consentingly have acquired both profit and advancement from cuckoldom, of which the bare name only affrights so many people.

If the sight be not the most necessary of all our senses, 'tis at least the most pleasant; but the most pleasant and most useful of all our members seem to be those of generation; and yet a great many have conceived a mortal hatred against them only for this, that they were too pleasant, and have deprived themselves of them only for their value: as much thought he of his eyes that put them out. The generality and more solid sort of men look upon abundance of children as a great blessing; I, and some others, think it as great a benefit to be without them. And when you ask Thales why he does not marry, he tells you, because he has no mind to leave any posterity behind him.

That our opinion gives the value to things is very manifest in the great number of those which we do, not so much prizing them, as ourselves, and never considering either their virtues or their use, but only how dear they cost us, as though that were a part of their substance; and we only repute for value in them, not what they bring to us, but what we add to them. By which I understand that we are great economisers of our expense: as it weighs, it serves for so much as it weighs. Our opinion will never suffer it to want of its value: the price gives value to the diamond; difficulty to virtue; suffering to devotion; and griping to physic. A certain person, to be poor, threw his crowns into the same sea to which so many come, in all parts of the world, to fish for riches. Epicurus says that to be rich is no relief, but only an alteration, of affairs. In truth, it is not want, but rather abundance, that creates avarice. I will deliver my own experience concerning this affair.

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I have since my emergence from childhood lived in three sorts of conditions. The first, which continued for some twenty years, I passed over without any other means but what were casual and depending upon the allowance and assistance of others, without stint, but without certain revenue. I then spent my money so much the more cheerfully, and with so much the less care how it went, as it wholly depended upon my overconfidence of fortune. I never lived more at my ease; I never had the repulse of finding the purse of any of my friends shut against me, having enjoined myself this necessity above all other necessities whatever, by no means to fail of payment at the appointed time, which also they have a thousand times respited, seeing how careful I was to satisfy them; so that I practised at once a thrifty, and withal a kind of alluring, honesty. I naturally feel a kind of pleasure in paying, as if I eased my shoulders of a troublesome weight and freed myself from an image of slavery; as also that I find a ravishing kind of satisfaction in pleasing another and doing a just action. I except payments where the trouble of bargaining and reckoning is required; and in such cases; where I can meet with nobody to ease me of that charge, I delay them, how scandalously and injuriously soever, all I possibly can, for fear of the wranglings for which both my humour and way of speaking are so totally improper and unfit. There is nothing I hate so much as driving a bargain; 'tis a mere traffic of cozenage and impudence, where, after an hour's cheapening and hesitating, both parties abandon their word and oath for five sols' abatement. Yet I always borrowed at great disadvantage; for, wanting the confidence to speak to the person myself, I committed my request to the persuasion of a letter, which usually is no very successful advocate, and is of very great advantage to him who has a mind to deny. I, in those days, more jocundly and freely referred the conduct of my affairs to the stars, than I have since done to my own providence and judgment. Most good managers look upon it as a horrible thing to live always thus in uncertainty, and do not consider, in the first place, that the greatest part of the world live so: how many worthy men have wholly abandoned their own certainties, and yet daily do it, to the winds, to trust to the inconstant favour of princes and of fortune? Caesar ran above a million of gold, more than he was worth, in debt to become Caesar; and how many merchants have begun their traffic by the sale of their farms, which they sent into the Indies,

"Tot per impotentia freta."

["Through so many ungovernable seas."—Catullus, iv. 18.]

In so great a siccity of devotion as we see in these days, we have a thousand and a thousand colleges that pass it over commodiously enough, expecting every day their dinner from the liberality of Heaven. Secondly, they do not take notice that this certitude upon which they so much rely is not much less uncertain and hazardous than hazard itself. I see misery as near beyond two thousand crowns a year as if it stood close by me; for besides that it is in the power of chance to make a hundred breaches to poverty through the greatest strength of our riches —there being very often no mean betwixt the highest and the lowest fortune:

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“Fortuna vitrea est: turn, quum splendet, frangitur,”

["Fortune is glass: in its greatest brightness it breaks."
—Ex Mim. P. Syrus.]

and to turn all our barricadoes and bulwarks topsy-turvy, I find that, by divers causes, indigence is as frequently seen to inhabit with those who have estates as with those that have none; and that, peradventure, it is then far less grievous when alone than when accompanied with riches. These flow more from good management than from revenue;

“Faber est suae quisque fortunae”

["Every one is the maker of his own fortune."
—Sallust, De Repub. Ord., i. I.]

and an uneasy, necessitous, busy, rich man seems to me more miserable than he that is simply poor.

“In divitiis mopes, quod genus egestatis gravissimum est.”

["Poor in the midst of riches, which is the sorest kind of poverty."
—Seneca, Ep., 74.]

The greatest and most wealthy princes are by poverty and want driven to the most extreme necessity; for can there be any more extreme than to become tyrants and unjust usurpers of their subjects' goods and estates?

My second condition of life was to have money of my own, wherein I so ordered the matter that I had soon laid up a very notable sum out of a mean fortune, considering with myself that that only was to be reputed having which a man reserves from his ordinary expense, and that a man cannot absolutely rely upon revenue he hopes to receive, how clear soever the hope may be. For what, said I, if I should be surprised by such or such an accident? And after such-like vain and vicious imaginations, would very learnedly, by this hoarding of money, provide against all inconveniences; and could, moreover, answer such as objected to me that the number of these was too infinite, that if I could not lay up for all, I could, however, do it at least for some and for many. Yet was not this done without a great deal of solicitude and anxiety of mind; I kept it very close, and though I dare talk so boldly of myself, never spoke of my money, but falsely, as others do, who being rich, pretend to be poor, and being poor, pretend to be rich, dispensing their consciences from ever telling sincerely what they have: a ridiculous and shameful prudence. Was I going a journey? Methought I was never enough provided: and the more I loaded myself with money, the more also was I loaded with fear, one while of the danger of the roads, another of the fidelity of him who had the charge of my baggage, of whom, as some others that I know, I was never sufficiently



secure if I had him not always in my eye. If I chanced to leave my cash-box behind me, O, what strange suspicions and anxiety of mind did I enter into, and, which was worse, without daring to acquaint anybody with it. My mind was eternally taken up with such things as these, so that, all things

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considered, there is more trouble in keeping money than in getting it. And if I did not altogether so much as I say, or was not really so scandalously solicitous of my money as I have made myself out to be, yet it cost me something at least to restrain myself from being so. I reaped little or no advantage by what I had, and my expenses seemed nothing less to me for having the more to spend; for, as Bion said, the hairy men are as angry as the bald to be pulled; and after you are once accustomed to it and have once set your heart upon your heap, it is no more at your service; you cannot find in your heart to break it: 'tis a building that you will fancy must of necessity all tumble down to ruin if you stir but the least pebble; necessity must first take you by the throat before you can prevail upon yourself to touch it; and I would sooner have pawned anything I had, or sold a horse, and with much less constraint upon myself, than have made the least breach in that beloved purse I had so carefully laid by. But the danger was that a man cannot easily prescribe certain limits to this desire (they are hard to find in things that a man conceives to be good), and to stint this good husbandry so that it may not degenerate into avarice: men still are intent upon adding to the heap and increasing the stock from sum to sum, till at last they vilely deprive themselves of the enjoyment of their own proper goods, and throw all into reserve, without making any use of them at all. According to this rule, they are the richest people in the world who are set to guard the walls and gates of a wealthy city. All moneyed men I conclude to be covetous. Plato places corporal or human goods in this order: health, beauty, strength, riches; and riches, says he, are not blind, but very clear-sighted, when illuminated by prudence. Dionysius the son did a very handsome act upon this subject; he was informed that one of the Syracusans had hid a treasure in the earth, and thereupon sent to the man to bring it to him, which he accordingly did, privately reserving a small part of it only to himself, with which he went to another city, where being cured of his appetite of hoarding, he began to live at a more liberal rate; which Dionysius hearing, caused the rest of his treasure to be restored to him, saying, that since he had learned to use it, he very willingly returned it back to him.

I continued some years in this hoarding humour, when I know not what good demon fortunately put me out of it, as he did the Syracusan, and made me throw abroad all my reserve at random, the pleasure of a certain journey I took at very great expense having made me spurn this fond love of money underfoot; by which means I am now fallen into a third way of living (I speak what I think of it), doubtless much more pleasant and regular, which is, that I live at the height of my revenue; sometimes the one, sometimes the other may perhaps exceed, but 'tis very little and but rarely that they differ. I live from

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hand to mouth, and content myself in having sufficient for my present and ordinary expense; for as to extraordinary occasions, all the laying up in the world would never suffice. And 'tis the greatest folly imaginable to expect that fortune should ever sufficiently arm us against herself; 'tis with our own arms that we are to fight her; accidental ones will betray us in the pinch of the business. If I lay up, 'tis for some near and contemplated purpose; not to purchase lands, of which I have no need, but to purchase pleasure:

“Non esse cupidum, pecunia est; non esse emacem, vertigal est.”

["Not to be covetous, is money; not to be acquisitive, is revenue."
—Cicero, Paradox., vi. 3.]

I neither am in any great apprehension of wanting, nor in desire of any more:

“Divinarum fructus est in copia; copiam declarat satietas.”

["The fruit of riches is in abundance; satiety declares abundance."
—Idem, *ibid.*, vi. 2.]

And I am very well pleased that this reformation in me has fallen out in an age naturally inclined to avarice, and that I see myself cleared of a folly so common to old men, and the most ridiculous of all human follies.

Feraulez, a man that had run through both fortunes, and found that the increase of substance was no increase of appetite either to eating or drinking, sleeping or the enjoyment of his wife, and who on the other side felt the care of his economics lie heavy upon his shoulders, as it does on mine, was resolved to please a poor young man, his faithful friend, who panted after riches, and made him a gift of all his, which were excessively great, and, moreover, of all he was in the daily way of getting by the liberality of Cyrus, his good master, and by the war; conditionally that he should take care handsomely to maintain and plentifully to entertain him as his guest and friend; which being accordingly done, they afterwards lived very happily together, both of them equally content with the change of their condition. 'Tis an example that I could imitate with all my heart; and I very much approve the fortune of the aged prelate whom I see to have so absolutely stripped himself of his purse, his revenue, and care of his expense, committing them one while to one trusty servant, and another while to another, that he has spun out a long succession of years, as ignorant, by this means, of his domestic affairs as a mere stranger.

The confidence in another man's virtue is no light evidence of a man's own, and God willingly favours such a confidence. As to what concerns him of whom I am speaking, I

see nowhere a better governed house, more nobly and constantly maintained than his. Happy to have regulated his affairs to so just a proportion that his estate is sufficient to do it without his care or trouble, and without any hindrance, either in the spending or laying it up, to his other more quiet employments, and more suitable both to his place and liking.

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Plenty, then, and indigence depend upon the opinion every one has of them; and riches no more than glory or health have other beauty or pleasure than he lends them by whom they are possessed.

Every one is well or ill at ease, according as he so finds himself; not he whom the world believes, but he who believes himself to be so, is content; and in this alone belief gives itself being and reality. Fortune does us neither good nor hurt; she only presents us the matter and the seed, which our soul, more powerful than she, turns and applies as she best pleases; the sole cause and sovereign mistress of her own happy or unhappy condition. All external accessions receive taste and colour from the internal constitution, as clothes warm us, not with their heat, but our own, which they are fit to cover and nourish; he who would shield therewith a cold body, would do the same service for the cold, for so snow and ice are preserved. And, certes, after the same manner that study is a torment to an idle man, abstinence from wine to a drunkard, frugality to the spendthrift, and exercise to a lazy, tender-bred fellow, so it is of all the rest. The things are not so painful and difficult of themselves, but our weakness or cowardice makes them so. To judge of great, and high matters requires a suitable soul; otherwise we attribute the vice to them which is really our own. A straight oar seems crooked in the water it does not only import that we see the thing, but how and after what manner we see it.

After all this, why, amongst so many discourses that by so many arguments persuade men to despise death and to endure pain, can we not find out one that helps us? And of so many sorts of imaginations as have so prevailed upon others as to persuade them to do so, why does not every one apply some one to himself, the most suitable to his own humour? If he cannot digest a strong-working decoction to eradicate the evil, let him at least take a lenitive to ease it:

["It is an effeminate and flimsy opinion, nor more so in pain than in pleasure, in which, while we are at our ease, we cannot bear without a cry the sting of a bee. The whole business is to commend thyself."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, ii. 22.]

As to the rest, a man does not transgress philosophy by permitting the acrimony of pains and human frailty to prevail so much above measure; for they constrain her to go back to her unanswerable replies: "If it be ill to live in necessity, at least there is no necessity upon a man to live in necessity": "No man continues ill long but by his own fault." He who has neither the courage to die nor the heart to live, who will neither resist nor fly, what can we do with him?

CHAPTER XLI

NOT TO COMMUNICATE A MAN'S HONOUR

Of all the follies of the world, that which is most universally received is the solicitude of reputation and glory; which we are fond of to that degree as to abandon riches, peace, life, and health, which are effectual and substantial goods, to pursue this vain phantom and empty word, that has neither body nor hold to be taken of it:

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La fama, ch'invaghisce a un dolce suono
Gli superbi mortali, et par si bella,
E un eco, un sogno, anzi d'un sogno un'ombra,
Ch'ad ogni vento si dilegua a sgombra."

["Fame, which with alluring sound charms proud mortals, and appears so fair, is but an echo, a dream, nay, the shadow of a dream, which at every breath vanishes and dissolves." —Tasso, *Gerus.*, xiv. 63.]

And of all the irrational humours of men, it should seem that the philosophers themselves are among the last and the most reluctant to disengage themselves from this: 'tis the most restive and obstinate of all:

"Quia etiam bene proficientes animos tentare non cessat."

["Because it ceases not to assail even well-directed minds"
—St. Augustin, *De Civit. Dei*, v. 14.]

There is not any one of which reason so clearly accuses the vanity; but it is so deeply rooted in us that I dare not determine whether any one ever clearly discharged himself from it or no. After you have said all and believed all has been said to its prejudice, it produces so intestine an inclination in opposition to your best arguments that you have little power to resist it; for, as Cicero says, even those who most controvert it, would yet that the books they write about it should visit the light under their own names, and seek to derive glory from seeming to despise it. All other things are communicable and fall into commerce: we lend our goods and stake our lives for the necessity and service of our friends; but to communicate a man's honour, and to robe another with a man's own glory, is very rarely seen.

And yet we have some examples of that kind. Catulus Luctatius in the Cimbrian war, having done all that in him lay to make his flying soldiers face about upon the enemy, ran himself at last away with the rest, and counterfeited the coward, to the end his men might rather seem to follow their captain than to fly from the enemy; which was to abandon his own reputation in order to cover the shame of others. When Charles V. came into Provence in the year 1537, 'tis said that Antonio de Leva, seeing the emperor positively resolved upon this expedition, and believing it would redound very much to his honour, did, nevertheless, very stiffly oppose it in the council, to the end that the entire glory of that resolution should be attributed to his master, and that it might be said his own wisdom and foresight had been such as that, contrary to the opinion of all, he had brought about so great an enterprise; which was to do him honour at his own expense. The Thracian ambassadors coming to comfort Archileonida, the mother of Brasidas, upon the death of her son, and commending him to that height as to say he had not left his like behind him, she rejected this private and particular commendation to attribute it to the public: "Tell me not that," said she; "I know the city

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of Sparta has many citizens both greater and of greater worth than he.” In the battle of Crecy, the Prince of Wales, being then very young, had the vanguard committed to him: the main stress of the battle happened to be in that place, which made the lords who were with him, finding themselves overmatched, send to King Edward to advance to their relief. He inquired of the condition his son was in, and being answered that he was alive and on horseback: “I should, then, do him wrong,” said the king, “now to go and deprive him of the honour of winning this battle he has so long and so bravely sustained; what hazard soever he runs, that shall be entirely his own”; and, accordingly, would neither go nor send, knowing that if he went, it would be said all had been lost without his succour, and that the honour of the victory would be wholly attributed to him.

“Semper enim quod postremum adjectum est,
id rem totam videtur traxisse.”

[“For always that which is last added, seems to have accomplished the whole affair.”—Livy, xxvii. 45.]

Many at Rome thought, and would usually say, that the greatest of Scipio’s acts were in part due to Laelius, whose constant practice it was still to advance and support Scipio’s grandeur and renown, without any care of his own. And Theopompus, king of Sparta, to him who told him the republic could not miscarry since he knew so well how to command, “Tis rather,” answered he, “because the people know so well how to obey.” As women succeeding to peerages had, notwithstanding their sex, the privilege to attend and give their votes in the trials that appertained to the jurisdiction of peers; so the ecclesiastical peers, notwithstanding their profession, were obliged to attend our kings in their wars, not only with their friends and servants, but in their own persons. As the Bishop of Beauvais did, who being with Philip Augustus at the battle of Bouvines, had a notable share in that action; but he did not think it fit for him to participate in the fruit and glory of that violent and bloody trade. He with his own hand reduced several of the enemy that day to his mercy, whom he delivered to the first gentleman he met either to kill or receive them to quarter, referring the whole execution to this other hand; and he did this with regard to William, Earl of Salisbury, whom he gave up to Messire Jehan de Nesle. With a like subtlety of conscience to that I have just named, he would kill but not wound, and for that reason ever fought with a mace. And a certain person of my time, being reproached by the king that he had laid hands on a priest, stiffly and positively denied he had done any such thing: the meaning of which was, he had cudgelled and kicked him.

CHAPTER XLII

Of the inequality AMOUNGST us.

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Plutarch says somewhere that he does not find so great a difference betwixt beast and beast as he does betwixt man and man; which he says in reference to the internal qualities and perfections of the soul. And, in truth, I find so vast a distance betwixt Epaminondas, according to my judgment of him, and some that I know, who are yet men of good sense, that I could willingly enhance upon Plutarch, and say that there is more difference betwixt such and such a man than there is betwixt such a man and such a beast:

["Ah! how much may one man surpass another!"
—Terence, *Eunuchus*, ii. 2.]

and that there are as many and innumerable degrees of mind as there are cubits betwixt this and heaven. But as touching the estimate of men, 'tis strange that, ourselves excepted, no other creature is esteemed beyond its proper qualities; we commend a horse for his strength and sureness of foot,

"Volucrem
Sic laudamus equum, facili cui plurima palma
Fervet, et exsultat rauco victoria circo,"

["So we praise the swift horse, for whose easy mastery many a hand glows in applause, and victory exults in the hoarse circus.
—"Juvenal, viii. 57.]

and not for his rich caparison; a greyhound for his speed of heels, not for his fine collar; a hawk for her wing, not for her gesses and bells. Why, in like manner, do we not value a man for what is properly his own? He has a great train, a beautiful palace, so much credit, so many thousand pounds a year: all these are about him, but not in him. You will not buy a pig in a poke: if you cheapen a horse, you will see him stripped of his housing-cloths, you will see him naked and open to your eye; or if he be clothed, as they anciently were wont to present them to princes to sell, 'tis only on the less important parts, that you may not so much consider the beauty of his colour or the breadth of his crupper, as principally to examine his legs, eyes, and feet, which are the members of greatest use:

"Regibus hic mos est: ubi equos mercantur, opertos
Inspiciunt; ne, si facies, ut saepe, decora
Molli fulta pede est, emptorem inducat hiantem"

["This is the custom of kings: when they buy horses, they have open inspection, lest, if a fair head, as often chances, is supported by a weak foot, it should tempt the gaping purchaser." —Horace, *Sat.*, i. 2, 86.]



why, in giving your estimate of a man, do you prize him wrapped and muffled up in clothes? He then discovers nothing to you but such parts as are not in the least his own, and conceals those by which alone one may rightly judge of his value. 'Tis the price of the blade that you inquire into, not of the scabbard: you would not peradventure bid a farthing for him, if you saw him stripped. You are to judge him by himself and not by what he

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wears; and, as one of the ancients very pleasantly said: “Do you know why you repute him tall? You reckon withal the height of his pattens.”—[Seneca, Ep. 76.]—The pedestal is no part of the statue. Measure him without his stilts; let him lay aside his revenues and his titles; let him present himself in his shirt. Then examine if his body be sound and sprightly, active and disposed to perform its functions. What soul has he? Is she beautiful, capable, and happily provided of all her faculties? Is she rich of what is her own, or of what she has borrowed? Has fortune no hand in the affair? Can she, without winking, stand the lightning of swords? is she indifferent whether her life expire by the mouth or through the throat? Is she settled, even and content? This is what is to be examined, and by that you are to judge of the vast differences betwixt man and man. Is he:

“Sapiens, sibi que imperiosus,
Quern neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula terrent;
Responsare cupidinibus, contemnere honores
Fortis; et in seipso totus teres atque rotundus,
Externi ne quid valeat per laeve morari;
In quem manca ruit semper fortuna?”

[“The wise man, self-governed, whom neither poverty, nor death, nor chains affright: who has the strength to resist his appetites and to contemn honours: who is wholly self-contained: whom no external objects affect: whom fortune assails in vain.” —Horace, Sat., ii. 7,]

such a man is five hundred cubits above kingdoms and duchies; he is an absolute monarch in and to himself:

“Sapiens, . . . Pol! ipse fingit fortunam sibi;”

[“The wise man is the master of his own fortune,”
—Plautus, Trin., ii. 2, 84.]

what remains for him to covet or desire?

“Nonne videmus,
Nil aliud sibi naturam latrare, nisi ut, quoi
Corpore sejunctus dolor absit, mente fruatur,
Jucundo sensu, cura semotu’ metuque?”

[“Do we not see that human nature asks no more for itself than that, free from bodily pain, it may exercise its mind agreeably, exempt from care and fear.”—Lucretius, ii. 16.]



Compare with such a one the common rabble of mankind, stupid and mean-spirited, servile, instable, and continually floating with the tempest of various passions, that tosses and tumbles them to and fro, and all depending upon others, and you will find a greater distance than betwixt heaven and earth; and yet the blindness of common usage is such that we make little or no account of it; whereas if we consider a peasant and a king, a nobleman and a vassal, a magistrate and a private man, a rich man and a poor, there appears a vast disparity, though they differ no more, as a man may say, than in their breeches.

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In Thrace the king was distinguished from his people after a very pleasant and especial manner; he had a religion by himself, a god all his own, and which his subjects were not to presume to adore, which was Mercury, whilst, on the other hand, he disdained to have anything to do with theirs, Mars, Bacchus, and Diana. And yet they are no other than pictures that make no essential dissimilitude; for as you see actors in a play representing the person of a duke or an emperor upon the stage, and immediately after return to their true and original condition of valets and porters, so the emperor, whose pomp and lustre so dazzle you in public:

“Scilicet grandes viridi cum luce smaragdi
Auto includuntur, teriturque thalassina vestis
Assidue, et Veneris sudorem exercita potat;”

[“Because he wears great emeralds richly set in gold, darting green lustre; and the sea-blue silken robe, worn with pressure, and moist with illicit love (and absorbs the sweat of Venus).” —Lucretius, iv. 1123.]

do but peep behind the curtain, and you will see no thing more than an ordinary man, and peradventure more contemptible than the meanest of his subjects:

“Ille beatus introrsum est, istius bracteata felicitas est;”

[“The one is happy in himself; the happiness of the other is counterfeit.”—Seneca, Ep., 115.]

cowardice, irresolution, ambition, spite, and envy agitate him as much as another:

“Non enim gazae, neque consularis
Submovet lictor miseros tumultus
Mentis, et curas laqueata circum
Tecta volantes.”

[“For not treasures, nor the consular lictor, can remove the miserable tumults of the mind, nor cares that fly about panelled ceilings.”—Horace, Od., ii. 16, 9.]

Care and fear attack him even in the centre of his battalions:

“Re veraque metus hominum curaeque sequaces
Nec metuunt sonitus armorum, nee fera tela;
Audacterque inter reges, rerumque potentes
Versantur, neque fulgorem reverentur ab auro.”



["And in truth the fears and haunting cares of men fear not the clash of arms nor points of darts, and mingle boldly with great kings and men in authority, nor respect the glitter of gold." —Lucretius, ii. 47.]

Do fevers, gout, and apoplexies spare him any more than one of us? When old age hangs heavy upon his shoulders, can the yeomen of his guard ease him of the burden? When he is astounded with the apprehension of death, can the gentlemen of his bedchamber comfort and assure him? When jealousy or any other caprice swims in his brain, can our compliments and ceremonies restore him to his good-humour? The canopy embroidered with pearl and gold he lies under has no virtue against a violent fit of the colic:

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"Nee calidae citius decedunt corpore febres
Textilibus si in picturis, ostroque rubenti
Jactaris, quam si plebeia in veste cubandum est."

["Nor do burning fevers quit you sooner if you are stretched on a couch of rich tapestry and in a vest of purple dye, than if you be in a coarse blanket."—Idem, ii. 34.]

The flatterers of Alexander the Great possessed him that he was the son of Jupiter; but being one day wounded, and observing the blood stream from his wound: "What say you now, my masters," said he, "is not this blood of a crimson colour and purely human? This is not of the complexion of that which Homer makes to issue from the wounded gods." The poet Hermodorus had written a poem in honour of Antigonus, wherein he called him the son of the sun: "He who has the emptying of my close-stool," said Antigonus, "knows to the contrary." He is but a man at best, and if he be deformed or ill-qualified from his birth, the empire of the universe cannot set him to rights:

"Puellae
Hunc rapiant; quidquid calcaverit hic, rosa fiat,"

["Let girls carry him off; wherever he steps let there spring up a rose!"—Persius, Sat., ii. 38.]

what of all that, if he be a fool? even pleasure and good fortune are not relished without vigour and understanding:

"Haec perinde sunt, ut ilius animus; qui ea possidet
Qui uti scit, ei bona; illi, qui non uritur recte, mala."

["Things are, as is the mind of their possessor; who knows how to use them, to him they are good; to him who abuses them, ill."
—Terence, Heart., i. 3, 21.]

Whatever the benefits of fortune are, they yet require a palate to relish them. 'Tis fruition, and not possession, that renders us happy:

["'Tis not lands, or a heap of brass and gold, that has removed fevers from the ailing body of the owner, or cares from his mind. The possessor must be healthy, if he thinks to make good use of his realised wealth. To him who is covetous or timorous his house and estate are as a picture to a blind man, or a fomentation to a gouty."—Horace, Ep., i. 2, 47.]

He is a sot, his taste is palled and flat; he no more enjoys what he has than one that has a cold relishes the flavour of canary, or than a horse is sensible of his rich caparison. Plato is in the right when he tells us that health, beauty, vigour, and riches, and all the

other things called goods, are equally evil to the unjust as good to the just, and the evil on the contrary the same. And therefore where the body and the mind are in disorder, to what use serve these external conveniences: considering that the least prick with a pin, or the least passion of the soul, is sufficient to deprive one of the pleasure of being sole monarch of the world. At the first twitch of the gout it signifies much to be called Sir and Your Majesty!

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“Totus et argento conflatus, totus et auro;”

[“Wholly made up of silver and gold.”—Tibullus, i. 2, 70.]

does he not forget his palaces and girandeurs? If he be angry, can his being a prince keep him from looking red and looking pale, and grinding his teeth like a madman? Now, if he be a man of parts and of right nature, royalty adds very little to his happiness;

“Si ventri bene, si lateri est, pedibusque tuffs, nil
Divitix poterunt regales addere majus;”

[“If it is well with thy belly, thy side and thy feet, regal wealth
will be able to add nothing.”—Horace, Ep., i. 12, 5.]

he discerns 'tis nothing but counterfeit and gullery. Nay, perhaps he would be of King Seleucus' opinion, that he who knew the weight of a sceptre would not stoop to pick it up, if he saw it lying before him, so great and painful are the duties incumbent upon a good king.—[Plutarch, If a Sage should Meddle with Affairs of State, c. 12.]—Assuredly it can be no easy task to rule others, when we find it so hard a matter to govern ourselves; and as to dominion, that seems so charming, the frailty of human judgment and the difficulty of choice in things that are new and doubtful considered, I am very much of opinion that it is far more easy and pleasant to follow than to lead; and that it is a great settlement and satisfaction of mind to have only one path to walk in, and to have none to answer for but a man's self;

“Ut satius multo jam sit parere quietum,
Quam regere imperio res velle.”

[“'Tis much better quietly to obey than wish to rule.”
—Lucretius, V, 1126.]

To which we may add that saying of Cyrus, that no man was fit to rule but he who in his own worth was of greater value than those he was to govern; but King Hiero in Xenophon says further, that in the fruition even of pleasure itself they are in a worse condition than private men; forasmuch as the opportunities and facility they have of commanding those things at will takes off from the delight that ordinary folks enjoy:

“Pinguis amor, nimiumque patens, in taedia nobis
Vertitur, et, stomacho dulcis ut esca, nocet.”

[“Love in excess and too palpable turns to weariness, and, like
sweetmeats to the stomach, is injurious.”—Ovid, Amoy., ii. 19, 25.]

Can we think that the singing boys of the choir take any great delight in music? the satiety rather renders it troublesome and tedious to them. Feasts, balls, masquerades

and tiltings delight such as but rarely see, and desire to see, them; but having been frequently at such entertainments, the relish of them grows flat and insipid. Nor do women so much delight those who make a common practice of the sport. He who will not give himself leisure to be thirsty can never find the true pleasure of drinking. Farces and tumbling tricks are pleasant to the spectators, but a wearisome toil to those by whom they are performed. And that this is so, we see that princes divert themselves sometimes in disguising their quality, awhile to depose themselves, and to stoop to the poor and ordinary way of living of the meanest of their people.

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"Plerumque gratae divitibus vices
Mundaeque parvo sub lare pauperum
Coenae, sine aulaeis et ostro,
Soliicitam explicuere frontem."

["The rich are often pleased with variety; and the plain supper in a poor cottage, without tapestry and purple, has relaxed the anxious brow."—Horace, *Od.*, iii. 29, 13.]

Nothing is so distasteful and clogging as abundance. What appetite would not be baffled to see three hundred women at its mercy, as the grand signor has in his seraglio? And, of his ancestors what fruition or taste of sport did he reserve to himself, who never went hawking without seven thousand falconers? And besides all this, I fancy that this lustre of grandeur brings with it no little disturbance and uneasiness upon the enjoyment of the most tempting pleasures; the great are too conspicuous and lie too open to every one's view. Neither do I know to what end a man should more require of them to conceal their errors, since what is only reputed indiscretion in us, the people in them brand with the names of tyranny and contempt of the laws, and, besides their proclivity to vice, are apt to hold that it is a heightening of pleasure to them, to insult over and to trample upon public observances. Plato, indeed, in his *Gorgias*, defines a tyrant to be one who in a city has licence to do whatever his own will leads him to do; and by reason of this impunity, the display and publication of their vices do oftentimes more mischief than the vice itself. Every one fears to be pried into and overlooked; but princes are so, even to their very gestures, looks and thoughts, the people conceiving they have right and title to be judges of them besides that the blemishes of the great naturally appear greater by reason of the eminence and lustre of the place where they are seated, and that a mole or a wart appears greater in them than a wide gash in others. And this is the reason why the poets feign the amours of Jupiter to be performed in the disguises of so many borrowed shapes, and that amongst the many amorous practices they lay to his charge, there is only one, as I remember, where he appears in his own majesty and grandeur.

But let us return to Hiero, who further complains of the inconveniences he found in his royalty, in that he could not look abroad and travel the world at liberty, being as it were a prisoner in the bounds and limits of his own dominion, and that in all his actions he was evermore surrounded with an importunate crowd. And in truth, to see our kings sit all alone at table, environed with so many people prating about them, and so many strangers staring upon them, as they always are, I have often been moved rather to pity than to envy their condition. King Alfonso was wont to say, that in this asses were in a better condition than kings, their masters permitting them to feed at their own ease and pleasure, a favour that

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kings cannot obtain of their servants. And it has never come into my fancy that it could be of any great benefit to the life of a man of sense to have twenty people prating about him when he is at stool; or that the services of a man of ten thousand livres a year, or that has taken Casale or defended Siena, should be either more commodious or more acceptable to him, than those of a good groom of the chamber who understands his place. The advantages of sovereignty are in a manner but imaginary: every degree of fortune has in it some image of principality. Caesar calls all the lords of France, having free franchise within their own demesnes, roitelets or petty kings; and in truth, the name of sire excepted, they go pretty far towards kingship; for do but look into the provinces remote from court, as Brittany for example; take notice of the train, the vassals, the officers, the employments, service, ceremony, and state of a lord who lives retired from court in his own house, amongst his own tenants and servants; and observe withal the flight of his imagination; there is nothing more royal; he hears talk of his master once a year, as of a king of Persia, without taking any further recognition of him, than by some remote kindred his secretary keeps in some register. And, to speak the truth, our laws are easy enough, so easy that a gentleman of France scarce feels the weight of sovereignty pinch his shoulders above twice in his life. Real and effectual subjection only concerns such amongst us as voluntarily thrust their necks under the yoke, and who design to get wealth and honours by such services: for a man that loves his own fireside, and can govern his house without falling by the ears with his neighbours or engaging in suits of law, is as free as a Duke of Venice.

“Paucos servitus, plures servitutem tenent.”

["Servitude enchains few, but many enchain themselves to servitude."—Seneca, Ep., 22.]

But that which Hiero is most concerned at is, that he finds himself stripped of all friendship, deprived of all mutual society, wherein the true and most perfect fruition of human life consists. For what testimony of affection and goodwill can I extract from him that owes me, whether he will or no, all that he is able to do? Can I form any assurance of his real respect to me, from his humble way of speaking and submissive behaviour, when these are ceremonies it is not in his choice to deny? The honour we receive from those that fear us is not honour; those respects are due to royalty and not to me:

“Maximum hoc regni bonum est
Quod facta domini cogitur populus sui
Quam ferre, tam laudare.”

["'Tis the greatest benefit of a kingdom that the people is forced to commend, as well as to bear the acts of the ruler."
—Seneca, Thyestes, ii. i, 30.]

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Do I not see that the wicked and the good king, he that is hated and he that is beloved, have the one as much reverence paid him as the other? My predecessor was, and my successor shall be, served with the same ceremony and state. If my subjects do me no harm, 'tis no evidence of any good affection; why should I look upon it as such, seeing it is not in their power to do it if they would? No one follows me or obeys my commands upon the account of any friendship, betwixt him and me; there can be no contracting of friendship where there is so little relation and correspondence: my own height has put me out of the familiarity of and intelligence with men; there is too great disparity and disproportion betwixt us. They follow me either upon the account of decency and custom; or rather my fortune, than me, to increase their own. All they say to me or do for me is but outward paint, appearance, their liberty being on all parts restrained by the great power and authority I have over them. I see nothing about me but what is dissembled and disguised.

The Emperor Julian being one day applauded by his courtiers for his exact justice: "I should be proud of these praises," said he, "did they come from persons that durst condemn or disapprove the contrary, in case I should do it." All the real advantages of princes are common to them with men of meaner condition ('tis for the gods to mount winged horses and feed upon ambrosia): they have no other sleep, nor other appetite than we; the steel they arm themselves withal is of no better temper than that we also use; their crowns neither defend them from the rain nor the sun.

Diocletian, who wore a crown so fortunate and revered, resigned it to retire to the felicity of a private life; and some time after the necessity of public affairs requiring that he should reassume his charge, he made answer to those who came to court him to it: "You would not offer," said he, "to persuade me to this, had you seen the fine order of the trees I have planted in my orchard, and the fair melons I have sown in my garden."

In Anacharsis' opinion, the happiest state of government would be where, all other things being equal, precedence should be measured out by the virtues, and repulses by the vices of men.

When King Pyrrhus prepared for his expedition into Italy, his wise counsellor Cyneas, to make him sensible of the vanity of his ambition: "Well, sir," said he, "to what end do you make all this mighty preparation?"—"To make myself master of Italy," replied the king. "And what after that is done?" said Cyneas. "I will pass over into Gaul and Spain," said the other. "And what then?"—"I will then go to subdue Africa; and lastly, when I have brought the whole world to my subjection, I will sit down and rest content at my own ease."

"For God sake, sir," replied Cyneas, "tell me what hinders that you may not, if you please, be now in the condition you speak of? Why do you not now at this instant settle yourself in the state you seem to aim at, and spare all the labour and hazard you interpose?"

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"Nimirum, quia non cognovit, quæ esset habendi
Finis, et omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas."

["Forsooth because he does not know what should be the limit of
acquisition, and altogether how far real pleasure should increase."
—Lucretius, v. 1431]

I will conclude with an old versicle, that I think very apt to the purpose:

"Mores cuique sui fingunt fortunam."

["Every man frames his own fortune."
—Cornelius Nepos, Life of Atticus]

CHAPTER XLIII

OF SUMPTUARY LAWS

The way by which our laws attempt to regulate idle and vain expenses in meat and clothes, seems to be quite contrary to the end designed. The true way would be to beget in men a contempt of silks and gold, as vain, frivolous, and useless; whereas we augment to them the honours, and enhance the value of such things, which, sure, is a very improper way to create a disgust. For to enact that none but princes shall eat turbot, shall wear velvet or gold lace, and interdict these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into a greater esteem, and to set every one more agog to eat and wear them? Let kings leave off these ensigns of grandeur; they have others enough besides; those excesses are more excusable in any other than a prince. We may learn by the example of several nations better ways of exterior distinction of quality (which, truly, I conceive to be very requisite in a state) enough, without fostering to this purpose such corruption and manifest inconvenience. 'Tis strange how suddenly and with how much ease custom in these indifferent things establishes itself and becomes authority. We had scarce worn cloth a year, in compliance with the court, for the mourning of Henry *ii.*, but that silks were already grown into such contempt with every one, that a man so clad was presently concluded a citizen: silks were divided betwixt the physicians and surgeons, and though all other people almost went in the same habit, there was, notwithstanding, in one thing or other, sufficient distinction of the several conditions of men. How suddenly do greasy chamois and linen doublets become the fashion in our armies, whilst all neatness and richness of habit fall into contempt? Let kings but lead the dance and begin to leave off this expense, and in a month the business will be done throughout the kingdom, without edict or ordinance; we shall all follow. It should be rather proclaimed, on the contrary, that no one should wear scarlet or goldsmiths' work but courtesans and tumblers.

Zealeucus by the like invention reclaimed the corrupted manners of the Locrians. His laws were, that no free woman should be allowed any more than one maid to follow her, unless she was drunk: nor was to stir out of the city by night, wear jewels of gold about her, or go in an embroidered robe, unless she was a professed and public prostitute; that, bravos excepted, no man was to wear a gold ring, nor be seen in one of those effeminate robes woven in the city of Miletus. By which infamous exceptions he discreetly diverted his citizens from superfluities and pernicious pleasures, and it was a project of great utility to attract them by honour and ambition to their duty and obedience.

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Our kings can do what they please in such external reformatations; their own inclination stands in this case for a law:

“Quicquid principes faciunt, praecipere videntur.”

["What princes themselves do, they seem to prescribe."
—Quintil., Declam., 3.]

Whatever is done at court passes for a rule through the rest of France. Let the courtiers fall out with these abominable breeches, that discover so much of those parts should be concealed; these great bellied doublets, that make us look like I know not what, and are so unfit to admit of arms; these long effeminate locks of hair; this foolish custom of kissing what we present to our equals, and our hands in saluting them, a ceremony in former times only due to princes. Let them not permit that a gentleman shall appear in place of respect without his sword, unbuttoned and untrussed, as though he came from the house of office; and that, contrary to the custom of our forefathers and the particular privilege of the nobles of this kingdom, we stand a long time bare to them in what place soever, and the same to a hundred others, so many tiercelets and quartelets of kings we have got nowadays and other like vicious innovations: they will see them all presently vanish and cried down. These are, 'tis true, but superficial errors; but they are of ill augury, and enough to inform us that the whole fabric is crazy and tottering, when we see the roughcast of our walls to cleave and split.

Plato in his Laws esteems nothing of more pestiferous consequence to his city than to give young men the liberty of introducing any change in their habits, gestures, dances, songs, and exercises, from one form to another; shifting from this to that, hunting after novelties, and applauding the inventors; by which means manners are corrupted and the old institutions come to be nauseated and despised. In all things, saving only in those that are evil, a change is to be feared; even the change of seasons, winds, viands, and humours. And no laws are in their true credit, but such to which God has given so long a continuance that no one knows their beginning, or that there ever was any other.

CHAPTER XLIV

OF SLEEP

Reason directs that we should always go the same way, but not always at the same pace. And, consequently, though a wise man ought not so much to give the reins to human passions as to let him deviate from the right path, he may, notwithstanding, without prejudice to his duty, leave it to them to hasten or to slacken his speed, and not fix himself like a motionless and insensible Colossus. Could virtue itself put on flesh and blood, I believe the pulse would beat faster going on to assault than in going to

dinner: that is to say, there is a necessity she should heat and be moved upon this account. I have taken notice, as of an extraordinary thing, of some great

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men, who in the highest enterprises and most important affairs have kept themselves in so settled and serene a calm, as not at all to break their sleep. Alexander the Great, on the day assigned for that furious battle betwixt him and Darius, slept so profoundly and so long in the morning, that Parmenio was forced to enter his chamber, and coming to his bedside, to call him several times by his name, the time to go to fight compelling him so to do. The Emperor Otho, having put on a resolution to kill himself that night, after having settled his domestic affairs, divided his money amongst his servants, and set a good edge upon a sword he had made choice of for the purpose, and now staying only to be satisfied whether all his friends had retired in safety, he fell into so sound a sleep that the gentlemen of his chamber heard him snore. The death of this emperor has in it circumstances paralleling that of the great Cato, and particularly this just related for Cato being ready to despatch himself, whilst he only stayed his hand in expectation of the return of a messenger he had sent to bring him news whether the senators he had sent away were put out from the Port of Utica, he fell into so sound a sleep, that they heard him snore in the next room; and the man, whom he had sent to the port, having awakened him to let him know that the tempestuous weather had hindered the senators from putting to sea, he despatched away another messenger, and composing again himself in the bed, settled to sleep, and slept till by the return of the last messenger he had certain intelligence they were gone. We may here further compare him with Alexander in the great and dangerous storm that threatened him by the sedition of the tribune Metellus, who, attempting to publish a decree for the calling in of Pompey with his army into the city at the time of Catiline's conspiracy, was only and that stoutly opposed by Cato, so that very sharp language and bitter menaces passed betwixt them in the senate about that affair; but it was the next day, in the forenoon, that the controversy was to be decided, where Metellus, besides the favour of the people and of Caesar—at that time of Pompey's faction—was to appear accompanied with a rabble of slaves and gladiators; and Cato only fortified with his own courage and constancy; so that his relations, domestics, and many virtuous people of his friends were in great apprehensions for him; and to that degree, that some there were who passed over the whole night without sleep, eating, or drinking, for the danger they saw him running into; his wife and sisters did nothing but weep and torment themselves in his house; whereas, he, on the contrary, comforted every one, and after having supped after his usual manner, went to bed, and slept profoundly till morning, when one of his fellow-tribunes roused him to go to the encounter. The knowledge we have of the greatness of this man's courage by the rest of his life, may warrant us certainly to judge that his indifference proceeded from a soul so much elevated above such accidents, that he disdained to let it take any more hold of his fancy than any ordinary incident.

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In the naval engagement that Augustus won of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, just as they were to begin the fight, he was so fast asleep that his friends were compelled to wake him to give the signal of battle: and this was it that gave Mark Antony afterwards occasion to reproach him that he had not the courage so much as with open eyes to behold the order of his own squadrons, and not to have dared to present himself before the soldiers, till first Agrippa had brought him news of the victory obtained. But as to the young Marius, who did much worse (for the day of his last battle against Sylla, after he had marshalled his army and given the word and signal of battle, he laid him down under the shade of a tree to repose himself, and fell so fast asleep that the rout and flight of his men could hardly waken him, he having seen nothing of the fight), he is said to have been at that time so extremely spent and worn out with labour and want of sleep, that nature could hold out no longer. Now, upon what has been said, the physicians may determine whether sleep be so necessary that our lives depend upon it: for we read that King Perseus of Macedon, being prisoner at Rome, was killed by being kept from sleep; but Pliny instances such as have lived long without sleep. Herodotus speaks of nations where the men sleep and wake by half-years, and they who write the life of the sage Epimenides affirm that he slept seven-and-fifty years together.

CHAPTER XLV

OF THE BATTLE OF DREUX

[December 19, 1562, in which the Catholics, under the command of the Duc de Guise and the Constable de Montmorenci, defeated the Protestants, commanded by the Prince de Conde. See Sismondi, *Hist. des Francais*, vol. xviii., p. 354.]

Our battle of Dreux is remarkable for several extraordinary incidents; but such as have no great kindness for M. de Guise, nor much favour his reputation, are willing to have him thought to blame, and that his making a halt and delaying time with the forces he commanded, whilst the Constable, who was general of the army, was racked through and through with the enemy's artillery, his battalion routed, and himself taken prisoner, is not to be excused; and that he had much better have run the hazard of charging the enemy in flank, than staying for the advantage of falling in upon the rear, to suffer so great and so important a loss. But, besides what the event demonstrated, he who will consider it without passion or prejudice will easily be induced to confess that the aim and design, not of a captain only, but of every private soldier, ought to regard the victory in general, and that no particular occurrences, how nearly soever they may concern his own interest, should divert him from that pursuit. Philopoemen, in an encounter with Machanidas, having sent before a good strong party of his archers and slingers to begin the skirmish, and these being routed and hotly pursued by the enemy,

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who, pushing on the fortune of their arms, and in that pursuit passing by the battalion where Philopoemen was, though his soldiers were impatient to fall on, he did not think fit to stir from his post nor to present himself to the enemy to relieve his men, but having suffered these to be chased and cut in pieces before his face, charged in upon the enemy's foot when he saw them left unprotected by the horse, and notwithstanding that they were Lacedaemonians, yet taking them in the nick, when thinking themselves secure of the victory, they began to disorder their ranks; he did this business with great facility, and then put himself in pursuit of Machanidas. Which case is very like that of Monsieur de Guise.

In that bloody battle betwixt Agesilaus and the Boeotians, which Xenophon, who was present at it, reports to be the sharpest that he had ever seen, Agesilaus waived the advantage that fortune presented him, to let the Boeotian battalions pass by and then to charge them in the rear, how certain soever he might make himself of the victory, judging it would rather be an effect of conduct than valour, to proceed that way; and therefore, to show his prowess, rather chose with a marvellous ardour of courage to charge them in the front; but he was well beaten and well wounded for his pains, and constrained at last to disengage himself, and to take the course he had at first neglected; opening his battalion to give way to this torrent of Boeotians, and they being passed by, taking notice that they marched in disorder, like men who thought themselves out of danger, he pursued and charged them in flank; yet could not so prevail as to bring it to so general a rout but that they leisurely retreated, still facing about upon him till they had retired to safety.

CHAPTER XLVI

OF NAMES

What variety of herbs soever are shufed together in the dish, yet the whole mass is swallowed up under one name of a sallet. In like manner, under the consideration of names, I will make a hodge-podge of divers articles.

Every nation has certain names, that, I know not why, are taken in no good sense, as with us, John, William, Benedict. In the genealogy of princes, also, there seem to be certain names fatally affected, as the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Henries in England, the Charleses in France, the Baldwins in Flanders, and the Williams of our ancient Aquitaine, from whence, 'tis said, the name of Guyenne has its derivation; which would seem far fetched were there not as crude derivations in Plato himself.

Item, 'tis a frivolous thing in itself, but nevertheless worthy to be recorded for the strangeness of it, that is written by an eyewitness, that Henry, Duke of Normandy, son of

Henry *ii.*, king of England, making a great feast in France, the concourse of nobility and gentry was so great, that being, for sport's sake, divided into troops, according to their names, in the first troop, which consisted of Williams, there were found an hundred and ten knights sitting at the table of that name, without reckoning the ordinary gentlemen and servants.

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It is as pleasant to distinguish the tables by the names of the guests as it was in the Emperor Geta to distinguish the several courses of his meat by the first letters of the meats themselves; so that those that began with B were served up together, as brawn, beef, bream, bustards, becca-ficos; and so of the others. Item, there is a saying that it is a good thing to have a good name, that is to say, credit and a good repute; but besides this, it is really convenient to have a well-sounding name, such as is easy of pronunciation and easy to be remembered, by reason that kings and other great persons do by that means the more easily know and the more hardly forget us; and indeed of our own servants we more frequently call and employ those whose names are most ready upon the tongue. I myself have seen Henry *ii.*, when he could not for his heart hit of a gentleman's name of our country of Gascony, and moreover was fain to call one of the queen's maids of honour by the general name of her race, her own family name being so difficult to pronounce or remember; and Socrates thinks it worthy a father's care to give fine names to his children.

Item, 'tis said that the foundation of Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers took its original from hence that a debauched young fellow formerly living in that place, having got to him a wench, and, at her first coming in, asking her name, and being answered that it was Mary, he felt himself so suddenly pierced through with the awe of religion and the reverence to that sacred name of the Blessed Virgin, that he not only immediately sent the girl away, but became a reformed man and so continued the remainder of his life; and that, in consideration of this miracle, there was erected upon the place where this young man's house stood, first a chapel dedicated to our Lady and afterwards the church that we now see standing there. This vocal and auricular reproof wrought upon the conscience, and that right into the soul; this that follows, insinuated itself merely by the senses. Pythagoras being in company with some wild young fellows, and perceiving that, heated with the feast, they comploted to go violate an honest house, commanded the singing wench to alter her wanton airs; and by a solemn, grave, and spondaic music, gently enchanted and laid asleep their ardour.

Item, will not posterity say that our modern reformation has been wonderfully delicate and exact, in having not only combated errors and vices, and filled the world with devotion, humility, obedience, peace, and all sorts of virtue; but in having proceeded so far as to quarrel with our ancient baptismal names of Charles, Louis, Francis, to fill the world with Methuselahs, Ezeiels, and Malachis, names of a more spiritual sound? A gentleman, a neighbour of mine, a great admirer of antiquity, and who was always extolling the excellences of former times in comparison with this present age of ours, did not, amongst the rest, forget to dwell upon the lofty and magnificent sound of the gentleman's names of those days, Don Grumedan, Quedregan, Agesilan, which, but to hear named he conceived to denote other kind of men than Pierre, Guillot, and Michel.

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Item, I am mightily pleased with Jacques Amyot for leaving, throughout a whole French oration, the Latin names entire, without varying and garbling them to give them a French cadence. It seemed a little harsh and rough at first; but already custom, by the authority of his Plutarch, has overcome that novelty. I have often wished that such as write histories in Latin would leave our names as they find them and as they are; for in making Vaudemont into Vallemontanus, and metamorphosing names to make them suit better with the Greek or Latin, we know not where we are, and with the persons of the men lose the benefit of the story.

To conclude, 'tis a scurvy custom and of very ill consequence that we have in our kingdom of France to call every one by the name of his manor or seignury; 'tis the thing in the world that the most prejudices and confounds families and descents. A younger brother of a good family, having a manor left him by his father, by the name of which he has been known and honoured, cannot handsomely leave it; ten years after his decease it falls into the hand of a stranger, who does the same: do but judge whereabouts we shall be concerning the knowledge of these men. We need look no further for examples than our own royal family, where every partition creates a new surname, whilst, in the meantime, the original of the family is totally lost. There is so great liberty taken in these mutations, that I have not in my time seen any one advanced by fortune to any extraordinary condition who has not presently had genealogical titles added to him, new and unknown to his father, and who has not been inoculated into some illustrious stem by good luck; and the obscurest families are the most apt for falsification. How many gentlemen have we in France who by their own account are of royal extraction? more, I think, than who will confess they are not. Was it not a pleasant passage of a friend of mine? There were, several gentlemen assembled together about the dispute of one seigneur with another; which other had, in truth, some preeminence of titles and alliances above the ordinary gentry. Upon the debate of this prerogative, every one, to make himself equal to him, alleged, this one extraction, that another; this, the near resemblance of name, that, of arms; another, an old worm-eaten patent; the very least of them was great-grandchild to some foreign king. When they came to sit down, to dinner, my friend, instead of taking his place amongst them, retiring with most profound conges, entreated the company to excuse him for having hitherto lived with them at the saucy rate of a companion; but being now better informed of their quality, he would begin to pay them the respect due to their birth and grandeur, and that it would ill become him to sit down among so many princes—ending this farce with a thousand reproaches: "Let us, in God's name, satisfy ourselves with what our fathers were contented with, with what we are. We are great enough, if we rightly understand how to maintain it. Let us not disown the fortune and condition of our ancestors, and let us lay aside these ridiculous pretences, that can never be wanting to any one that has the impudence to allege them."

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Arms have no more security than surnames. I bear azure powdered with trefoils or, with a lion's paw of the same armed gules in fesse. What privilege has this to continue particularly in my house? A son-in-law will transport it into another family, or some paltry purchaser will make them his first arms. There is nothing wherein there is more change and confusion.

But this consideration leads me, perforce, into another subject. Let us pry a little narrowly into, and, in God's name, examine upon what foundation we erect this glory and reputation for which the world is turned topsy-turvy: wherein do we place this renown that we hunt after with so much pains? It is, in the end, Peter or William that carries it, takes it into his possession, and whom it only concerns. O what a valiant faculty is hope, that in a mortal subject, and in a moment, makes nothing of usurping infinity, immensity, eternity, and of supplying its master's indigence, at its pleasure, with all things he can imagine or desire! Nature has given us this passion for a pretty toy to play withal. And this Peter or William, what is it but a sound, when all is done? or three or four dashes with a pen, so easy to be varied that I would fain know to whom is to be attributed the glory of so many victories, to Guesquin, to Glesquin, or to Gueaquin? and yet there would be something of greater moment in the case than in Lucian, that Sigma should serve Tau with a process; for

"Non levia aut ludicra petuntur
Praemia;"

["They aim at no slight or jocular rewards."—Aeneid, xii. 764.]

the chase is there in very good earnest: the question is, which of these letters is to be rewarded for so many sieges, battles, wounds, imprisonments, and services done to the crown of France by this famous constable? Nicholas Denisot—[Painter and poet, born at Le Mans, 1515.]—never concerned himself further than the letters of his name, of which he has altered the whole contexture to build up by anagram the Count d'Alsinois, whom he has handsomely endowed with the glory of his poetry and painting. The historian Suetonius was satisfied with only the meaning of his name, which made him cashier his father's surname, Lenis, to leave Tranquillus successor to the reputation of his writings. Who would believe that Captain Bayard should have no honour but what he derives from the deeds of Peter Terrail; and that Antonio Iscalin should suffer himself to his face to be robbed of the honour of so many navigations and commands at sea and land by Captain Paulin and the Baron de la Garde? Secondly, these are dashes of the pen common to a thousand people. How many are there, in every family, of the same name and surname? and how many more in several families, ages, and countries? History tells us of three of the name of Socrates, of five Platos, of eight Aristotles, of seven Xenophons, of twenty Demetrii,

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and of twenty Theodores; and how many more she was not acquainted with we may imagine. Who hinders my groom from calling himself Pompey the Great? But after all, what virtue, what authority, or what secret springs are there that fix upon my deceased groom, or the other Pompey, who had his head cut off in Egypt, this glorious renown, and these so much honoured flourishes of the pen, so as to be of any advantage to them?

“Id cinerem et manes credis curare sepultos?”

[“Do you believe the dead regard such things?”—Aeneid, iv. 34.]

What sense have the two companions in greatest esteem amongst me, Epaminondas, of this fine verse that has been so many ages current in his praise,

“Consiliis nostris laus est attrita Laconum;”

[“The glory of the Spartans is extinguished by my plans.
—“Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., v. 17.]

or Africanus, of this other,

“A sole exoriente supra Maeotis Paludes
Nemo est qui factis me aequiparare queat.”

[“From where the sun rises over the Palus Maeotis, to where it sets,
there is no one whose acts can compare with mine”—Idem, *ibid.*]

Survivors indeed tickle themselves with these fine phrases, and by them incited to jealousy and desire, inconsiderately and according to their own fancy, attribute to the dead this their own feeling, vainly flattering themselves that they shall one day in turn be capable of the same character. However:

“Ad haec se
Romanus Graiusque, et Barbaras induperator
Erexit; caucus discriminis atque laboris
Inde habuit: tanto major famae sitis est, quam
Virtutis.”

[“For these the Roman, the Greek, and the Barbarian commander hath aroused himself; he has incurred thence causes of danger and toil: so much greater is the thirst for fame than for virtue.” —Juvenal, x. 137.]

CHAPTER XLVII

OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF OUR JUDGMENT

Well says this verse:

["There is everywhere much liberty of speech."—Iliad, xx. 249.]

For example:

["Hannibal conquered, but knew not how to make the best use of his victorious venture."—Petrarch, Son., 83.]

Such as would improve this argument, and condemn the oversight of our leaders in not pushing home the victory at Moncontour, or accuse the King of Spain of not knowing how to make the best use of the advantage he had against us at St. Quentin, may conclude these oversights to proceed from a soul already drunk with success, or from a spirit which, being full and overgorged with this beginning of good fortune, had lost the appetite of adding to it, already having enough to do to digest what it had taken in: he has his arms full, and

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can embrace no more: unworthy of the benefit fortune has conferred upon him and the advantage she had put into his hands: for what utility does he reap from it, if, notwithstanding, he give his enemy respite to rally and make head against him? What hope is there that he will dare at another time to attack an enemy reunited and recomposed, and armed anew with anger and revenge, who did not dare to pursue them when routed and unmanned by fear?

“Dum fortuna calet, dum conficit omnia terror.”

[“Whilst fortune is fresh, and terror finishes all.”
—Lucan, vii. 734.]

But withal, what better opportunity can he expect than that he has lost? 'Tis not here, as in fencing, where the most hits gain the prize; for so long as the enemy is on foot, the game is new to begin, and that is not to be called a victory that puts not an end to the war. In the encounter where Caesar had the worst, near the city of Oricum, he reproached Pompey's soldiers that he had been lost had their general known how to overcome; and afterwards clawed him in a very different fashion when it came to his turn.

But why may not a man also argue, on the contrary, that it is the effect of a precipitous and insatiate spirit not to know how to bound and restrain its coveting; that it is to abuse the favours of God to exceed the measure He has prescribed them: and that again to throw a man's self into danger after a victory obtained is again to expose himself to the mercy of fortune: that it is one of the greatest discretions in the rule of war not to drive an enemy to despair? Sylla and Marius in the social war, having defeated the Marsians, seeing yet a body of reserve that, prompted by despair, was coming on like enraged brutes to dash in upon them, thought it not convenient to stand their charge. Had not Monsieur de Foix's ardour transported him so furiously to pursue the remains of the victory of Ravenna, he had not obscured it by his own death. And yet the recent memory of his example served to preserve Monsieur d'Anguien from the same misfortune at the battle of Serisoles. 'Tis dangerous to attack a man you have deprived of all means to escape but by his arms, for necessity teaches violent resolutions:

“Gravissimi sunt morsus irritatae necessitatis.”

[“Irritated necessity bites deepest.”—Portius Latro., Declam.]

“Vincitur haud gratis, jugulo qui provocat hostem.”

["He is not readily beaten who provokes the enemy by shewing his throat."—or: "He who presents himself to his foe, sells his life dear."—Lucan, iv. 275.]

This was it that made Pharax withhold the King of Lacedaemon, who had won a battle against the Mantineans, from going to charge a thousand Argians, who had escaped in an entire body from the defeat, but rather let them steal off at liberty that he might not encounter valour whetted and enraged by mischance. Clodomir, king of Aquitaine, after his victory pursuing Gondemar, king of Burgundy, beaten and making off as fast as he could for safety, compelled him to face about and make head, wherein his obstinacy deprived him of the fruit of his conquest, for he there lost his life.

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In like manner, if a man were to choose whether he would have his soldiers richly and sumptuously accoutred or armed only for the necessity of the matter in hand, this argument would step in to favour the first, of which opinion was Sertorius, Philopemen, Brutus, Caesar, and others, that it is to a soldier an enflaming of courage and a spur himself in brave attire; and withal a motive to be more obstinate in fight, having his arms, which are in a manner his estate and whole inheritance to defend; which is the reason, says Xenophon, why those of Asia carried their wives and concubines, with their choicest jewels and greatest wealth, along with them to the wars. But then these arguments would be as ready to stand up for the other side; that a general ought rather to lessen in his men their solicitude of preserving themselves than to increase it; that by such means they will be in a double fear of hazarding their persons, as it will be a double temptation to the enemy to fight with greater resolution where so great booty and so rich spoils are to be obtained; and this very thing has been observed in former times, notably to encourage the Romans against the Samnites. Antiochus, shewing Hannibal the army he had raised, wonderfully splendid and rich in all sorts of equipage, asked him if the Romans would be satisfied with that army? "Satisfied," replied the other, "yes, doubtless, were their avarice never so great." Lycurgus not only forbid his soldiers all manner of bravery in their equipage, but, moreover, to strip their conquered enemies, because he would, as he said, that poverty and frugality should shine with the rest of the battle.

At sieges and elsewhere, where occasion draws us near to the enemy, we willingly suffer our men to brave, rate, and affront him with all sorts of injurious language; and not without some colour of reason: for it is of no little consequence to take from them all hopes of mercy and composition, by representing to them that there is no fair quarter to be expected from an enemy they have incensed to that degree, nor other remedy remaining but in victory. And yet Vitellius found himself deceived in this way of proceeding; for having to do with Otho, weaker in the valour of his soldiers, long unaccustomed to war and effeminated with the delights of the city, he so nettled them at last with injurious language, reproaching them with cowardice and regret for the mistresses and entertainments they had left behind at Rome, that by this means he inspired them with such resolution as no exhortation had had the power to have done, and himself made them fall upon him, with whom their own captains before could by no means prevail. And, indeed, when they are injuries that touch to the quick, it may very well fall out that he who went but unwillingly to work in the behalf of his prince will fall to't with another sort of mettle when the quarrel is his own.

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Considering of how great importance is the preservation of the general of an army, and that the universal aim of an enemy is levelled directly at the head, upon which all the others depend, the course seems to admit of no dispute, which we know has been taken by so many great captains, of changing their habit and disguising their persons upon the point of going to engage. Nevertheless, the inconvenience a man by so doing runs into is not less than that he thinks to avoid; for the captain, by this means being concealed from the knowledge of his own men, the courage they should derive from his presence and example happens by degrees to cool and to decay; and not seeing the wonted marks and ensigns of their leader, they presently conclude him either dead, or that, despairing of the business, he is gone to shift for himself. And experience shows us that both these ways have been successful and otherwise. What befell Pyrrhus in the battle he fought against the Consul Levinus in Italy will serve us to both purposes; for though by shrouding his person under the armour of Megacles and making him wear his own, he undoubtedly preserved his own life, yet, by that very means, he was withal very near running into the other mischief of losing the battle. Alexander, Caesar, and Lucullus loved to make themselves known in a battle by rich accoutrements and armour of a particular lustre and colour: Agis, Agesilaus, and that great Gilippus, on the contrary, used to fight obscurely armed, and without any imperial attendance or distinction.

Amongst other oversights Pompey is charged withal at the battle of Pharsalia, he is condemned for making his army stand still to receive the enemy's charge; by "reason that" (I shall here steal Plutarch's own words, which are better than mine) "he by so doing deprived himself of the violent impression the motion of running adds to the first shock of arms, and hindered that clashing of the combatants against one another which is wont to give them greater impetuosity and fury; especially when they come to rush in with their utmost vigour, their courages increasing by the shouts and the career; 'tis to render the soldiers' ardour, as a man may say, more reserved and cold." This is what he says. But if Caesar had come by the worse, why might it not as well have been urged by another, that, on the contrary, the strongest and most steady posture of fighting is that wherein a man stands planted firm without motion; and that they who are steady upon the march, closing up, and reserving their force within themselves for the push of the business, have a great advantage against those who are disordered, and who have already spent half their breath in running on precipitately to the charge? Besides that an army is a body made up of so many individual members, it is impossible for it to move in this fury with so exact a motion as not to break the order of battle, and that the best of them are not engaged before their fellows can come on to help

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them. In that unnatural battle betwixt the two Persian brothers, the Lacedaemonian Clearchus, who commanded the Greeks of Cyrus' party, led them on softly and without precipitation to the charge; but, coming within fifty paces, hurried them on full speed, hoping in so short a career both to keep their order and to husband their breath, and at the same time to give the advantage of impetuosity and impression both to their persons and their missile arms. Others have regulated this question as to their armies thus if your enemy come full drive upon you, stand firm to receive him; if he stand to receive you, run full drive upon him.

In the expedition of the Emperor Charles V. into Provence, King Francis was put to choose either to go meet him in Italy or to await him in his own dominions; wherein, though he very well considered of how great advantage it was to preserve his own territory entire and clear from the troubles of war, to the end that, being unexhausted of its stores, it might continually supply men and money at need; that the necessity of war requires at every turn to spoil and lay waste the country before us, which cannot very well be done upon one's own; to which may be added, that the country people do not so easily digest such a havoc by those of their own party as from an enemy, so that seditions and commotions might by such means be kindled amongst us; that the licence of pillage and plunder (which are not to be tolerated at home) is a great ease and refreshment against the fatigues and sufferings of war; and that he who has no other prospect of gain than his bare pay will hardly be kept from running home, being but two steps from his wife and his own house; that he who lays the cloth is ever at the charge of the feast; that there is more alacrity in assaulting than defending; and that the shock of a battle's loss in our own bowels is so violent as to endanger the disjoining of the whole body, there being no passion so contagious as that of fear, that is so easily believed, or that so suddenly diffuses itself; and that the cities that should hear the rattle of this tempest at their gates, that should take in their captains and soldiers yet trembling and out of breath, would be in danger in this heat and hurry to precipitate themselves upon some untoward resolution: notwithstanding all this, so it was that he chose to recall the forces he had beyond the mountains and to suffer the enemy to come to him. For he might, on the other hand, imagine that, being at home and amongst his friends, he could not fail of plenty of all manner of conveniences; the rivers and passes he had at his devotion would bring him in both provisions and money in all security, and without the trouble of convoy; that he should find his subjects by so much the more affectionate to him, by how much their danger was more near and pressing; that having so many cities and barriers to secure him, it would be in his power to give the law of battle at his own opportunity and advantage; and that, if

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it pleased him to delay the time, under cover and at his ease he might see his enemy founder and defeat himself with the difficulties he was certain to encounter, being engaged in a hostile country, where before, behind, and on every side war would be made upon him; no means to refresh himself or to enlarge his quarters, should diseases infest them, or to lodge his wounded men in safety; no money, no victuals, but at the point of the lance; no leisure to repose and take breath; no knowledge of the ways or country to secure him from ambushes and surprises; and in case of losing a battle, no possible means of saving the remains. Neither is there want of example in both these cases.

Scipio thought it much better to go and attack his enemy's territories in Africa than to stay at home to defend his own and to fight him in Italy, and it succeeded well with him. But, on the contrary, Hannibal in the same war ruined himself by abandoning the conquest of a foreign country to go and defend his own. The Athenians having left the enemy in their own dominions to go over into Sicily, were not favoured by fortune in their design; but Agathocles, king of Syracuse, found her favourable to him when he went over into Africa and left the war at home.

By which examples we are wont to conclude, and with some reason, that events, especially in war, for the most part depend upon fortune, who will not be governed by nor submit unto human reasons and prudence, according to the poet:

"Et male consultis pretium est: prudentia fallit
Nec fortune probat causas, sequiturque merentes,
Sed vaga per cunctos nullo discrimine fertur.
Scilicet est aliud, quod nos cogatque regatque
Majus, et in proprias ducat mortalia leges."

["And there is value in ill counsel: prudence deceives: nor does fortune inquire into causes, nor aid the most deserving, but turns hither and thither without discrimination. Indeed there is a greater power which directs and rules us, and brings mortal affairs under its own laws."—Manilius, iv. 95.]

But, to take the thing right, it should seem that our counsels and deliberations depend as much upon fortune as anything else we do, and that she engages also our arguments in her uncertainty and confusion. "We argue rashly and adventurously," says Timaeus in Plato, "by reason that, as well as ourselves, our discourses have great participation in the temerity of chance."

ETEXT editor's bookmarks:



"Art thou not ashamed," said he to him, "to sing so well?"
As great a benefit to be without (children)
Away with that eloquence that enchants us with itself
Because the people know so well how to obey
Blemishes of the great naturally appear greater
Change is to be feared
Cicero: on fame
Confidence in another man's virtue

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Dangerous man you have deprived of all means to escape
Depend as much upon fortune as anything else we do
Fame: an echo, a dream, nay, the shadow of a dream
Far more easy and pleasant to follow than to lead
He who lays the cloth is ever at the charge of the feast
I honour those most to whom I show the least honour
In war not to drive an enemy to despair
My words does but injure the love I have conceived within.
Neither the courage to die nor the heart to live
Never spoke of my money, but falsely, as others do
No great choice betwixt not knowing to speak anything but ill
No man continues ill long but by his own fault
No necessity upon a man to live in necessity
No passion so contagious as that of fear
Not a victory that puts not an end to the war
Not want, but rather abundance, that creates avarice
Only secure harbour from the storms and tempests of life
Opinions they have of things and not by the things themselves
People conceiving they have right and title to be judges
Pyrrho's hog
Repute for value in them, not what they bring to us
Satisfaction of mind to have only one path to walk in
That which cowardice itself has chosen for its refuge
The honour we receive from those that fear us is not honour
The pedestal is no part of the statue
There is more trouble in keeping money than in getting it.
There is nothing I hate so much as driving a bargain
Thou wilt not feel it long if thou feelest it too much
Tis the sharpness of our mind that gives the edge to our pains
Titles being so dearly bought
Twenty people prating about him when he is at stool
Valour whetted and enraged by mischance
What can they not do; what do they fear to do (for beauty)