

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 12 eBook

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 12 by Michel de Montaigne

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 12 eBook..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Table of Contents..... | 4 |
| Page 1..... | 5 |
| Page 2..... | 7 |
| Page 3..... | 8 |
| Page 4..... | 9 |
| Page 5..... | 10 |
| Page 6..... | 11 |
| Page 7..... | 12 |
| Page 8..... | 13 |
| Page 9..... | 15 |
| Page 10..... | 17 |
| Page 11..... | 19 |
| Page 12..... | 20 |
| Page 13..... | 21 |
| Page 14..... | 22 |
| Page 15..... | 24 |
| Page 16..... | 26 |
| Page 17..... | 28 |
| Page 18..... | 30 |
| Page 19..... | 31 |
| Page 20..... | 32 |
| Page 21..... | 34 |
| Page 22..... | 36 |

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Page 23..... | 38 |
| Page 24..... | 39 |
| Page 25..... | 40 |
| Page 26..... | 42 |
| Page 27..... | 43 |
| Page 28..... | 44 |
| Page 29..... | 45 |
| Page 30..... | 47 |
| Page 31..... | 49 |
| Page 32..... | 50 |
| Page 33..... | 52 |
| Page 34..... | 53 |
| Page 35..... | 54 |
| Page 36..... | 55 |
| Page 37..... | 56 |
| Page 38..... | 58 |
| Page 39..... | 60 |
| Page 40..... | 61 |
| Page 41..... | 62 |
| Page 42..... | 63 |
| Page 43..... | 65 |
| Page 44..... | 67 |
| Page 45..... | 69 |

Table of Contents

| Section | Table of Contents | Page |
|-------------------|-------------------|------|
| Start of eBook | | 1 |
| OF GIVING THE LIE | | 1 |
| CHAPTER XIX | | 4 |
| CHAPTER XX | | 8 |
| CHAPTER XXI | | 10 |
| CHAPTER XXII | | 14 |
| CHAPTER XXIII | | 15 |
| CHAPTER XXIV | | 17 |
| CHAPTER XXV | | 19 |
| CHAPTER XXVI | | 20 |
| CHAPTER XXVII | | 21 |
| CHAPTER XXVIII | | 29 |
| CHAPTER XXIX | | 31 |
| CHAPTER XXX. | | 37 |
| CHAPTER XXXI | | 38 |

Page 1

OF GIVING THE LIE

Well, but some one will say to me, this design of making a man's self the subject of his writing, were indeed excusable in rare and famous men, who by their reputation had given others a curiosity to be fully informed of them. It is most true, I confess and know very well, that a mechanic will scarce lift his eyes from his work to look at an ordinary man, whereas a man will forsake his business and his shop to stare at an eminent person when he comes into a town. It misbecomes any other to give his own character, but him who has qualities worthy of imitation, and whose life and opinions may serve for example: Caesar and Xenophon had a just and solid foundation whereon to found their narrations, the greatness of their own performances; and were to be wished that we had the journals of Alexander the Great, the commentaries that Augustus, Cato, Sylla, Brutus, and others left of their actions; of such persons men love and contemplate the very statues even in copper and marble. This remonstrance is very true; but it very little concerns me:

“Non recito cuiquam, nisi amicis, idque coactus;
Non ubivis, coramve quibuslibet, in medio qui
Scripta foro recitant, sunt multi, quique lavantes.”

[“I repeat my poems only to my friends, and when bound to do so; not before every one and everywhere; there are plenty of reciters in the open market-place and at the baths.”—Horace, sat. i. 4, 73.]

I do not here form a statue to erect in the great square of a city, in a church, or any public place:

“Non equidem hoc studeo, bullatis ut mihi nugis,
Pagina turgescat.....
Secreti loquimur:”

[“I study not to make my pages swell with empty trifles; you and I are talking in private.”—Persius, Sat., v. 19.]

'tis for some corner of a library, or to entertain a neighbour, a kinsman, a friend, who has a mind to renew his acquaintance and familiarity with me in this image of myself. Others have been encouraged to speak of themselves, because they found the subject worthy and rich; I, on the contrary, am the bolder, by reason the subject is so poor and sterile that I cannot be suspected of ostentation. I judge freely of the actions of others; I give little of my own to judge of, because they are nothing: I do not find so much good in myself, that I cannot tell it without blushing.



What contentment would it not be to me to hear any one thus relate to me the manners, faces, countenances, the ordinary words and fortunes of my ancestors? how attentively should I listen to it! In earnest, it would be evil nature to despise so much as the pictures of our friends and predecessors, the fashion of their clothes and arms. I preserve their writing, seal, and a particular sword they wore, and have not thrown the long staves my father used to carry in his hand, out of my closet

Page 2

“Paterna vestis, et annulus, tanto charior est
posteris, quanto erga parentes major affectus.”

["A father's garment and ring is by so much dearer to his posterity,
as there is the greater affection towards parents."
—St. Aug., *De Civat. Dei*, i. 13.]

If my posterity, nevertheless, shall be of another mind, I shall be avenged on them; for they cannot care less for me than I shall then do for them. All the traffic that I have in this with the public is, that I borrow their utensils of writing, which are more easy and most at hand; and in recompense shall, peradventure, keep a pound of butter in the market from melting in the sun:—[Montaigne semi-seriously speculates on the possibility of his *Ms.* being used to wrap up butter.]

“Ne toga cordyllis, ne penula desit olivis;
Et laxas scombris saepe dabo tunicas;”

["Let not wrappers be wanting to tunny-fish, nor olives;
and I shall supply loose coverings to mackerel."
—Martial, *xiii. l, l.*]

And though nobody should read me, have I wasted time in entertaining myself so many idle hours in so pleasing and useful thoughts? In moulding this figure upon myself, I have been so often constrained to temper and compose myself in a right posture, that the copy is truly taken, and has in some sort formed itself; painting myself for others, I represent myself in a better colouring than my own natural complexion. I have no more made my book than my book has made me: 'tis a book consubstantial with the author, of a peculiar design, a parcel of my life, and whose business is not designed for others, as that of all other books is. In giving myself so continual and so exact an account of myself, have I lost my time? For they who sometimes cursorily survey themselves only, do not so strictly examine themselves, nor penetrate so deep, as he who makes it his business, his study, and his employment, who intends a lasting record, with all his fidelity, and with all his force: The most delicious pleasures digested within, avoid leaving any trace of themselves, and avoid the sight not only of the people, but of any other person. How often has this work diverted me from troublesome thoughts? and all that are frivolous should be reputed so. Nature has presented us with a large faculty of entertaining ourselves alone; and often calls us to it, to teach us that we owe ourselves in part to society, but chiefly and mostly to ourselves. That I may habituate my fancy even to meditate in some method and to some end, and to keep it from losing itself and roving at random, 'tis but to give to body and to record all the little thoughts that present themselves to it. I give ear to my whimsies, because I am to record them. It often falls out, that being displeased at some action that civility and reason will not permit me openly to reprove, I here disgorge myself, not without design of public instruction: and also these poetical lashes,

Page 3

“Zon zur l’oeil, ion sur le groin,
Zon zur le dos du Sagoin,”

[“A slap on his eye, a slap on his snout, a slap on Sagoin’s back.”—Marot. Fripelippes, Valet de Marot a Sagoin.]

imprint themselves better upon paper than upon the flesh. What if I listen to books a little more attentively than ordinary, since I watch if I can purloin anything that may adorn or support my own? I have not at all studied to make a book; but I have in some sort studied because I had made it; if it be studying to scratch and pinch now one author, and then another, either by the head or foot, not with any design to form opinions from them, but to assist, second, and fortify those I already have embraced. But whom shall we believe in the report he makes of himself in so corrupt an age? considering there are so few, if, any at all, whom we can believe when speaking of others, where there is less interest to lie. The first thing done in the corruption of manners is banishing truth; for, as Pindar says, to be true is the beginning of a great virtue, and the first article that Plato requires in the governor of his Republic. The truth of these days is not that which really is, but what every man persuades another man to believe; as we generally give the name of money not only to pieces of the dust alloy, but even to the false also, if they will pass. Our nation has long been reproached with this vice; for Salvianus of Marseilles, who lived in the time of the Emperor Valentinian, says that lying and forswearing themselves is with the French not a vice, but a way of speaking. He who would enhance this testimony, might say that it is now a virtue in them; men form and fashion themselves to it as to an exercise of honour; for dissimulation is one of the most notable qualities of this age.

I have often considered whence this custom that we so religiously observe should spring, of being more highly offended with the reproach of a vice so familiar to us than with any other, and that it should be the highest insult that can in words be done us to reproach us with a lie. Upon examination, I find that it is natural most to defend the defects with which we are most tainted. It seems as if by resenting and being moved at the accusation, we in some sort acquit ourselves of the fault; though we have it in effect, we condemn it in outward appearance. May it not also be that this reproach seems to imply cowardice and feebleness of heart? of which can there be a more manifest sign than to eat a man’s own words—nay, to lie against a man’s own knowledge? Lying is a base vice; a vice that one of the ancients portrays in the most odious colours when he says, “that it is to manifest a contempt of God, and withal a fear of men.” It is not possible more fully to represent the horror, baseness, and irregularity of it; for what can a man imagine more hateful and contemptible than to be a coward towards men, and valiant against his Maker?

Page 4

Our intelligence being by no other way communicable to one another but by a particular word, he who falsifies that betrays public society. 'Tis the only way by which we communicate our thoughts and wills; 'tis the interpreter of the soul, and if it deceive us, we no longer know nor have further tie upon one another; if that deceive us, it breaks all our correspondence, and dissolves all the ties of government. Certain nations of the newly discovered Indies (I need not give them names, seeing they are no more; for, by wonderful and unheardof example, the desolation of that conquest has extended to the utter abolition of names and the ancient knowledge of places) offered to their gods human blood, but only such as was drawn from the tongue and ears, to expiate for the sin of lying, as well heard as pronounced. That good fellow of Greece—[Plutarch, Life of Lysander, c. 4.]—said that children are amused with toys and men with words.

As to our diverse usages of giving the lie, and the laws of honour in that case, and the alteration they have received, I defer saying what I know of them to another time, and shall learn, if I can, in the meanwhile, at what time the custom took beginning of so exactly weighing and measuring words, and of making our honour interested in them; for it is easy to judge that it was not anciently amongst the Romans and Greeks. And it has often seemed to me strange to see them rail at and give one another the lie without any quarrel. Their laws of duty steered some other course than ours. Caesar is sometimes called thief, and sometimes drunkard, to his teeth. We see the liberty of invective they practised upon one another, I mean the greatest chiefs of war of both nations, where words are only revenged with words, and do not proceed any farther.

CHAPTER XIX

OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

'Tis usual to see good intentions, if carried on without moderation, push men on to very vicious effects. In this dispute which has at this time engaged France in a civil war, the better and the soundest cause no doubt is that which maintains the ancient religion and government of the kingdom. Nevertheless, amongst the good men of that party (for I do not speak of those who only make a pretence of it, either to execute their own particular revenges or to gratify their avarice, or to conciliate the favour of princes, but of those who engage in the quarrel out of true zeal to religion and a holy desire to maintain the peace and government of their country), of these, I say, we see many whom passion transports beyond the bounds of reason, and sometimes inspires with counsels that are unjust and violent, and, moreover, rash.

Page 5

It is certain that in those first times, when our religion began to gain authority with the laws, zeal armed many against all sorts of pagan books, by which the learned suffered an exceeding great loss, a disorder that I conceive to have done more prejudice to letters than all the flames of the barbarians. Of this Cornelius Tacitus is a very good testimony; for though the Emperor Tacitus, his kinsman, had, by express order, furnished all the libraries in the world with it, nevertheless one entire copy could not escape the curious examination of those who desired to abolish it for only five or six idle clauses that were contrary to our belief.

They had also the trick easily to lend undue praises to all the emperors who made for us, and universally to condemn all the actions of those who were adversaries, as is evidently manifest in the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate,

[The character of the Emperor Julian was censured, when Montaigne was at Rome in 1581, by the Master of the Sacred Palace, who, however, as Montaigne tells us in his journal (ii. 35), referred it to his conscience to alter what he should think in bad taste. This Montaigne did not do, and this chapter supplied Voltaire with the greater part of the praises he bestowed upon the Emperor.—Leclerc.]

who was, in truth, a very great and rare man, a man in whose soul philosophy was imprinted in the best characters, by which he professed to govern all his actions; and, in truth, there is no sort of virtue of which he has not left behind him very notable examples: in chastity (of which the whole of his life gave manifest proof) we read the same of him that was said of Alexander and Scipio, that being in the flower of his age, for he was slain by the Parthians at one-and-thirty, of a great many very beautiful captives, he would not so much as look upon one. As to his justice, he took himself the pains to hear the parties, and although he would out of curiosity inquire what religion they were of, nevertheless, the antipathy he had to ours never gave any counterpoise to the balance. He made himself several good laws, and repealed a great part of the subsidies and taxes levied by his predecessors.

We have two good historians who were eyewitnesses of his actions: one of whom, Marcellinus, in several places of his history sharply reproves an edict of his whereby he interdicted all Christian rhetoricians and grammarians to keep school or to teach, and says he could wish that act of his had been buried in silence: it is probable that had he done any more severe thing against us, he, so affectionate as he was to our party, would not have passed it over in silence. He was indeed sharp against us, but yet no cruel enemy; for our own people tell this story of him, that one day, walking about the city of Chalcedon, Maris, bishop of the place; was so bold as to tell him that he was impious, and an enemy to Christ, at which, they say,

Page 6

he was no further moved than to reply, "Go, poor wretch, and lament the loss of thy eyes," to which the bishop replied again, "I thank Jesus Christ for taking away my sight, that I may not see thy impudent visage," affecting in that, they say, a philosophical patience. But this action of his bears no comparison to the cruelty that he is said to have exercised against us. "He was," says Eutropius, my other witness, "an enemy to Christianity, but without putting his hand to blood." And, to return to his justice, there is nothing in that whereof he can be accused, the severity excepted he practised in the beginning of his reign against those who had followed the party of Constantius, his predecessor. As to his sobriety, he lived always a soldier-like life; and observed a diet and routine, like one that prepared and inured himself to the austerities of war. His vigilance was such, that he divided the night into three or four parts, of which the least was dedicated to sleep; the rest was spent either in visiting the state of his army and guards in person, or in study; for amongst other rare qualities, he was very excellent in all sorts of learning. 'Tis said of Alexander the Great, that being in bed, for fear lest sleep should divert him from his thoughts and studies, he had always a basin set by his bedside, and held one of his hands out with a ball of copper in it, to the end, that, beginning to fall asleep, and his fingers leaving their hold, the ball by falling into the basin, might awake him. But the other had his soul so bent upon what he had a mind to do, and so little disturbed with fumes by reason of his singular abstinence, that he had no need of any such invention. As to his military experience, he was excellent in all the qualities of a great captain, as it was likely he should, being almost all his life in a continual exercise of war, and most of that time with us in France, against the Germans and Franks: we hardly read of any man who ever saw more dangers, or who made more frequent proofs of his personal valour.

His death has something in it parallel with that of Epaminondas, for he was wounded with an arrow, and tried to pull it out, and had done so, but that, being edged, it cut and disabled his hand. He incessantly called out that they should carry him again into the heat of the battle, to encourage his soldiers, who very bravely disputed the fight without him, till night parted the armies. He stood obliged to his philosophy for the singular contempt he had for his life and all human things. He had a firm belief of the immortality of souls.

Page 7

In matter of religion he was wrong throughout, and was surnamed the Apostate for having relinquished ours: nevertheless, the opinion seems to me more probable, that he had never thoroughly embraced it, but had dissembled out of obedience to the laws, till he came to the empire. He was in his own so superstitious, that he was laughed at for it by those of his own time, of the same opinion, who jeeringly said, that had he got the victory over the Parthians, he had destroyed the breed of oxen in the world to supply his sacrifices. He was, moreover, besotted with the art of divination, and gave authority to all sorts of predictions. He said, amongst other things at his death, that he was obliged to the gods, and thanked them, in that they would not cut him off by surprise, having long before advertised him of the place and hour of his death, nor by a mean and unmanly death, more becoming lazy and delicate people; nor by a death that was languishing, long, and painful; and that they had thought him worthy to die after that noble manner, in the progress of his victories, in the flower of his glory. He had a vision like that of Marcus Brutus, that first threatened him in Gaul, and afterward appeared to him in Persia just before his death. These words that some make him say when he felt himself wounded: "Thou hast overcome, Nazarene"; or as others, "Content thyself, Nazarene"; would hardly have been omitted, had they been believed, by my witnesses, who, being present in the army, have set down to the least motions and words of his end; no more than certain other miracles that are reported about it.

And to return to my subject, he long nourished, says Marcellinus, paganism in his heart; but all his army being Christians, he durst not own it. But in the end, seeing himself strong enough to dare to discover himself, he caused the temples of the gods to be thrown open, and did his uttermost to set on foot and to encourage idolatry. Which the better to effect, having at Constantinople found the people disunited, and also the prelates of the church divided amongst themselves, having convened them all before him, he earnestly admonished them to calm those civil dissensions, and that every one might freely, and without fear, follow his own religion. Which he the more sedulously solicited, in hope that this licence would augment the schisms and factions of their division, and hinder the people from reuniting, and consequently fortifying themselves against him by their unanimous intelligence and concord; having experienced by the cruelty of some Christians, that there is no beast in the world so much to be feared by man as man; these are very nearly his words.

Page 8

Wherein this is very worthy of consideration, that the Emperor Julian made use of the same receipt of liberty of conscience to inflame the civil dissensions that our kings do to extinguish them. So that a man may say on one side, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to scatter and sow division, and, as it were, to lend a hand to augment it, there being no legal impediment or restraint to stop or hinder their career; but, on the other side, a man may also say, that to give the people the reins to entertain every man his own opinion, is to mollify and appease them by facility and toleration, and to dull the point which is whetted and made sharper by singularity, novelty, and difficulty: and I think it is better for the honour of the devotion of our kings, that not having been able to do what they would, they have made a show of being willing to do what they could.

CHAPTER XX

THAT WE TASTE NOTHING PURE

The feebleness of our condition is such that things cannot, in their natural simplicity and purity, fall into our use; the elements that we enjoy are changed, and so 'tis with metals; and gold must be debased with some other matter to fit it for our service. Neither has virtue, so simple as that which Aristo, Pyrrho, and also the Stoics, made the end of life; nor the Cyrenaic and Aristippic pleasure, been without mixture useful to it. Of the pleasure and goods that we enjoy, there is not one exempt from some mixture of ill and inconvenience:

“Medio de fonte leporum,
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis fioribus angat.”

[“From the very fountain of our pleasure, something rises that is bitter, which even in flowers destroys.”—Lucretius, iv. 1130.]

Our extremest pleasure has some sort of groaning and complaining in it; would you not say that it is dying of pain? Nay, when we frame the image of it in its full excellence, we stuff it with sickly and painful epithets and qualities, languor, softness, feebleness, faintness, ‘morbidezza’: a great testimony of their consanguinity and consubstantiality. The most profound joy has more of severity than gaiety, in it. The highest and fullest contentment offers more of the grave than of the merry:

“Ipsa felicitas, se nisi temperat, premit.”

[“Even felicity, unless it moderate itself, oppresses?”
—Seneca, Ep. 74.]

Pleasure chews and grinds us; according to the old Greek verse, which says that the gods sell us all the goods they give us; that is to say, that they give us nothing pure and perfect, and that we do not purchase but at the price of some evil.

Page 9

Labour and pleasure, very unlike in nature, associate, nevertheless, by I know not what natural conjunction. Socrates says, that some god tried to mix in one mass and to confound pain and pleasure, but not being able to do it; he bethought him at least to couple them by the tail. Metrodorus said, that in sorrow there is some mixture of pleasure. I know not whether or no he intended anything else by that saying; but for my part, I am of opinion that there is design, consent, and complacency in giving a man's self up to melancholy. I say, that besides ambition, which may also have a stroke in the business, there is some shadow of delight and delicacy which smiles upon and flatters us even in the very lap of melancholy. Are there not some constitutions that feed upon it?

“Est quaedam flere voluptas;”

[“’Tis a certain kind of pleasure to weep.”
—Ovid, *Trist.*, iv. 3, 27.]

and one Attalus in Seneca says, that the memory of our lost friends is as grateful to us, as bitterness in wine, when too old, is to the palate:

“Minister vetuli, puer, Falerni
Inger’ mi calices amariores”—

[“Boy, when you pour out old Falernian wine, the bitterest put into my bowl.”—Catullus, xxvii. 1.]

and as apples that have a sweet tartness.

Nature discovers this confusion to us; painters hold that the same motions and grimaces of the face that serve for weeping; serve for laughter too; and indeed, before the one or the other be finished, do but observe the painter's manner of handling, and you will be in doubt to which of the two the design tends; and the extreme of laughter does at last bring tears:

“Nullum sine auctoramento malum est.”

[“No evil is without its compensation.”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 69.]

When I imagine man abounding with all the conveniences that are to be desired (let us put the case that all his members were always seized with a pleasure like that of generation, in its most excessive height) I feel him melting under the weight of his delight, and see him utterly unable to support so pure, so continual, and so universal a pleasure. Indeed, he is running away whilst he is there, and naturally makes haste to escape, as from a place where he cannot stand firm, and where he is afraid of sinking.



When I religiously confess myself to myself, I find that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice; and I am afraid that Plato, in his purest virtue (I, who am as sincere and loyal a lover of virtue of that stamp as any other whatever), if he had listened and laid his ear close to himself and he did so no doubt—would have heard some jarring note of human mixture, but faint and only perceptible to himself. Man is wholly and throughout but patch and motley. Even the laws of justice themselves cannot subsist without mixture of injustice; insomuch that Plato says, they undertake to cut off the hydra's head, who pretend to clear the law of all inconveniences:

Page 10

“Omne magnum exemplum habet aliquid ex iniquo,
quod contra singulos utilitate publics rependitur,”

["Every great example has in it some mixture of injustice, which
recompenses the wrong done to particular men by the public utility."
—Annals, xiv. 44.]

says Tacitus.

It is likewise true, that for the use of life and the service of public commerce, there may be some excesses in the purity and perspicacity of our minds; that penetrating light has in it too much of subtlety and curiosity: we must a little stupefy and blunt them to render them more obedient to example and practice, and a little veil and obscure them, the better to proportion them to this dark and earthly life. And therefore common and less speculative souls are found to be more proper for and more successful in the management of affairs, and the elevated and exquisite opinions of philosophy unfit for business. This sharp vivacity of soul, and the supple and restless volubility attending it, disturb our negotiations. We are to manage human enterprises more superficially and roughly, and leave a great part to fortune; it is not necessary to examine affairs with so much subtlety and so deep: a man loses himself in the consideration of many contrary lustres, and so many various forms:

“Volutantibus res inter se pugnantes, obtorpuerunt.... animi.”

["Whilst they considered of things so indifferent in themselves,
they were astonished, and knew not what to do."—Livy, xxxii. 20.]

'Tis what the ancients say of Simonides, that by reason his imagination suggested to him, upon the question King Hiero had put to him—[What God was.—Cicero, De Nat. Deor., i. 22.]—(to answer which he had had many days for thought), several sharp and subtle considerations, whilst he doubted which was the most likely, he totally despaired of the truth.

He who dives into and in his inquisition comprehends all circumstances and consequences, hinders his election: a little engine well handled is sufficient for executions, whether of less or greater weight. The best managers are those who can worst give account how they are so; while the greatest talkers, for the most part, do nothing to purpose; I know one of this sort of men, and a most excellent discourser upon all sorts of good husbandry, who has miserably let a hundred thousand livres yearly revenue slip through his hands; I know another who talks, who better advises than any man of his counsel, and there is not in the world a fairer show of soul and understanding than he has; nevertheless, when he comes to the test, his servants find him quite another thing; not to make any mention of his misfortunes.

CHAPTER XXI

AGAINST IDLENESS

Page 11

The Emperor Vespasian, being sick of the disease whereof he died, did not for all that neglect to inquire after the state of the empire, and even in bed continually despatched very many affairs of great consequence; for which, being reproved by his physician, as a thing prejudicial to his health, “An emperor,” said he, “must die standing.” A fine saying, in my opinion, and worthy a great prince. The Emperor Adrian since made use of the same words, and kings should be often put in mind of them, to make them know that the great office conferred upon them of the command of so many men, is not an employment of ease; and that there is nothing can so justly disgust a subject, and make him unwilling to expose himself to labour and danger for the service of his prince, than to see him, in the meantime, devoted to his ease and frivolous amusement, and to be solicitous of his preservation who so much neglects that of his people.

Whoever will take upon him to maintain that 'tis better for a prince to carry on his wars by others, than in his own person, fortune will furnish him with examples enough of those whose lieutenants have brought great enterprises to a happy issue, and of those also whose presence has done more hurt than good: but no virtuous and valiant prince can with patience endure so dishonourable councils. Under colour of saving his head, like the statue of a saint, for the happiness of his kingdom, they degrade him from and declare him incapable of his office, which is military throughout: I know one—[Probably Henry *iv.*]—who had much rather be beaten, than to sleep whilst another fights for him; and who never without jealousy heard of any brave thing done even by his own officers in his absence. And Soliman I. said, with very good reason, in my opinion, that victories obtained without the master were never complete. Much more would he have said that that master ought to blush for shame, to pretend to any share in the honour, having contributed nothing to the work, but his voice and thought; nor even so much as these, considering that in such work as that, the direction and command that deserve honour are only such as are given upon the spot, and in the heat of the business. No pilot performs his office by standing still. The princes of the Ottoman family, the chiefest in the world in military fortune, have warmly embraced this opinion, and Bajazet *ii.*, with his son, who swerved from it, spending their time in science and other retired employments, gave great blows to their empire; and Amurath *iii.*, now reigning, following their example, begins to find the same. Was it not Edward *iii.*, King of England, who said this of our Charles V.: “There never was king who so seldom put on his armour, and yet never king who gave me so much to do.” He had reason to think it strange, as an effect of chance more than of reason. And let those seek out some other to join with them than me, who will reckon the Kings of Castile and Portugal amongst the warlike and magnanimous conquerors, because at the distance of twelve hundred leagues from their lazy abode, by the conduct of their captains, they made themselves masters of both Indies; of which it has to be known if they would have had even the courage to go and in person enjoy them.

Page 12

The Emperor Julian said yet further, that a philosopher and a brave man ought not so much as to breathe; that is to say, not to allow any more to bodily necessities than what we cannot refuse; keeping the soul and body still intent and busy about honourable, great, and virtuous things. He was ashamed if any one in public saw him spit, or sweat (which is said by some, also, of the Lacedaemonian young men, and which Xenophon says of the Persian), forasmuch as he conceived that exercise, continual labour, and sobriety, ought to have dried up all those superfluities. What Seneca says will not be unfit for this place; which is, that the ancient Romans kept their youth always standing, and taught them nothing that they were to learn sitting.

'Tis a generous desire to wish to die usefully and like a man, but the effect lies not so much in our resolution as in our good fortune; a thousand have proposed to themselves in battle, either to overcome or to die, who have failed both in the one and the other, wounds and imprisonment crossing their design and compelling them to live against their will. There are diseases that overthrow even our desires, and our knowledge. Fortune ought not to second the vanity of the Roman legions, who bound themselves by oath, either to overcome or die:

“Victor, Marce Fabi, revertar ex acie: si fallo, Jovem patrem,
Gradivumque Martem aliosque iratos invoco deos.”

[“I will return, Marcus Fabius, a conqueror, from the fight:
and if I fail, I invoke Father Jove, Mars Gradivus, and the
other angry gods.”—Livy, ii. 45.]

The Portuguese say that in a certain place of their conquest of the Indies, they met with soldiers who had condemned themselves, with horrible execrations, to enter into no other composition but either to cause themselves to be slain, or to remain victorious; and had their heads and beards shaved in token of this vow. 'Tis to much purpose for us to hazard ourselves and to be obstinate: it seems as if blows avoided those who present themselves too briskly to them, and do not willingly fall upon those who too willingly seek them, and so defeat them of their design. Such there have been, who, after having tried all ways, not having been able with all their endeavour to obtain the favour of dying by the hand of the enemy, have been constrained, to make good their resolution of bringing home the honour of victory or of losing their lives, to kill themselves even in the heat of battle. Of which there are other examples, but this is one: Philistus, general of the naval army of Dionysius the younger against the Syracusans, presented them battle which was sharply disputed, their forces being equal: in this engagement, he had the better at the first, through his own valour: but the Syracusans drawing about his gally to environ him, after having done great things in his own person to disengage himself and hoping for no relief, with his own hand he took away the life he had so liberally, and in vain, exposed to the enemy.

Page 13

Mule Moloch, king of Fez, who lately won against Sebastian, king of Portugal, the battle so famous for the death of three kings, and for the transmission of that great kingdom to the crown of Castile, was extremely sick when the Portuguese entered in an hostile manner into his dominions; and from that day forward grew worse and worse, still drawing nearer to and foreseeing his end; yet never did man better employ his own sufficiency more vigorously and bravely than he did upon this occasion. He found himself too weak to undergo the pomp and ceremony of entering into his camp, which after their manner is very magnificent, and therefore resigned that honour to his brother; but this was all of the office of a general that he resigned; all the rest of greatest utility and necessity he most, exactly and gloriously performed in his own person; his body lying upon a couch, but his judgment and courage upright and firm to his last gasp, and in some sort beyond it. He might have wasted his enemy, indiscreetly advanced into his dominions, without striking a blow; and it was a very unhappy occurrence, that for want of a little life or somebody to substitute in the conduct of this war and the affairs of a troubled state, he was compelled to seek a doubtful and bloody victory, having another by a better and surer way already in his hands. Notwithstanding, he wonderfully managed the continuance of his sickness in consuming the enemy, and in drawing them far from the assistance of the navy and the ports they had on the coast of Africa, even till the last day of his life, which he designedly reserved for this great battle. He arranged his battalions in a circular form, environing the Portuguese army on every side, which round circle coming to close in and to draw up close together, not only hindered them in the conflict (which was very sharp through the valour of the young invading king), considering that they had every way to present a front, but prevented their flight after the defeat, so that finding all passages possessed and shut up by the enemy, they were constrained to close up together again:

“Coacerveturque non solum caede, sed etiam fuga,”

["Piled up not only in slaughter but in flight."]

and there they were slain in heaps upon one another, leaving to the conqueror a very bloody and entire victory. Dying, he caused himself to be carried and hurried from place to place where most need was, and passing along the files, encouraged the captains and soldiers one after another; but a corner of his main battalions being broken, he was not to be held from mounting on horseback with his sword in his hand; he did his utmost to break from those about him, and to rush into the thickest of the battle, they all the while withholding him, some by the bridle, some by his robe, and others by his stirrups. This last effort totally overwhelmed the little life he had left; they again laid him upon his bed; but coming to himself, and starting as it were out of his swoon, all other faculties failing, to give his people notice that they were to conceal his death the most necessary command he had then to give, that his soldiers might not be discouraged (with the news) he expired with his finger upon his mouth, the ordinary sign of keeping silence. Who ever lived so long and so far into death? whoever died so erect, or more like a man?

Page 14

The most extreme degree of courageously treating death, and the most natural, is to look upon it not only without astonishment but without care, continuing the wonted course of life even into it, as Cato did, who entertained himself in study, and went to sleep, having a violent and bloody death in his heart, and the weapon in his hand with which he was resolved to despatch himself.

CHAPTER XXII

OF POSTING

I have been none of the least able in this exercise, which is proper for men of my pitch, well-knit and short; but I give it over; it shakes us too much to continue it long. I was at this moment reading, that King Cyrus, the better to have news brought him from all parts of the empire, which was of a vast extent, caused it to be tried how far a horse could go in a day without baiting, and at that distance appointed men, whose business it was to have horses always in readiness, to mount those who were despatched to him; and some say, that this swift way of posting is equal to that of the flight of cranes.

Caesar says, that Lucius Vibullius Rufus, being in great haste to carry intelligence to Pompey, rode night and day, still taking fresh horses for the greater diligence and speed; and he himself, as Suetonius reports, travelled a hundred miles a day in a hired coach; but he was a furious courier, for where the rivers stopped his way he passed them by swimming, without turning out of his way to look for either bridge or ford. Tiberius Nero, going to see his brother Drusus, who was sick in Germany, travelled two hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours, having three coaches. In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy:

“Per dispositos equos prope incredibili celeritate
ab Amphissa tertio die Pellam pervenit.”

[“By pre-arranged relays of horses, he, with an almost incredible speed, rode in three days from Amphissa to Pella.”
—Livy, xxxvii. 7.]

And it appears that they were established posts, and not horses purposely laid in upon this occasion.

Cecina’s invention to send back news to his family was much more quick, for he took swallows along with him from home, and turned them out towards their nests when he would send back any news; setting a mark of some colour upon them to signify his meaning, according to what he and his people had before agreed upon.

At the theatre at Rome masters of families carried pigeons in their bosoms to which they tied letters when they had a mind to send any orders to their people at home; and the

pigeons were trained up to bring back an answer. D. Brutus made use of the same device when besieged in Modena, and others elsewhere have done the same.

In Peru they rode post upon men, who took them upon their shoulders in a certain kind of litters made for that purpose, and ran with such agility that, in their full speed, the first couriers transferred their load to the second without making any stop.

Page 15

I understand that the Wallachians, the grand Signior's couriers, perform wonderful journeys, by reason they have liberty to dismount the first person they meet upon the road, giving him their own tired horses; and that to preserve themselves from being weary, they gird themselves straight about the middle with a broad girdle; but I could never find any benefit from this.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF ILL MEANS EMPLOYED TO A GOOD END

There is wonderful relation and correspondence in this universal government of the works of nature, which very well makes it appear that it is neither accidental nor carried on by divers masters. The diseases and conditions of our bodies are, in like manner, manifest in states and governments; kingdoms and republics are founded, flourish, and decay with age as we do. We are subject to a repletion of humours, useless and dangerous: whether of those that are good (for even those the physicians are afraid of; and seeing we have nothing in us that is stable, they say that a too brisk and vigorous perfection of health must be abated by art, lest our nature, unable to rest in any certain condition, and not having whither to rise to mend itself, make too sudden and too disorderly a retreat; and therefore prescribe wrestlers to purge and bleed, to qualify that superabundant health), or else a repletion of evil humours, which is the ordinary cause of sickness. States are very often sick of the like repletion, and various sorts of purgations have commonly been applied. Some times a great multitude of families are turned out to clear the country, who seek out new abodes elsewhere and encroach upon others. After this manner our ancient Franks came from the remotest part of Germany to seize upon Gaul, and to drive thence the first inhabitants; so was that infinite deluge of men made up who came into Italy under the conduct of Brennus and others; so the Goths and Vandals, and also the people who now possess Greece, left their native country to go settle elsewhere, where they might have more room; and there are scarce two or three little corners in the world that have not felt the effect of such removals. The Romans by this means erected their colonies; for, perceiving their city to grow immeasurably populous, they eased it of the most unnecessary people, and sent them to inhabit and cultivate the lands conquered by them; sometimes also they purposely maintained wars with some of their enemies, not only to keep their own men in action, for fear lest idleness, the mother of corruption, should bring upon them some worse inconvenience:

“Et patimur longae pacis mala; saevior armis
Luxuria incumbit.”

[“And we suffer the ills of a long peace; luxury is more pernicious than war.”—Juvenal, vi. 291.]

but also to serve for a blood-letting to their Republic, and a little to evaporate the too vehement heat of their youth, to prune and clear the branches from the stock too luxuriant in wood; and to this end it was that they maintained so long a war with Carthage.

Page 16

In the treaty of Bretigny, Edward *iii.*, king of England, would not, in the general peace he then made with our king, comprehend the controversy about the Duchy of Brittany, that he might have a place wherein to discharge himself of his soldiers, and that the vast number of English he had brought over to serve him in his expedition here might not return back into England. And this also was one reason why our King Philip consented to send his son John upon a foreign expedition, that he might take along with him a great number of hot young men who were then in his pay.

There—are many in our times who talk at this rate, wishing that this hot emotion that is now amongst us might discharge itself in some neighbouring war, for fear lest all the peccant humours that now reign in this politic body of ours may diffuse themselves farther, keep the fever still in the height, and at last cause our total ruin; and, in truth, a foreign is much more supportable than a civil war, but I do not believe that God will favour so unjust a design as to offend and quarrel with others for our own advantage:

“Nil mihi tam valde placeat, Rhamnusia virgo,
Quod temere invitis suscipiatur heris.”

[“Rhamnusian virgin, let nothing ever so greatly please me which is taken without justice from the unwilling owners”
—Catullus, lxxviii. 77.]

And yet the weakness of our condition often pushes us upon the necessity of making use of ill means to a good end. Lycurgus, the most perfect legislator that ever was, virtuous and invented this very unjust practice of making the helots, who were their slaves, drunk by force, to the end that the Spartans, seeing them so lost and buried in wine, might abhor the excess of this vice. And yet those were still more to blame who of old gave leave that criminals, to what sort of death soever condemned, should be cut up alive by the physicians, that they might make a true discovery of our inward parts, and build their art upon greater certainty; for, if we must run into excesses, it is more excusable to do it for the health of the soul than that of the body; as the Romans trained up the people to valour and the contempt of dangers and death by those furious spectacles of gladiators and fencers, who, having to fight it out to the last, cut, mangled, and killed one another in their presence:

“Quid vesani aliud sibi vult ars impia ludi,
Quid mortes juvenum, quid sanguine pasta voluptas?”

[“What other end does the impious art of the gladiators propose to itself, what the slaughter of young men, what pleasure fed with blood.”—Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 643.]

and this custom continued till the Emperor Theodosius' time:



“Arripe dilatam tua, dux, in tempora famam,
Quodque patris superest, successor laudis habeto
Nullus in urbe cadat, cujus sit poena voluptas....
Jam solis contenta feris, infamis arena
Nulla cruentatis homicidia ludat in armis.”

Page 17

["Prince, take the honours delayed for thy reign, and be successor to thy fathers; henceforth let none at Rome be slain for sport. Let beasts' blood stain the infamous arena, and no more homicides be there acted."—Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 643.]

It was, in truth, a wonderful example, and of great advantage for the training up the people, to see every day before their eyes a hundred; two hundred, nay, a thousand couples of men armed against one another, cut one another to pieces with so great a constancy of courage, that they were never heard to utter so much as one syllable of weakness or commiseration; never seen to turn their backs, nor so much as to make one cowardly step to evade a blow, but rather exposed their necks to the adversary's sword and presented themselves to receive the stroke; and many of them, when wounded to death, have sent to ask the spectators if they were satisfied with their behaviour, before they lay down to die upon the place. It was not enough for them to fight and to die bravely, but cheerfully too; insomuch that they were hissed and cursed if they made any hesitation about receiving their death. The very girls themselves set them on:

"Consurgit ad ictus,
Et, quoties victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa
Delicias ait esse suas, pectusque jacentis
Virgo modesta jubet converso pollice rumpi."

["The modest virgin is so delighted with the sport, that she applauds the blow, and when the victor bathes his sword in his fellow's throat, she says it is her pleasure, and with turned thumb orders him to rip up the bosom of the prostrate victim." —Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ii. 617.]

The first Romans only condemned criminals to this example: but they afterwards employed innocent slaves in the work, and even freemen too, who sold themselves to this purpose, nay, moreover, senators and knights of Rome, and also women:

"Nunc caput in mortem vendunt, et funus arena,
Atque hostem sibi quisque parat, cum bella quiescunt."

["They sell themselves to death and the circus, and, since the wars are ceased, each for himself a foe prepares."
—Manilius, *Astron.*, iv. 225.]

"Hos inter fremitus novosque lusus....
Stat sexus rudis insciusque ferri,
Et pugnas capit improbus viriles;"

["Amidst these tumults and new sports, the tender sex, unskilled in arms, immodestly engaged in manly fights."
—Statius, *Sylv.*, i. 6, 51.]

which I should think strange and incredible, if we were not accustomed every day to see in our own wars many thousands of men of other nations, for money to stake their blood and their lives in quarrels wherein they have no manner of concern.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF THE ROMAN GRANDEUR

Page 18

I will only say a word or two of this infinite argument, to show the simplicity of those who compare the pitiful greatness of these times with that of Rome. In the seventh book of Cicero's Familiar Epistles (and let the grammarians put out that surname of familiar if they please, for in truth it is not very suitable; and they who, instead of familiar, have substituted "ad Familiares," may gather something to justify them for so doing out of what Suetonius says in the Life of Caesar, that there was a volume of letters of his "ad Familiares") there is one directed to Caesar, then in Gaul, wherein Cicero repeats these words, which were in the end of another letter that Caesar had written to him: "As to what concerns Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him king of Gaul, and if you would have me advance any other friend of yours send him to me." It was no new thing for a simple citizen of Rome, as Caesar then was, to dispose of kingdoms, for he took away that of King Deiotarus from him to give it to a gentleman of the city of Pergamus, called Mithridates; and they who wrote his Life record several cities sold by him; and Suetonius says, that he had once from King Ptolemy three millions and six hundred thousand crowns, which was very like selling him his own kingdom:

"Tot Galatae, tot Pontus, tot Lydia, nummis."

["So much for Galatia, so much for Pontus,
so much for Lydia."—Claudius in Eutrop., i. 203.]

Marcus Antonius said, that the greatness of the people of Rome was not so much seen in what they took, as in what they gave; and, indeed, some ages before Antonius, they had dethroned one amongst the rest with so wonderful authority, that in all the Roman history I have not observed anything that more denotes the height of their power. Antiochus possessed all Egypt, and was, moreover, ready to conquer Cyprus and other appendages of that empire: when being upon the progress of his victories, C. Popilius came to him from the Senate, and at their first meeting refused to take him by the hand, till he had first read his letters, which after the king had read, and told him he would consider of them, Popilius made a circle about him with his cane, saying:—"Return me an answer, that I may carry it back to the Senate, before thou stirrest out of this circle." Antiochus, astonished at the roughness of so positive a command, after a little pause, replied, "I will obey the Senate's command." Then Popilius saluted him as friend of the Roman people. To have renounced claim to so great a monarchy, and a course of such successful fortune, from the effects of three lines in writing! Truly he had reason, as he afterwards did, to send the Senate word by his ambassadors, that he had received their order with the same respect as if it had come from the immortal gods.

All the kingdoms that Augustus gained by the right of war, he either restored to those who had lost them or presented them to strangers. And Tacitus, in reference to this, speaking of Cogidunus, king of England, gives us, by a marvellous touch, an instance of that infinite power: the Romans, says he, were from all antiquity accustomed to leave the kings they had subdued in possession of their kingdoms under their authority

Page 19

“Ut haberent instruments servitutis et reges.”

["That they might have even kings to be their slaves."
—Livy, xlv. 13.]

'Tis probable that Solyman, whom we have seen make a gift of Hungary and other principalities, had therein more respect to this consideration than to that he was wont to allege, *viz.*, that he was glutted and overcharged with so many monarchies and so much dominion, as his own valour and that of his ancestors had acquired.

CHAPTER XXV

NOT TO COUNTERFEIT BEING SICK

There is an epigram in Martial, and one of the very good ones—for he has of all sorts—where he pleasantly tells the story of Caelius, who, to avoid making his court to some great men of Rome, to wait their rising, and to attend them abroad, pretended to have the gout; and the better to colour this anointed his legs, and had them lapped up in a great many swathings, and perfectly counterfeited both the gesture and countenance of a gouty person; till in the end, Fortune did him the kindness to make him one indeed:

“Quantum curs potest et ars doloris
Desiit fingere Caelius podagram.”

["How great is the power of counterfeiting pain: Caelius has ceased to feign the gout; he has got it."—Martial, Ep., vii. 39, 8.]

I think I have read somewhere in Appian a story like this, of one who to escape the proscriptions of the triumvirs of Rome, and the better to be concealed from the discovery of those who pursued him, having hidden himself in a disguise, would yet add this invention, to counterfeit having but one eye; but when he came to have a little more liberty, and went to take off the plaster he had a great while worn over his eye, he found he had totally lost the sight of it indeed, and that it was absolutely gone. 'Tis possible that the action of sight was dulled from having been so long without exercise, and that the optic power was wholly retired into the other eye: for we evidently perceive that the eye we keep shut sends some part of its virtue to its fellow, so that it will swell and grow bigger; and so inaction, with the heat of ligatures and, plasters, might very well have brought some gouty humour upon the counterfeiter in Martial.

Reading in Froissart the vow of a troop of young English gentlemen, to keep their left eyes bound up till they had arrived in France and performed some notable exploit upon us, I have often been tickled with this thought, that it might have befallen them as it did those others, and they might have returned with but an eye a-piece to their mistresses, for whose sakes they had made this ridiculous vow.

Page 20

Mothers have reason to rebuke their children when they counterfeit having but one eye, squinting, lameness, or any other personal defect; for, besides that their bodies being then so tender, may be subject to take an ill bent, fortune, I know not how, sometimes seems to delight in taking us at our word; and I have heard several examples related of people who have become really sick, by only feigning to be so. I have always used, whether on horseback or on foot, to carry a stick in my hand, and even to affect doing it with an elegant air; many have threatened that this fancy would one day be turned into necessity: if so, I should be the first of my family to have the gout.

But let us a little lengthen this chapter, and add another anecdote concerning blindness. Pliny reports of one who, dreaming he was blind, found himself so indeed in the morning without any preceding infirmity in his eyes. The force of imagination might assist in this case, as I have said elsewhere, and Pliny seems to be of the same opinion; but it is more likely that the motions which the body felt within, of which physicians, if they please, may find out the cause, taking away his sight, were the occasion of his dream.

Let us add another story, not very improper for this subject, which Seneca relates in one of his epistles: "You know," says he, writing to Lucilius, "that Harpaste, my wife's fool, is thrown upon me as an hereditary charge, for I have naturally an aversion to those monsters; and if I have a mind to laugh at a fool, I need not seek him far; I can laugh at myself. This fool has suddenly lost her sight: I tell you a strange, but a very true thing she is not sensible that she is blind, but eternally importunes her keeper to take her abroad, because she says the house is dark. That what we laugh at in her, I pray you to believe, happens to every one of us: no one knows himself to be avaricious or grasping; and, again, the blind call for a guide, while we stray of our own accord. I am not ambitious, we say; but a man cannot live otherwise at Rome; I am not wasteful, but the city requires a great outlay; 'tis not my fault if I am choleric—if I have not yet established any certain course of life: 'tis the fault of youth. Let us not seek our disease out of ourselves; 'tis in us, and planted in our bowels; and the mere fact that we do not perceive ourselves to be sick, renders us more hard to be cured. If we do not betimes begin to see to ourselves, when shall we have provided for so many wounds and evils wherewith we abound? And yet we have a most sweet and charming medicine in philosophy; for of all the rest we are sensible of no pleasure till after the cure: this pleases and heals at once." This is what Seneca says, that has carried me from my subject, but there is advantage in the change.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THUMBS

Tacitus reports, that amongst certain barbarian kings their manner was, when they would make a firm obligation, to join their right hands close to one another, and

intertwist their thumbs; and when, by force of straining the blood, it appeared in the ends, they lightly pricked them with some sharp instrument, and mutually sucked them.

Page 21

Physicians say that the thumbs are the master fingers of the hand, and that their Latin etymology is derived from “pollere.” The Greeks called them ‘Avtixeip’, as who should say, another hand. And it seems that the Latins also sometimes take it in this sense for the whole hand:

“Sed nec vocibus excitata blandis,
Molli pollici nec rogata, surgit.”

["Neither to be excited by soft words or by the thumb."
—Mart., xii. 98, 8.]

It was at Rome a signification of favour to depress and turn in the thumbs:

“Fautor utroque tuum laudabit pollice ludum:”

["Thy patron will applaud thy sport with both thumbs"
—Horace.]

and of disfavour to elevate and thrust them outward:

“Converso pollice vulgi,
Quemlibet occidunt populariter.”

["The populace, with inverted thumbs, kill all that
come before them.”—Juvenal, iii. 36]

The Romans exempted from war all such as were maimed in the thumbs, as having no more sufficient strength to hold their weapons. Augustus confiscated the estate of a Roman knight who had maliciously cut off the thumbs of two young children he had, to excuse them from going into the armies; and, before him, the Senate, in the time of the Italic war, had condemned Caius Vatienus to perpetual imprisonment, and confiscated all his goods, for having purposely cut off the thumb of his left hand, to exempt himself from that expedition. Some one, I have forgotten who, having won a naval battle, cut off the thumbs of all his vanquished enemies, to render them incapable of fighting and of handling the oar. The Athenians also caused the thumbs of the Aeginatans to be cut off, to deprive them of the superiority in the art of navigation.

In Lacedaemon, pedagogues chastised their scholars by biting their thumbs.

CHAPTER XXVII

COWARDICE THE MOTHER OF CRUELTY



I have often heard it said that cowardice is the mother of cruelty; and I have found by experience that malicious and inhuman animosity and fierceness are usually accompanied with feminine weakness. I have seen the most cruel people, and upon frivolous occasions, apt to cry. Alexander, the tyrant of Pheres, durst not be a spectator of tragedies in the theatre, for fear lest his citizens should see him weep at the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, who himself without pity caused so many people every day to be murdered. Is it not meanness of spirit that renders them so pliable to all extremities? Valour, whose effect is only to be exercised against resistance

“Nec nisi bellantis gaudet cervice juvenci”—

["Nor delights in killing a bull unless he resists."
—Claudius, Ep. ad Hadrianum, v. 39.]

Page 22

stops when it sees the enemy at its mercy; but pusillanimity, to say that it was also in the game, not having dared to meddle in the first act of danger, takes as its part the second, of blood and massacre. The murders in victories are commonly performed by the rascality and hangers-on of an army, and that which causes so many unheard of cruelties in domestic wars is, that this canaille makes war in imbruing itself up to the elbows in blood, and ripping up a body that lies prostrate at its feet, having no sense of any other valour:

“Et lupus, et turpes instant morientibus ursi,
Et quaecunque minor nobilitate fera est:”

[“Wolves and the filthy bears, and all the baser beasts,
fall upon the dying.”—Ovid, *Trist.*, iii. 5, 35.]

like cowardly dogs, that in the house worry and tear the skins of wild beasts, they durst not come near in the field. What is it in these times of ours that makes our quarrels mortal; and that, whereas our fathers had some degrees of revenge, we now begin with the last in ours, and at the first meeting nothing is to be said but, kill? What is this but cowardice?

Every one is sensible that there is more bravery and disdain in subduing an enemy, than in cutting, his throat; and in making him yield, than in putting him to the sword: besides that the appetite of revenge is better satisfied and pleased because its only aim is to make itself felt: And this is the reason why we do not fall upon a beast or a stone when they hurt us, because they are not capable of being sensible of our revenge; and to kill a man is to save him from the injury and offence we intend him. And as Bias cried out to a wicked fellow, “I know that sooner or later thou wilt have thy reward, but I am afraid I shall not see it”; —[Plutarch, on the Delay in Divine Justice, c. 2.]—and pitied the Orchomenians that the penitence of Lyciscus for the treason committed against them, came at a season when there was no one remaining alive of those who had been interested in the offence, and whom the pleasure of this penitence should affect: so revenge is to be pitied, when the person on whom it is executed is deprived of means of suffering under it: for as the avenger will look on to enjoy the pleasure of his revenge, so the person on whom he takes revenge should be a spectator too, to be afflicted and to repent. “He will repent it,” we say, and because we have given him a pistol-shot through the head, do we imagine he will repent? On the contrary, if we but observe, we shall find, that he makes mouths at us in falling, and is so far from penitency, that he does not so much as repine at us; and we do him the kindest office of life, which is to make him die insensibly, and soon: we are afterwards to hide ourselves, and to shift and fly from the officers of justice, who pursue us, whilst he is at rest. Killing is good to frustrate an offence to come, not to revenge one that is already past; and more an act of fear than of bravery; of precaution than of courage; of defence than of enterprise. It is manifest that by it we lose both the true end of revenge and the care of our reputation;

we are afraid, if he lives he will do us another injury as great as the first; 'tis not out of animosity to him, but care of thyself, that thou gettest rid of him.

Page 23

In the kingdom of Narsingah this expedient would be useless to us, where not only soldiers, but tradesmen also, end their differences by the sword. The king never denies the field to any who wish to fight; and when they are persons of quality; he looks on, rewarding the victor with a chain of gold,—for which any one who pleases may fight with him again, so that, by having come off from one combat, he has engaged himself in many.

If we thought by virtue to be always masters of our enemies, and to triumph over them at pleasure, we should be sorry they should escape from us as they do, by dying: but we have a mind to conquer, more with safety than honour, and, in our quarrel, more pursue the end than the glory.

Asnius Pollio, who, as being a worthy man, was the less to be excused, committed a like, error, when, having written a libel against Plancus, he forbore to publish it till he was dead; which is to bite one's thumb at a blind man, to rail at one who is deaf, to wound a man who has no feeling, rather than to run the hazard of his resentment. And it was also said of him that it was only for hobgoblins to wrestle with the dead.

He who stays to see the author die, whose writings he intends to question, what does he say but that he is weak in his aggressiveness? It was told to Aristotle that some one had spoken ill of him: "Let him do more," said he; "let him whip me too, provided I am not there."

Our fathers contented themselves with revenging an insult with the lie, the lie with a box of the ear, and so forward; they were valiant enough not to fear their adversaries, living and provoked we tremble for fear so soon as we see them on foot. And that this is so, does not our noble practice of these days, equally to prosecute to death both him that has offended us and him we have offended, make it out? 'Tis also a kind of cowardice that has introduced the custom of having seconds, thirds, and fourths in our duels; they were formerly duels; they are now skirmishes, rencontres, and battles. Solitude was, doubtless, terrible to those who were the first inventors of this practice:

"Quum in se cuique minimum fiducia esset,"

for naturally any company whatever is consolatory in danger. Third persons were formerly called in to prevent disorder and foul play only, and to be witness of the fortune of the combat; but now they have brought it to this pass that the witnesses themselves engage; whoever is invited cannot handsomely stand by as an idle spectator, for fear of being suspected either of want of affection or of courage. Besides the injustice and unworthiness of such an action, of engaging other strength and valour in the protection of your honour than your own, I conceive it a disadvantage to a brave man, and who wholly relies upon himself, to shuffle his fortune with that of a second; every one runs hazard enough himself without hazarding for another, and has enough to do to assure himself in

Page 24

his own valour for the defence of his life, without intrusting a thing so dear in a third man's hand. For, if it be not expressly agreed upon before to the contrary, 'tis a combined party of all four, and if your second be killed, you have two to deal withal, with good reason; and to say that it is foul play, it is so indeed, as it is, well armed, to attack a man who has but the hilt of a broken sword in his hand, or, clear and untouched, a man who is desperately wounded: but if these be advantages you have got by fighting, you may make use of them without reproach. The disparity and inequality are only weighed and considered from the condition of the combatants when they began; as to the rest, you must take your chance: and though you had, alone, three enemies upon you at once, your two companions being killed, you have no more wrong done you, than I should do in a battle, by running a man through whom I should see engaged with one of our own men, with the like advantage. The nature of society will have it so that where there is troop against troop, as where our Duke of Orleans challenged Henry, king of England, a hundred against a hundred; three hundred against as many, as the Argians against the Lacedaemonians; three to three, as the Horatii against the Curiatii, the multitude on either side is considered but as one single man: the hazard, wherever there is company, being confused and mixed.

I have a domestic interest in this discourse; for my brother, the Sieur de Mattecoulom, was at Rome asked by a gentleman with whom he had no great acquaintance, and who was a defendant challenged by another, to be his second; in this duel he found himself matched with a gentleman much better known to him. (I would fain have an explanation of these rules of honour, which so often shock and confound those of reason.) After having despatched his man, seeing the two principals still on foot and sound, he ran in to disengage his friend. What could he do less? should he have stood still, and if chance would have ordered it so, have seen him he was come thither to defend killed before his face? what he had hitherto done helped not the business; the quarrel was yet undecided. The courtesy that you can, and certainly ought to shew to your enemy, when you have reduced him to an ill condition and have a great advantage over him, I do not see how you can do it, where the interest of another is concerned, where you are only called in as an assistant, and the quarrel is none of yours: he could neither be just nor courteous, at the hazard of him he was there to serve. And he was therefore enlarged from the prisons of Italy at the speedy and solemn request of our king. Indiscreet nation! we are not content to make our vices and follies known to the world by report only, but we must go into foreign countries, there to show them what fools we are. Put three Frenchmen into the deserts of Libya, they will not live a month together without fighting; so

Page 25

that you would say this peregrination were a thing purposely designed to give foreigners the pleasure of our tragedies, and, for the most part, to such as rejoice and laugh at our miseries. We go into Italy to learn to fence, and exercise the art at the expense of our lives before we have learned it; and yet, by the rule of discipline, we should put the theory before the practice. We discover ourselves to be but learners:

“Primitae juvenum miserae, bellicae futuri
Dura rudimenta.”

[“Wretched the elementary trials of youth, and hard the rudiments of approaching war.”—Virgil, *Aeneid*, xi. 156.]

I know that fencing is an art very useful to its end (in a duel betwixt two princes, cousin-germans, in Spain, the elder, says Livy, by his skill and dexterity in arms, easily overcoming the greater and more awkward strength of the younger), and of which the knowledge, as I experimentally know, has inspired some with courage above their natural measure; but this is not properly valour, because it supports itself upon address, and is founded upon something besides itself. The honour of combat consists in the jealousy of courage, and not of skill; and therefore I have known a friend of mine, famed as a great master in this exercise, in his quarrels make choice of such arms as might deprive him of this advantage and that wholly depended upon fortune and assurance, that they might not attribute his victory rather to his skill in fencing than his valour. When I was young, gentlemen avoided the reputation of good fencers as injurious to them, and learned to fence with all imaginable privacy as a trade of subtlety, derogating from true and natural valour:

“Non schivar non parar, non ritirarsi,
Vogliono costor, ne qui destrezza ha parte;
Non danno i colpi or finti, or pieni, or scarsi!
Toglie l'ira a il furor l'uso de l'arte.
Odi le spade orribilmente utarsi
A mezzo il ferro; il pie d'orma non parte,
Sempre a il pie fermo, a la man sempre in moto;
Ne scende taglio in van, ne punta a voto.”

[“They neither shrank, nor vantage sought of ground, They travers'd not, nor skipt from part to part, Their blows were neither false, nor feigned found: In fight, their rage would let them use no art. Their swords together clash with dreadful sound, Their feet stand fast, and neither stir nor start, They move their hands, steadfast their feet remain. Nor blow nor foin they strook, or thrust in vain.” —Tasso, *Gierus. Lib.*, c. 12, st. 55, Fairfax's translation.]

Butts, tilting, and barriers, the feint of warlike fights, were the exercises of our forefathers: this other exercise is so much the less noble, as it only respects a private end; that teaches us to destroy one another against law and justice, and that

Page 26

every way always produces very ill effects. It is much more worthy and more becoming to exercise ourselves in things that strengthen than that weaken our government and that tend to the public safety and common glory. The consul, Publius Rutilius, was the first who taught the soldiers to handle their arms with skill, and joined art with valour, not for the rise of private quarrel, but for war and the quarrels of the people of Rome; a popular and civil defence. And besides the example of Caesar, who commanded his men to shoot chiefly at the face of Pompey's soldiers in the battle of Pharsalia, a thousand other commanders have also bethought them to invent new forms of weapons and new ways of striking and defending, according as occasion should require.

But as Philopoemen condemned wrestling, wherein he excelled, because the preparatives that were therein employed were differing from those that appertain to military discipline, to which alone he conceived men of honour ought wholly to apply themselves; so it seems to me that this address to which we form our limbs, those writhings and motions young men are taught in this new school, are not only of no use, but rather contrary and hurtful to the practice of fight in battle; and also our people commonly make use of particular weapons, and peculiarly designed for duel; and I have seen, when it has been disapproved, that a gentleman challenged to fight with rapier and poignard appeared in the array of a man-at-arms, and that another should take his cloak instead of his poignard. It is worthy of consideration that Laches in Plato, speaking of learning to fence after our manner, says that he never knew any great soldier come out of that school, especially the masters of it: and, indeed, as to them, our experience tells as much. As to the rest, we may at least conclude that they are qualities of no relation or correspondence; and in the education of the children of his government, Plato interdicts the art of boxing, introduced by Amycus and Epeius, and that of wrestling, by Antaeus and Cercyo, because they have another end than to render youth fit for the service of war and contribute nothing to it. But I see that I have somewhat strayed from my theme.

The Emperor Mauricius, being advertised by dreams and several prognostics, that one Phocas, an obscure soldier, should kill him, questioned his son-in-law, Philip, who this Phocas was, and what were his nature, qualities, and manners; and so soon as Philip, amongst other things, had told him that he was cowardly and timorous, the emperor immediately concluded then that he was a murderer and cruel. What is it that makes tyrants so sanguinary? 'Tis only the solicitude for their own safety, and that their faint hearts can furnish them with no other means of securing themselves than in exterminating those who may hurt them, even so much as women, for fear of a scratch:

"Cuncta ferit, dum cuncta timer."

Page 27

["He strikes at all who fears all."
—Claudius, in Eutrop., i. 182.]

The first cruelties are exercised for themselves thence springs the fear of a just revenge, which afterwards produces a series of new cruelties, to obliterate one another. Philip, king of Macedon, who had so much to do with the people of Rome, agitated with the horror of so many murders committed by his order, and doubting of being able to keep himself secure from so many families, at divers times mortally injured and offended by him, resolved to seize all the children of those he had caused to be slain, to despatch them daily one after another, and so to establish his own repose.

Fine matter is never impertinent, however placed; and therefore I, who more consider the weight and utility of what I deliver than its order and connection, need not fear in this place to bring in an excellent story, though it be a little by-the-by; for when they are rich in their own native beauty, and are able to justify themselves, the least end of a hair will serve to draw them into my discourse.

Amongst others condemned by Philip, had been one Herodicus, prince of Thessaly; he had, moreover, after him caused his two sons-in-law to be put to death, each leaving a son very young behind him. Theoxena and Archo were their two widows. Theoxena, though highly courted to it, could not be persuaded to marry again: Archo married Poris, the greatest man among the AEnians, and by him had a great many children, whom she, dying, left at a very tender age. Theoxena, moved with a maternal charity towards her nephews, that she might have them under her own eyes and in her own protection, married Poris: when presently comes a proclamation of the king's edict. This brave-spirited mother, suspecting the cruelty of Philip, and afraid of the insolence of the soldiers towards these charming and tender children was so bold as to declare that she would rather kill them with her own hands than deliver them. Poris, startled at this protestation, promised her to steal them away, and to transport them to Athens, and there commit them to the custody of some faithful friends of his. They took, therefore, the opportunity of an annual feast which was celebrated at AEnia in honour of AEneas, and thither they went. Having appeared by day at the public ceremonies and banquet, they stole the night following into a vessel laid ready for the purpose, to escape away by sea. The wind proved contrary, and finding themselves in the morning within sight of the land whence they had launched overnight, and being pursued by the guards of the port, Poris perceiving this, laboured all he could to make the mariners do their utmost to escape from the pursuers. But Theoxena, frantic with affection and revenge, in pursuance of her former resolution, prepared both weapons and poison, and exposing them before them; "Go to, my children," said she, "death is now the only means of your

Page 28

defence and liberty, and shall administer occasion to the gods to exercise their sacred justice: these sharp swords, and these full cups, will open you the way into it; courage, fear nothing! And thou, my son, who art the eldest, take this steel into thy hand, that thou mayest the more bravely die." The children having on one side so powerful a counsellor, and the enemy at their throats on the other, run all of them eagerly upon what was next to hand; and, half dead, were thrown into the sea. Theoxena, proud of having so gloriously provided for the safety of her children, clasping her arms with great affection about her husband's neck. "Let us, my friend," said she, "follow these boys, and enjoy the same sepulchre they do"; and so, having embraced, they threw themselves headlong into the sea; so that the ship was carried—back without the owners into the harbour.

Tyrants, at once both to kill and to make their anger felt, have employed their capacity to invent the most lingering deaths. They will have their enemies despatched, but not so fast that they may not have leisure to taste their vengeance. And therein they are mightily perplexed; for if the torments they inflict are violent, they are short; if long, they are not then so painful as they desire; and thus plague themselves in choice of the greatest cruelty. Of this we have a thousand examples in antiquity, and I know not whether we, unawares, do not retain some traces of this barbarity.

All that exceeds a simple death appears to me absolute cruelty. Our justice cannot expect that he, whom the fear of dying by being beheaded or hanged will not restrain, should be any more awed by the imagination of a languishing fire, pincers, or the wheel. And I know not, in the meantime, whether we do not throw them into despair; for in what condition can be the soul of a man, expecting four-and-twenty hours together to be broken upon a wheel, or after the old way, nailed to a cross? Josephus relates that in the time of the war the Romans made in Judaea, happening to pass by where they had three days before crucified certain Jews, he amongst them knew three of his own friends, and obtained the favour of having them taken down, of whom two, he says, died; the third lived a great while after.

Chalcondylas, a writer of good credit, in the records he has left behind him of things that happened in his time, and near him, tells us, as of the most excessive torment, of that the Emperor Mohammed very often practised, of cutting off men in the middle by the diaphragm with one blow of a scimitar, whence it followed that they died as it were two deaths at once; and both the one part, says he, and the other, were seen to stir and strive a great while after in very great torment. I do not think there was any great suffering in this motion the torments that are the most dreadful to look on are not always the greatest to endure; and I find those that other historians relate to have been practised by him upon the Epirot lords, are more horrid and cruel, where they were condemned to be flayed alive piecemeal, after so malicious a manner that they continued fifteen days in that misery.

Page 29

And these other two: Croesus, having caused a gentleman, the favourite of his brother Pantaleon, to be seized, carried him into a fuller's shop, where he caused him to be scratched and carded with the cards and combs belonging to that trade, till he died. George Sechel, chief commander of the peasants of Poland, who committed so many mischiefs under the title of the Crusade, being defeated in battle and taken by the Vayvode of Transylvania, was three days bound naked upon the rack exposed to all sorts of torments that any one could contrive against him: during which time many other prisoners were kept fasting; in the end, he living and looking on, they made his beloved brother Lucat, for whom alone he entreated, taking on himself the blame of all their evil actions drink his blood, and caused twenty of his most favoured captains to feed upon him, tearing his flesh in pieces with their teeth, and swallowing the morsels. The remainder of his body and his bowels, so soon as he was dead, were boiled, and others of his followers compelled to eat them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR SEASON

Such as compare Cato the Censor with the younger Cato, who killed himself, compare two beautiful natures, much resembling one another. The first acquired his reputation several ways, and excels in military exploits and the utility of his public employments; but the virtue of the younger, besides that it were blasphemy to compare any to it in vigour, was much more pure and unblemished. For who could absolve that of the Censor from envy and ambition, having dared to attack the honour of Scipio, a man in goodness and all other excellent qualities infinitely beyond him or any other of his time?

That which they, report of him, amongst other things, that in his extreme old age he put himself upon learning the Greek tongue with so greedy an appetite, as if to quench a long thirst, does not seem to me to make much for his honour; it being properly what we call falling into second childhood. All things have their seasons, even good ones, and I may say my Paternoster out of time; as they accused T. Quintus Flaminius, that being general of an army, he was seen praying apart in the time of a battle that he won.

"Imponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis."

["The wise man limits even honest things."—Juvenal, vi. 444]

Eudemondas, seeing Xenocrates when very old, still very intent upon his school lectures: "When will this man be wise," said he, "if he is yet learning?" And Philopaemen, to those who extolled King Ptolemy for every day inuring his person to the exercise of arms: "It is not," said he, "commendable in a king of his age to exercise himself in these things; he ought now really to employ them." The young are to make their preparations, the old to enjoy them, say the sages: and the greatest vice they

observe in us is that our desires incessantly grow young again; we are always re-beginning to live.

Page 30

Our studies and desires should sometime be sensible of age; yet we have one foot in the grave and still our appetites and pursuits spring every day anew within us:

“Tu secanda marmora
Locas sub ipsum funus, et, sepulcri
Immemor, struis domos.”

[“You against the time of death have marble cut for use, and, forgetful of the tomb, build houses.”—Horace, *Od.*, ii. 18, 17.]

The longest of my designs is not of above a year’s extent; I think of nothing now but ending; rid myself of all new hopes and enterprises; take my last leave of every place I depart from, and every day dispossess myself of what I have.

“Olim jam nec perit quicquam mihi, nec acquiritur....
plus superest viatici quam viae.”

[“Henceforward I will neither lose, nor expect to get: I have more wherewith to defray my journey, than I have way to go.” (Or): “Hitherto nothing of me has been lost or gained; more remains to pay the way than there is way.”—Seneca, *Ep.*, 77. (The sense seems to be that so far he had met his expenses, but that for the future he was likely to have more than he required.)]

“Vixi, et, quem dederat cursum fortuna, peregi.”

[“I have lived and finished the career Fortune placed before me.”
—*Aeneid*, iv. 653.]

’Tis indeed the only comfort I find in my old age, that it mortifies in me several cares and desires wherewith my life has been disturbed; the care how the world goes, the care of riches, of grandeur, of knowledge, of health, of myself. There are men who are learning to speak at a time when they should learn to be silent for ever. A man may always study, but he must not always go to school what a contemptible thing is an old Abecedarian!—[Seneca, *Ep.* 36]

“Diversos diversa juvant; non omnibus annis
Omnia conveniunt.”

[“Various things delight various men; all things are not for all ages.”—*Gall.*, *Eleg.*, i. 104.]

If we must study, let us study what is suitable to our present condition, that we may answer as he did, who being asked to what end he studied in his decrepit age, “that I may go out better,” said he, “and at greater ease.” Such a study was that of the younger Cato, feeling his end approach, and which he met with in Plato’s *Discourse of*

the Eternity of the Soul: not, as we are to believe, that he was not long before furnished with all sorts of provision for such a departure; for of assurance, an established will and instruction, he had more than Plato had in all his writings; his knowledge and courage were in this respect above philosophy; he applied himself to this study, not for the service of his death; but, as a man whose sleeps were never disturbed in the importance of such a deliberation, he also, without choice or change, continued his studies with the other accustomed actions of his life. The night that he was denied the praetorship he spent in play; that wherein he was to die he spent in reading. The loss either of life or of office was all one to him.

Page 31

CHAPTER XXIX

OF VIRTUE

I find by experience, that there is a good deal to be said betwixt the flights and emotions of the soul or a resolute and constant habit; and very well perceive that there is nothing we may not do, nay, even to the surpassing the Divinity itself, says a certain person, forasmuch as it is more to render a man's self impassible by his own study and industry, than to be so by his natural condition; and even to be able to conjoin to man's imbecility and frailty a God-like resolution and assurance; but it is by fits and starts; and in the lives of those heroes of times past there are sometimes miraculous impulses, and that seem infinitely to exceed our natural force; but they are indeed only impulses: and 'tis hard to believe, that these so elevated qualities in a man can so thoroughly tinct and imbue the soul that they should become ordinary, and, as it were, natural in him. It accidentally happens even to us, who are but abortive births of men, sometimes to launch our souls, when roused by the discourses or examples of others, much beyond their ordinary stretch; but 'tis a kind of passion which pushes and agitates them, and in some sort ravishes them from themselves: but, this perturbation once overcome, we see that they insensibly flag and slacken of themselves, if not to the lowest degree, at least so as to be no more the same; insomuch as that upon every trivial occasion, the losing of a bird, or the breaking, of a glass, we suffer ourselves to be moved little less than one of the common people. I am of opinion, that order, moderation, and constancy excepted, all things are to be done by a man that is very imperfect and defective in general. Therefore it is, say the Sages, that to make a right judgment of a man, you are chiefly to pry into his common actions, and surprise him in his everyday habit.

Pyrrho, he who erected so pleasant a knowledge upon ignorance, endeavoured, as all the rest who were really philosophers did, to make his life correspond with his doctrine. And because he maintained the imbecility of human judgment to be so extreme as to be incapable of any choice or inclination, and would have it perpetually wavering and suspended, considering and receiving all things as indifferent, 'tis said, that he always comforted himself after the same manner and countenance: if he had begun a discourse, he would always end what he had to say, though the person he was speaking to had gone away: if he walked, he never stopped for any impediment that stood in his way, being preserved from precipices, collision with carts, and other like accidents, by the care of his friends: for, to fear or to avoid anything, had been to shock his own propositions, which deprived the senses themselves of all election and certainty. Sometimes he suffered incision and cauteries with so great constancy as never to be seen so much as to wince. 'Tis something to bring the soul

Page 32

to these imaginations; 'tis more to join the effects, and yet not impossible; but to conjoin them with such perseverance and constancy as to make them habitual, is certainly, in attempts so remote from the common usage, almost incredible to be done. Therefore it was, that being sometime taken in his house sharply scolding with his sister, and being reproached that he therein transgressed his own rules of indifference: "What!" said he, "must this bit of a woman also serve for a testimony to my rules?" Another time, being seen to defend himself against a dog: "It is," said he, "very hard totally to put off man; and we must endeavour and force ourselves to resist and encounter things, first by effects, but at least by reason and argument."

About seven or eight years since, a husbandman yet living, but two leagues from my house, having long been tormented with his wife's jealousy, coming one day home from his work, and she welcoming him with her accustomed railing, entered into so great fury that with a sickle he had yet in his hand, he totally cut off all those parts that she was jealous of and threw them in her face. And, 'tis said that a young gentleman of our nation, brisk and amorous, having by his perseverance at last mollified the heart of a fair mistress, enraged, that upon the point of fruition he found himself unable to perform, and that,

"Nec viriliter
Iners senile penis extulit caput."

[(The 19th or 20th century translators leave this phrase
untranslated and with no explanation. D.W.)
—Tibullus, Priap. Carm., 84.]

as soon as ever he came home he deprived himself of the rebellious member, and sent it to his mistress, a cruel and bloody victim for the expiation of his offence. If this had been done upon mature consideration, and upon the account of religion, as the priests of Cybele did, what should we say of so high an action?

A few days since, at Bergerac, five leagues from my house, up the river Dordogne, a woman having overnight been beaten and abused by her husband, a choleric ill-conditioned fellow, resolved to escape from his ill-usage at the price of her life; and going so soon as she was up the next morning to visit her neighbours, as she was wont to do, and having let some words fall in recommendation of her affairs, she took a sister of hers by the hand, and led her to the bridge; whither being come, and having taken leave of her, in jest as it were, without any manner of alteration in her countenance, she threw herself headlong from the top into the river, and was there drowned. That which is the most remarkable in this is, that this resolution was a whole night forming in her head.

It is quite another thing with the Indian women for it being the custom there for the men to have many wives, and the best beloved of them to kill herself at her husband's decease, every one of them makes it the business of her whole life to obtain this privilege and gain this advantage over her companions; and the good offices they do their husbands aim at no other recompense but to be preferred in accompanying him in death:

Page 33

"Ubi mortifero jacta est fax ultima lecto,
Uxorum fuis stat pia turba comis
Et certamen habent lethi, quae viva sequatur
Conjugium: pudor est non licuisse mori.
Ardent victrices, et flammae pectora praebent,
Imponuntque suis ora perusta viris."

["For when they threw the torch on the funeral bed, the pious wives with hair dishevelled, stand around striving, which, living, shall accompany her spouse; and are ashamed that they may not die; they who are preferred expose their breasts to the flame, and they lay their scorched lips on those of their husbands." —Propertius, iii. 13, 17.]

A certain author of our times reports that he has seen in those Oriental nations this custom in practice, that not only the wives bury themselves with their husbands, but even the slaves he has enjoyed also; which is done after this manner: The husband being dead, the widow may if she will (but few will) demand two or three months' respite wherein to order her affairs. The day being come, she mounts on horseback, dressed as fine as at her wedding, and with a cheerful countenance says she is going to sleep with her spouse, holding a looking-glass in her left hand and an arrow in the other. Being thus conducted in pomp, accompanied with her kindred and friends and a great concourse of people in great joy, she is at last brought to the public place appointed for such spectacles: this is a great space, in the midst of which is a pit full of wood, and adjoining to it a mount raised four or five steps, upon which she is brought and served with a magnificent repast; which being done, she falls to dancing and singing, and gives order, when she thinks fit, to kindle the fire. This being done, she descends, and taking the nearest of her husband's relations by the hand, they walk to the river close by, where she strips herself stark naked, and having distributed her clothes and jewels to her friends, plunges herself into the water, as if there to cleanse herself from her sins; coming out thence, she wraps herself in a yellow linen of five-and-twenty ells long, and again giving her hand to this kinsman of her husband's, they return back to the mount, where she makes a speech to the people, and recommends her children to them, if she have any. Betwixt the pit and the mount there is commonly a curtain drawn to screen the burning furnace from their sight, which some of them, to manifest the greater courage, forbid. Having ended what she has to say, a woman presents her with a vessel of oil, wherewith to anoint her head and her whole body, which when done with she throws into the fire, and in an instant precipitates herself after. Immediately, the people throw a good many billets and logs upon her that she may not be long in dying, and convert all their joy into sorrow and mourning. If they are persons of meaner condition, the body

Page 34

of the defunct is carried to the place of sepulture, and there placed sitting, the widow kneeling before him, embracing the dead body; and they continue in this posture whilst the people build a wall about them, which so soon as it is raised to the height of the woman's shoulders, one of her relations comes behind her, and taking hold of her head, twists her neck; so soon as she is dead, the wall is presently raised up, and closed, and there they remain entombed.

There was, in this same country, something like this in their gymnosophists; for not by constraint of others nor by the impetuosity of a sudden humour, but by the express profession of their order, their custom was, as soon as they arrived at a certain age, or that they saw themselves threatened by any disease, to cause a funeral pile to be erected for them, and on the top a stately bed, where, after having joyfully feasted their friends and acquaintance, they laid them down with so great resolution, that fire being applied to it, they were never seen to stir either hand or foot; and after this manner, one of them, Calanus by name; expired in the presence of the whole army of Alexander the Great. And he was neither reputed holy nor happy amongst them who did not thus destroy himself, dismissing his soul purged and purified by the fire, after having consumed all that was earthly and mortal. This constant premeditation of the whole life is that which makes the wonder.

Amongst our other controversies, that of 'Fatum' has also crept in; and to tie things to come, and even our own wills, to a certain and inevitable necessity, we are yet upon this argument of time past: "Since God foresees that all things shall so fall out, as doubtless He does, it must then necessarily follow, that they must so fall out": to which our masters reply: "that the seeing anything come to pass, as we do, and as God Himself also does (for all things being present with him, He rather sees, than foresees), is not to compel an event: that is, we see because things do fall out, but things do not fall out because we see: events cause knowledge, but knowledge does not cause events. That which we see happen, does happen; but it might have happened otherwise: and God, in the catalogue of the causes of events which He has in His prescience, has also those which we call accidental and voluntary, depending upon the liberty. He has given our free will, and knows that we do amiss because we would do so."

I have seen a great many commanders encourage their soldiers with this fatal necessity; for if our time be limited to a certain hour, neither the enemies' shot nor our own boldness, nor our flight and cowardice, can either shorten or prolong our lives. This is easily said, but see who will be so easily persuaded; and if it be so that a strong and lively faith draws along with it actions of the same kind, certainly this faith we so much brag of, is very light in this age of ours, unless the contempt it has of works makes

Page 35

it disdain their company. So it is, that to this very purpose the Sire de Joinville, as credible a witness as any other whatever, tells us of the Bedouins, a nation amongst the Saracens, with whom the king St. Louis had to do in the Holy Land, that they, in their religion, so firmly believed the number of every man's days to be from all eternity prefixed and set down by an inevitable decree, that they went naked to the wars, excepting a Turkish sword, and their bodies only covered with a white linen cloth: and for the greatest curse they could invent when they were angry, this was always in their mouths: "Accursed be thou, as he that arms himself for fear of death." This is a testimony of faith very much beyond ours. And of this sort is that also that two friars of Florence gave in our fathers' days. Being engaged in some controversy of learning, they agreed to go both of them into the fire in the sight of all the people, each for the verification of his argument, and all things were already prepared, and the thing just upon the point of execution, when it was interrupted by an unexpected accident.—[7th April 1498. Savonarola issued the challenge. After many delays from demands and counter-demands by each side as to the details of the fire, both parties found that they had important business to transact in another county—both just barely escaped assassination at the hands of the disappointed spectators. D.W.]

A young Turkish lord, having performed a notable exploit in his own person in the sight of both armies, that of Amurath and that of Huniades, ready to join battle, being asked by Amurath, what in such tender and inexperienced years (for it was his first sally into arms) had inspired him with so brave a courage, replied, that his chief tutor for valour was a hare. "For being," said he, "one day a hunting, I found a hare sitting, and though I had a brace of excellent greyhounds with me, yet methought it would be best for sureness to make use of my bow; for she sat very fair. I then fell to letting fly my arrows, and shot forty that I had in my quiver, not only without hurting, but without starting her from her form. At last I slipped my dogs after her, but to no more purpose than I had shot: by which I understood that she had been secured by her destiny; and, that neither darts nor swords can wound without the permission of fate, which we can neither hasten nor defer." This story may serve, by the way, to let us see how flexible our reason is to all sorts of images.

A person of great years, name, dignity, and learning boasted to me that he had been induced to a certain very important change in his faith by a strange and whimsical incitation, and one otherwise so inadequate, that I thought it much stronger, taken the contrary way: he called it a miracle, and so I look upon it, but in a different sense. The Turkish historians say, that the persuasion those of their nation have imprinted in them of the fatal and unalterable prescription of their days, manifestly conduces to the giving them great assurance in dangers. And I know a great prince who makes very fortunate use of it, whether it be that he really believes it, or that he makes it his excuse for so wonderfully hazarding himself: let us hope Fortune may not be too soon weary of her favour to him.

Page 36

There has not happened in our memory a more admirable effect of resolution than in those two who conspired the death of the Prince of Orange.

[The first of these was Jehan de Jaureguy, who wounded the Prince 18th March 1582; the second, by whom the Prince was killed 10th July 1584., was Balthazar Gerard.]

'Tis marvellous how the second who executed it, could ever be persuaded into an attempt, wherein his companion, who had done his utmost, had had so ill success; and after the same method, and with the same arms, to go attack a lord, armed with so recent a late lesson of distrust, powerful in followers and bodily strength, in his own hall, amidst his guards, and in a city wholly at his devotion. Assuredly, he employed a very resolute arm and a courage enflamed with furious passion. A poignard is surer for striking home; but by reason that more motion and force of hand is required than with a pistol, the blow is more subject to be put by or hindered. That this man did not run to a certain death, I make no great doubt; for the hopes any one could flatter him withal, could not find place in any sober understanding, and the conduct of his exploit sufficiently manifests that he had no want of that, no more than of courage. The motives of so powerful a persuasion may be diverse, for our fancy does what it will, both with itself and us. The execution that was done near Orleans—[The murder of the Duke of Guise by Poltrot.]—was nothing like this; there was in this more of chance than vigour; the wound was not mortal, if fortune had not made it so, and to attempt to shoot on horseback, and at a great distance, by one whose body was in motion from the motion of his horse, was the attempt of a man who had rather miss his blow than fail of saving himself. This was apparent from what followed; for he was so astonished and stupefied with the thought of so high an execution, that he totally lost his judgment both to find his way to flight and to govern his tongue. What needed he to have done more than to fly back to his friends across the river? 'Tis what I have done in less dangers, and that I think of very little hazard, how broad soever the river may be, provided your horse have easy going in, and that you see on the other side easy landing according to the stream. The other, —[Balthazar Gerard.]—when they pronounced his dreadful sentence, "I was prepared for this," said he, "beforehand, and I will make you wonder at my patience."

The Assassins, a nation bordering upon Phoenicia,

[Or in Egypt, Syria, and Persia. Derivation of 'assassin' is from Hassan-ben-Saba, one of their early leaders, and they had an existence for some centuries. They are classed among the secret societies of the Middle Ages. D.W.]

are reputed amongst the Mohammedans a people of very great devotion and purity of manners. They hold that the nearest way to gain Paradise is to kill some

Page 37

one of a contrary religion; which is the reason they have often been seen, being but one or two, and without armour, to attempt against powerful enemies, at the price of a certain death and without any consideration of their own danger. So was our Raymond, Count of Tripoli, assassinated (which word is derived from their name) in the heart of his city,—[in 1151]—during our enterprises of the Holy War: and likewise Conrad, Marquis of Monteferrat, the murderers at their execution bearing themselves with great pride and glory that they had performed so brave an exploit.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF A MONSTROUS CHILD

This story shall go by itself; for I will leave it to physicians to discourse of. Two days ago I saw a child that two men and a nurse, who said they were the father, the uncle, and the aunt of it, carried about to get money by showing it, by reason it was so strange a creature. It was, as to all the rest, of a common form, and could stand upon its feet; could go and gabble much like other children of the same age; it had never as yet taken any other nourishment but from the nurse's breasts, and what, in my presence, they tried to put into the mouth of it, it only chewed a little and spat it out again without swallowing; the cry of it seemed indeed a little odd and particular, and it was just fourteen months old. Under the breast it was joined to another child, but without a head, and which had the spine of the back without motion, the rest entire; for though it had one arm shorter than the other, it had been broken by accident at their birth; they were joined breast to breast, and as if a lesser child sought to throw its arms about the neck of one something bigger. The juncture and thickness of the place where they were conjoined was not above four fingers, or thereabouts, so that if you thrust up the imperfect child you might see the navel of the other below it, and the joining was betwixt the paps and the navel. The navel of the imperfect child could not be seen, but all the rest of the belly, so that all that was not joined of the imperfect one, as arms, buttocks, thighs, and legs, hung dangling upon the other, and might reach to the mid-leg. The nurse, moreover, told us that it urined at both bodies, and that the members of the other were nourished, sensible, and in the same plight with that she gave suck to, excepting that they were shorter and less. This double body and several limbs relating to one head might be interpreted a favourable prognostic to the king,—[Henry *iii.*]—of maintaining these various parts of our state under the union of his laws; but lest the event should prove otherwise, 'tis better to let it alone, for in things already past there needs no divination,

“Ut quum facts sunt, tum ad conjecturam
aliqui interpretatione revocentur;”

["So as when they are come to pass, they may then by some interpretation be recalled to conjecture"
—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 31.]

Page 38

as 'tis said of Epimenides, that he always prophesied backward.

I have just seen a herdsman in Medoc, of about thirty years of age, who has no sign of any genital parts; he has three holes by which he incessantly voids his water; he is bearded, has desire, and seeks contact with women.

Those that we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of His work the infinite forms that He has comprehended therein; and it is to be believed that this figure which astonishes us has relation to some other figure of the same kind unknown to man. From His all wisdom nothing but good, common; and regular proceeds; but we do not discern the disposition and relation:

“Quod crebro videt, non miratur, etiamsi,
cur fiat, nescit. Quod ante non vidit, id,
si evenerit, ostentum esse censet.”

[“What he often sees he does not admire, though he be ignorant how it comes to pass. When a thing happens he never saw before, he thinks that it is a portent.”—Cicero, *De Divin.*, ii. 22.]

Whatever falls out contrary to custom we say is contrary to nature, but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her. Let, therefore, this universal and natural reason expel the error and astonishment that novelty brings along with it.

CHAPTER XXXI

OF ANGER

Plutarch is admirable throughout, but especially where he judges of human actions. What fine things does he say in the comparison of Lycurgus and Numa upon the subject of our great folly in abandoning children to the care and government of their fathers? The most of our civil governments, as Aristotle says, “leave, after the manner of the Cyclopes, to every one the ordering of their wives and children, according to their own foolish and indiscreet fancy; and the Lacedaemonian and Cretan are almost the only governments that have committed the education of children to the laws. Who does not see that in a state all depends upon their nurture and bringing up? and yet they are left to the mercy of parents, let them be as foolish and ill-conditioned as they may, without any manner of discretion.”

Amongst other things, how often have I, as I have passed along our streets, had a good mind to get up a farce, to revenge the poor boys whom I have seen hid, knocked down, and miserably beaten by some father or mother, when in their fury and mad with rage? You shall see them come out with fire and fury sparkling in their eyes:



“Rabie jecur incendente, feruntur,
Praecipites; ut saxa jugis abrupta, quibus mons
Subtrahitur, clivoque latus pendente recedit,”

[“They are headlong borne with burning fury as great stones torn from the mountains, by which the steep sides are left naked and bare.”—Juvenal, Sat., vi. 647.]

Page 39

(and according to Hippocrates, the most dangerous maladies are they that disfigure the countenance), with a roaring and terrible voice, very often against those that are but newly come from nurse, and there they are lamed and spoiled with blows, whilst our justice takes no cognisance of it, as if these maims and dislocations were not executed upon members of our commonwealth:

“Gratum est, quod patria; civem populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patrix sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis et bellorum et pacis rebus agendis.”

[“It is well when to thy country and the people thou hast given a citizen, provided thou make fit for his country’s service; useful to till the earth, useful in affairs of war and peace” —Juvenal, Sat., xiv. 70.]

There is no passion that so much transports men from their right judgment as anger. No one would demur upon punishing a judge with death who should condemn a criminal on the account of his own choler; why, then, should fathers and pedagogues be any more allowed to whip and chastise children in their anger? ’Tis then no longer correction, but revenge. Chastisement is instead of physic to children; and would we endure a physician who should be animated against and enraged at his patient?

We ourselves, to do well, should never lay a hand upon our servants whilst our anger lasts. When the pulse beats, and we feel emotion in ourselves, let us defer the business; things will indeed appear otherwise to us when we are calm and cool. ’Tis passion that then commands, ’tis passion that speaks, and not we. Faults seen through passion appear much greater to us than they really are, as bodies do when seen through a mist. He who is hungry uses meat; but he who will make use of chastisement should have neither hunger nor thirst to it. And, moreover, chastisements that are inflicted with weight and discretion are much better received and with greater benefit by him who suffers; otherwise, he will not think himself justly condemned by a man transported with anger and fury, and will allege his master’s excessive passion, his inflamed countenance, his unwonted oaths, his emotion and precipitous rashness, for his own justification:

“Ora tument ira, nigrescunt sanguine venae,
Lumina Gorgoneo saevius igne micant.”

[“Their faces swell, their veins grow black with rage, and their eyes sparkle with Gorgonian fire.”—Ovid, De Art. Amandi, iii. 503.]

Suetonius reports that Caius Rabirius having been condemned by Caesar, the thing that most prevailed upon the people (to whom he had appealed) to determine the cause in his favour, was the animosity and vehemence that Caesar had manifested in that sentence.

Page 40

Saying is a different thing from doing; we are to consider the sermon apart and the preacher apart. These men lent themselves to a pretty business who in our times have attempted to shake the truth of our Church by the vices of her ministers; she extracts her testimony elsewhere; 'tis a foolish way of arguing and that would throw all things into confusion. A man whose morals are good may have false opinions, and a wicked man may preach truth, even though he believe it not himself. 'Tis doubtless a fine harmony when doing and saying go together; and I will not deny but that saying, when the actions follow, is not of greater authority and efficacy, as Eudamidas said, hearing a philosopher talk of military affairs: "These things are finely said, but he who speaks them is not to be believed for his ears have never been used to the sound of the trumpet." And Cleomenes, hearing an orator declaiming upon valour, burst out into laughter, at which the other being angry; "I should," said he to him, "do the same if it were a swallow that spoke of this subject; but if it were an eagle I should willingly hear him." I perceive, methinks, in the writings of the ancients, that he who speaks what he thinks, strikes much more home than he who only feigns. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty: hear Brutus speak of it, the mere written words of this man sound as if he would purchase it at the price of his life. Let Cicero, the father of eloquence, treat of the contempt of death; let Seneca do the same: the first languishingly drawls it out so you perceive he would make you resolve upon a thing on which he is not resolved himself; he inspires you not with courage, for he himself has none; the other animates and inflames you. I never read an author, even of those who treat of virtue and of actions, that I do not curiously inquire what kind of a man he was himself; for the Ephori at Sparta, seeing a dissolute fellow propose a wholesome advice to the people, commanded him to hold his peace, and entreated a virtuous man to attribute to himself the invention, and to propose it. Plutarch's writings, if well understood, sufficiently bespeak their author, and so that I think I know him even into his soul; and yet I could wish that we had some fuller account of his life. And I am thus far wandered from my subject, upon the account of the obligation I have to Aulus Gellius, for having left us in writing this story of his manners, that brings me back to my subject of anger. A slave of his, a vicious, ill-conditioned fellow, but who had the precepts of philosophy often ringing in his ears, having for some offence of his been stript by Plutarch's command, whilst he was being whipped, muttered at first, that it was without cause and that he had done nothing to deserve it; but at last falling in good earnest to exclaim against and rail at his master, he reproached him that he was no philosopher, as he had boasted himself to be: that he had often heard him say it was indecent to be angry, nay,

Page 41

had written a book to that purpose; and that the causing him to be so cruelly beaten, in the height of his rage, totally gave the lie to all his writings; to which Plutarch calmly and coldly answered, "How, ruffian," said he, "by what dost thou judge that I am now angry? Does either my face, my colour, or my voice give any manifestation of my being moved? I do not think my eyes look fierce, that my countenance appears troubled, or that my voice is dreadful: am I red, do I foam, does any word escape my lips I ought to repent? Do I start? Do I tremble with fury? For those, I tell thee, are the true signs of anger." And so, turning to the fellow that was whipping him, "Ply on thy work," said he, "whilst this gentleman and I dispute." This is his story.

Archytas Tarentinus, returning from a war wherein he had been captain-general, found all things in his house in very great disorder, and his lands quite out of tillage, through the ill husbandry of his receiver, and having caused him to be called to him; "Go," said he, "if I were not in anger I would soundly drub your sides." Plato likewise, being highly offended with one of his slaves, gave Speusippus order to chastise him, excusing himself from doing it because he was in anger. And Carillus, a Lacedaemonian, to a Helot, who carried himself insolently towards him: "By the gods," said he, "if I was not angry, I would immediately cause thee to be put to death."

'Tis a passion that is pleased with and flatters itself. How often, being moved under a false cause, if the person offending makes a good defence and presents us with a just excuse, are we angry against truth and innocence itself? In proof of which, I remember a marvellous example of antiquity.

Piso, otherwise a man of very eminent virtue, being moved against a soldier of his, for that returning alone from forage he could give him no account where he had left a companion of his, took it for granted that he had killed him, and presently condemned him to death. He was no sooner mounted upon the gibbet, but, behold, his wandering companion arrives, at which all the army were exceedingly glad, and after many embraces of the two comrades, the hangman carried both the one and the other into Piso's presence, all those present believing it would be a great pleasure even to himself; but it proved quite contrary; for through shame and spite, his fury, which was not yet cool, redoubled; and by a subtlety which his passion suddenly suggested to him, he made three criminals for having found one innocent, and caused them all to be despatched: the first soldier, because sentence had passed upon him; the second, who had lost his way, because he was the cause of his companion's death; and the hangman, for not having obeyed the order which had been given him. Such as have had to do with testy and obstinate women, may have experimented into what a rage it puts them to oppose silence and coldness to their fury, and that a man

Page 42

disdains to nourish their anger. The orator Celius was wonderfully choleric by nature; and to one who supped in his company, a man of a gentle and sweet conversation, and who, that he might not move him, approved and consented to all he said; he, impatient that his ill-humour should thus spend itself without aliment: "For the love of the gods deny me something," said he, "that we may be two." Women, in like manner, are only angry that others may be angry again, in imitation of the laws of love. Phocion, to one who interrupted his speaking by injurious and very opprobrious words, made no other return than silence, and to give him full liberty and leisure to vent his spleen; which he having accordingly done, and the storm blown over, without any mention of this disturbance, he proceeded in his discourse where he had left off before. No answer can nettle a man like such a contempt.

Of the most choleric man in France (anger is always an imperfection, but more excusable in, a soldier, for in that trade it cannot sometimes be avoided) I often say, that he is the most patient man that I know, and the most discreet in bridling his passions; which rise in him with so great violence and fury,

"Magno veluti cum flamma sonore
Virgea suggeritur costis undantis ahem,
Exsultantque aatu latices, furit intus aquae vis.
Fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis,
Nec jam se capit unda; volat vapor ater ad auras;"

["When with loud crackling noise, a fire of sticks is applied to the boiling caldron's side, by the heat in frisky bells the liquor dances; within the water rages, and high the smoky fluid in foam overflows. Nor can the wave now contain itself; the black steam flies all abroad."—Aeneid, vii. 462.]

that he must of necessity cruelly constrain himself to moderate it. And for my part, I know no passion which I could with so much violence to myself attempt to cover and conceal; I would not set wisdom at so high a price; and do not so much consider what a man does, as how much it costs him to do no worse.

Another boasted himself to me of the regularity and gentleness of his manners, which are to truth very singular; to whom I replied, that it was indeed something, especially in persons of so eminent a quality as himself, upon whom every one had their eyes, to present himself always well-tempered to the world; but that the principal thing was to make provision for within and for himself; and that it was not in my opinion very well to order his business outwardly well, and to grate himself within, which I was afraid he did, in putting on and maintaining this mask and external appearance.

A man incorporates anger by concealing it, as Diogenes told Demosthenes, who, for fear of being seen in a tavern, withdrew himself the more retiredly into it: "The more you retire backward, the farther you enter in." I would rather advise that a man should give his servant a box of the ear a little unseasonably, than rack his fancy to present this grave and composed countenance; and had rather discover my passions than brood over them at my own expense; they grow less inventing and manifesting themselves; and 'tis much better their point should wound others without, than be turned towards ourselves within:

Page 43

“Omnia vitia in aperto leviora sunt: et tunc perniciosissima,
quum simulata sanitate subsident.”

[“All vices are less dangerous when open to be seen, and then most
pernicious when they lurk under a dissembled good nature.”
—Seneca, Ep. 56]

I admonish all those who have authority to be angry in my family, in the first place to manage their anger and not to lavish it upon every occasion, for that both lessens the value and hinders the effect: rash and incessant scolding runs into custom, and renders itself despised; and what you lay out upon a servant for a theft is not felt, because it is the same he has seen you a hundred times employ against him for having ill washed a glass, or set a stool out of place. Secondly, that they be not angry to no purpose, but make sure that their reprehension reach him with whom they are offended; for, ordinarily, they rail and bawl before he comes into their presence, and continue scolding an age after he is gone:

“Et secum petulans amentia certat:”

[“And petulant madness contends with itself.”
—Claudian in Eutrop., i. 237.]

they attack his shadow, and drive the storm in a place where no one is either chastised or concerned, but in the clamour of their voice. I likewise in quarrels condemn those who huff and vapour without an enemy: those rhodomontades should be reserved to discharge upon the offending party:

“Mugitus veluti cum prima in praelia taurus
Terrificos ciet, atque irasci in cornua tentat,
Arboris obnixus trunco, ventospue lacessit
Ictibus, et sparsa ad pugnum proludit arena.”

[“As when a bull to usher in the fight, makes dreadful bellowings, and whets his horns against the trunk of a tree; with blows he beats the air, and rehearses the fight by scattering the sand.” —Aeneid, xii. 103.]

When I am angry, my anger is very sharp but withal very short, and as private as I can; I lose myself indeed in promptness and violence, but not in trouble; so that I throw out all sorts of injurious words at random, and without choice, and never consider pertinently to dart my language where I think it will deepest wound, for I commonly make use of no other weapon than my tongue.

My servants have a better bargain of me in great occasions than in little; the little ones surprise me; and the misfortune is, that when you are once upon the precipice, 'tis no



matter who gave you the push, you always go to the bottom; the fall urges, moves, and makes haste of itself. In great occasions this satisfies me, that they are so just every one expects a reasonable indignation, and then I glorify myself in deceiving their expectation; against these, I fortify and prepare myself; they disturb my head, and threaten to transport me very far, should I follow them. I can easily contain myself from entering into one of these passions,

Page 44

and am strong enough, when I expect them, to repel their violence, be the cause never so great; but if a passion once prepossess and seize me, it carries me away, be the cause never so small. I bargain thus with those who may contend with me when you see me moved first, let me alone, right or wrong; I'll do the same for you. The storm is only begot by a concurrence of angers, which easily spring from one another, and are not born together. Let every one have his own way, and we shall be always at peace. A profitable advice, but hard to execute. Sometimes also it falls out that I put on a seeming anger, for the better governing of my house, without any real emotion. As age renders my humours more sharp, I study to oppose them, and will, if I can, order it so, that for the future I may be so much the less peevish and hard to please, as I have more excuse and inclination to be so, although I have heretofore been reckoned amongst those who have the greatest patience.

A word more to conclude this argument. Aristotle says, that anger sometimes serves for arms to virtue and valour. That is probable; nevertheless, they who contradict him pleasantly answer, that 'tis a weapon of novel use, for we move all other arms, this moves us; our hand guides it not, 'tis it that guides our hand; it holds us, we hold not it.

ETEXT editor's bookmarks:

A man may always study, but he must not always go to school
Accursed be thou, as he that arms himself for fear of death
All things have their seasons, even good ones
All those who have authority to be angry in my family
"An emperor," said he, "must die standing"
Ancient Romans kept their youth always standing at school
And we suffer the ills of a long peace
Be not angry to no purpose
Best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice
By resenting the lie we acquit ourselves of the fault
"By the gods," said he, "if I was not angry, I would execute you"
Children are amused with toys and men with words
Consent, and complacency in giving a man's self up to melancholy
Defend most the defects with which we are most tainted
Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate
Fortune sometimes seems to delight in taking us at our word
Greatest talkers, for the most part, do nothing to purpose
Have more wherewith to defray my journey, than I have way to go
Hearing a philosopher talk of military affairs
How much it costs him to do no worse
I need not seek a fool from afar; I can laugh at myself
Idleness, the mother of corruption

If a passion once prepossess and seize me, it carries me away
In sorrow there is some mixture of pleasure
Killing is good to frustrate an offence to come, not to revenge
Laws cannot subsist without mixture of injustice

Page 45

Least end of a hair will serve to draw them into my discourse
Let us not seek our disease out of ourselves; 'tis in us
Look on death not only without astonishment but without care
Melancholy: Are there not some constitutions that feed upon it?
Most cruel people, and upon frivolous occasions, apt to cry.
No beast in the world so much to be feared by man as man
Our extremest pleasure has some sort of groaning
Our fancy does what it will, both with itself and us
Owe ourselves chiefly and mostly to ourselves
Petulant madness contends with itself
Rage it puts them to oppose silence and coldness to their fury
Rash and incessant scolding runs into custom
Revenge, which afterwards produces a series of new cruelties
See how flexible our reason is
Seeming anger, for the better governing of my house
Shake the truth of our Church by the vices of her ministers
Take my last leave of every place I depart from
The gods sell us all the goods they give us
The storm is only begot by a concurrence of angers
Though nobody should read me, have I wasted time
Tis said of Epimenides, that he always prophesied backward
Tis then no longer correction, but revenge
Upon the precipice, 'tis no matter who gave you the push
"When will this man be wise," said he, "if he is yet learning?"
When you see me moved first, let me alone, right or wrong
Young are to make their preparations, the old to enjoy them