

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 13 eBook

The Essays of Montaigne — Volume 13 by Michel de Montaigne

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Page 1

DEFENCE OF SENECA AND PLUTARCH

The familiarity I have with these two authors, and the assistance they have lent to my age and to my book, wholly compiled of what I have borrowed from them, oblige me to stand up for their honour.

As to Seneca, amongst a million of little pamphlets that those of the so-called reformed religion disperse abroad for the defence of their cause (and which sometimes proceed from so good a hand, that 'tis pity his pen is not employed in a better subject), I have formerly seen one, that to make up the parallel he would fain find out betwixt the government of our late poor King Charles IX. and that of Nero, compares the late Cardinal of Lorraine with Seneca; their fortunes, in having both of them been the prime ministers in the government of their princes, and in their manners, conditions, and deportments to have been very near alike. Wherein, in my opinion, he does the said cardinal a very great honour; for though I am one of those who have a very high esteem for his wit, eloquence, and zeal to religion and the service of his king, and his good fortune to have lived in an age wherein it was so novel, so rare, and also so necessary for the public good to have an ecclesiastical person of such high birth and dignity, and so sufficient and capable of his place; yet, to confess the truth, I do not think his capacity by many degrees near to the other, nor his virtue either so clean, entire, or steady as that of Seneca.

Now the book whereof I speak, to bring about its design, gives a very injurious description of Seneca, having borrowed its approaches from Dion the historian, whose testimony I do not at all believe for besides that he is inconsistent, that after having called Seneca one while very wise, and again a mortal enemy to Nero's vices, makes him elsewhere avaricious, an usurer, ambitious, effeminate, voluptuous, and a false pretender to philosophy, his virtue appears so vivid and vigorous in his writings, and his vindication is so clear from any of these imputations, as of his riches and extraordinarily expensive way of living, that I cannot believe any testimony to the contrary. And besides, it is much more reasonable to believe the Roman historians in such things than Greeks and foreigners. Now Tacitus and the rest speak very honourably both of his life and death; and represent him to us a very excellent and virtuous person in all things; and I will allege no other reproach against Dion's report but this, which I cannot avoid, namely, that he has so weak a judgment in the Roman affairs, that he dares to maintain Julius Caesar's cause against Pompey [And so does this editor. D.W.], and that of Antony against Cicero.



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Let us now come to Plutarch: Jean Bodin is a good author of our times, and a writer of much greater judgment than the rout of scribblers of his age, and who deserves to be read and considered. I find him, though, a little bold in this passage of his Method of history, where he accuses Plutarch not only of ignorance (wherein I would have let him alone: for that is beyond my criticism), but that he “often writes things incredible, and absolutely fabulous “: these are his own words. If he had simply said, that he had delivered things otherwise than they really are, it had been no great reproach; for what we have not seen, we are forced to receive from other hands, and take upon trust, and I see that he purposely sometimes variously relates the same story; as the judgment of the three best captains that ever were, given by Hannibal; ’tis one way in the Life of Flammius, and another in that of Pyrrhus. But to charge him with having taken incredible and impossible things for current pay, is to accuse the most judicious author in the world of want of judgment. And this is his example; “as,” says he, “when he relates that a Lacedaemonian boy suffered his bowels to be torn out by a fox-cub he had stolen, and kept it still concealed under his coat till he fell down dead, rather than he would discover his theft.” I find, in the first place, this example ill chosen, forasmuch as it is very hard to limit the power of the faculties of—the soul, whereas we have better authority to limit and know the force of the bodily limbs; and therefore, if I had been he, I should rather have chosen an example of this second sort; and there are some of these less credible: and amongst others, that which he refates of Pyrrhus, that “all wounded as he was, he struck one of his enemies, who was armed from head to foot, so great a blow with his sword, that he clave him down from his crown to his seat, so that the body was divided into two parts.” In this example I find no great miracle, nor do I admit the excuse with which he defends Plutarch, in having added these words, “as ’tis said,” to suspend our belief; for unless it be in things received by authority, and the reverence to antiquity or religion, he would never have himself admitted, or enjoined us to believe things incredible in themselves; and that these words, “as ’tis said,” are not put in this place to that effect, is easy to be seen, because he elsewhere relates to us, upon this subject, of the patience of the Lacedaemonian children, examples happening in his time, more unlikely to prevail upon our faith; as what Cicero has also testified before him, as having, as he says, been upon the spot: that even to their times there were children found who, in the trial of patience they were put to before the altar of Diana, suffered themselves to be there whipped till the blood ran down all over their bodies, not only without crying out, but without so much as a groan, and some till they there voluntarily



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lost their lives: and that which Plutarch also, amongst a hundred other witnesses, relates, that at a sacrifice, a burning coal having fallen into the sleeve of a Lacedaemonian boy, as he was censuring, he suffered his whole arm to be burned, till the smell of the broiling flesh was perceived by those present. There was nothing, according to their custom, wherein their reputation was more concerned, nor for which they were to undergo more blame and disgrace, than in being taken in theft. I am so fully satisfied of the greatness of those people, that this story does not only not appear to me, as to Bodin, incredible; but I do not find it so much as rare and strange. The Spartan history is full of a thousand more cruel and rare examples; and is; indeed, all miracle in this respect.

Marcellinus, concerning theft, reports that in his time there was no sort of torments which could compel the Egyptians, when taken in this act, though a people very much addicted to it, so much as to tell their name.

A Spanish peasant, being put to the rack as to the accomplices of the murder of the Praetor Lucius Piso, cried out in the height of the torment, "that his friends should not leave him, but look on in all assurance, and that no pain had the power to force from him one word of confession," which was all they could get the first day. The next day, as they were leading him a second time to another trial, strongly disengaging himself from the hands of his guards, he furiously ran his head against a wall, and beat out his brains.

Epicharis, having tired and glutted the cruelty of Nero's satellites, and undergone their fire, their beating, their racks, a whole day together, without one syllable of confession of her conspiracy; being the next day brought again to the rack, with her limbs almost torn to pieces, conveyed the lace of her robe with a running noose over one of the arms of her chair, and suddenly slipping her head into it, with the weight of her own body hanged herself. Having the courage to die in that manner, is it not to be presumed that she purposely lent her life to the trial of her fortitude the day before, to mock the tyrant, and encourage others to the like attempt?

And whoever will inquire of our troopers the experiences they have had in our civil wars, will find effects of patience and obstinate resolution in this miserable age of ours, and amongst this rabble even more effeminate than the Egyptians, worthy to be compared with those we have just related of the Spartan virtue.

I know there have been simple peasants amongst us who have endured the soles of their feet to be broiled upon a gridiron, their finger-ends to be crushed with the cock of a pistol, and their bloody eyes squeezed out of their heads by force of a cord twisted about their brows, before they would so much as consent to a ransom. I have seen one left stark naked for dead in a ditch, his neck black and swollen, with



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a halter yet about it with which they had dragged him all night at a horse's tail, his body wounded in a hundred places, with stabs of daggers that had been given him, not to kill him, but to put him to pain and to affright him, who had endured all this, and even to being speechless and insensible, resolved, as he himself told me, rather to die a thousand deaths (as indeed, as to matter of suffering, he had borne one) before he would promise anything; and yet he was one of the richest husbandmen of all the country. How many have been seen patiently to suffer themselves to be burnt and roasted for opinions taken upon trust from others, and by them not at all understood? I have known a hundred and a hundred women (for Gascony has a certain prerogative for obstinacy) whom you might sooner have made eat fire than forsake an opinion they had conceived in anger. They are all the more exasperated by blows and constraint. And he that made the story of the woman who, in defiance of all correction, threats, and bastinadoes, ceased not to call her husband lousy knave, and who being plunged over head and ears in water, yet lifted her hands above her head and made a sign of cracking lice, feigned a tale of which, in truth, we every day see a manifest image in the obstinacy of women. And obstinacy is the sister of constancy, at least in vigour and stability.

We are not to judge what is possible and what is not, according to what is credible and incredible to our apprehension, as I have said elsewhere and it is a great fault, and yet one that most men are guilty of, which, nevertheless, I do not mention with any reflection upon Bodin, to make a difficulty of believing that in another which they could not or would not do themselves. Every one thinks that the sovereign stamp of human nature is imprinted in him, and that from it all others must take their rule; and that all proceedings which are not like his are feigned and false. Is anything of another's actions or faculties proposed to him? the first thing he calls to the consultation of his judgment is his own example; and as matters go with him, so they must of necessity do with all the world besides dangerous and intolerable folly! For my part, I consider some men as infinitely beyond me, especially amongst the ancients, and yet, though I clearly discern my inability to come near them by a thousand paces, I do not forbear to keep them in sight, and to judge of what so elevates them, of which I perceive some seeds in myself, as I also do of the extreme meanness of some other minds, which I neither am astonished at nor yet misbelieve. I very well perceive the turns those great souls take to raise themselves to such a pitch, and admire their grandeur; and those flights that I think the bravest I could be glad to imitate; where, though I want wing, yet my judgment readily goes along with them. The other example he introduces of "things incredible and wholly fabulous," delivered by Plutarch,



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is, that “Agesilaus was fined by the Ephori for having wholly engrossed the hearts and affections of his citizens to himself alone.” And herein I do not see what sign of falsity is to be found: clearly Plutarch speaks of things that must needs be better known to him than to us; and it was no new thing in Greece to see men punished and exiled for this very thing, for being too acceptable to the people; witness the Ostracism and Petalism. —[Ostracism at Athens was banishment for ten years; petalism at Syracuse was banishment for five years.]

There is yet in this place another accusation laid against Plutarch which I cannot well digest, where Bodin says that he has sincerely paralleled Romans with Romans, and Greeks amongst themselves, but not Romans with Greeks; witness, says he, Demosthenes and Cicero, Cato and Aristides, Sylla and Lysander, Marcellus and Pelopidas, Pompey and Agesilaus, holding that he has favoured the Greeks in giving them so unequal companions. This is really to attack what in Plutarch is most excellent and most to be commended; for in his parallels (which is the most admirable part of all his works, and with which, in my opinion, he is himself the most pleased) the fidelity and sincerity of his judgments equal their depth and weight; he is a philosopher who teaches us virtue. Let us see whether we cannot defend him from this reproach of falsity and prevarication. All that I can imagine could give occasion to this censure is the great and shining lustre of the Roman names which we have in our minds; it does not seem likely to us that Demosthenes could rival the glory of a consul, proconsul, and proctor of that great Republic; but if a man consider the truth of the thing, and the men in themselves, which is Plutarch’s chiefest aim, and will rather balance their manners, their natures, and parts, than their fortunes, I think, contrary to Bodin, that Cicero and the elder Cato come far short of the men with whom they are compared. I should sooner, for his purpose, have chosen the example of the younger Cato compared with Phocion, for in this couple there would have been a more likely disparity, to the Roman’s advantage. As to Marcellus, Sylla, and Pompey, I very well discern that their exploits of war are greater and more full of pomp and glory than those of the Greeks, whom Plutarch compares with them; but the bravest and most virtuous actions any more in war than elsewhere, are not always the most renowned. I often see the names of captains obscured by the splendour of other names of less desert; witness Labienus, Ventidius, Telesinus, and several others. And to take it by that, were I to complain on the behalf of the Greeks, could I not say, that Camillus was much less comparable to Themistocles, the Gracchi to Agis and Cleomenes, and Numa to Lycurgus? But ’tis folly to judge, at one view, of things that have so many aspects. When Plutarch compares them, he does not, for all that, make them equal; who could



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more learnedly and sincerely have marked their distinctions? Does he parallel the victories, feats of arms, the force of the armies conducted by Pompey, and his triumphs, with those of Agesilaus? "I do not believe," says he, "that Xenophon himself, if he were now living, though he were allowed to write whatever pleased him to the advantage of Agesilaus, would dare to bring them into comparison." Does he speak of paralleling Lysander to Sylla. "There is," says he, "no comparison, either in the number of victories or in the hazard of battles, for Lysander only gained two naval battles." This is not to derogate from the Romans; for having only simply named them with the Greeks, he can have done them no injury, what disparity soever there may be betwixt them and Plutarch does not entirely oppose them to one another; there is no preference in general; he only compares the pieces and circumstances one after another, and gives of every one a particular and separate judgment. Wherefore, if any one could convict him of partiality, he ought to pick out some one of those particular judgments, or say, in general, that he was mistaken in comparing such a Greek to such a Roman, when there were others more fit and better resembling to parallel him to.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE STORY OF SPURINA

Philosophy thinks she has not ill employed her talent when she has given the sovereignty of the soul and the authority of restraining our appetites to reason. Amongst which, they who judge that there is none more violent than those which spring from love, have this opinion also, that they seize both body and soul, and possess the whole man, so that even health itself depends upon them, and medicine is sometimes constrained to pimp for them; but one might, on the contrary, also say, that the mixture of the body brings an abatement and weakening; for such desires are subject to satiety, and capable of material remedies.

Many, being determined to rid their soul from the continual alarms of this appetite, have made use of incision and amputation of the rebelling members; others have subdued their force and ardour by the frequent application of cold things, as snow and vinegar. The sackcloths of our ancestors were for this purpose, which is cloth woven of horse hair, of which some of them made shirts, and others girdles, to torture and correct their reins. A prince, not long ago, told me that in his youth upon a solemn festival in the court of King Francis I., where everybody was finely dressed, he would needs put on his father's hair shirt, which was still kept in the house; but how great soever his devotion was, he had not patience to wear it till night, and was sick a long time after; adding withal, that he did not think there could be any youthful heat so fierce that the use of this recipe would not mortify, and yet perhaps he never essayed the most violent; for

experience shows us, that such emotions are often seen under rude and slovenly clothes, and that a hair shirt does not always render those chaste who wear it.



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Xenocrates proceeded with greater rigour in this affair; for his disciples, to make trial of his continency, having slipt Lais, that beautiful and famous courtesan, into his bed, quite naked, excepting the arms of her beauty and her wanton allurements, her philters, finding that, in despite of his reason and philosophical rules, his unruly flesh began to mutiny, he caused those members of his to be burned that he found consenting to this rebellion. Whereas the passions which wholly reside in the soul, as ambition, avarice, and the rest, find the reason much more to do, because it cannot there be helped but by its own means; neither are those appetites capable of satiety, but grow sharper and increase by fruition.

The sole example of Julius Caesar may suffice to demonstrate to us the disparity of these appetites; for never was man more addicted to amorous delights than he: of which one testimony is the peculiar care he had of his person, to such a degree, as to make use of the most lascivious means to that end then in use, as to have all the hairs of his body twitched off, and to wipe all over with perfumes with the extremest nicety. And he was a beautiful person in himself, of a fair complexion, tall, and sprightly, full faced, with quick hazel eyes, if we may believe Suetonius; for the statues of him that we see at Rome do not in all points answer this description. Besides his wives, whom he four times changed, without reckoning the amours of his boyhood with Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, he had the maidenhead of the renowned Cleopatra, queen of Egypt; witness the little Caesario whom he had by her. He also made love to. Eunoe, queen of Mauritania, and at Rome, to Posthumia, the wife of Servius Sulpitius; to Lollia, the wife of Gabinius to Tertulla, the wife of Crassus, and even to Mutia, wife to the great Pompey: which was the reason, the Roman historians say, that she was repudiated by her husband, which Plutarch confesses to be more than he knew; and the Curios, both father and son, afterwards reproached Pompey, when he married Caesar's daughter, that he had made himself son-in-law to a man who had made him cuckold, and one whom he himself was wont to call Aegisthus. Besides all these, he entertained Servilia, Cato's sister and mother to Marcus Brutus, whence, every one believes, proceeded the great affection he had to Brutus, by reason that he was born at a time when it was likely he might be his son. So that I have reason, methinks, to take him for a man extremely given to this debauch, and of very amorous constitution. But the other passion of ambition, with which he was infinitely smitten, arising in him to contend with the former, it was soon compelled to give way.

And here calling to mind Mohammed, who won Constantinople, and finally exterminated the Grecian name, I do not know where these two were so evenly balanced; equally an indefatigable lecher and soldier: but where they both meet in his life and jostle one another, the quarrelling passion always gets the better of the amorous one, and this though it was out of its natural season never regained an absolute sovereignty over the other till he had arrived at an extreme old age and unable to undergo the fatigues of war.



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What is related for a contrary example of Ladislaus, king of Naples, is very remarkable; that being a great captain, valiant and ambitious, he proposed to himself for the principal end of his ambition, the execution of his pleasure and the enjoyment of some rare and excellent beauty. His death sealed up all the rest: for having by a close and tedious siege reduced the city of Florence to so great distress that the inhabitants were compelled to capitulate about surrender, he was content to let them alone, provided they would deliver up to him a beautiful maid he had heard of in their city; they were forced to yield to it, and by a private injury to avert the public ruin. She was the daughter of a famous physician of his time, who, finding himself involved in so foul a necessity, resolved upon a high attempt. As every one was lending a hand to trick up his daughter and to adorn her with ornaments and jewels to render her more agreeable to this new lover, he also gave her a handkerchief most richly wrought, and of an exquisite perfume, an implement they never go without in those parts, which she was to make use of at their first approaches. This handkerchief, poisoned with his greatest art, coming to be rubbed between the chafed flesh and open pores, both of the one and the other, so suddenly infused the poison, that immediately converting their warm into a cold sweat they presently died in one another's arms.

But I return to Caesar. His pleasures never made him steal one minute of an hour, nor go one step aside from occasions that might any way conduce to his advancement. This passion was so sovereign in him over all the rest, and with so absolute authority possessed his soul, that it guided him at pleasure. In truth, this troubles me, when, as to everything else, I consider the greatness of this man, and the wonderful parts wherewith he was endued; learned to that degree in all sorts of knowledge that there is hardly any one science of which he has not written; so great an orator that many have preferred his eloquence to that of Cicero, and he, I conceive, did not think himself inferior to him in that particular, for his two anti-Catos were written to counterbalance the elocution that Cicero had expended in his Cato. As to the rest, was ever soul so vigilant, so active, and so patient of labour as his? and, doubtless, it was embellished with many rare seeds of virtue, lively, natural, and not put on; he was singularly sober; so far from being delicate in his diet, that Oppius relates, how that having one day at table set before him medicated instead of common oil in some sauce, he ate heartily of it, that he might not put his entertainer out of countenance. Another time he caused his baker to be whipped for serving him with a finer than ordinary sort of bread. Cato himself was wont to say of him, that he was the first sober man who ever made it his business to ruin his country. And as to the same Cato's calling, him one day drunkard,



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it fell out thus being both of them in the Senate, at a time when Catiline's conspiracy was in question of which was Caesar was suspected, one came and brought him a letter sealed up. Cato believing that it was something the conspirators gave him notice of, required him to deliver into his hand, which Caesar was constrained to do to avoid further suspicion. It was by chance a love-letter that Servilia, Cato's sister, had written to him, which Cato having read, he threw it back to him saying, "There, drunkard." This, I say, was rather a word of disdain and anger than an express reproach of this vice, as we often rate those who anger us with the first injurious words that come into our mouths, though nothing due to those we are offended at; to which may be added that the vice with which Cato upbraided him is wonderfully near akin to that wherein he had surprised Caesar; for Bacchus and Venus, according to the proverb, very willingly agree; but to me Venus is much more sprightly accompanied by sobriety. The examples of his sweetness and clemency to those by whom he had been offended are infinite; I mean, besides those he gave during the time of the civil wars, which, as plainly enough appears by his writings, he practised to cajole his enemies, and to make them less afraid of his future dominion and victory. But I must also say, that if these examples are not sufficient proofs of his natural sweetness, they, at least, manifest a marvellous confidence and grandeur of courage in this person. He has often been known to dismiss whole armies, after having overcome them, to his enemies, without ransom, or deigning so much as to bind them by oath, if not to favour him, at least no more to bear arms against him; he has three or four times taken some of Pompey's captains prisoners, and as often set them at liberty. Pompey declared all those to be enemies who did not follow him to the war; he proclaimed all those to be his friends who sat still and did not actually take arms against him. To such captains of his as ran away from him to go over to the other side, he sent, moreover, their arms, horses, and equipage: the cities he had taken by force he left at full liberty to follow which side they pleased, imposing no other garrison upon them but the memory of his gentleness and clemency. He gave strict and express charge, the day of his great battle of Pharsalia, that, without the utmost necessity, no one should lay a hand upon the citizens of Rome. These, in my opinion, were very hazardous proceedings, and 'tis no wonder if those in our civil war, who, like him, fight against the ancient estate of their country, do not follow his example; they are extraordinary means, and that only appertain to Caesar's fortune, and to his admirable foresight in the conduct of affairs. When I consider the incomparable grandeur of his soul, I excuse victory that it could not disengage itself from him, even in so unjust and so wicked a cause.



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To return to his clemency: we have many striking examples in the time of his government, when, all things being reduced to his power, he had no more written against him which he had as sharply answered: yet he did not soon after forbear to use his interest to make him consul. Caius Calvus, who had composed several injurious epigrams against him, having employed many of his friends to mediate a reconciliation with him, Caesar voluntarily persuaded himself to write first to him. And our good Catullus, who had so rudely ruffled him under the name of Mamurra, coming to offer his excuses to him, he made the same day sit at his table. Having intelligence of some who spoke ill of him, he did no more, but only by a public oration declare that he had notice of it. He still less feared his enemies than he hated them; some conspiracies and cabals that were made against his life being discovered to him, he satisfied himself in publishing by proclamation that they were known to him, without further prosecuting the conspirators.

As to the respect he had for his friends: Caius Oppius, being with him upon a journey, and finding himself ill, he left him the only lodging he had for himself, and lay all night upon a hard ground in the open air. As to what concerns his justice, he put a beloved servant of his to death for lying with a noble Roman's wife, though there was no complaint made. Never had man more moderation in his victory, nor more resolution in his adverse fortune.

But all these good inclinations were stifled and spoiled by his furious ambition, by which he suffered himself to be so transported and misled that one may easily maintain that this passion was the rudder of all his actions; of a liberal man, it made him a public thief to supply this bounty and profusion, and made him utter this vile and unjust saying, "That if the most wicked and profligate persons in the world had been faithful in serving him towards his advancement, he would cherish and prefer them to the utmost of his power, as much as the best of men." It intoxicated him with so excessive a vanity, as to dare to boast in the presence of his fellow-citizens, that he had made the great commonwealth of Rome a name without form and without body; and to say that his answers for the future should stand for laws; and also to receive the body of the Senate coming to him, sitting; to suffer himself to be adored, and to have divine honours paid to him in his own presence. To conclude, this sole vice, in my opinion, spoiled in him the most rich and beautiful nature that ever was, and has rendered his name abominable to all good men, in that he would erect his glory upon the ruins of his country and the subversion of the greatest and most flourishing republic the world shall ever see.

There might, on the contrary, many examples be produced of great men whom pleasures have made to neglect the conduct of their affairs, as Mark Antony and others; but where love and ambition should be in equal balance, and come to jostle with equal forces, I make no doubt but the last would win the prize.



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To return to my subject: 'tis much to bridle our appetites by the argument of reason, or, by violence, to contain our members within their duty; but to lash ourselves for our neighbour's interest, and not only to divest ourselves of the charming passion that tickles us, of the pleasure we feel in being agreeable to others, and courted and beloved of every one, but also to conceive a hatred against the graces that produce that effect, and to condemn our beauty because it inflames others; of this, I confess, I have met with few examples. But this is one. Spurina, a young man of Tuscany:

“Qualis gemma micat, fulvum quae dividit aurum,
Aut collo decus, aut cupiti: vel quale per artem
Inclusum buxo aut Oricia terebintho
Lucet ebur,”

[“As a gem shines enchased in yellow gold, or an ornament on the neck or head, or as ivory has lustre, set by art in boxwood or Orician ebony.”—Aeneid, x. 134.]

being endowed with a singular beauty, and so excessive, that the chastest eyes could not chasterly behold its rays; not contenting himself with leaving so much flame and fever as he everywhere kindled without relief, entered into a furious spite against himself and those great endowments nature had so liberally conferred upon him, as if a man were responsible to himself for the faults of others, and purposely slashed and disfigured, with many wounds and scars, the perfect symmetry and proportion that nature had so curiously imprinted in his face. To give my free opinion, I more admire than honour such actions: such excesses are enemies to my rules. The design was conscientious and good, but certainly a little defective in prudence. What if his deformity served afterwards to make others guilty of the sin of hatred or contempt; or of envy at the glory of so rare a recommendation; or of calumny, interpreting this humour a mad ambition! Is there any form from which vice cannot, if it will, extract occasion to exercise itself, one way or another? It had been more just, and also more noble, to have made of these gifts of God a subject of exemplary regularity and virtue.

They who retire themselves from the common offices, from that infinite number of troublesome rules that fetter a man of exact honesty in civil life, are in my opinion very discreet, what peculiar sharpness of constraint soever they impose upon themselves in so doing. 'Tis in some sort a kind of dying to avoid the pain of living well. They may have another reward; but the reward of difficulty I fancy they can never have; nor, in uneasiness, that there can be anything more or better done than the keeping oneself upright amid the waves of the world, truly and exactly performing all parts of our duty. 'Tis, peradventure, more easy to keep clear of the sex than to maintain one's self aright in all points in the society of a wife; and a man may with less trouble adapt himself to entire abstinence than to the due dispensation of abundance. Use, carried on according to reason, has in it more of difficulty than abstinence; moderation is a virtue that gives more work than suffering; the well living of Scipio has a thousand fashions,

that of Diogenes but one; this as much excels the ordinary lives in innocence as the most accomplished excel them in utility and force.



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CHAPTER XXXIV

OBSERVATION ON THE MEANS TO CARRY ON A WAR ACCORDING TO JULIUS CAESAR

'Tis related of many great leaders that they have had certain books in particular esteem, as Alexander the Great, Homer; Scipio Africanus, Xenophon; Marcus Brutus, Polybius; Charles V., Philip'de Comines; and 'tis said that, in our times, Machiavelli is elsewhere still in repute; but the late Marshal Strozzi, who had taken Caesar for his man, doubtless made the best choice, seeing that it indeed ought to be the breviary of every soldier, as being the true and sovereign pattern of the military art. And, moreover, God knows with that grace and beauty he has embellished that rich matter, with so pure, delicate, and perfect expression, that, in my opinion, there are no writings in the world comparable to his, as to that business.

I will set down some rare and particular passages of his wars that remain in my memory.

His army, being in some consternation upon the rumour that was spread of the great forces that king Juba was leading against him, instead of abating the apprehension which his soldiers had conceived at the news and of lessening to them the forces of the enemy, having called them all together to encourage and reassure them, he took a quite contrary way to what we are used to do, for he told them that they need no more trouble themselves with inquiring after the enemy's forces, for that he was certainly informed thereof, and then told them of a number much surpassing both the truth and the report that was current in his army; following the advice of Cyrus in Xenophon, forasmuch as the deception is not of so great importance to find an enemy weaker than we expected, than to find him really very strong, after having been made to believe that he was weak.

It was always his use to accustom his soldiers simply to obey, without taking upon them to control, or so much as to speak of their captain's designs, which he never communicated to them but upon the point of execution; and he took a delight, if they discovered anything of what he intended, immediately to change his orders to deceive them; and to that purpose, would often, when he had assigned his quarters in a place, pass forward and lengthen his day's march, especially if it was foul and rainy weather.

The Swiss, in the beginning of his wars in Gaul, having sent to him to demand a free passage over the Roman territories, though resolved to hinder them by force, he nevertheless spoke kindly to the messengers, and took some respite to return an answer, to make use of that time for the calling his army together. These silly people did not know how good a husband he was of his time: for he often repeats that it is the best part of a captain to know how to make use of occasions, and his diligence in his exploits is, in truth, unheard of and incredible.



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If he was not very conscientious in taking advantage of an enemy under colour of a treaty of agreement, he was as little so in this, that he required no other virtue in a soldier but valour only, and seldom punished any other faults but mutiny and disobedience. He would often after his victories turn them loose to all sorts of licence, dispensing them for some time from the rules of military discipline, saying withal that he had soldiers so well trained up that, powdered and perfumed, they would run furiously to the fight. In truth, he loved to have them richly armed, and made them wear engraved, gilded, and damasked armour, to the end that the care of saving it might engage them to a more obstinate defence. Speaking to them, he called them by the name of fellow-soldiers, which we yet use; which his successor, Augustus, reformed, supposing he had only done it upon necessity, and to cajole those who merely followed him as volunteers:

“Rheni mihi Caesar in undis
Dux erat; hic socius; facinus quos inquinat, aequat:”

[“In the waters of the Rhine Caesar was my general; here at Rome he is my fellow. Crime levels those whom it polluted.”
—Lucan, v. 289.]

but that this carriage was too mean and low for the dignity of an emperor and general of an army, and therefore brought up the custom of calling them soldiers only.

With this courtesy Caesar mixed great severity to keep them in awe; the ninth legion having mutinied near Placentia, he ignominiously cashiered them, though Pompey was then yet on foot, and received them not again to grace till after many supplications; he quieted them more by authority and boldness than by gentle ways.

In that place where he speaks of his, passage over the Rhine to Germany, he says that, thinking it unworthy of the honour of the Roman people to waft over his army in vessels, he built a bridge that they might pass over dry-foot. There it was that he built that wonderful bridge of which he gives so particular a description; for he nowhere so willingly dwells upon his actions as in representing to us the subtlety of his inventions in such kind of handiwork.

I have also observed this, that he set a great value upon his exhortations to the soldiers before the fight; for where he would show that he was either surprised or reduced to a necessity of fighting, he always brings in this, that he had not so much as leisure to harangue his army. Before that great battle with those of Tournay, “Caesar,” says he, “having given order for everything else, presently ran where fortune carried him to encourage his people, and meeting with the tenth legion, had no more time to say anything to them but this, that they should remember their wonted valour; not to be astonished, but bravely sustain the enemy’s encounter; and seeing the enemy had already approached within a dart’s cast, he gave the signal for battle; and going suddenly thence



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elsewhere, to encourage others, he found that they were already engaged.” Here is what he tells us in that place. His tongue, indeed, did him notable service upon several occasions, and his military eloquence was, in his own time, so highly reputed, that many of his army wrote down his harangues as he spoke them, by which means there were volumes of them collected that existed a long time after him. He had so particular a grace in speaking, that his intimates, and Augustus amongst others, hearing those orations read, could distinguish even to the phrases and words that were not his.

The first time that he went out of Rome with any public command, he arrived in eight days at the river Rhone, having with him in his coach a secretary or two before him who were continually writing, and him who carried his sword behind him. And certainly, though a man did nothing but go on, he could hardly attain that promptitude with which, having been everywhere victorious in Gaul, he left it, and, following Pompey to Brundisium, in eighteen days’ time he subdued all Italy; returned from Brundisium to Rome; from Rome went into the very heart of Spain, where he surmounted extreme difficulties in the war against Afranius and Petreius, and in the long siege of Marseilles; thence he returned into Macedonia, beat the Roman army at Pharsalia, passed thence in pursuit of Pompey into Egypt, which he also subdued; from Egypt he went into Syria and the territories of Pontus, where he fought Pharnaces; thence into Africa, where he defeated Scipio and Juba; again returned through Italy, where he defeated Pompey’s sons:

“Ocyor et coeli fiammis, et tigride foeta.”

[“Swifter than lightning, or the cub-bearing tigress.”
—Lucan, v. 405]

“Ac veluti montis saxum de, vertice praeceps
Cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
Proluit, aut annis solvit sublapsa vetustas,
Fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu,
Exultatque solo, silvas, armenta, virosque,
Involvens secum.”

[“And as a stone torn from the mountain’s top by the wind or rain torrents, or loosened by age, falls massive with mighty force, bounds here and there, in its course sweeps from the earth with it woods, herds, and men.”—Aeneid, xii. 684.]

Speaking of the siege of Avaricum, he says, that it, was his custom to be night and day with the pioneers.—[Engineers. D.W.]—In all enterprises of consequence he always reconnoitred in person, and never brought his army into quarters till he had first viewed



the place, and, if we may believe Suetonius, when he resolved to pass over into England, he was the first man that sounded the passage.

He was wont to say that he more valued a victory obtained by counsel than by force, and in the war against Petreius and Afranius, fortune presenting him with an occasion of manifest advantage, he declined it, saying, that he hoped, with a little more time, but less hazard, to overthrow his enemies. He there also played a notable part in commanding his whole army to pass the river by swimming, without any manner of necessity:



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“Rapuitque ruens in praelia miles,
Quod fugiens timuisset, iter; mox uda receptis
Membra fovent armis, gelidosque a gurgite, cursu
Restituunt artus.”

[“The soldier rushing through a way to fight which he would have been afraid to have taken in flight: then with their armour they cover wet limbs, and by running restore warmth to their numbed joints.”—Lucan, iv. 151.]

I find him a little more temperate and considerate in his enterprises than Alexander, for this man seems to seek and run headlong upon dangers like an impetuous torrent which attacks and rushes against everything it meets, without choice or discretion;

“Sic tauriformis volvitur Aufidus;
Qui regna Dauni perfluit Appuli,
Dum saevit, horrendamque cultis
Diluvium meditatur agris;”

[“So the biforked Aufidus, which flows through the realm of the Apulian Daunus, when raging, threatens a fearful deluge to the tilled ground.”—Horat., Od., iv. 14, 25.]

and, indeed, he was a general in the flower and first heat of his youth, whereas Caesar took up the trade at a ripe and well advanced age; to which may be added that Alexander was of a more sanguine, hot, and choleric constitution, which he also inflamed with wine, from which Caesar was very abstinent.

But where necessary occasion required, never did any man venture his person more than he: so much so, that for my part, methinks I read in many of his exploits a determinate resolution to throw himself away to avoid the shame of being overcome. In his great battle with those of Tournay, he charged up to the head of the enemies without his shield, just as he was seeing the van of his own army beginning to give ground; which also several other times befell him. Hearing that his people were besieged, he passed through the enemy's army in disguise to go and encourage them with his presence. Having crossed over to Dyrrachium with very slender forces, and seeing the remainder of his army which he had left to Antony's conduct slow in following him, he undertook alone to repossess the sea in a very great storm and privately stole away to fetch the rest of his forces, the ports on the other side being seized by Pompey, and the whole sea being in his possession. And as to what he performed by force of hand, there are many exploits that in hazard exceed all the rules of war; for with how small means did he undertake to subdue the kingdom of Egypt, and afterwards to attack the forces of Scipio and Juba, ten times greater than his own? These people had, I know not what, more than human confidence in their fortune; and he was wont to say that men must embark, and not deliberate, upon high enterprises. After the battle of



Pharsalia, when he had sent his army away before him into Asia, and was passing in one single vessel the strait of the Hellespont, he met Lucius Cassius at sea with ten tall men-of-war, when he had the courage not only to stay his coming, but to sail up to him and summon him to yield, which he did.



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Having undertaken that furious siege of Alexia, where there were fourscore thousand men in garrison, all Gaul being in arms to raise the siege and having set an army on foot of a hundred and nine thousand horse, and of two hundred and forty thousand foot, what a boldness and vehement confidence was it in him that he would not give over his attempt, but resolved upon two so great difficulties—which nevertheless he overcame; and, after having won that great battle against those without, soon reduced those within to his mercy. The same happened to Lucullus at the siege of Tigranocerta against King Tigranes, but the condition of the enemy was not the same, considering the effeminacy of those with whom Lucullus had to deal. I will here set down two rare and extraordinary events concerning this siege of Alexia; one, that the Gauls having drawn their powers together to encounter Caesar, after they had made a general muster of all their forces, resolved in their council of war to dismiss a good part of this great multitude, that they might not fall into confusion. This example of fearing to be too many is new; but, to take it right, it stands to reason that the body of an army should be of a moderate greatness, and regulated to certain bounds, both out of respect to the difficulty of providing for them, and the difficulty of governing and keeping them in order. At least it is very easy to make it appear by example that armies monstrous in number have seldom done anything to purpose. According to the saying of Cyrus in Xenophon, “’Tis not the number of men, but the number of good men, that gives the advantage”: the remainder serving rather to trouble than assist. And Bajazet principally grounded his resolution of giving Tamerlane battle, contrary to the opinion of all his captains, upon this, that his enemies numberless number of men gave him assured hopes of confusion. Scanderbeg, a very good and expert judge in such matters, was wont to say that ten or twelve thousand reliable fighting men were sufficient to a good leader to secure his regulation in all sorts of military occasions. The other thing I will here record, which seems to be contrary both to the custom and rules of war, is, that Vercingetorix, who was made general of all the parts of the revolted Gaul, should go shut up himself in Alexia: for he who has the command of a whole country ought never to shut himself up but in case of such last extremity that the only place he has left is in concern, and that the only hope he has left is in the defence of that city; otherwise he ought to keep himself always at liberty, that he may have the means to provide, in general, for all parts of his government.

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To return to Caesar. He grew, in time, more slow and more considerate, as his friend Oppius witnesses: conceiving that he ought not lightly to hazard the glory of so many victories, which one blow of fortune might deprive him of. 'Tis what the Italians say, when they would reproach the rashness and foolhardiness of young people, calling them Bisognosi d'onore, "necessitous of honour," and that being in so great a want and dearth of reputation, they have reason to seek it at what price soever, which they ought not to do who have acquired enough already. There may reasonably be some moderation, some satiety, in this thirst and appetite of glory, as well as in other things: and there are enough people who practise it.

He was far remote from the religious scruples of the ancient Romans, who would never prevail in their wars but by dint of pure and simple valour; and yet he was more conscientious than we should be in these days, and did not approve all sorts of means to obtain a victory. In the war against Ariovistus, whilst he was parleying with him, there happened some commotion between the horsemen, which was occasioned by the fault of Ariovistus' light horse, wherein, though Caesar saw he had a very great advantage of the enemy, he would make no use on't, lest he should have been reproached with a treacherous proceeding.

He was always wont to wear rich garments, and of a shining colour in battle, that he might be the more remarkable and better observed.

He always carried a stricter and tighter hand over his soldiers when near an enemy. When the ancient Greeks would accuse any one of extreme insufficiency, they would say, in common proverb, that he could neither read nor swim; he was of the same opinion, that swimming was of great use in war, and himself found it so; for when he had to use diligence, he commonly swam over the rivers in his way; for he loved to march on foot, as also did Alexander the Great. Being in Egypt forced, to save himself, to go into a little boat, and so many people leaping in with him that it was in danger of sinking, he chose rather to commit himself to the sea, and swam to his fleet, which lay two hundred paces off, holding in his left hand his tablets, and drawing his coatarmour in his teeth, that it might not fall into the enemy's hand, and at this time he was of a pretty advanced age.

Never had any general so much credit with his soldiers: in the beginning of the civil wars, his centurions offered him to find every one a man-at-arms at his own charge, and the foot soldiers to serve him at their own expense; those who were most at their ease, moreover, undertaking to defray the more necessitous. The late Admiral Chastillon

[Gaspard de Coligny, assassinated in the St. Bartholomew massacre, 24th August 1572.]



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showed us the like example in our civil wars; for the French of his army provided money out of their own purses to pay the foreigners that were with him. There are but rarely found examples of so ardent and so ready an affection amongst the soldiers of elder times, who kept themselves strictly to their rules of war: passion has a more absolute command over us than reason; and yet it happened in the war against Hannibal, that by the example of the people of Rome in the city, the soldiers and captains refused their pay in the army, and in Marcellus' camp those were branded with the name of Mercenaries who would receive any. Having got the worst of it near Dyrrachium, his soldiers came and offered themselves to be chastised and punished, so that there was more need to comfort than reprove them. One single cohort of his withstood four of Pompey's legions above four hours together, till they were almost all killed with arrows, so that there were a hundred and thirty thousand shafts found in the trenches. A soldier called Scaeva, who commanded at one of the avenues, invincibly maintained his ground, having lost an eye, with one shoulder and one thigh shot through, and his shield hit in two hundred and thirty places. It happened that many of his soldiers being taken prisoners, rather chose to die than promise to join the contrary side. Granius Petronius was taken by Scipio in Africa: Scipio having put the rest to death, sent him word that he gave him his life, for he was a man of quality and quaestor, to whom Petronius sent answer back, that Caesar's soldiers were wont to give others their life, and not to receive it; and immediately with his own hand killed himself.

Of their fidelity there are infinite examples amongst them, that which was done by those who were besieged in Salona, a city that stood for Caesar against Pompey, is not, for the rarity of an accident that there happened, to be forgotten. Marcus Octavius kept them close besieged; they within being reduced to the extremest necessity of all things, so that to supply the want of men, most of them being either slain or wounded, they had manumitted all their slaves, and had been constrained to cut off all the women's hair to make ropes for their war engines, besides a wonderful dearth of victuals, and yet continuing resolute never to yield. After having drawn the siege to a great length, by which Octavius was grown more negligent and less attentive to his enterprise, they made choice of one day about noon, and having first placed the women and children upon the walls to make a show, sallied upon the besiegers with such fury, that having routed the first, second, and third body, and afterwards the fourth, and the rest, and beaten them all out of their trenches, they pursued them even to their ships, and Octavius himself was fain to fly to Dyrrachium, where Pompey lay. I do not at present remember that I have met with any other example where the besieged ever gave the besieger a total defeat and won the field, nor that a sortie ever achieved the result of a pure and entire victory.



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CHAPTER XXXV

OF THREE GOOD WOMEN

They are not by the dozen, as every one knows, and especially in the duties of marriage, for that is a bargain full of so many nice circumstances that 'tis hard a woman's will should long endure such a restraint; men, though their condition be something better under that tie, have yet enough to do. The true touch and test of a happy marriage have respect to the time of the companionship, if it has been constantly gentle, loyal, and agreeable. In our age, women commonly reserve the publication of their good offices, and their vehement affection towards their husbands, until they have lost them, or at least, till then defer the testimonies of their good will; a too slow testimony and unseasonable. By it they rather manifest that they never loved them till dead: their life is nothing but trouble; their death full of love and courtesy. As fathers conceal their affection from their children, women, likewise, conceal theirs from their husbands, to maintain a modest respect. This mystery is not for my palate; 'tis to much purpose that they scratch themselves and tear their hair. I whisper in a waiting-woman's or secretary's ear: "How were they, how did they live together?" I always have that good saying in my head:

"Jactantius moerent, quae minus dolent."

["They make the most ado who are least concerned." (Or:)
"They mourn the more ostentatiously, the less they grieve."
—Tacitus, *Annal.*, ii. 77, writing of Germanicus.]

Their whimpering is offensive to the living and vain to the dead. We should willingly give them leave to laugh after we are dead, provided they will smile upon us whilst we are alive. Is it not enough to make a man revive in pure spite, that she, who spat in my face whilst I was in being, shall come to kiss my feet when I am no more? If there be any honour in lamenting a husband, it only appertains to those who smiled upon them whilst they had them; let those who wept during their lives laugh at their deaths, as well outwardly as within. Therefore, never regard those blubbered eyes and that pitiful voice; consider her deportment, her complexion, the plumpness of her cheeks under all those formal veils; 'tis there she talks plain French. There are few who do not mend upon't, and health is a quality that cannot lie. That starched and ceremonious countenance looks not so much back as forward, and is rather intended to get a new husband than to lament the old. When I was a boy, a very beautiful and virtuous lady, who is yet living, the widow of a prince, wore somewhat more ornament in her dress than our laws of widowhood allow, and being reproached with it, she made answer that it was because she was resolved to have no more love affairs, and would never marry again.

I have here, not at all dissenting from our customs, made choice of three women, who have also expressed the utmost of their goodness and affection about their husbands' deaths; yet are they examples of another kind than are now in use, and so austere that they will hardly be drawn into imitation.



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The younger Pliny had near a house of his in Italy a neighbour who was exceedingly tormented with certain ulcers in his private parts. His wife seeing him so long to languish, entreated that he would give her leave to see and at leisure to consider of the condition of his disease, and that she would freely tell him what she thought. This permission being obtained, and she having curiously examined the business, found it impossible he could ever be cured, and that all he had to hope for or expect was a great while to linger out a painful and miserable life, and therefore, as the most sure and sovereign remedy, resolutely advised him to kill himself. But finding him a little tender and backward in so rude an attempt: "Do not think, my friend," said she, "that the torments I see thee endure are not as sensible to me as to thyself, and that to deliver myself from them, I will not myself make use of the same remedy I have prescribed to thee. I will accompany thee in the cure as I have done in the disease; fear nothing, but believe that we shall have pleasure in this passage that is to free us from so many miseries, and we will go happily together." Which having said, and roused up her husband's courage, she resolved that they should throw themselves headlong into the sea out of a window that overlooked it, and that she might maintain to the last the loyal and vehement affection wherewith she had embraced him during his life, she would also have him die in her arms; but lest they should fail, and should quit their hold in the fall through fear, she tied herself fast to him by the waist, and so gave up her own life to procure her husband's repose. This was a woman of mean condition; and, amongst that class of people, 'tis no very new thing to see some examples of rare virtue:

"Extrema per illos
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit."

["Justice, when she left the earth, took her last
steps among them."—Virgil, *Georg.*, ii. 473.]

The other two were noble and rich, where examples of virtue are rarely lodged.

Arria, the wife of Caecina Paetus, a consular person, was the mother of another Arria, the wife of Thrasea Paetus, he whose virtue was so renowned in the time of Nero, and by this son-in-law, the grandmother of Fannia: for the resemblance of the names of these men and women, and their fortunes, have led to several mistakes. This first Arria, her husband Caecina Paetus, having been taken prisoner by some of the Emperor Claudius' people, after Scribonianus' defeat, whose party he had embraced in the war, begged of those who were to carry him prisoner to Rome, that they would take her into their ship, where she would be of much less charge and trouble to them than a great many persons they must otherwise have to attend her husband, and that she alone would undertake to serve him in his chamber, his kitchen, and all other



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offices. They refused, whereupon she put herself into a fisher-boat she hired on the spot, and in that manner followed him from Slavonia. When she had come to Rome, Junia, the widow of Scribonianus, having one day, from the resemblance of their fortune, accosted her in the Emperor's presence; she rudely repulsed her with these words, "I," said she, "speak to thee, or give ear to any thing thou sayest! to thee in whose lap Scribonianus was slain, and thou art yet alive!" These words, with several other signs, gave her friends to understand that she would undoubtedly despatch herself, impatient of supporting her husband's misfortune. And Thrasea, her son-in-law, beseeching her not to throw away herself, and saying to her, "What! if I should run the same fortune that Caecina has done, would you that your daughter, my wife, should do the same?"—"Would I?" replied she, "yes, yes, I would: if she had lived as long, and in as good understanding with thee as I have done, with my husband." These answers made them more careful of her, and to have a more watchful eye to her proceedings. One day, having said to those who looked to her: "Tis to much purpose that you take all this pains to prevent me; you may indeed make me die an ill death, but to keep me from dying is not in your power"; she in a sudden phrenzy started from a chair whereon she sat, and with all her force dashed her head against the wall, by which blow being laid flat in a swoon, and very much wounded, after they had again with great ado brought her to herself: "I told you," said she, "that if you refused me some easy way of dying, I should find out another, how painful soever." The conclusion of so admirable a virtue was this: her husband Paetus, not having resolution enough of his own to despatch himself, as he was by the emperor's cruelty enjoined, one day, amongst others, after having first employed all the reasons and exhortations which she thought most prevalent to persuade him to it, she snatched the poignard he wore from his side, and holding it ready in her hand, for the conclusion of her admonitions; "Do thus, Paetus," said she, and in the same instant giving herself a mortal stab in the breast, and then drawing it out of the wound, presented it to him, ending her life with this noble, generous, and immortal saying, "Paete, non dolet"—having time to pronounce no more but those three never-to-be-forgotten words: "Paetus, it is not painful."

*"Casta suo gladium cum traderet Arria Paeto,
Quern de visceribus traxerat ipsa suis
Si qua fides, vulnus quod feci non dolet, inquit,
Sed quod to facies, id mihi, Paete, dolet."*

[*"When the chaste Arria gave to Poetus the reeking sword she had drawn from her breast, 'If you believe me,' she said, 'Paetus, the wound I have made hurts not, but 'tis that which thou wilt make that hurts me.'"*—Martial, i. 14.]

The action was much more noble in itself, and of a



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braver sense than the poet expressed it: for she was so far from being deterred by the thought of her husband's wound and death and her own, that she had been their promotress and adviser: but having performed this high and courageous enterprise for her husband's only convenience, she had even in the last gasp of her life no other concern but for him, and of dispossessing him of the fear of dying with her. Paetus presently struck himself to the heart with the same weapon, ashamed, I suppose, to have stood in need of so dear and precious an example.

Pompeia Paulina, a young and very noble Roman lady, had married Seneca in his extreme old age. Nero, his fine pupil, sent his guards to him to denounce the sentence of death, which was performed after this manner: When the Roman emperors of those times had condemned any man of quality, they sent to him by their officers to choose what death he would, and to execute it within such or such a time, which was limited, according to the degree of their indignation, to a shorter or a longer respite, that they might therein have better leisure to dispose their affairs, and sometimes depriving them of the means of doing it by the shortness of the time; and if the condemned seemed unwilling to submit to the order, they had people ready at hand to execute it either by cutting the veins of the arms and legs, or by compelling them by force to swallow a draught of poison. But persons of honour would not abide this necessity, but made use of their own physicians and surgeons for this purpose. Seneca, with a calm and steady countenance, heard their charge, and presently called for paper to write his will, which being by the captain refused, he turned himself towards his friends, saying to them, "Since I cannot leave you any other acknowledgment of the obligation I have to you, I leave you at least the best thing I have, namely, the image of my life and manners, which I entreat you to keep in memory of me, that by so doing you may acquire the glory of sincere and real friends." And there withal, one while appeasing the sorrow he saw in them with gentle words, and presently raising his voice to reprove them: "What," said he, "are become of all our brave philosophical precepts? What are become of all the provisions we have so many years laid up against the accidents of fortune? Is Nero's cruelty unknown to us? What could we expect from him who had murdered his mother and his brother, but that he should put his tutor to death who had brought him up?" After having spoken these words in general, he turned himself towards his wife, and embracing her fast in his arms, as, her heart and strength failing her, she was ready to sink down with grief, he begged of her, for his sake, to bear this accident with a little more patience, telling her, that now the hour was come wherein he was to show, not by argument and discourse, but effect, the fruit he had acquired by his studies, and that he really embraced his death, not only without



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grief, but moreover with joy. "Wherefore, my dearest," said he, "do not dishonour it with thy tears, that it may not seem as if thou lovest thyself more than my reputation. Moderate thy grief, and comfort thyself in the knowledge thou hast had of me and my actions, leading the remainder of thy life in the same virtuous manner thou hast hitherto done." To which Paulina, having a little recovered her spirits, and warmed the magnanimity of her courage with a most generous affection, replied,—“No, Seneca,” said she, “I am not a woman to suffer you to go alone in such a necessity: I will not have you think that the virtuous examples of your life have not taught me how to die; and when can I ever better or more fittingly do it, or more to my own desire, than with you? and therefore assure yourself I will go along with you.” Then Seneca, taking this noble and generous resolution of his wife in good part, and also willing to free himself from the fear of leaving her exposed to the cruelty of his enemies after his death: “I have, Paulina,” said he, “instructed thee in what would serve thee happily to live; but thou more covetest, I see, the honour of dying: in truth, I will not grudge it thee; the constancy and resolution in our common end are the same, but the beauty and glory of thy part are much greater.” Which being said, the surgeons, at the same time, opened the veins of both their arms, but as those of Seneca were more shrunk up, as well with age as abstinence, made his blood flow too slowly, he moreover commanded them to open the veins of his thighs; and lest the torments he endured might pierce his wife’s heart, and also to free himself from the affliction of seeing her in so sad a condition, after having taken a very affectionate leave of her, he entreated she would suffer them to carry her into her chamber, which they accordingly did. But all these incisions being not yet enough to make him die, he commanded Statius Anneus, his physician, to give him a draught of poison, which had not much better effect; for by reason of the weakness and coldness of his limbs, it could not arrive at his heart. Wherefore they were forced to superadd a very hot bath, and then, feeling his end approach, whilst he had breath he continued excellent discourses upon the subject of his present condition, which the secretaries wrote down so long as they could hear his voice, and his last words were long after in high honour and esteem amongst men, and it is a great loss to us that they have not come down to our times. Then, feeling the last pangs of death, with the bloody water of the bath he bathed his head, saying: “This water I dedicate to Jupiter the deliverer.” Nero, being presently informed of all this, fearing lest the death of Paulina, who was one of the best-born ladies of Rome, and against whom he had no particular unkindness, should turn to his reproach, sent orders in all haste to bind up her wounds, which her attendants did without her knowledge, she being already half dead, and without all manner of sense. Thus, though she lived contrary to her own design, it was very honourably, and befitting her own virtue, her pale complexion ever after manifesting how much life had run from her veins.



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These are my three very true stories, which I find as entertaining and as tragic as any of those we make out of our own heads wherewith to amuse the common people; and I wonder that they who are addicted to such relations, do not rather cull out ten thousand very fine stories, which are to be found in books, that would save them the trouble of invention, and be more useful and diverting; and he who would make a whole and connected body of them would need to add nothing of his own, but the connection only, as it were the solder of another metal; and might by this means embody a great many true events of all sorts, disposing and diversifying them according as the beauty of the work should require, after the same manner, almost, as Ovid has made up his *Metamorphoses* of the infinite number of various fables.

In the last couple, this is, moreover, worthy of consideration, that Paulina voluntarily offered to lose her life for the love of her husband, and that her husband had formerly also forborne to die for the love of her. We may think there is no just counterpoise in this exchange; but, according to his stoical humour, I fancy he thought he had done as much for her, in prolonging his life upon her account, as if he had died for her. In one of his letters to Lucilius, after he has given him to understand that, being seized with an ague in Rome, he presently took coach to go to a house he had in the country, contrary to his wife's opinion, who would have him stay, and that he had told her that the ague he was seized with was not a fever of the body but of the place, it follows thus: "She let me go," says he, "giving me a strict charge of my health. Now I, who know that her life is involved in mine, begin to make much of myself, that I may preserve her. And I lose the privilege my age has given me, of being more constant and resolute in many things, when I call to mind that in this old fellow there is a young girl who is interested in his health. And since I cannot persuade her to love me more courageously, she makes me more solicitously love myself: for we must allow something to honest affections, and, sometimes, though occasions importune us to the contrary, we must call back life, even though it be with torment: we must hold the soul fast in our teeth, since the rule of living, amongst good men, is not so long as they please, but as long as they ought. He that loves not his wife nor his friend so well as to prolong his life for them, but will obstinately die, is too delicate and too effeminate: the soul must impose this upon itself, when the utility of our friends so requires; we must sometimes lend ourselves to our friends, and when we would die for ourselves must break that resolution for them. 'Tis a testimony of grandeur of courage to return to life for the consideration of another, as many excellent persons have done: and 'tis a mark of singular good nature to preserve old age (of which the greatest convenience is the



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indifference as to its duration, and a more stout and disdainful use of life), when a man perceives that this office is pleasing, agreeable, and useful to some person by whom he is very much beloved. And a man reaps by it a very pleasing reward; for what can be more delightful than to be so dear to his wife, as upon her account he shall become dearer to himself? Thus has my Paulina loaded me not only with her fears, but my own; it has not been sufficient to consider how resolutely I could die, but I have also considered how irresolutely she would bear my death. I am enforced to live, and sometimes to live in magnanimity." These are his own words, as excellent as they everywhere are.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OF THE MOST EXCELLENT MEN

If I should be asked my choice among all the men who have come to my knowledge, I should make answer, that methinks I find three more excellent than all the rest.

One of them Homer: not that Aristotle and Varro, for example, were not, peradventure, as learned as he; nor that possibly Virgil was not equal to him in his own art, which I leave to be determined by such as know them both. I who, for my part, understand but one of them, can only say this, according to my poor talent, that I do not believe the Muses themselves could ever go beyond the Roman:

"Tale facit carmen docta testudine, quale
Cynthius impositis temperat articulis:"

["He plays on his learned lute a verse such as Cynthian Apollo modulates with his imposed fingers."—Propertius, ii. 34, 79.]

and yet in this judgment we are not to forget that it is chiefly from Homer that Virgil derives his excellence, that he is guide and teacher; and that one touch of the Iliad has supplied him with body and matter out of which to compose his great and divine Aeneid. I do not reckon upon that, but mix several other circumstances that render to me this poet admirable, even as it were above human condition. And, in truth, I often wonder that he who has produced, and, by his authority, given reputation in the world to so many deities, was not deified himself. Being blind and poor, living before the sciences were reduced into rule and certain observation, he was so well acquainted with them, that all those who have since taken upon them to establish governments, to carry on wars, and to write either of religion or philosophy, of what sect soever, or of the arts, have made use of him as of a most perfect instructor in the knowledge of all things, and of his books as of a treasury of all sorts of learning:



“Qui, quid sit pulcrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.”

[“Who tells us what is good, what evil, what useful, what not, more
clearly and better than Chrysippus and Crantor?”
—Horace, Ep., i. 2, 3.]

and as this other says,



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“A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis”

[“From which, as from a perennial spring, the lips of the poets are moistened by Pierian waters.”—Ovid, *Amoy.*, iii. 9, 25.]

and the other,

“Adde Heliconiadum comites, quorum unus Homerus
Sceptra potitus;”

[“Add the companions of the Muses, whose sceptre Homer has solely obtained.”—Lucretius, iii. 1050.]

and the other:

“Cujusque ex ore profusos

Omnis posteritas latices in carmina duxit,
Amnemque in tenues ausa est deducere rivos.
Unius foecunda bonis.”[“From whose mouth all posterity has drawn out copious streams of verse, and has made bold to turn the mighty river into its little rivulets, fertile in the property of one man.” —Manilius, *Astyon.*, ii. 8.]

’Tis contrary to the order of nature that he has made the most excellent production that can possibly be; for the ordinary birth of things is imperfect; they thrive and gather strength by growing, whereas he rendered the infancy of poesy and several other sciences mature, perfect, and accomplished at first. And for this reason he may be called the first and the last of the poets, according to the fine testimony antiquity has left us of him, “that as there was none before him whom he could imitate, so there has been none since that could imitate him.” His words, according to Aristotle, are the only words that have motion and action, the only substantial words. Alexander the Great, having found a rich cabinet amongst Darius’ spoils, gave order it should be reserved for him to keep his Homer in, saying: that he was the best and most faithful counsellor he had in his military affairs. For the same reason it was that Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandridas, said that he was the poet of the Lacedaemonians, for that he was an excellent master for the discipline of war. This singular and particular commendation is also left of him in the judgment of Plutarch, that he is the only author in the world that never glutted nor disgusted his readers, presenting himself always another thing, and always flourishing in some new grace. That wanton Alcibiades, having asked one, who pretended to learning, for a book of Homer, gave him a box of the ear because he had none, which he thought as scandalous as we should if we found one of our priests without a Breviary. Xenophanes complained one day to Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, that he was so poor he had not wherewithal to maintain two servants. “What!” replied



he, "Homer, who was much poorer than thou art, keeps above ten thousand, though he is dead." What did Panaetius leave unsaid when he called Plato the Homer of the philosophers? Besides what glory can be compared to his? Nothing is so frequent in men's mouths as his name and works, nothing so known and received as Troy, Helen, and the war about her, when



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perhaps there was never any such thing. Our children are still called by names that he invented above three thousand years ago; who does not know Hector and Achilles? Not only some particular families, but most nations also seek their origin in his inventions. Mohammed, the second of that name, emperor of the Turks, writing to our Pope Pius *ii.*, "I am astonished," says he, "that the Italians should appear against me, considering that we have our common descent from the Trojans, and that it concerns me as well as it does them to revenge the blood of Hector upon the Greeks, whom they countenance against me." Is it not a noble farce wherein kings, republics, and emperors have so many ages played their parts, and to which the vast universe serves for a theatre? Seven Grecian cities contended for his birth, so much honour even his obscurity helped him to!

"Smyrna, Rhodos, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, Athenm."

The other is Alexander the Great. For whoever will consider the age at which he began his enterprises, the small means by which he effected so glorious a design, the authority he obtained in such mere youth with the greatest and most experienced captains of the world, by whom he was followed, the extraordinary favour wherewith fortune embraced and favoured so many hazardous, not to say rash, exploits,

"Impellens quicquid sibi summa petenti
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruins;"

["Bearing down all who sought to withstand him, and pleased to force his way by ruin."—Lucan, i. 149.]

that greatness, to have at the age of three-and-thirty years, passed victorious through the whole habitable earth, and in half a life to have attained to the utmost of what human nature can do; so that you cannot imagine its just duration and the continuation of his increase in valour and fortune, up to a due maturity of age, but that you must withal imagine something more than man: to have made so many royal branches to spring from his soldiers, leaving the world, at his death, divided amongst four successors, simple captains of his army, whose posterity so long continued and maintained that vast possession; so many excellent virtues as he was master of, justice, temperance, liberality, truth in his word, love towards his own people, and humanity towards those he overcame; for his manners, in general, seem in truth incapable of any manner of reproach, although some particular and extraordinary actions of his may fall under censure. But it is impossible to carry on such great things as he did within the strict rules of justice; such as he are to be judged in gross by the main end of their actions. The ruin of Thebes and Persepolis, the murder of Menander and of Ephistion's physician, the massacre of so many Persian prisoners at one time, of a troop of Indian soldiers not without prejudice to his word, and of the Cossians, so much as to the



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very children, are indeed sallies that are not well to be excused. For, as to Clytus, the fault was more than redeemed; and that very action, as much as any other whatever, manifests the goodness of his nature, a nature most excellently formed to goodness; and it was ingeniously said of him, that he had his virtues from Nature, his vices from Fortune. As to his being a little given to bragging, a little too impatient of hearing himself ill-spoken of, and as to those mangers, arms, and bits he caused to be strewed in the Indies, all those little vanities, methinks, may very well be allowed to his youth, and the prodigious prosperity of his fortune. And who will consider withal his so many military virtues, his diligence, foresight, patience, discipline, subtlety, magnanimity, resolution, and good fortune, wherein (though we had not had the authority of Hannibal to assure us) he was the first of men, the admirable beauty and symmetry of his person, even to a miracle, his majestic port and awful mien, in a face so young, ruddy, and radiant:

“Qualis, ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda,
Quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignes,
Extulit os sacrum coelo, tenebrasque resolvit;”

[“As when, bathed in the waves of Ocean, Lucifer, whom Venus loves beyond the other stars, has displayed his sacred countenance to the heaven, and disperses the darkness”—Aeneid, iii. 589.]

the excellence of his knowledge and capacity; the duration and grandeur of his glory, pure, clean, without spot or envy, and that long after his death it was a religious belief that his very medals brought good fortune to all who carried them about them; and that more kings and princes have written his actions than other historians have written the actions of any other king or prince whatever; and that to this very day the Mohammedans, who despise all other histories, admit of and honour his alone, by a special privilege: whoever, I say, will seriously consider these particulars, will confess that, all these things put together, I had reason to prefer him before Caesar himself, who alone could make me doubtful in my choice: and it cannot be denied that there was more of his own in his exploits, and more of fortune in those of Alexander. They were in many things equal, and peradventure Caesar had some greater qualities they were two fires, or two torrents, overrunning the world by several ways;

“Ac velut immissi diversis partibus ignes
Arentem in silvam, et virgulta sonantia lauro
Aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
Dant sonitum spumosi amnes, et in aequora currunt,
Quisque suum populatus iter:”



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["And as fires applied in several parts to a dry wood and crackling shrubs of laurel, or as with impetuous fall from the steep mountains, foaming torrents pour down to the ocean, each clearing a destructive course."—Aeneid, xii. 521.]

but though Caesar's ambition had been more moderate, it would still be so unhappy, having the ruin of his country and universal mischief to the world for its abominable object, that, all things raked together and put into the balance, I must needs incline to Alexander's side.

The third and in my opinion the most excellent, is Epaminondas. Of glory he has not near so much as the other two (which, for that matter, is but a part of the substance of the thing): of valour and resolution, not of that sort which is pushed on by ambition, but of that which wisdom and reason can plant in a regular soul, he had all that could be imagined. Of this virtue of his, he has, in my idea, given as ample proof as Alexander himself or Caesar: for although his warlike exploits were neither so frequent nor so full, they were yet, if duly considered in all their circumstances, as important, as bravely fought, and carried with them as manifest testimony of valour and military conduct, as those of any whatever. The Greeks have done him the honour, without contradiction, to pronounce him the greatest man of their nation; and to be the first of Greece, is easily to be the first of the world. As to his knowledge, we have this ancient judgment of him, "That never any man knew so much, and spake so little as he";—[Plutarch, On the Demon of Socrates, c. 23.]—for he was of the Pythagorean sect; but when he did speak, never any man spake better; an excellent orator, and of powerful persuasion. But as to his manners and conscience, he infinitely surpassed all men who ever undertook the management of affairs; for in this one thing, which ought chiefly to be considered, which alone truly denotes us for what we are, and which alone I make counterbalance all the rest put together, he comes not short of any philosopher whatever, not even of Socrates himself. Innocence, in this man, is a quality peculiar, sovereign, constant, uniform, incorruptible, compared with which, it appears in Alexander subject to something else subaltern, uncertain, variable, effeminate, and fortuitous.

Antiquity has judged that in thoroughly sifting all the other great captains, there is found in every one some peculiar quality that illustrates his name: in this man only there is a full and equal virtue throughout, that leaves nothing to be wished for in him, whether in private or public employment, whether in peace or war; whether to live gloriously and grandly, and to die: I do not know any form or fortune of man that I so much honour and love.

'Tis true that I look upon his obstinate poverty, as it is set out by his best friends, as a little too scrupulous and nice; and this is the only feature, though high in itself and well worthy of admiration, that I find so rugged as not to desire to imitate, to the degree it was in him.



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Scipio AEmilianus alone, could one attribute to him as brave and magnificent an end, and as profound and universal a knowledge, might be put into the other scale of the balance. Oh, what an injury has time done me to deprive me of the sight of two of the most noble lives which, by the common consent of all the world, one of the greatest of the Greeks, and the other of the Romans, were in all Plutarch. What a matter! what a workman!

For a man that was no saint, but, as we say, a gentleman, of civilian and ordinary manners, and of a moderate ambition, the richest life that I know, and full of the richest and most to be desired parts, all things considered, is, in my opinion, that of Alcibiades.

But as to what concerns Epaminondas, I will here, for the example of an excessive goodness, add some of his opinions: he declared, that the greatest satisfaction he ever had in his whole life, was the contentment he gave his father and mother by his victory at Leuctra; wherein his deference is great, preferring their pleasure before his own, so dust and so full of so glorious an action. He did not think it lawful, even to restore the liberty of his country, to kill a man without knowing a cause: which made him so cold in the enterprise of his companion Pelopidas for the relief of Thebes. He was also of opinion that men in battle ought to avoid the encounter of a friend who was on the contrary side, and to spare him. And his humanity, even towards his enemies themselves, having rendered him suspected to the Boeotians, for that, after he had miraculously forced the Lacedaemonians to open to him the pass which they had undertaken to defend at the entrance into the Morea, near Corinth, he contented himself with having charged through them, without pursuing them to the utmost, he had his commission of general taken from him, very honourably upon such an account, and for the shame it was to them upon necessity afterwards to restore him to his command, and so to manifest how much upon him depended their safety and honour; victory like a shadow attending him wherever he went; and indeed the prosperity of his country, as being from him derived, died with him.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OF THE RESEMBLANCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS

This faggoting up of so many divers pieces is so done that I never set pen to paper but when I have too much idle time, and never anywhere but at home; so that it is compiled after divers interruptions and intervals, occasions keeping me sometimes many months elsewhere. As to the rest, I never correct my first by any second conceptions; I, peradventure, may alter a word or so, but 'tis only to vary the phrase, and not to destroy my former meaning. I have a mind to represent the progress of my humours, and that every one may see each piece as it came from the forge. I could wish I had begun sooner, and had taken more notice of the course of my mutations.



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A servant of mine whom I employed to transcribe for me, thought he had got a prize by stealing several pieces from me, wherewith he was best pleased; but it is my comfort that he will be no greater a gainer than I shall be a loser by the theft. I am grown older by seven or eight years since I began; nor has it been without some new acquisition: I have, in that time, by the liberality of years, been acquainted with the stone: their commerce and long converse do not well pass away without some such inconvenience. I could have been glad that of other infirmities age has to present long-lived men withal, it had chosen some one that would have been more welcome to me, for it could not possibly have laid upon me a disease for which, even from my infancy, I have had so great a horror; and it is, in truth, of all the accidents of old age, that of which I have ever been most afraid. I have often thought with myself that I went on too far, and that in so long a voyage I should at last run myself into some disadvantage; I perceived, and have often enough declared, that it was time to depart, and that life should be cut off in the sound and living part, according to the surgeon's rule in amputations; and that nature made him pay very strict usury who did not in due time pay the principal. And yet I was so far from being ready, that in the eighteen months' time or thereabout that I have been in this uneasy condition, I have so inured myself to it as to be content to live on in it; and have found wherein to comfort myself, and to hope: so much are men enslaved to their miserable being, that there is no condition so wretched they will not accept, provided they may live! Hear Maecenas:

“Debilem facito manu,
Debilem pede, coxa,
Lubricos quate dentes;
Vita dum superest, bene est.”

["Cripple my hand, foot, hip; shake out my loose teeth: while there's life, 'tis well."—Apud Seneca, Ep., 101.]

And Tamerlane, with a foolish humanity, palliated the fantastic cruelty he exercised upon lepers, when he put all he could hear of to death, to deliver them, as he pretended, from the painful life they lived. For there was not one of them who would not rather have been thrice a leper than be not. And Antisthenes the Stoic, being very sick, and crying out, "Who will deliver me from these evils?" Diogenes, who had come to visit him, "This," said he, presenting him a knife, "soon enough, if thou wilt."—"I do not mean from my life," he replied, "but from my sufferings." The sufferings that only attack the mind, I am not so sensible of as most other men; and this partly out of judgment, for the world looks upon several things as dreadful or to be avoided at the expense of life, that are almost indifferent to me: partly, through a dull and insensible complexion I have in accidents which do not point-blank hit me;



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and that insensibility I look upon as one of the best parts of my natural condition; but essential and corporeal pains I am very sensible of. And yet, having long since foreseen them, though with a sight weak and delicate and softened with the long and happy health and quiet that God has been pleased to give me the greatest part of my time, I had in my imagination fancied them so insupportable, that, in truth, I was more afraid than I have since found I had cause: by which I am still more fortified in this belief, that most of the faculties of the soul, as we employ them, more trouble the repose of life than they are any way useful to it.

I am in conflict with the worst, the most sudden, the most painful, the most mortal, and the most irremediable of all diseases; I have already had the trial of five or six very long and very painful fits; and yet I either flatter myself, or there is even in this state what is very well to be endured by a man who has his soul free from the fear of death, and of the menaces, conclusions, and consequences which physic is ever thundering in our ears; but the effect even of pain itself is not so sharp and intolerable as to put a man of understanding into rage and despair. I have at least this advantage by my stone, that what I could not hitherto prevail upon myself to resolve upon, as to reconciling and acquainting myself with death, it will perfect; for the more it presses upon and importunes me, I shall be so much the less afraid to die. I had already gone so far as only to love life for life's sake, but my pain will dissolve this intelligence; and God grant that in the end, should the sharpness of it be once greater than I shall be able to bear, it does not throw me into the other no less vicious extreme to desire and wish to die!

“Summum nec metuas diem, nec optes:”

["Neither to wish, nor fear to die." (Or:)
"Thou shouldst neither fear nor desire the last day."
—Martial, x. 7.]

they are two passions to be feared; but the one has its remedy much nearer at hand than the other.

As to the rest, I have always found the precept that so rigorously enjoins a resolute countenance and disdainful and indifferent comportment in the toleration of infirmities to be ceremonial. Why should philosophy, which only has respect to life and effects, trouble itself about these external appearances? Let us leave that care to actors and masters of rhetoric, who set so great a value upon our gestures. Let her allow this vocal frailty to disease, if it be neither cordial nor stomachic, and permit the ordinary ways of expressing grief by sighs, sobs, palpitations, and turning pale, that nature has put out of our power; provided the courage be undaunted, and the tones not expressive of despair, let her be satisfied. What matter the wringing of our hands, if we do not wring

our thoughts? She forms us for ourselves, not for others; to be, not to seem; let her be satisfied



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with governing our understanding, which she has taken upon her the care of instructing; that, in the fury of the colic, she maintain the soul in a condition to know itself, and to follow its accustomed way, contending with, and enduring, not meanly truckling under pain; moved and heated, not subdued and conquered, in the contention; capable of discourse and other things, to a certain degree. In such extreme accidents, 'tis cruelty to require so exact a composedness. 'Tis no great matter that we make a wry face, if the mind plays its part well: if the body find itself relieved by complaining let it complain: if agitation ease it, let it tumble and toss at pleasure; if it seem to find the disease evaporate (as some physicians hold that it helps women in delivery) in making loud outcries, or if this do but divert its torments, let it roar as it will. Let us not command this voice to sally, but stop it not. Epicurus, not only forgives his sage for crying out in torments, but advises him to it:

“Pugiles etiam, quum feriunt, in jactandis caestibus ingemiscunt, quia profundenda voce omne corpus intenditur, venitque plaga vehementior.”

["Boxers also, when they strike, groan in the act, because with the strength of voice the whole body is carried, and the blow comes with the greater vehemence."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, ii. 23.]

We have enough to do to deal with the disease, without troubling ourselves with these superfluous rules.

Which I say in excuse of those whom we ordinarily see impatient in the assaults of this malady; for as to what concerns myself, I have passed it over hitherto with a little better countenance, and contented myself with groaning without roaring out; not, nevertheless, that I put any great constraint upon myself to maintain this exterior decorum, for I make little account of such an advantage: I allow herein as much as the pain requires; but either my pains are not so excessive, or I have more than ordinary patience. I complain, I confess, and am a little impatient in a very sharp fit, but I do not arrive to such a degree of despair as he who with:

“Ejulatu, questu, gemitu, fremitibus
Resonando, multum flebiles voces refert.”

["Howling, roaring, groaning with a thousand noises, expressing his torment in a dismal voice." (Or:) "Wailing, complaining, groaning, murmuring much avail lugubrious sounds."—Verses of Attius, in his *Phalocetes*, quoted by Cicero, *De Finib.*, ii. 29; *Tusc. Quaes.*, ii. 14.]



I try myself in the depth of my suffering, and have always found that I was in a capacity to speak, think, and give a rational answer as well as at any other time, but not so firmly, being troubled and interrupted by the pain. When I am looked upon by my visitors to be in the greatest torment, and that they therefore forbear to trouble me, I often essay my own strength,



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and myself set some discourse on foot, the most remote I can contrive from my present condition. I can do anything upon a sudden endeavour, but it must not continue long. Oh, what pity 'tis I have not the faculty of that dreamer in Cicero, who dreaming he was lying with a wench, found he had discharged his stone in the sheets. My pains strangely deaden my appetite that way. In the intervals from this excessive torment, when my ureters only languish without any great dolor, I presently feel myself in my wonted state, forasmuch as my soul takes no other alarm but what is sensible and corporal, which I certainly owe to the care I have had of preparing myself by meditation against such accidents:

“Laborum,
Nulla mihi nova nunc facies inopinave surgit;
Omnia praecepi, atque animo mecum ante peregi.”

["No new shape of suffering can arise new or unexpected; I have anticipated all, and acted them over beforehand in my mind."
—Aeneid, vi. 103.]

I am, however, a little roughly handled for an apprentice, and with a sudden and sharp alteration, being fallen in an instant from a very easy and happy condition of life into the most uneasy and painful that can be imagined. For besides that it is a disease very much to be feared in itself, it begins with me after a more sharp and severe manner than it is used to do with other men. My fits come so thick upon me that I am scarcely ever at ease; yet I have hitherto kept my mind so upright that, provided I can still continue it, I find myself in a much better condition of life than a thousand others, who have no fewer nor other disease but what they create to themselves for want of meditation.

There is a certain sort of crafty humility that springs from presumption, as this, for example, that we confess our ignorance in many things, and are so courteous as to acknowledge that there are in the works of nature some qualities and conditions that are imperceptible to us, and of which our understanding cannot discover the means and causes; by this so honest and conscientious declaration we hope to obtain that people shall also believe us as to those that we say we do understand. We need not trouble ourselves to seek out foreign miracles and difficulties; methinks, amongst the things that we ordinarily see, there are such incomprehensible wonders as surpass all difficulties of miracles. What a wonderful thing it is that the drop of seed from which we are produced should carry in itself the impression not only of the bodily form, but even of the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers! Where can that drop of fluid matter contain that infinite number of forms? and how can they carry on these resemblances with so precarious and irregular a process that the son shall be like his great-grandfather, the nephew like his uncle? In the family of Lepidus at Rome there were three, not successively but by



intervals, who were born with the same eye covered with a cartilage. At Thebes there was a race that carried from their mother's womb the form of the head of a lance, and he who was not born so was looked upon as illegitimate. And Aristotle says that in a certain nation, where the women were in common, they assigned the children to their fathers by their resemblance.



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'Tis to be believed that I derive this infirmity from my father, for he died wonderfully tormented with a great stone in his bladder; he was never sensible of his disease till the sixty-seventh year of his age; and before that had never felt any menace or symptoms of it, either in his reins, sides, or any other part, and had lived, till then, in a happy, vigorous state of health, little subject to infirmities, and he continued seven years after in this disease, dragging on a very painful end of life. I was born about five-and-twenty years before his disease seized him, and in the time of his most flourishing and healthful state of body, his third child in order of birth: where could his propension to this malady lie lurking all that while? And he being then so far from the infirmity, how could that small part of his substance wherewith he made me, carry away so great an impression for its share? and how so concealed, that till five-and-forty years after, I did not begin to be sensible of it? being the only one to this hour, amongst so many brothers and sisters, and all by one mother, that was ever troubled with it. He that can satisfy me in this point, I will believe him in as many other miracles as he pleases; always provided that, as their manner is, he do not give me a doctrine much more intricate and fantastic than the thing itself for current pay.

Let the physicians a little excuse the liberty I take, for by this same infusion and fatal insinuation it is that I have received a hatred and contempt of their doctrine; the antipathy I have against their art is hereditary. My father lived three-score and fourteen years, my grandfather sixty-nine, my great-grandfather almost fourscore years, without ever tasting any sort of physic; and, with them, whatever was not ordinary diet, was instead of a drug. Physic is grounded upon experience and examples: so is my opinion. And is not this an express and very advantageous experience. I do not know that they can find me in all their records three that were born, bred, and died under the same roof, who have lived so long by their conduct. They must here of necessity confess, that if reason be not, fortune at least is on my side, and with physicians fortune goes a great deal further than reason. Let them not take me now at a disadvantage; let them not threaten me in the subdued condition wherein I now am; that were treachery. In truth, I have enough the better of them by these domestic examples, that they should rest satisfied. Human things are not usually so constant; it has been two hundred years, save eighteen, that this trial has lasted, for the first of them was born in the year 1402: 'tis now, indeed, very good reason that this experience should begin to fail us. Let them not, therefore, reproach me with the infirmities under which I now suffer; is it not enough that I for my part have lived seven-and-forty years in good health? though it should be the end of my career; 'tis of the longer sort.



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My ancestors had an aversion to physic by some occult and natural instinct; for the very sight of drugs was loathsome to my father. The Seigneur de Gaviac, my uncle by the father's side, a churchman, and a valetudinary from his birth, and yet who made that crazy life hold out to sixty-seven years, being once fallen into a furious fever, it was ordered by the physicians he should be plainly told that if he would not make use of help (for so they call that which is very often an obstacle), he would infallibly be a dead man. That good man, though terrified with this dreadful sentence, yet replied, "I am then a dead man." But God soon after made the prognostic false. The last of the brothers—there were four of them—and by many years the last, the Sieur de Bussaguet, was the only one of the family who made use of medicine, by reason, I suppose, of the concern he had with the other arts, for he was a councillor in the court of Parliament, and it succeeded so ill with him, that being in outward appearance of the strongest constitution, he yet died long before any of the rest, save the Sieur de Saint Michel.

'Tis possible I may have derived this natural antipathy to physic from them; but had there been no other consideration in the case, I would have endeavoured to have overcome it; for all these conditions that spring in us without reason, are vicious; 'tis a kind of disease that we should wrestle with. It may be I had naturally this propension; but I have supported and fortified it by arguments and reasons which have established in me the opinion I am of. For I also hate the consideration of refusing physic for the nauseous taste.

I should hardly be of that humour who hold health to be worth purchasing by all the most painful cauteries and incisions that can be applied. And, with Epicurus, I conceive that pleasures are to be avoided, if greater pains be the consequence, and pains to be coveted, that will terminate in greater pleasures. Health is a precious thing, and the only one, in truth, meriting that a man should lay out, not only his time, sweat, labour, and goods, but also his life itself to obtain it; forasmuch as, without it, life is wearisome and injurious to us: pleasure, wisdom, learning, and virtue, without it, wither away and vanish; and to the most laboured and solid discourses that philosophy would imprint in us to the contrary, we need no more but oppose the image of Plato being struck with an epilepsy or apoplexy; and, in this presupposition, to defy him to call the rich faculties of his soul to his assistance. All means that conduce to health can neither be too painful nor too dear to me. But I have some other appearances that make me strangely suspect all this merchandise. I do not deny but that there may be some art in it, that there are not amongst so many works of Nature, things proper for the conservation of health: that is most certain: I very well know there are some simples that moisten, and others that dry;



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I experimentally know that radishes are windy, and senna-leaves purging; and several other such experiences I have, as that mutton nourishes me, and wine warms me: and Solon said "that eating was physic against the malady hunger." I do not disapprove the use we make of things the earth produces, nor doubt, in the least, of the power and fertility of Nature, and of its application to our necessities: I very well see that pikes and swallows live by her laws; but I mistrust the inventions of our mind, our knowledge and art, to countenance which, we have abandoned Nature and her rules, and wherein we keep no bounds nor moderation. As we call the piling up of the first laws that fall into our hands justice, and their practice and dispensation very often foolish and very unjust; and as those who scoff at and accuse it, do not, nevertheless, blame that noble virtue itself, but only condemn the abuse and profanation of that sacred title; so in physic I very much honour that glorious name, its propositions, its promises, so useful for the service of mankind; but the ordinances it foists upon us, betwixt ourselves, I neither honour nor esteem.

In the first place, experience makes me dread it; for amongst all my acquaintance, I see no people so soon sick, and so long before they are well, as those who take much physic; their very health is altered and corrupted by their frequent prescriptions. Physicians are not content to deal only with the sick, but they will moreover corrupt health itself, for fear men should at any time escape their authority. Do they not, from a continual and perfect health, draw the argument of some great sickness to ensue? I have been sick often enough, and have always found my sicknesses easy enough to be supported (though I have made trial of almost all sorts), and as short as those of any other, without their help, or without swallowing their ill-tasting doses. The health I have is full and free, without other rule or discipline than my own custom and pleasure. Every place serves me well enough to stay in, for I need no other conveniences, when I am sick, than what I must have when I am well. I never disturb myself that I have no physician, no apothecary, nor any other assistance, which I see most other sick men more afflicted at than they are with their disease. What! Do the doctors themselves show us more felicity and duration in their own lives, that may manifest to us some apparent effect of their skill?

There is not a nation in the world that has not been many ages without physic; and these the first ages, that is to say, the best and most happy; and the tenth part of the world knows nothing of it yet; many nations are ignorant of it to this day, where men live more healthful and longer than we do here, and even amongst us the common people live well enough without it. The Romans were six hundred years before they received it; and after having made trial of it, banished it from the city at the instance of Cato the Censor,



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who made it appear how easy it was to live without it, having himself lived fourscore and five years, and kept his wife alive to an extreme old age, not without physic, but without a physician: for everything that we find to be healthful to life may be called physic. He kept his family in health, as Plutarch says if I mistake not, with hare's milk; as Pliny reports, that the Arcadians cured all manner of diseases with that of a cow; and Herodotus says, the Lybians generally enjoy rare health, by a custom they have, after their children are arrived to four years of age, to burn and cauterise the veins of their head and temples, by which means they cut off all defluxions of rheum for their whole lives. And the country people of our province make use of nothing, in all sorts of distempers, but the strongest wine they can get, mixed with a great deal of saffron and spice, and always with the same success.

And to say the truth, of all this diversity and confusion of prescriptions, what other end and effect is there after all, but to purge the belly? which a thousand ordinary simples will do as well; and I do not know whether such evacuations be so much to our advantage as they pretend, and whether nature does not require a residence of her excrements to a certain proportion, as wine does of its lees to keep it alive: you often see healthful men fall into vomitings and fluxes of the belly by some extrinsic accident, and make a great evacuation of excrements, without any preceding need, or any following benefit, but rather with hurt to their constitution. 'Tis from the great Plato, that I lately learned, that of three sorts of motions which are natural to us, purging is the worst, and that no man, unless he be a fool, ought to take anything to that purpose but in the extremest necessity. Men disturb and irritate the disease by contrary oppositions; it must be the way of living that must gently dissolve, and bring it to its end. The violent gripings and contest betwixt the drug and the disease are ever to our loss, since the combat is fought within ourselves, and that the drug is an assistant not to be trusted, being in its own nature an enemy to our health, and by trouble having only access into our condition. Let it alone a little; the general order of things that takes care of fleas and moles, also takes care of men, if they will have the same patience that fleas and moles have, to leave it to itself. 'Tis to much purpose we cry out "Bihore,"—[A term used by the Languedoc waggoners to hasten their horses]—'tis a way to make us hoarse, but not to hasten the matter. 'Tis a proud and uncompassionate order: our fears, our despair displease and stop it from, instead of inviting it to, our relief; it owes its course to the disease, as well as to health; and will not suffer itself to be corrupted in favour of the one to the prejudice of the other's right, for it would then fall into disorder. Let us, in God's name, follow it; it leads those that follow, and those who will not follow, it drags along, both their fury and physic together. Order a purge for your brain, it will there be much better employed than upon your stomach.



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One asking a Lacedaemonian what had made him live so long, he made answer, “the ignorance of physic”; and the Emperor Adrian continually exclaimed as he was dying, that the crowd of physicians had killed him. A bad wrestler turned physician: “Courage,” says Diogenes to him; “thou hast done well, for now thou will throw those who have formerly thrown thee.” But they have this advantage, according to Nicocles, that the sun gives light to their success and the earth covers their failures. And, besides, they have a very advantageous way of making use of all sorts of events: for what fortune, nature, or any other cause (of which the number is infinite), products of good and healthful in us, it is the privilege of physic to attribute to itself; all the happy successes that happen to the patient, must be thence derived; the accidents that have cured me, and a thousand others, who do not employ physicians, physicians usurp to themselves: and as to ill accidents, they either absolutely disown them, in laying the fault upon the patient, by such frivolous reasons as they are never at a loss for; as “he lay with his arms out of bed,” or “he was disturbed with the rattling of a coach:”

“Rhedarum transitus arcto
Vicorum inflexu:”

[“The passage of the wheels in the narrow
turning of the street”—Juvenal, iii. 236.]

or “somebody had set open the casement,” or “he had lain upon his left side,” or “he had some disagreeable fancies in his head”: in sum, a word, a dream, or a look, seems to them excuse sufficient wherewith to palliate their own errors: or, if they so please, they even make use of our growing worse, and do their business in this way which can never fail them: which is by buzzing us in the ear, when the disease is more inflamed by their medicaments, that it had been much worse but for those remedies; he, whom from an ordinary cold they have thrown into a double tertian-ague, had but for them been in a continued fever. They do not much care what mischief they do, since it turns to their own profit. In earnest, they have reason to require a very favourable belief from their patients; and, indeed, it ought to be a very easy one, to swallow things so hard to be believed. Plato said very well, that physicians were the only men who might lie at pleasure, since our health depends upon the vanity and falsity of their promises.

AEsop, a most excellent author, and of whom few men discover all the graces, pleasantly represents to us the tyrannical authority physicians usurp over poor creatures, weakened and subdued by sickness and fear, when he tells us, that a sick person, being asked by his physician what operation he found of the potion he had given him: “I have sweated very much,” says the sick man. “That’s good,” says the physician. Another time, having asked how he felt himself after his physic: “I have been very cold, and have had a great



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shivering upon me,” said he. “That is good,” replied the physician. After the third potion, he asked him again how he did: “Why, I find myself swollen and puffed up,” said he, “as if I had a dropsy.”—“That is very well,” said the physician. One of his servants coming presently after to inquire how he felt himself, “Truly, friend,” said he, “with being too well I am about to die.”

There was a more just law in Egypt, by which the physician, for the three first days, was to take charge of his patient at the patient’s own risk and cost; but, those three days being past, it was to be at his own. For what reason is it that their patron, AEsculapius, should be struck with thunder for restoring Hippolitus from death to life:

“Nam Pater omnipotens, aliquem indignatus ab umbris
Mortalem infernis ad lumina surgere vitae,
Ipse repertorem medicinae talis, et artis
Fulmine Phoebigenam Stygias detrusit ad undas;”

[“Then the Almighty Father, offended that any mortal should rise to the light of life from the infernal shades, struck the son of Phoebus with his forked lightning to the Stygian lake.” —Aeneid, vii. 770.]

and his followers be pardoned, who send so many souls from life to death? A physician, boasting to Nicocles that his art was of great authority: “It is so, indeed,” said Nicocles, “that can with impunity kill so many people.”

As to what remains, had I been of their counsel, I would have rendered my discipline more sacred and mysterious; they begun well, but they have not ended so. It was a good beginning to make gods and demons the authors of their science, and to have used a peculiar way of speaking and writing, notwithstanding that philosophy concludes it folly to persuade a man to his own good by an unintelligible way: “Ut si quis medicus imperet, ut sumat:”

“Terrigenam, herbigradam, domiportam, sanguine cassam.”

[“Describing it by the epithets of an animal trailing with its slime over the herbage, without blood or bones, and carrying its house upon its back, meaning simply a snail.”—Coste]

It was a good rule in their art, and that accompanies all other vain, fantastic, and supernatural arts, that the patient’s belief should prepossess them with good hope and assurance of their effects and operation: a rule they hold to that degree, as to maintain that the most inexpert and ignorant physician is more proper for a patient who has confidence in him, than the most learned and experienced whom he is not so



acquainted with. Nay, even the very choice of most of their drugs is in some sort mysterious and divine; the left foot of a tortoise, the urine of a lizard, the dung of an elephant, the liver of a mole, blood drawn from under the right wing of a white pigeon; and for us who have the stone (so scornfully they use us in our miseries) the excrement



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of rats beaten to powder, and such like trash and fooleries which rather carry a face of magical enchantment than of any solid science. I omit the odd number of their pills, the destination of certain days and feasts of the year, the superstition of gathering their simples at certain hours, and that so austere and very wise countenance and carriage which Pliny himself so much derides. But they have, as I said, failed in that they have not added to this fine beginning the making their meetings and consultations more religious and secret, where no profane person should have admission, no more than in the secret ceremonies of AEsculapius; for by the reason of this it falls out that their irresolution, the weakness of their arguments, divinations and foundations, the sharpness of their disputes, full of hatred, jealousy, and self-consideration, coming to be discovered by every one, a man must be marvellously blind not to see that he runs a very great hazard in their hands. Who ever saw one physician approve of another's prescription, without taking something away, or adding something to it? by which they sufficiently betray their tricks, and make it manifest to us that they therein more consider their own reputation, and consequently their profit, than their patient's interest. He was a much wiser man of their tribe, who of old gave it as a rule, that only one physician should undertake a sick person; for if he do nothing to purpose, one single man's default can bring no great scandal upon the art of medicine; and, on the contrary, the glory will be great if he happen to have success; whereas, when there are many, they at every turn bring a disrepute upon their calling, forasmuch as they oftener do hurt than good. They ought to be satisfied with the perpetual disagreement which is found in the opinions of the principal masters and ancient authors of this science, which is only known to men well read, without discovering to the vulgar the controversies and various judgments which they still nourish and continue amongst themselves.

Will you have one example of the ancient controversy in physic? Herophilus lodges the original cause of all diseases in the humours; Erasistratus, in the blood of the arteries; Asclepiades, in the invisible atoms of the pores; Alcmaeon, in the exuberance or defect of our bodily strength; Diocles, in the inequality of the elements of which the body is composed, and in the quality of the air we breathe; Strato, in the abundance, crudity, and corruption of the nourishment we take; and Hippocrates lodges it in the spirits. There is a certain friend of theirs,—[Celsus, Preface to the First Book.]—whom they know better than I, who declares upon this subject, “that the most important science in practice amongst us, as that which is intrusted with our health and conservation, is, by ill luck, the most uncertain, the most perplexed, and agitated with the greatest mutations.” There is no great danger in our mistaking the height of the sun, or the fraction of some astronomical supputation; but here, where our whole being is concerned, 'tis not wisdom to abandon ourselves to the mercy of the agitation of so many contrary winds.



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Before the Peloponnesian war there was no great talk of this science. Hippocrates brought it into repute; whatever he established, Chrysippus overthrew; after that, Erasistratus, Aristotle's grandson, overthrew what Chrysippus had written; after these, the Empirics started up, who took a quite contrary way to the ancients in the management of this art; when the credit of these began a little to decay, Herophilus set another sort of practice on foot, which Asclepiades in turn stood up against, and overthrew; then, in their turn, the opinions first of Themiso, and then of Musa, and after that those of Vectius Valens, a physician famous through the intelligence he had with Messalina, came in vogue; the empire of physic in Nero's time was established in Thessalus, who abolished and condemned all that had been held till his time; this man's doctrine was refuted by Crinas of Marseilles, who first brought all medicinal operations under the Ephemerides and motions of the stars, and reduced eating, sleeping, and drinking to hours that were most pleasing to Mercury and the moon; his authority was soon after supplanted by Charinus, a physician of the same city of Marseilles, a man who not only controverted all the ancient methods of physic, but moreover the usage of hot baths, that had been generally and for so many ages in common use; he made men bathe in cold water, even in winter, and plunged his sick patients in the natural waters of streams. No Roman till Pliny's time had ever vouchsafed to practise physic; that office was only performed by Greeks and foreigners, as 'tis now amongst us French, by those who sputter Latin; for, as a very great physician says, we do not easily accept the medicine we understand, no more than we do the drugs we ourselves gather. If the nations whence we fetch our guaiacum, sarsaparilla, and China wood, have physicians, how great a value must we imagine, by the same recommendation of strangeness, rarity, and dear purchase, do they set upon our cabbage and parsley? for who would dare to contemn things so far fetched, and sought out at the hazard of so long and dangerous a voyage?

Since these ancient mutations in physic, there have been infinite others down to our own times, and, for the most part, mutations entire and universal, as those, for example, produced by Paracelsus, Fioravanti, and Argentier; for they, as I am told, not only alter one recipe, but the whole contexture and rules of the body of physic, accusing all others of ignorance and imposition who have practised before them. At this rate, in what a condition the poor patient must be, I leave you to judge.



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If we were even assured that, when they make a mistake, that mistake of theirs would do us no harm, though it did us no good, it were a reasonable bargain to venture the making ourselves better without any danger of being made worse. AEsop tells a story, that one who had bought a Morisco slave, believing that his black complexion had arrived by accident and the ill usage of his former master, caused him to enter with great care into a course of baths and potions: it happened that the Moor was nothing amended in his tawny complexion, but he wholly lost his former health. How often do we see physicians impute the death of their patients to one another? I remember that some years ago there was an epidemical disease, very dangerous and for the most part mortal, that raged in the towns about us: the storm being over which had swept away an infinite number of men, one of the most famous physicians of all the country, presently after published a book upon that subject, wherein, upon better thoughts, he confesses that the letting blood in that disease was the principal cause of so many mishaps. Moreover, their authors hold that there is no physic that has not something hurtful in it. And if even those of the best operation in some measure offend us, what must those do that are totally misapplied? For my own part, though there were nothing else in the case, I am of opinion, that to those who loathe the taste of physic, it must needs be a dangerous and prejudicial endeavour to force it down at so incommodious a time, and with so much aversion, and believe that it marvellously distempers a sick person at a time when he has so much need of repose. And more over, if we but consider the occasions upon which they usually ground the cause of our diseases, they are so light and nice, that I thence conclude a very little error in the dispensation of their drugs may do a great deal of mischief. Now, if the mistake of a physician be so dangerous, we are in but a scurvy condition; for it is almost impossible but he must often fall into those mistakes: he had need of too many parts, considerations, and circumstances, rightly to level his design: he must know the sick person's complexion, his temperament, his humours, inclinations, actions, nay, his very thoughts and imaginations; he must be assured of the external circumstances, of the nature of the place, the quality of the air and season, the situation of the planets, and their influences: he must know in the disease, the causes, prognostics, affections, and critical days; in the drugs, the weight, the power of working, the country, figure, age, and dispensation, and he must know how rightly to proportion and mix them together, to beget a just and perfect symmetry; wherein if there be the least error, if amongst so many springs there be but any one out of order, 'tis enough to destroy us. God knows with how great difficulty most of these things are to be understood: for (for example) how shall the physician find out



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the true sign of the disease, every disease being capable of an infinite number of indications? How many doubts and controversies have they amongst themselves upon the interpretation of urines? otherwise, whence should the continual debates we see amongst them about the knowledge of the disease proceed? how could we excuse the error they so oft fall into, of taking fox for marten? In the diseases I have had, though there were ever so little difficulty in the case, I never found three of one opinion: which I instance, because I love to introduce examples wherein I am myself concerned.

A gentleman at Paris was lately cut for the stone by order of the physicians, in whose bladder, being accordingly so cut, there was found no more stone than in the palm of his hand; and in the same place a bishop, who was my particular friend, having been earnestly pressed by the majority of the physicians whom he consulted, to suffer himself to be cut, to which also, upon their word, I used my interest to persuade him, when he was dead and opened, it appeared that he had no malady but in the kidneys. They are least excusable for any error in this disease, by reason that it is in some sort palpable; and 'tis thence that I conclude surgery to be much more certain, by reason that it sees and feels what it does, and so goes less upon conjecture; whereas the physicians have no 'speculum matricis', by which to examine our brains, lungs, and liver.

Even the very promises of physic are incredible in themselves; for, having to provide against divers and contrary accidents that often afflict us at one and the same time, and that have almost a necessary relation, as the heat of the liver and the coldness of the stomach, they will needs persuade us, that of their ingredients one will heat the stomach and the other will cool the liver: one has its commission to go directly to the kidneys, nay, even to the bladder, without scattering its operations by the way, and is to retain its power and virtue through all those turns and meanders, even to the place to the service of which it is designed, by its own occult property this will dry-the brain; that will moisten the lungs. Of all this bundle of things having mixed up a potion, is it not a kind of madness to imagine or to hope that these differing virtues should separate themselves from one another in this mixture and confusion, to perform so many various errands? I should very much fear that they would either lose or change their tickets, and disturb one another's quarters. And who can imagine but that, in this liquid confusion, these faculties must corrupt, confound, and spoil one another? And is not the danger still more when the making up of this medicine is entrusted to the skill and fidelity of still another, to whose mercy we again abandon our lives?



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As we have doublet and breeches-makers, distinct trades, to clothe us, and are so much the better fitted, seeing that each of them meddles only with his own business, and has less to trouble his head with than the tailor who undertakes all; and as in matter of diet, great persons, for their better convenience, and to the end they may be better served, have cooks for the different offices, this for soups and potages, that for roasting, instead of which if one cook should undertake the whole service, he could not so well perform it; so also as to the cure of our maladies. The Egyptians had reason to reject this general trade of physician, and to divide the profession: to each disease, to each part of the body, its particular workman; for that part was more properly and with less confusion cared for, seeing the person looked to nothing else. Ours are not aware that he who provides for all, provides for nothing; and that the entire government of this microcosm is more than they are able to undertake. Whilst they were afraid of stopping a dysentery, lest they should put the patient into a fever, they killed me a friend, — [Estienne de la Boetie.]—who was worth more than the whole of them. They counterpoise their own divinations with the present evils; and because they will not cure the brain to the prejudice of the stomach, they injure both with their dissentient and tumultuary drugs.

As to the variety and weakness of the rationale of this art, they are more manifest in it than in any other art; aperitive medicines are proper for a man subject to the stone, by reason that opening and dilating the passages they help forward the slimy matter whereof gravel and stone are engendered, and convey that downward which begins to harden and gather in the reins; aperitive things are dangerous for a man subject to the stone, by reason that, opening and dilating the passages, they help forward the matter proper to create the gravel toward the reins, which by their own propension being apt to seize it, 'tis not to be imagined but that a great deal of what has been conveyed thither must remain behind; moreover, if the medicine happen to meet with anything too large to be carried through all the narrow passages it must pass to be expelled, that obstruction, whatever it is, being stirred by these aperitive things and thrown into those narrow passages, coming to stop them, will occasion a certain and most painful death. They have the like uniformity in the counsels they give us for the regimen of life: it is good to make water often; for we experimentally see that, in letting it lie long in the bladder, we give it time to settle the sediment, which will concrete into a stone; it is good not to make water often, for the heavy excrements it carries along with it will not be voided without violence, as we see by experience that a torrent that runs with force washes the ground it rolls over much cleaner than the course of a slow and tardy stream; so, it is good to have



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often to do with women, for that opens the passages and helps to evacuate gravel; it is also very ill to have often to do with women, because it heats, tires, and weakens the reins. It is good to bathe frequently in hot water, forasmuch as that relaxes and mollifies the places where the gravel and stone lie; it is also ill by reason that this application of external heat helps the reins to bake, harden, and petrify the matter so disposed. For those who are taking baths it is most healthful. To eat little at night, to the end that the waters they are to drink the next morning may have a better operation upon an empty stomach; on the other hand, it is better to eat little at dinner, that it hinder not the operation of the waters, while it is not yet perfect, and not to oppress the stomach so soon after the other labour, but leave the office of digestion to the night, which will much better perform it than the day, when the body and soul are in perpetual moving and action. Thus do they juggle and trifle in all their discourses at our expense; and they could not give me one proposition against which I should not know how to raise a contrary of equal force. Let them, then, no longer exclaim against those who in this trouble of sickness suffer themselves to be gently guided by their own appetite and the advice of nature, and commit themselves to the common fortune.

I have seen in my travels almost all the famous baths of Christendom, and for some years past have begun to make use of them myself: for I look upon bathing as generally wholesome, and believe that we suffer no little inconveniences in our health by having left off the custom that was generally observed, in former times, almost by all nations, and is yet in many, of bathing every day; and I cannot imagine but that we are much the worse by, having our limbs crusted and our pores stopped with dirt. And as to the drinking of them, fortune has in the first place rendered them not at all unacceptable to my taste; and secondly, they are natural and simple, which at least carry no danger with them, though they may do us no good, of which the infinite crowd of people of all sorts and complexions who repair thither I take to be a sufficient warranty; and although I have not there observed any extraordinary and miraculous effects, but that on the contrary, having more narrowly than ordinary inquired into it, I have found all the reports of such operations that have been spread abroad in those places ill-grounded and false, and those that believe them (as people are willing to be gulled in what they desire) deceived in them, yet I have seldom known any who have been made worse by those waters, and a man cannot honestly deny but that they beget a better appetite, help digestion, and do in some sort revive us, if we do not go too late and in too weak a condition, which I would dissuade every one from doing. They have not the virtue to raise men from desperate and inveterate diseases, but they may



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help some light indisposition, or prevent some threatening alteration. He who does not bring along with him so much cheerfulness as to enjoy the pleasure of the company he will there meet, and of the walks and exercises to which the amenity of those places invite us, will doubtless lose the best and surest part of their effect. For this reason I have hitherto chosen to go to those of the most pleasant situation, where there was the best conveniency of lodging, provision, and company, as the baths of Bagneres in France, those of Plombieres on the frontiers of Germany and Lorraine, those of Baden in Switzerland, those of Lucca in Tuscany, and especially those of Della Villa, which I have the most and at various seasons frequented.

Every nation has particular opinions touching their use, and particular rules and methods in using them; and all of them, according to what I have seen, almost with like effect. Drinking them is not at all received in Germany; the Germans bathe for all diseases, and will lie dabbling in the water almost from sun to sun; in Italy, where they drink nine days, they bathe at least thirty, and commonly drink the water mixed with some other drugs to make it work the better. Here we are ordered to walk to digest it; there we are kept in bed after taking it till it be wrought off, our stomachs and feet having continually hot cloths applied to them all the while; and as the Germans have a particular practice generally to use cupping and scarification in the bath, so the Italians have their 'doccie', which are certain little streams of this hot water brought through pipes, and with these bathe an hour in the morning, and as much in the afternoon, for a month together, either the head, stomach, or any other part where the evil lies. There are infinite other varieties of customs in every country, or rather there is no manner of resemblance to one another. By this you may see that this little part of physic to which I have only submitted, though the least depending upon art of all others, has yet a great share of the confusion and uncertainty everywhere else manifest in the profession.

The poets put what they would say with greater emphasis and grace; witness these two epigrams:

“Alcon hesterno signum Jovis attigit: ille,
Quamvis marmoreus, vim patitur medici.
Ecce hodie, jussus transferri ex aeede vetusta,
Effertur, quamvis sit Deus atque lapis.”

[“Alcon yesterday touched Jove’s statue; he, although marble, suffers the force of the physician: to-day ordered to be transferred from the old temple, where it stood, it is carried out, although it be a god and a stone.”—Ausonius, Ep., 74.]

and the other:



“Lotus nobiscum est, hilaris coenavit; et idem
Inventus mane est mortuus Andragoras.
Tam subitae mortis causam, Faustine, requiris?
In somnis medicum viderat Hermocratem.”



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["Andragoras bathed with us, supped gaily, and in the morning the same was found dead. Dost thou ask, Faustinus, the cause of this so sudden death? In his dreams he had seen the physician Hermocrates." —Martial, vi. 53.]

upon which I will relate two stories.

The Baron de Caupene in Chalosse and I have betwixt us the advowson of a benefice of great extent, at the foot of our mountains, called Lahontan. It is with the inhabitants of this angle, as 'tis said of those of the Val d'Angrougne; they lived a peculiar sort of life, their fashions, clothes, and manners distinct from other people; ruled and governed by certain particular laws and usages, received from father to son, to which they submitted, without other constraint than the reverence to custom. This little state had continued from all antiquity in so happy a condition, that no neighbouring judge was ever put to the trouble of inquiring into their doings; no advocate was ever retained to give them counsel, no stranger ever called in to compose their differences; nor was ever any of them seen to go a-begging. They avoided all alliances and traffic with the outer world, that they might not corrupt the purity of their own government; till, as they say, one of them, in the memory of man, having a mind spurred on with a noble ambition, took it into his head, to bring his name into credit and reputation, to make one of his sons something more than ordinary, and having put him to learn to write in a neighbouring town, made him at last a brave village notary. This fellow, having acquired such dignity, began to disdain their ancient customs, and to buzz into the people's ears the pomp of the other parts of the nation; the first prank he played was to advise a friend of his, whom somebody had offended by sawing off the horns of one of his goats, to make his complaint to the royal judges thereabout, and so he went on from one to another, till he had spoiled and confounded all. In the tail of this corruption, they say, there happened another, and of worse consequence, by means of a physician, who, falling in love with one of their daughters, had a mind to marry her and to live amongst them. This man first of all began to teach them the names of fevers, colds, and imposthumes; the seat of the heart, liver, and intestines, a science till then utterly unknown to them; and instead of garlic, with which they were wont to cure all manner of diseases, how painful or extreme soever, he taught them, though it were but for a cough or any little cold, to take strange mixtures, and began to make a trade not only of their health, but of their lives. They swear till then they never perceived the evening air to be offensive to the head; that to drink when they were hot was hurtful, and that the winds of autumn were more unwholesome than those of spring; that, since this use of physic, they find themselves oppressed with a legion of unaccustomed diseases, and that they perceive a general decay in their ancient vigour, and their lives are cut shorter by the half. This is the first of my stories.



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The other is, that before I was afflicted with the stone, hearing that the blood of a he-goat was with many in very great esteem, and looked upon as a celestial manna rained down upon these latter ages for the good and preservation of the lives of men, and having heard it spoken of by men of understanding for an admirable drug, and of infallible operation; I, who have ever thought myself subject to all the accidents that can befall other men, had a mind, in my perfect health, to furnish myself with this miracle, and therefore gave order to have a goat fed at home according to the recipe: for he must be taken in the hottest month of all summer, and must only have aperitive herbs given him to eat, and white wine to drink. I came home by chance the very day he was to be killed; and some one came and told me that the cook had found two or three great balls in his paunch, that rattled against one another amongst what he had eaten. I was curious to have all his entrails brought before me, where, having caused the skin that enclosed them to be cut, there tumbled out three great lumps, as light as sponges, so that they appeared to be hollow, but as to the rest, hard and firm without, and spotted and mixed all over with various dead colours; one was perfectly round, and of the bigness of an ordinary ball; the other two something less, of an imperfect roundness, as seeming not to be arrived at their, full growth. I find, by inquiry of people accustomed to open these animals, that it is a rare and unusual accident. 'Tis likely these are stones of the same nature with ours and if so, it must needs be a very vain hope in those who have the stone, to extract their cure from the blood of a beast that was himself about to die of the same disease. For to say that the blood does not participate of this contagion, and does not thence alter its wonted virtue, it is rather to be believed that nothing is engendered in a body but by the conspiracy and communication of all the parts: the whole mass works together, though one part contributes more to the work than another, according to the diversity of operations; wherefore it is very likely that there was some petrifying quality in all the parts of this goat. It was not so much for fear of the future, and for myself, that I was curious in this experiment, but because it falls out in mine, as it does in many other families, that the women store up such little trumperies for the service of the people, using the same recipe in fifty several diseases, and such a recipe as they will not take themselves, and yet triumph when they happen to be successful.



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As to what remains, I honour physicians, not according to the precept for their necessity (for to this passage may be opposed another of the prophet reproving King Asa for having recourse to a physician), but for themselves, having known many very good men of that profession, and most worthy to be beloved. I do not attack them; 'tis their art I inveigh against, and do not much blame them for making their advantage of our folly, for most men do the same. Many callings, both of greater and of less dignity than theirs, have no other foundation or support than public abuse. When I am sick I send for them if they be near, only to have their company, and pay them as others do. I give them leave to command me to keep myself warm, because I naturally love to do it, and to appoint leeks or lettuce for my broth; to order me white wine or claret; and so as to all other things, which are indifferent to my palate and custom. I know very well that I do nothing for them in so doing, because sharpness and strangeness are incidents of the very essence of physic. Lycurgus ordered wine for the sick Spartans. Why? because they abominated the drinking it when they were well; as a gentleman, a neighbour of mine, takes it as an excellent medicine in his fever, because naturally he mortally hates the taste of it. How many do we see amongst them of my humour, who despise taking physic themselves, are men of a liberal diet, and live a quite contrary sort of life to what they prescribe others? What is this but flatly to abuse our simplicity? for their own lives and health are no less dear to them than ours are to us, and consequently they would accommodate their practice to their rules, if they did not themselves know how false these are.

'Tis the fear of death and of pain, impatience of disease, and a violent and indiscreet desire of a present cure, that so blind us: 'tis pure cowardice that makes our belief so pliable and easy to be imposed upon: and yet most men do not so much believe as they acquiesce and permit; for I hear them find fault and complain as well as we; but they resolve at last, "What should I do then?" As if impatience were of itself a better remedy than patience. Is there any one of those who have suffered themselves to be persuaded into this miserable subjection, who does not equally surrender himself to all sorts of impostures? who does not give up himself to the mercy of whoever has the impudence to promise him a cure? The Babylonians carried their sick into the public square; the physician was the people: every one who passed by being in humanity and civility obliged to inquire of their condition, gave some advice according to his own experience. We do little better; there is not so simple a woman, whose gossips and drenches we do not make use of: and according to my humour, if I were to take physic, I would sooner choose to take theirs than any other, because at least, if they do no good, they will do no harm. What Homer and Plato said of the Egyptians,



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that they were all physicians, may be said of all nations; there is not a man amongst any of them who does not boast of some rare recipe, and who will not venture it upon his neighbour, if he will let him. I was the other day in a company where one, I know not who, of my fraternity brought us intelligence of a new sort of pills made up of a hundred and odd ingredients: it made us very merry, and was a singular consolation, for what rock could withstand so great a battery? And yet I hear from those who have made trial of it, that the least atom of gravel deigned not to stir fort.

I cannot take my hand from the paper before I have added a word concerning the assurance they give us of the certainty of their drugs, from the experiments they have made.

The greatest part, I should say above two-thirds of the medicinal virtues, consist in the quintessence or occult property of simples, of which we can have no other instruction than use and custom; for quintessence is no other than a quality of which we cannot by our reason find out the cause. In such proofs, those they pretend to have acquired by the inspiration of some daemon, I am content to receive (for I meddle not with miracles); and also the proofs which are drawn from things that, upon some other account, often fall into use amongst us; as if in the wool, wherewith we are wont to clothe ourselves, there has accidentally some occult desiccative property been found out of curing kibed heels, or as if in the radish we eat for food there has been found out some aperitive operation. Galen reports, that a man happened to be cured of a leprosy by drinking wine out of a vessel into which a viper had crept by chance. In this example we find the means and a very likely guide and conduct to this experience, as we also do in those that physicians pretend to have been directed to by the example of some beasts. But in most of their other experiments wherein they affirm they have been conducted by fortune, and to have had no other guide than chance, I find the progress of this information incredible. Suppose man looking round about him upon the infinite number of things, plants, animals, metals; I do not know where he would begin his trial; and though his first fancy should fix him upon an elk's horn, wherein there must be a very pliant and easy belief, he will yet find himself as perplexed in his second operation. There are so many maladies and so many circumstances presented to him, that before he can attain the certainty of the point to which the perfection of his experience should arrive, human sense will be at the end of its lesson: and before he can, amongst this infinity of things, find out what this horn is; amongst so many diseases, what is epilepsy; the many complexions in a melancholy person; the many seasons in winter; the many nations in the French; the many ages in age; the many celestial mutations in the conjunction of Venus and Saturn; the many parts in man's body, nay, in a finger; and being, in



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all this, directed neither by argument, conjecture, example, nor divine inspirations, but merely by the sole motion of fortune, it must be by a perfectly artificial, regular and methodical fortune. And after the cure is performed, how can he assure himself that it was not because the disease had arrived at its period or an effect of chance? or the operation of something else that he had eaten, drunk, or touched that day? or by virtue of his grandmother's prayers? And, moreover, had this experiment been perfect, how many times was it repeated, and this long bead-roll of haps, and concurrences strung anew by chance to conclude a certain rule? And when the rule is concluded, by whom, I pray you? Of so many millions, there are but three men who take upon them to record their experiments: must fortune needs just hit one of these? What if another, and a hundred others, have made contrary experiments? We might, peradventure, have some light in this, were all the judgments and arguments of men known to us; but that three witnesses, three doctors, should lord it over all mankind, is against reason: it were necessary that human nature should have deputed and chosen them out, and that they were declared our comptrollers by express procuration:

"To Madame de Duras.

—[Marguerite de Grammont, widow of Jean de Durfort, Seigneur de Duras, who was killed near Leghorn, leaving no posterity. Montaigne seems to have been on terms of considerable intimacy with her, and to have tendered her some very wholesome and frank advice in regard to her relations with Henry *iv.*]—

"Madame,—The last time you honoured me with a visit, you found me at work upon this chapter, and as these trifles may one day fall into your hands, I would also that they testify in how great honour the author will take any favour you shall please to show them. You will there find the same air and mien you have observed in his conversation; and though I could have borrowed some better or more favourable garb than my own, I would not have done it: for I require nothing more of these writings, but to present me to your memory such as I naturally am. The same conditions and faculties you have been pleased to frequent and receive with much more honour and courtesy than they deserve, I would put together (but without alteration or change) in one solid body, that may peradventure continue some years, or some days, after I am gone; where you may find them again when you shall please to refresh your memory, without putting you to any greater trouble; neither are they worth it. I desire you should continue the favour of your friendship to me, by the same qualities by which it was acquired.



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“I am not at all ambitious that any one should love and esteem me more dead than living. The humour of Tiberius is ridiculous, but yet common, who was more solicitous to extend his renown to posterity than to render himself acceptable to men of his own time. If I were one of those to whom the world could owe commendation, I would give out of it one-half to have the other in hand; let their praises come quick and crowding about me, more thick than long, more full than durable; and let them cease, in God’s name, with my own knowledge of them, and when the sweet sound can no longer pierce my ears. It were an idle humour to essay, now that I am about to forsake the commerce of men, to offer myself to them by a new recommendation. I make no account of the goods I could not employ in the service of my life. Such as I am, I will be elsewhere than in paper: my art and industry have been ever directed to render myself good for something; my studies, to teach me to do, and not to write. I have made it my whole business to frame my life: this has been my trade and my work; I am less a writer of books than anything else. I have coveted understanding for the service of my present and real conveniences, and not to lay up a stock for my posterity. He who has anything of value in him, let him make it appear in his conduct, in his ordinary discourses, in his courtships, and his quarrels: in play, in bed, at table, in the management of his affairs, in his economics. Those whom I see make good books in ill breeches, should first have mended their breeches, if they would have been ruled by me. Ask a Spartan whether he had rather be a good orator or a good soldier: and if I was asked the same question, I would rather choose to be a good cook, had I not one already to serve me. My God! Madame, how should I hate such a recommendation of being a clever fellow at writing, and an ass and an inanity in everything else! Yet I had rather be a fool both here and there than to have made so ill a choice wherein to employ my talent. And I am so far from expecting to gain any new reputation by these follies, that I shall think I come off pretty well if I lose nothing by them of that little I had before. For besides that this dead and mute painting will take from my natural being, it has no resemblance to my better condition, but is much lapsed from my former vigour and cheerfulness, growing faded and withered: I am towards the bottom of the barrel, which begins to taste of the lees.

“As to the rest, Madame, I should not have dared to make so bold with the mysteries of physic, considering the esteem that you and so many others have of it, had I not had encouragement from their own authors. I think there are of these among the old Latin writers but two, Pliny and Celsus if these ever fall into your hands, you will find that they speak much more rudely of their art than I do; I but pinch it, they cut its throat. Pliny, amongst other things,



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twits them with this, that when they are at the end of their rope, they have a pretty device to save themselves, by recommending their patients, whom they have teased and tormented with their drugs and diets to no purpose, some to vows and miracles, others to the hot baths. (Be not angry, Madame; he speaks not of those in our parts, which are under the protection of your house, and all Gramontins.) They have a third way of saving their own credit, of ridding their hands of us and securing themselves from the reproaches we might cast in their teeth of our little amendment, when they have had us so long in their hands that they have not one more invention left wherewith to amuse us, which is to send us to the better air of some other country. This, Madame, is enough; I hope you will give me leave to return to my discourse, from which I have so far digressed, the better to divert you."

It was, I think, Pericles, who being asked how he did: "You may judge," says he, "by these," showing some little scrolls of parchment he had tied about his neck and arms. By which he would infer that he must needs be very sick when he was reduced to a necessity of having recourse to such idle and vain fopperies, and of suffering himself to be so equipped. I dare not promise but that I may one day be so much a fool as to commit my life and death to the mercy and government of physicians; I may fall into such a frenzy; I dare not be responsible for my future constancy: but then, if any one ask me how I do, I may also answer, as Pericles did, "You may judge by this," shewing my hand clutching six drachms of opium. It will be a very evident sign of a violent sickness: my judgment will be very much out of order; if once fear and impatience get such an advantage over me, it may very well be concluded that there is a dreadful fever in my mind.

I have taken the pains to plead this cause, which I understand indifferently, a little to back and support the natural aversion to drugs and the practice of physic I have derived from my ancestors, to the end it may not be a mere stupid and inconsiderate aversion, but have a little more form; and also, that they who shall see me so obstinate in my resolution against all exhortations and menaces that shall be given me, when my infirmity shall press hardest upon me, may not think 'tis mere obstinacy in me; or any one so ill-natured as to judge it to be any motive of glory: for it would be a strange ambition to seek to gain honour by an action my gardener or my groom can perform as well as I. Certainly, I have not a heart so tumorous and windy, that I should exchange so solid a pleasure as health for an airy and imaginary pleasure: glory, even that of the Four Sons of Aymon, is too dear bought by a man of my humour, if it cost him three swinging fits of the stone. Give me health, in God's name! Such as love physic, may also have good, great, and convincing considerations; I do not hate opinions contrary to

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my own: I am so, far from being angry to see a discrepancy betwixt mine and other men's judgments, and from rendering myself unfit for the society of men, from being of another sense and party than mine, that on the contrary (the most general way that nature has followed being variety, and more in souls than bodies, forasmuch as they are of a more supple substance, and more susceptible of forms) I find it much more rare to see our humours and designs jump and agree. And there never were, in the world, two opinions alike, no more than two hairs, or two grains: their most universal quality is diversity.

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks:*

I am towards the bottom of the barrel
Accusing all others of ignorance and imposition
Affection towards their husbands, (not) until they have lost them
Anything of value in him, let him make it appear in his conduct
As if impatience were of itself a better remedy than patience
Assurance they give us of the certainty of their drugs
At least, if they do no good, they will do no harm
Attribute to itself; all the happy successes that happen
Best part of a captain to know how to make use of occasions
Burnt and roasted for opinions taken upon trust from others
Commit themselves to the common fortune
Crafty humility that springs from presumption
Did not approve all sorts of means to obtain a victory
Disease had arrived at its period or an effect of chance?
Dissentient and tumultuary drugs
Do not much blame them for making their advantage of our folly
Doctors: more felicity and duration in their own lives?
Doctrine much more intricate and fantastic than the thing itself
Drugs being in its own nature an enemy to our health
Even the very promises of physic are incredible in themselves
Fathers conceal their affection from their children
He who provides for all, provides for nothing
Health depends upon the vanity and falsity of their promises
Health is altered and corrupted by their frequent prescriptions
Health to be worth purchasing by all the most painful cauteries
Homer: The only words that have motion and action
I dare not promise but that I may one day be so much a fool
I see no people so soon sick as those who take physic
Indiscreet desire of a present cure, that so blind us
Intended to get a new husband than to lament the old
Let it alone a little



Life should be cut off in the sound and living part
Live a quite contrary sort of life to what they prescribe others
Live, not so long as they please, but as long as they ought
Laying the fault upon the patient, by such frivolous reasons
Long a voyage I should at last run myself into some disadvantage
Making their advantage



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of our folly, for most men do the same

Man may with less trouble adapt himself to entire abstinence

Man runs a very great hazard in their hands (of physicians)

Mark of singular good nature to preserve old age

Men must embark, and not deliberate, upon high enterprises

Mercenaries who would receive any (pay)

Moderation is a virtue that gives more work than suffering

More valued a victory obtained by counsel than by force

Most men do not so much believe as they acquiesce and permit

Never any man knew so much, and spake so little

No danger with them, though they may do us no good

No other foundation or support than public abuse

No physic that has not something hurtful in it

Noble and rich, where examples of virtue are rarely lodged

Obstinacy is the sister of constancy

Order a purge for your brain, it will there be much better

Ordinances it (Medicine) foists upon us

Passion has a more absolute command over us than reason

Pay very strict usury who did not in due time pay the principal

People are willing to be gulled in what they desire

Physician's "help", which is very often an obstacle

Physicians are not content to deal only with the sick

Physicians fear men should at any time escape their authority

Physicians were the only men who might lie at pleasure

Physicians: earth covers their failures

Plato said of the Egyptians, that they were all physicians

Pure cowardice that makes our belief so pliable

Recommendation of strangeness, rarity, and dear purchase

Send us to the better air of some other country

Should first have mended their breeches

Smile upon us whilst we are alive

So austere and very wise countenance and carriage (of physicians)

So much are men enslaved to their miserable being

Solon said that eating was physic against the malady hunger

Strangely suspect all this merchandise: medical care

Studies, to teach me to do, and not to write

Such a recipe as they will not take themselves

That he could neither read nor swim

The Babylonians carried their sick into the public square

They (good women) are not by the dozen, as every one knows

They have not one more invention left wherewith to amuse us

They juggle and trifle in all their discourses at our expense



They never loved them till dead
Tis in some sort a kind of dying to avoid the pain of living well
Tis not the number of men, but the number of good men
Tis there she talks plain French
To be, not to seem
To keep me from dying is not in your power
Two opinions alike, no more than two hairs
Tyrannical authority physicians usurp over poor creatures
Venture it upon his



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neighbour, if he will let him

Venture the making ourselves better without any danger

We confess our ignorance in many things

We do not easily accept the medicine we understand

What are become of all our brave philosophical precepts?

What we have not seen, we are forced to receive from other hands

Whatever was not ordinary diet, was instead of a drug

Whimpering is offensive to the living and vain to the dead

Who does not boast of some rare recipe

Who ever saw one physician approve of another's prescription

Willingly give them leave to laugh after we are dead

With being too well I am about to die

Wont to give others their life, and not to receive it

You may indeed make me die an ill death