

# **The Essays of Montaigne, V1**

Michel de Montaigne

# Table of Contents

<u>The Essays of Montaigne, V1</u> .....	1
<u>Michel de Montaigne</u> .....	1
<u>PREFACE</u> .....	1
<u>THE LIFE OF MONTAIGNE</u> .....	3
<u>THE LETTERS OF MONTAIGNE</u> .....	10
<u>I. To Monsieur de MONTAIGNE</u> .....	10
<u>II. To Monseigneur, Monseigneur de MONTAIGNE</u> .....	16
<u>III. To Monsieur, Monsieur de LANSAC</u> .....	16
<u>IV. To Monsieur, Monsieur de MESMES, Lord of Roissy and Malassize, Privy Councillor to the King</u> .....	17
<u>V. To Monsieur, Monsieur de L'HOSPITAL, Chancellor of France</u> .....	18
<u>VIII. To Monsieur DUPUY,—</u> .....	21
<u>XII.</u> .....	22
<u>XIII. To Mademoiselle PAULMIER</u> .....	22
<u>XIV. To the KING, HENRY IV.</u> .....	23
<u>XV. To the same</u> .....	24
<u>XVI. To the Governor of Guienne</u> .....	24
<u>THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.—[Omitted by Cotton.]</u> .....	25

# The Essays of Montaigne, V1

Michel de Montaigne

Translated by Charles Cotton

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- PREFACE.
- THE LIFE OF MONTAIGNE
- THE LETTERS OF MONTAIGNE.
  - I. To Monsieur de MONTAIGNE
  - II. To Monseigneur, Monseigneur de MONTAIGNE.
  - III. To Monsieur, Monsieur de LANSAC.
  - IV. To Monsieur, Monsieur de MESMES, Lord of Roissy and Malassize, Privy Councillor to the King.
  - V. To Monsieur, Monsieur de L'HOSPITAL, Chancellor of France
  - VIII. To Monsieur DUPUY,—
  - XII.
  - XIII. To Mademoiselle PAULMIER.
  - XIV. To the KING, HENRY IV.
  - XV. To the same.
  - XVI. To the Governor of Guienne.
  - THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.—[Omitted by Cotton.]

Edited by William Carew Hazlitt

This etext was produced by David Widger

## PREFACE.

The present publication is intended to supply a recognised deficiency in our literature—a library edition of the Essays of Montaigne. This great French writer deserves to be regarded as a classic, not only in the land of his birth, but in all countries and in all literatures. His Essays, which are at once the most celebrated and the most permanent of his productions, form a magazine out of which such minds as those of Bacon and Shakespeare did not disdain to help themselves; and, indeed, as Hallam observes, the Frenchman's literary importance largely results from the share which his mind had in influencing other minds, coeval and subsequent. But, at the same time, estimating the value and rank of the essayist, we are not to leave out of the account the drawbacks and the circumstances of the period: the imperfect state of education, the comparative scarcity of books, and the limited opportunities of intellectual intercourse. Montaigne freely borrowed of others, and he has found men willing to borrow of him as freely. We need not wonder at the reputation which he with seeming facility achieved. He was, without being aware of it, the leader of a new school in letters and morals. His book was different from all others which were at that date in the world. It diverted the ancient currents of thought into new channels. It told its readers, with unexampled frankness, what its writer's opinion was about men and things, and threw what must have been a strange kind of new light on many matters but darkly understood. Above all, the essayist uncased himself, and made his intellectual and physical organism public property. He took the world into his confidence

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

on all subjects. His essays were a sort of literary anatomy, where we get a diagnosis of the writer's mind, made by himself at different levels and under a large variety of operating influences.

Of all egotists, Montaigne, if not the greatest, was the most fascinating, because, perhaps, he was the least affected and most truthful. What he did, and what he had professed to do, was to dissect his mind, and show us, as best he could, how it was made, and what relation it bore to external objects. He investigated his mental structure as a schoolboy pulls his watch to pieces, to examine the mechanism of the works; and the result, accompanied by illustrations abounding with originality and force, he delivered to his fellow-men in a book.

Eloquence, rhetorical effect, poetry, were alike remote from his design. He did not write from necessity, scarcely perhaps for fame. But he desired to leave France, nay, and the world, something to be remembered by, something which should tell what kind of a man he was—what he felt, thought, suffered—and he succeeded immeasurably, I apprehend, beyond his expectations.

It was reasonable enough that Montaigne should expect for his work a certain share of celebrity in Gascony, and even, as time went on, throughout France; but it is scarcely probable that he foresaw how his renown was to become world-wide; how he was to occupy an almost unique position as a man of letters and a moralist; how the Essays would be read, in all the principal languages of Europe, by millions of intelligent human beings, who never heard of Perigord or the League, and who are in doubt, if they are questioned, whether the author lived in the sixteenth or the eighteenth century. This is true fame. A man of genius belongs to no period and no country. He speaks the language of nature, which is always everywhere the same.

The text of these volumes is taken from the first edition of Cotton's version, printed in 3 vols. 8vo, 1685–6, and republished in 1693, 1700, 1711, 1738, and 1743, in the same number of volumes and the same size. In the earliest impression the errors of the press are corrected merely as far as page 240 of the first volume, and all the editions follow one another. That of 1685–6 was the only one which the translator lived to see. He died in 1687, leaving behind him an interesting and little-known collection of poems, which appeared posthumously, 8vo, 1689.

It was considered imperative to correct Cotton's translation by a careful collation with the 'variorum' edition of the original, Paris, 1854, 4 vols. 8vo or 12mo, and parallel passages from Florin's earlier undertaking have occasionally been inserted at the foot of the page. A Life of the Author and all his recovered Letters, sixteen in number, have also been given; but, as regards the correspondence, it can scarcely be doubted that it is in a purely fragmentary state. To do more than furnish a sketch of the leading incidents in Montaigne's life seemed, in the presence of Bayle St. John's charming and able biography, an attempt as difficult as it was useless.

The besetting sin of both Montaigne's translators seems to have been a propensity for reducing his language and phraseology to the language and phraseology of the age and country to which they belonged, and, moreover, inserting paragraphs and words, not here and there only, but constantly and habitually, from an evident desire and view to elucidate or strengthen their author's meaning. The result has generally been unfortunate; and I have, in the case of all these interpolations on Cotton's part, felt bound, where I did not cancel them, to throw them down into the notes, not thinking it right that Montaigne should be allowed any longer to stand sponsor for what he never wrote; and reluctant, on the other hand, to suppress the intruding matter entirely, where it appeared to possess a value of its own.

Nor is redundancy or paraphrase the only form of transgression in Cotton, for there are places in his author which he thought proper to omit, and it is hardly necessary to say that the restoration of all such matter to the text was considered essential to its integrity and completeness.

My warmest thanks are due to my father, Mr Registrar Hazlitt, the author of the well-known and excellent edition of Montaigne published in 1842, for the important assistance which he has rendered to me in verifying and

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

retranslating the quotations, which were in a most corrupt state, and of which Cotton's English versions were singularly loose and inexact, and for the zeal with which he has co-operated with me in collating the English text, line for line and word for word, with the best French edition.

By the favour of Mr F. W. Cosens, I have had by me, while at work on this subject, the copy of Cotgrave's Dictionary, folio, 1650, which belonged to Cotton. It has his autograph and copious MSS. notes, nor is it too much to presume that it is the very book employed by him in his translation.

W. C. H.

KENSINGTON, November 1877.

## THE LIFE OF MONTAIGNE

[This is translated freely from that prefixed to the 'variorum' Paris edition, 1854, 4 vols. 8vo. This biography is the more desirable that it contains all really interesting and important matter in the journal of the Tour in Germany and Italy, which, as it was merely written under Montaigne's dictation, is in the third person, is scarcely worth publication, as a whole, in an English dress.]

The author of the Essays was born, as he informs us himself, between eleven and twelve o'clock in the day, the last of February 1533, at the chateau of St. Michel de Montaigne. His father, Pierre Eyquem, esquire, was successively first Jurat of the town of Bordeaux (1530), Under-Mayor 1536), Jurat for the second time in 1540, Procureur in 1546, and at length Mayor from 1553 to 1556. He was a man of austere probity, who had "a particular regard for honour and for propriety in his person and attire . . . a mighty good faith in his speech, and a conscience and a religious feeling inclining to superstition, rather than to the other extreme." [Essays, ii. 2.] Pierre Eyquem bestowed great care on the education of his children, especially on the practical side of it. To associate closely his son Michel with the people, and attach him to those who stand in need of assistance, he caused him to be held at the font by persons of meanest position; subsequently he put him out to nurse with a poor villager, and then, at a later period, made him accustom himself to the most common sort of living, taking care, nevertheless, to cultivate his mind, and superintend its development without the exercise of undue rigour or constraint. Michel, who gives us the minutest account of his earliest years, charmingly narrates how they used to awake him by the sound of some agreeable music, and how he learned Latin, without suffering the rod or shedding a tear, before beginning French, thanks to the German teacher whom his father had placed near him, and who never addressed him except in the language of Virgil and Cicero. The study of Greek took precedence. At six years of age young Montaigne went to the College of Guienne at Bordeaux, where he had as preceptors the most eminent scholars of the sixteenth century, Nicolas Grouchy, Guerente, Muret, and Buchanan. At thirteen he had passed through all the classes, and as he was destined for the law he left school to study that science. He was then about fourteen, but these early years of his life are involved in obscurity. The next information that we have is that in 1554 he received the appointment of councillor in the Parliament of Bordeaux; in 1559 he was at Bar-le-Duc with the court of Francis II, and in the year following he was present at Rouen to witness the declaration of the majority of Charles IX. We do not know in what manner he was engaged on these occasions.

Between 1556 and 1563 an important incident occurred in the life of Montaigne, in the commencement of his romantic friendship with Etienne de la Boetie, whom he had met, as he tells us, by pure chance at some festive celebration in the town. From their very first interview the two found themselves drawn irresistibly close to one another, and during six years this alliance was foremost in the heart of Montaigne, as it was afterwards in his memory, when death had severed it.

Although he blames severely in his own book [Essays, i. 27.] those who, contrary to the opinion of Aristotle, marry before five-and-thirty, Montaigne did not wait for the period fixed by the philosopher of Stagyræ, but in 1566, in his thirty-third year, he espoused Françoise de Chassigne, daughter of a councillor in the Parliament of Bordeaux. The history of his early married life vies in obscurity with that of his youth. His biographers are not

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

agreed among themselves; and in the same degree that he lays open to our view all that concerns his secret thoughts, the innermost mechanism of his mind, he observes too much reticence in respect to his public functions and conduct, and his social relations. The title of Gentleman in Ordinary to the King, which he assumes, in a preface, and which Henry II. gives him in a letter, which we print a little farther on; what he says as to the commotions of courts, where he passed a portion of his life; the Instructions which he wrote under the dictation of Catherine de Medici for King Charles IX., and his noble correspondence with Henry IV., leave no doubt, however, as to the part which he played in the transactions of those times, and we find an unanswerable proof of the esteem in which he was held by the most exalted personages, in a letter which was addressed to him by Charles at the time he was admitted to the Order of St. Michael, which was, as he informs us himself, the highest honour of the French noblesse.

According to Lacroix du Maine, Montaigne, upon the death of his eldest brother, resigned his post of Councillor, in order to adopt the military profession, while, if we might credit the President Bouhier, he never discharged any functions connected with arms. However, several passages in the Essays seem to indicate that he not only took service, but that he was actually in numerous campaigns with the Catholic armies. Let us add, that on his monument he is represented in a coat of mail, with his casque and gauntlets on his right side, and a lion at his feet, all which signifies, in the language of funeral emblems, that the departed has been engaged in some important military transactions.

However it may be as to these conjectures, our author, having arrived at his thirty–eighth year, resolved to dedicate to study and contemplation the remaining term of his life; and on his birthday, the last of February 1571, he caused a philosophical inscription, in Latin, to be placed upon one of the walls of his chateau, where it is still to be seen, and of which the translation is to this effect:—"In the year of Christ . . . in his thirty–eighth year, on the eve of the Calends of March, his birthday, Michel Montaigne, already weary of court employments and public honours, withdrew himself entirely into the converse of the learned virgins where he intends to spend the remaining moiety of the to allotted to him in tranquil seclusion."

At the time to which we have come, Montaigne was unknown to the world of letters, except as a translator and editor. In 1569 he had published a translation of the "Natural Theology" of Raymond de Sebonde, which he had solely undertaken to please his father. In 1571 he had caused to be printed at Paris certain 'opuscula' of Etienne de la Boetie ; and these two efforts, inspired in one case by filial duty, and in the other by friendship, prove that affectionate motives overruled with him mere personal ambition as a literary man. We may suppose that he began to compose the Essays at the very outset of his retirement from public engagements; for as, according to his own account, observes the President Bouhier, he cared neither for the chase, nor building, nor gardening, nor agricultural pursuits, and was exclusively occupied with reading and reflection, he devoted himself with satisfaction to the task of setting down his thoughts just as they occurred to him. Those thoughts became a book, and the first part of that book, which was to confer immortality on the writer, appeared at Bordeaux in 1580. Montaigne was then fifty– seven; he had suffered for some years past from renal colic and gravel; and it was with the necessity of distraction from his pain, and the hope of deriving relief from the waters, that he undertook at this time a great journey. As the account which he has left of his travels in Germany and Italy comprises some highly interesting particulars of his life and personal history, it seems worth while to furnish a sketch or analysis of it.

"The Journey, of which we proceed to describe the course simply," says the editor of the Itinerary, "had, from Beaumont–sur–Oise to Plombieres, in Lorraine, nothing sufficiently interesting to detain us . . . we must go as far, as Basle, of which we have a description, acquainting us with its physical and political condition at that period, as well as with the character of its baths. The passage of Montaigne through Switzerland is not without interest, as we see there how our philosophical traveller accommodated himself everywhere to the ways of the country. The hotels, the provisions, the Swiss cookery, everything, was agreeable to him; it appears, indeed, as if he preferred to the French manners and tastes those of the places he was visiting, and of which the simplicity and freedom (or frankness) accorded more with his own mode of life and thinking. In the towns where he stayed, Montaigne took care to see the Protestant divines, to make himself conversant with all their dogmas. He even had disputations

with them occasionally.

"Having left Switzerland he went to Isne, an imperial then on to Augsburg and Munich. He afterwards proceeded to the Tyrol, where he was agreeably surprised, after the warnings which he had received, at the very slight inconveniences which he suffered, which gave him occasion to remark that he had all his life distrusted the statements of others respecting foreign countries, each person's tastes being according to the notions of his native place; and that he had consequently set very little on what he was told beforehand.

"Upon his arrival at Botzen, Montaigne wrote to Francois Hottmann, to say that he had been so pleased with his visit to Germany that he quitted it with great regret, although it was to go into Italy. He then passed through Brunsol, Trent, where he put up at the Rose; thence going to Rovera; and here he first lamented the scarcity of crawfish, but made up for the loss by partaking of truffles cooked in oil and vinegar; oranges, citrons, and olives, in all of which he delighted.

After passing a restless night, when he bethought himself in the morning that there was some new town or district to be seen, he rose, we are told, with alacrity and pleasure.

His secretary, to whom he dictated his Journal, assures us that he never saw him take so much interest in surrounding scenes and persons, and believes that the complete change helped to mitigate his sufferings in concentrating his attention on other points. When there was a complaint made that he had led his party out of the beaten route, and then returned very near the spot from which they started, his answer was that he had no settled course, and that he merely proposed to himself to pay visits to places which he had not seen, and so long as they could not convict him of traversing the same path twice, or revisiting a point already seen, he could perceive no harm in his plan. As to Rome, he cared less to go there, inasmuch as everybody went there; and he said that he never had a lacquey who could not tell him all about Florence or Ferrara. He also would say that he seemed to himself like those who are reading some pleasant story or some fine book, of which they fear to come to the end: he felt so much pleasure in travelling that he dreaded the moment of arrival at the place where they were to stop for the night.

We see that Montaigne travelled, just as he wrote, completely at his ease, and without the least constraint, turning, just as he fancied, from the common or ordinary roads taken by tourists. The good inns, the soft beds, the fine views, attracted his notice at every point, and in his observations on men and things he confines himself chiefly to the practical side. The consideration of his health was constantly before him, and it was in consequence of this that, while at Venice, which disappointed him, he took occasion to note, for the benefit of readers, that he had an attack of colic, and that he evacuated two large stones after supper. On quitting Venice, he went in succession to Ferrara, Rovigo, Padua, Bologna (where he had a stomach-ache), Florence, and everywhere, before alighting, he made it a rule to send some of his servants to ascertain where the best accommodation was to be had. He pronounced the Florentine women the finest in the world, but had not an equally good opinion of the food, which was less plentiful than in Germany, and not so well served. He lets us understand that in Italy they send up dishes without dressing, but in Germany they were much better seasoned, and served with a variety of sauces and gravies. He remarked further, that the glasses were singularly small and the wines insipid.

After dining with the Grand-Duke of Florence, Montaigne passed rapidly over the intermediate country, which had no fascination for him, and arrived at Rome on the last day of November, entering by the Porta del Popolo, and putting up at Bear. But he afterwards hired, at twenty crowns a month, fine furnished rooms in the house of a Spaniard, who included in these terms the use of the kitchen fire. What most annoyed him in the Eternal City was the number of Frenchmen he met, who all saluted him in his native tongue; but otherwise he was very comfortable, and his stay extended to five months. A mind like his, full of grand classical reflections, could not fail to be profoundly impressed in the presence of the ruins at Rome, and he has enshrined in a magnificent passage of the Journal the feelings of the moment: "He said," writes his secretary, "that at Rome one saw nothing but the sky under which she had been built, and the outline of her site: that the knowledge we had of her was

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

abstract, contemplative, not palpable to the actual senses: that those who said they beheld at least the ruins of Rome, went too far, for the ruins of so gigantic a structure must have commanded greater reverence—it was nothing but her sepulchre. The world, jealous of her, prolonged empire, had in the first place broken to pieces that admirable body, and then, when they perceived that the remains attracted worship and awe, had buried the very wreck itself. —[Compare a passage in one of Horace Walpole's letters to Richard West, 22 March 1740 (Cunningham's edit. i. 41), where Walpole, speaking of Rome, describes her very ruins as ruined.]— As to those small fragments which were still to be seen on the surface, notwithstanding the assaults of time and all other attacks, again and again repeated, they had been favoured by fortune to be some slight evidence of that infinite grandeur which nothing could entirely extinguish. But it was likely that these disfigured remains were the least entitled to attention, and that the enemies of that immortal renown, in their fury, had addressed themselves in the first instance to the destruction of what was most beautiful and worthiest of preservation; and that the buildings of this bastard Rome, raised upon the ancient productions, although they might excite the admiration of the present age, reminded him of the crows' and sparrows' nests built in the walls and arches of the old churches, destroyed by the Huguenots. Again, he was apprehensive, seeing the space which this grave occupied, that the whole might not have been recovered, and that the burial itself had been buried. And, moreover, to see a wretched heap of rubbish, as pieces of tile and pottery, grow (as it had ages since) to a height equal to that of Mount Gurson,—[In Perigord.]—and thrice the width of it, appeared to show a conspiracy of destiny against the glory and pre-eminence of that city, affording at the same time a novel and extraordinary proof of its departed greatness. He (Montaigne) observed that it was difficult to believe considering the limited area taken up by any of her seven hills and particularly the two most favoured ones, the Capitoline and the Palatine, that so many buildings stood on the site. Judging only from what is left of the Temple of Concord, along the 'Forum Romanum', of which the fall seems quite recent, like that of some huge mountain split into horrible crags, it does not look as if more than two such edifices could have found room on the Capitoline, on which there were at one period from five—and—twenty to thirty temples, besides private dwellings. But, in point of fact, there is scarcely any probability of the views which we take of the city being correct, its plan and form having changed infinitely; for instance, the 'Velabrum', which on account of its depressed level, received the sewage of the city, and had a lake, has been raised by artificial accumulation to a height with the other hills, and Mount Savello has, in truth, grown simply out of the ruins of the theatre of Marcellus. He believed that an ancient Roman would not recognise the place again. It often happened that in digging down into earth the workmen came upon the crown of some lofty column, which, though thus buried, was still standing upright. The people there have no recourse to other foundations than the vaults and arches of the old houses, upon which, as on slabs of rock, they raise their modern palaces. It is easy to see that several of the ancient streets are thirty feet below those at present in use."

Sceptical as Montaigne shows himself in his books, yet during his sojourn at Rome he manifested a great regard for religion. He solicited the honour of being admitted to kiss the feet of the Holy Father, Gregory XIII.; and the Pontiff exhorted him always to continue in the devotion which he had hitherto exhibited to the Church and the service of the Most Christian King.

"After this, one sees," says the editor of the Journal, "Montaigne employing all his time in making excursions about the neighbourhood on horseback or on foot, in visits, in observations of every kind. The churches, the stations, the processions even, the sermons; then the palaces, the vineyards, the gardens, the public amusements, as the Carnival, was overlooked. He saw a Jewish child circumcised, and wrote down a most minute account of the operation. He met at San Sisto a Muscovite ambassador, the second who had come to Rome since the pontificate of Paul III. This minister had despatches from his court for Venice, addressed to the 'Grand Governor of the Signory'. The court of Muscovy had at that time such limited relations with the other powers of Europe, and it was so imperfect in its information, that it thought Venice to be a dependency of the Holy See."

Of all the particulars with which he has furnished us during his stay at Rome, the following passage in reference to the Essays is not the least singular: "The Master of the Sacred Palace returned him his Essays, castigated in accordance with the views of the learned monks. 'He had only been able to form a judgment of them,' said he, 'through a certain French monk, not understanding French himself'" —we leave Montaigne himself to tell the



story—"and he received so complacently my excuses and explanations on each of the passages which had been animadverted upon by the French monk, that he concluded by leaving me at liberty to revise the text agreeably to the dictates of my own conscience. I begged him, on the contrary, to abide by the opinion of the person who had criticised me, confessing, among other matters, as, for example, in my use of the word fortune, in quoting historical poets, in my apology for Julian, in my animadversion on the theory that he who prayed ought to be exempt from vicious inclinations for the time being; item, in my estimate of cruelty, as something beyond simple death; item, in my view that a child ought to be brought up to do everything, and so on; that these were my opinions, which I did not think wrong; as to other things, I said that the corrector understood not my meaning. The Master, who is a clever man, made many excuses for me, and gave me to suppose that he did not concur in the suggested improvements; and pleaded very ingeniously for me in my presence against another (also an Italian) who opposed my sentiments."

Such is what passed between Montaigne and these two personages at that time; but when the Essayist was leaving, and went to bid them farewell, they used very different language to him. "They prayed me," says he, "to pay no attention to the censure passed on my book, in which other French persons had apprised them that there were many foolish things; adding, that they honoured my affectionate intention towards the Church, and my capacity; and had so high an opinion of my candour and conscientiousness that they should leave it to me to make such alterations as were proper in the book, when I reprinted it; among other things, the word fortune. To excuse themselves for what they had said against my book, they instanced works of our time by cardinals and other divines of excellent repute which had been blamed for similar faults, which in no way affected reputation of the author, or of the publication as a whole; they requested me to lend the Church the support of my eloquence (this was their fair speech), and to make longer stay in the place, where I should be free from all further intrusion on their part. It seemed to me that we parted very good friends."

Before quitting Rome, Montaigne received his diploma of citizenship, by which he was greatly flattered; and after a visit to Tivoli he set out for Loretto, stopping at Ancona, Fano, and Urbino. He arrived at the beginning of May 1581, at Bagno della Villa, where he established himself, order to try the waters. There, we find in the Journal, of his own accord the Essayist lived in the strictest conformity with the regime, and henceforth we only hear of diet, the effect which the waters had by degrees upon system, of the manner in which he took them; in a word, he does not omit an item of the circumstances connected with his daily routine, his habit of body, his baths, and the rest. It was no longer the journal of a traveller which he kept, but the diary of an invalid,—["I am reading Montaigne's Travels, which have lately been found; there is little in them but the baths and medicines he took, and what he had everywhere for dinner."—H. Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, June 8, 1774.]—attentive to the minutest details of the cure which he was endeavouring to accomplish: a sort of memorandum book, in which he was noting down everything that he felt and did, for the benefit of his medical man at home, who would have the care of his health on his return, and the attendance on his subsequent infirmities. Montaigne gives it as his reason and justification for enlarging to this extent here, that he had omitted, to his regret, to do so in his visits to other baths, which might have saved him the trouble of writing at such great length now; but it is perhaps a better reason in our eyes, that what he wrote he wrote for his own use.

We find in these accounts, however, many touches which are valuable as illustrating the manners of the place. The greater part of the entries in the Journal, giving the account of these waters, and of the travels, down to Montaigne's arrival at the first French town on his homeward route, are in Italian, because he wished to exercise himself in that language.

The minute and constant watchfulness of Montaigne over his health and over himself might lead one to suspect that excessive fear of death which degenerates into cowardice. But was it not rather the fear of the operation for the stone, at that time really formidable? Or perhaps he was of the same way of thinking with the Greek poet, of whom Cicero reports this saying: "I do not desire to die; but the thought of being dead is indifferent to me." Let us hear, however, what he says himself on this point very frankly: "It would be too weak and unmanly on my part if, certain as I am of always finding myself in the position of having to succumb in that way,—[To the stone or

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

gravel.]— and death coming nearer and nearer to me, I did not make some effort, before the time came, to bear the trial with fortitude. For reason prescribes that we should joyfully accept what it may please God to send us. Therefore the only remedy, the only rule, and the sole doctrine for avoiding the evils by which mankind is surrounded, whatever they are, is to resolve to bear them so far as our nature permits, or to put an end to them courageously and promptly."

He was still at the waters of La Villa, when, on the 7th September 1581, he learned by letter that he had been elected Mayor of Bordeaux on the 1st August preceding. This intelligence made him hasten his departure; and from Lucca he proceeded to Rome. He again made some stay in that city, and he there received the letter of the jurats of Bordeaux, notifying to him officially his election to the Mayoralty, and inviting him to return as speedily as possible. He left for France, accompanied by young D'Estissac and several other gentlemen, who escorted him a considerable distance; but none went back to France with him, not even his travelling companion. He passed by Padua, Milan, Mont Cenis, and Chambery; thence he went on to Lyons, and lost no time in repairing to his chateau, after an absence of seventeen months and eight days.

We have just seen that, during his absence in Italy, the author of the Essays was elected mayor of Bordeaux. "The gentlemen of Bordeaux," says he, "elected me Mayor of their town while I was at a distance from France, and far from the thought of such a thing. I excused myself; but they gave to understand that I was wrong in so doing, it being also the command of the king that I should stand." This the letter which Henry III. wrote to him on the occasion:

MONSIEUR, DE MONTAIGNE,—Inasmuch as I hold in great esteem your fidelity and zealous devotion to my service, it has been a pleasure to me to learn that you have been chosen mayor of my town of Bordeaux. I have had the agreeable duty of confirming the selection, and I did so the more willingly, seeing that it was made during your distant absence; wherefore it is my desire, and I require and command you expressly that you proceed without delay to enter on the duties to which you have received so legitimate a call. And so you will act in a manner very agreeable to me, while the contrary will displease me greatly. Praying God, M. de Montaigne, to have you in his holy keeping.

"Written at Paris, the 25th day of November 1581.

"HENRI.

"A Monsieur de MONTAIGNE,  
Knight of my Order, Gentleman in Ordinary of my  
Chamber, being at present in Rome."

Montaigne, in his new employment, the most important in the province, obeyed the axiom, that a man may not refuse a duty, though it absorb his time and attention, and even involve the sacrifice of his blood. Placed between two extreme parties, ever on the point of getting to blows, he showed himself in practice what he is in his book, the friend of a middle and temperate policy. Tolerant by character and on principle, he belonged, like all the great minds of the sixteenth century, to that political sect which sought to improve, without destroying, institutions; and we may say of him, what he himself said of La Boetie, "that he had that maxim indelibly impressed on his mind, to obey and submit himself religiously to the laws under which he was born. Affectionately attached to the repose of his country, an enemy to changes and innovations, he would have preferred to employ what means he had towards their discouragement and suppression, than in promoting their success." Such was the platform of his administration.

He applied himself, in an especial manner, to the maintenance of peace between the two religious factions which at that time divided the town of Bordeaux; and at the end of his two first years of office, his grateful fellow-citizens conferred on him (in 1583) the mayoralty for two years more, a distinction which had been

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

enjoyed, as he tells us, only twice before. On the expiration of his official career, after four years' duration, he could say fairly enough of himself that he left behind him neither hatred nor cause of offence.

In the midst of the cares of government, Montaigne found time to revise and enlarge his Essays, which, since their appearance in 1580, were continually receiving augmentation in the form of additional chapters or papers. Two more editions were printed in 1582 and 1587; and during this time the author, while making alterations in the original text, had composed part of the Third Book. He went to Paris to make arrangements for the publication of his enlarged labours, and a fourth impression in 1588 was the result. He remained in the capital some time on this occasion, and it was now that he met for the first time Mademoiselle de Gournay. Gifted with an active and inquiring spirit, and, above all, possessing a sound and healthy tone of mind, Mademoiselle de Gournay had been carried from her childhood with that tide which set in with sixteenth century towards controversy, learning, and knowledge. She learnt Latin without a master; and when, the age of eighteen, she accidentally became possessor of a copy of the Essays, she was transported with delight and admiration.

She quitted the chateau of Gournay, to come and see him. We cannot do better, in connection with this journey of sympathy, than to repeat the words of Pasquier: "That young lady, allied to several great and noble families of Paris, proposed to herself no other marriage than with her honour, enriched with the knowledge gained from good books, and, beyond all others, from the essays of M. de Montaigne, who making in the year 1588 a lengthened stay in the town of Paris, she went there for the purpose of forming his personal acquaintance; and her mother, Madame de Gournay, and herself took him back with them to their chateau, where, at two or three different times, he spent three months altogether, most welcome of visitors." It was from this moment that Mademoiselle de Gournay dated her adoption as Montaigne's daughter, a circumstance which has tended to confer immortality upon her in a far greater measure than her own literary productions.

Montaigne, on leaving Paris, stayed a short time at Blois, to attend the meeting of the States-General. We do not know what part he took in that assembly: but it is known that he was commissioned, about this period, to negotiate between Henry of Navarre (afterwards Henry IV.) and the Duke of Guise. His political life is almost a blank; but De Thou assures us that Montaigne enjoyed the confidence of the principal persons of his time. De Thou, who calls him a frank man without constraint, tells us that, walking with him and Pasquier in the court at the Castle of Blois, he heard him pronounce some very remarkable opinions on contemporary events, and he adds that Montaigne had foreseen that the troubles in France could not end without witnessing the death of either the King of Navarre or of the Duke of Guise. He had made himself so completely master of the views of these two princes, that he told De Thou that the King of Navarre would have been prepared to embrace Catholicism, if he had not been afraid of being abandoned by his party, and that the Duke of Guise, on his part, had no particular repugnance to the Confession of Augsburg, for which the Cardinal of Lorraine, his uncle, had inspired him with a liking, if it had not been for the peril involved in quitting the Romish communion. It would have been easy for Montaigne to play, as we call it, a great part in politics, and create for himself a lofty position but his motto was, 'Otio et Libertati'; and he returned quietly home to compose a chapter for his next edition on inconveniences of Greatness.

The author of the Essays was now fifty-five. The malady which tormented him grew only worse and worse with years; and yet he occupied himself continually with reading, meditating, and composition. He employed the years 1589, 1590, and 1591 in making fresh additions to his book; and even in the approaches of old age he might fairly anticipate many happy hours, when he was attacked by quinsy, depriving him of the power utterance. Pasquier, who has left us some details his last hours, narrates that he remained three days in full possession of his faculties, but unable to speak, so that, in order to make known his desires, he was obliged to resort to writing; and as he felt his end drawing near, he begged his wife to summon certain of the gentlemen who lived in the neighbourhood to bid them a last farewell. When they had arrived, he caused mass to be celebrated in apartment; and just as the priest was elevating the host, Montaigne fell forward with his arms extended in front of him, on the bed, and so expired. He was in his sixtieth year. It was the 13th September 1592.

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

Montaigne was buried near his own house; but a few years after his decease, his remains were removed to the church of a Commandery of St. Antoine at Bordeaux, where they still continue. His monument was restored in 1803 by a descendant. It was seen about 1858 by an English traveller (Mr. St. John).—["Montaigne the Essayist," by Bayle St. John, 1858, 2 vols. 8vo, is one of most delightful books of the kind.]— and was then in good preservation.

In 1595 Mademoiselle de Gournay published a new edition of Montaigne's Essays, and the first with the latest emendations of the author, from a copy presented to her by his widow, and which has not been recovered, although it is known to have been in existence some years after the date of the impression, made on its authority.

Coldly as Montaigne's literary productions appear to have been received by the generation immediately succeeding his own age, his genius grew into just appreciation in the seventeenth century, when such great spirits arose as La Bruyere, Moliere, La Fontaine, Madame de Sevigne. "O," exclaimed the Chatelaine des Rochers, "what capital company he is, the dear man! he is my old friend; and just for the reason that he is so, he always seems new. My God! how full is that book of sense!" Balzac said that he had carried human reason as far and as high as it could go, both in politics and in morals. On the other hand, Malebranche and the writers of Port Royal were against him; some reprehended the licentiousness of his writings; others their impiety, materialism, epicureanism. Even Pascal, who had carefully read the Essays, and gained no small profit by them, did not spare his reproaches. But Montaigne has outlived detraction. As time has gone on, his admirers and borrowers have increased in number, and his Jansenism, which recommended him to the eighteenth century, may not be his least recommendation in the nineteenth. Here we have certainly, on the whole, a first-class man, and one proof of his masterly genius seems to be, that his merits and his beauties are sufficient to induce us to leave out of consideration blemishes and faults which would have been fatal to an inferior writer.

## THE LETTERS OF MONTAIGNE.

### I. To Monsieur de MONTAIGNE

[This account of the death of La Boetie begins imperfectly. It first appeared in a little volume of Miscellanies in 1571. See Hazlitt, *ubi sup.* p. 630.]—"....As to his last words, doubtless, if any man can give good account of them, it is I, both because, during the whole of his sickness he conversed as fully with me as with any one, and also because, in consequence of the singular and brotherly friendship which we had entertained for each other, I was perfectly acquainted with the intentions, opinions, and wishes which he had formed in the course of his life, as much so, certainly, as one man can possibly be with those of another man; and because I knew them to be elevated, virtuous, full of steady resolution, and (after all said) admirable. I well foresaw that, if his illness permitted him to express himself, he would allow nothing to fall from him, in such an extremity, that was not replete with good example. I consequently took every care in my power to treasure what was said. True it is, Monseigneur, as my memory is not only in itself very short, but in this case affected by the trouble which I have undergone, through so heavy and important a loss, that I have forgotten a number of things which I should wish to have had known; but those which I recollect shall be related to you as exactly as lies in my power. For to represent in full measure his noble career suddenly arrested, to paint to you his indomitable courage, in a body worn out and prostrated by pain and the assaults of death, I confess, would demand a far better ability than mine: because, although, when in former years he discoursed on serious and important matters, he handled them in such a manner that it was difficult to reproduce exactly what he said, yet his ideas and his words at the last seemed to rival each other in serving him. For I am sure that I never knew him give birth to such fine conceptions, or display so much eloquence, as in the time of his sickness. If, Monseigneur, you blame me for introducing his more ordinary observations, please to know that I do so advisedly; for since they proceeded from him at a season of such great trouble, they indicate the perfect tranquillity of his mind and thoughts to the last.

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

On Monday, the 9th day of August 1563, on my return from the Court, I sent an invitation to him to come and dine with me. He returned word that he was obliged, but, being indisposed, he would thank me to do him the pleasure of spending an hour with him before he started for Medoc. Shortly after my dinner I went to him. He had laid himself down on the bed with his clothes on, and he was already, I perceived, much changed. He complained of diarrhoea, accompanied by the gripes, and said that he had it about him ever since he played with M. d'Escars with nothing but his doublet on, and that with him a cold often brought on such attacks. I advised him to go as he had proposed, but to stay for the night at Germignac, which is only about two leagues from the town. I gave him this advice, because some houses, near to that where he was going, were visited by the plague, about which he was nervous since his return from Perigord and the Agenois, here it had been raging; and, besides, horse exercise was, from my own experience, beneficial under similar circumstances. He set out, accordingly, with his wife and M. Bouillhonnas, his uncle.

Early on the following morning, however, I had intelligence from Madame de la Boetie, that in the night he had fresh and violent attack of dysentery. She had called in physician and apothecary, and prayed me to lose no time coming, which (after dinner) I did. He was delighted to see me; and when I was going away, under promise to turn the following day, he begged me more importunately and affectionately than he was wont to do, to give him as such of my company as possible. I was a little affected; yet was about to leave, when Madame de la Boetie, as if she foresaw something about to happen, implored me with tears to stay the night. When I consented, he seemed to grow more cheerful. I returned home the next day, and on the Thursday I paid him another visit. He had become worse; and his loss of blood from the dysentery, which reduced his strength very much, was largely on the increase. I quitted his side on Friday, but on Saturday I went to him, and found him very weak. He then gave me to understand that his complaint was infectious, and, moreover, disagreeable and depressing; and that he, knowing thoroughly my constitution, desired that I should content myself with coming to see him now and then. On the contrary, after that I never left his side.

It was only on the Sunday that he began to converse with me on any subject beyond the immediate one of his illness, and what the ancient doctors thought of it: we had not touched on public affairs, for I found at the very outset that he had a dislike to them.

But, on the Sunday, he had a fainting fit; and when he came to himself, he told me that everything seemed to him confused, as if in a mist and in disorder, and that, nevertheless, this visitation was not unpleasing to him. "Death," I replied, "has no worse sensation, my brother." "None so bad," was his answer. He had had no regular sleep since the beginning of his illness; and as he became worse and worse, he began to turn his attention to questions which men commonly occupy themselves with in the last extremity, despairing now of getting better, and intimating as much to me. On that day, as he appeared in tolerably good spirits, I took occasion to say to him that, in consideration of the singular love I bore him, it would become me to take care that his affairs, which he had conducted with such rare prudence in his life, should not be neglected at present; and that I should regret it if, from want of proper counsel, he should leave anything unsettled, not only on account of the loss to his family, but also to his good name.

He thanked me for my kindness; and after a little reflection, as if he was resolving certain doubts in his own mind, he desired me to summon his uncle and his wife by themselves, in order that he might acquaint them with his testamentary dispositions. I told him that this would shock them. "No, no," he answered, "I will cheer them by making out my case to be better than it is." And then he inquired, whether we were not all much taken by surprise at his having fainted? I replied, that it was of no importance, being incidental to the complaint from which he suffered. "True, my brother," said he; "it would be unimportant, even though it should lead to what you most dread." "For you," I rejoined, "it might be a happy thing; but I should be the loser, who would thereby be deprived of so great, so wise, and so steadfast a friend, a friend whose place I should never see supplied." "It is very likely you may not," was his answer; "and be sure that one thing which makes me somewhat anxious to recover, and to delay my journey to that place, whither I am already half-way gone, is the thought of the loss both you and that poor man and woman there (referring to his uncle and wife) must sustain; for I love them with my whole heart,

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

and I feel certain that they will find it very hard to lose me. I should also regret it on account of such as have, in my lifetime, valued me, and whose conversation I should like to have enjoyed a little longer; and I beseech you, my brother, if I leave the world, to carry to them for me an assurance of the esteem I entertained for them to the last moment of my existence. My birth was, moreover, scarcely to so little purpose but that, had I lived, I might have done some service to the public; but, however this may be, I am prepared to submit to the will of God, when it shall please Him to call me, being confident of enjoying the tranquillity which you have foretold for me. As for you, my friend, I feel sure that you are so wise, that you will control your emotions, and submit to His divine ordinance regarding me; and I beg of you to see that that good man and woman do not mourn for my departure unnecessarily."

He proceeded to inquire how they behaved at present. "Very well," said I, "considering the circumstances." "Ah!" he replied, "that is, so long as they do not abandon all hope of me; but when that shall be the case, you will have a hard task to support them." It was owing to his strong regard for his wife and uncle that he studiously disguised from them his own conviction as to the certainty of his end, and he prayed me to do the same. When they were near him he assumed an appearance of gaiety, and flattered them with hopes. I then went to call them. They came, wearing as composed an air as possible; and when we four were together, he addressed us, with an untroubled countenance, as follows: "Uncle and wife, rest assured that no new attack of my disease, or fresh doubt that I have as to my recovery, has led me to take this step of communicating to you my intentions, for, thank God, I feel very well and hopeful; but taught by observation and experience the instability of all human things, and even of the life to which we are so much attached, and which is, nevertheless, a mere bubble; and knowing, moreover, that my state of health brings me more within the danger of death, I have thought proper to settle my worldly affairs, having the benefit of your advice." Then addressing himself more particularly to his uncle, "Good uncle," said he, "if I were to rehearse all the obligations under which I lie to you, I am sure that I never should make an end. Let me only say that, wherever I have been, and with whomsoever I have conversed, I have represented you as doing for me all that a father could do for a son; both in the care with which you tended my education, and in the zeal with which you pushed me forward into public life, so that my whole existence is a testimony of your good offices towards me. In short, I am indebted for all that I have to you, who have been to me as a parent; and therefore I have no right to part with anything, unless it be with your approval."

There was a general silence hereupon, and his uncle was prevented from replying by tears and sobs. At last he said that whatever he thought for the best would be agreeable to him; and as he intended to make him his heir, he was at liberty to dispose of what would be his.

Then he turned to his wife. "My image," said he (for so he often called her, there being some sort of relationship between them), "since I have been united to you by marriage, which is one of the most weighty and sacred ties imposed on us by God, for the purpose of maintaining human society, I have continued to love, cherish, and value you; and I know that you have returned my affection, for which I have no sufficient acknowledgment. I beg you to accept such portion of my estate as I bequeath to you, and be satisfied with it, though it is very inadequate to your desert."

Afterwards he turned to me. "My brother," he began, "for whom I have so entire a love, and whom I selected out of so large a number, thinking to revive with you that virtuous and sincere friendship which, owing to the degeneracy of the age, has grown to be almost unknown to us, and now exists only in certain vestiges of antiquity, I beg of you, as a mark of my affection to you, to accept my library: a slender offering, but given with a cordial will, and suitable to you, seeing that you are fond of learning. It will be a memorial of your old companion."

Then he addressed all three of us. He blessed God that in his extremity he had the happiness to be surrounded by those whom he held dearest in the world, and he looked upon it as a fine spectacle, where four persons were together, so unanimous in their feelings, and loving each other for each other's sake. He commended us one to the other; and proceeded thus: "My worldly matters being arranged, I must now think of the welfare of my soul. I am a Christian; I am a Catholic. I have lived one, and I shall die one. Send for a priest; for I wish to conform to this

last Christian obligation." He now concluded his discourse, which he had conducted with such a firm face and with so distinct an utterance, that whereas, when I first entered his room, he was feeble, inarticulate in his speech, his pulse low and feverish, and his features pallid, now, by a sort of miracle, he appeared to have rallied, and his pulse was so strong that for the sake of comparison, I asked him to feel mine.

I felt my heart so oppressed at this moment, that I had not the power to make him any answer; but in the course of two or three hours, solicitous to keep up his courage, and, likewise, out of the tenderness which I had had all my life for his honour and fame, wishing a larger number of witnesses to his admirable fortitude, I said to him, how much I was ashamed to think that I lacked courage to listen to what he, so great a sufferer, had the courage to deliver; that down to the present time I had scarcely conceived that God granted us such command over human infirmities, and had found a difficulty in crediting the examples I had read in histories; but that with such evidence of the thing before my eyes, I gave praise to God that it had shown itself in one so excessively dear to me, and who loved me so entirely, and that his example would help me to act in a similar manner when my turn came. Interrupting me, he begged that it might happen so, and that the conversation which had passed between us might not be mere words, but might be impressed deeply on our minds, to be put in exercise at the first occasion; and that this was the real object and aim of all philosophy.

He then took my hand, and continued: "Brother, friend, there are many acts of my life, I think, which have cost me as much difficulty as this one is likely to do; and, after all, I have been long prepared for it, and have my lesson by heart. Have I not lived long enough? I am just upon thirty—three. By the grace of God, my days so far have known nothing but health and happiness; but in the ordinary course of our unstable human affairs, this could not have lasted much longer; it would have become time for me to enter on graver avocations, and I should thus have involved myself in numberless vexations, and, among them, the troubles of old age, from which I shall now be exempt. Moreover, it is probable that hitherto my life has been spent more simply, and with less of evil, than if God had spared me, and I had survived to feel the thirst for riches and worldly prosperity. I am sure, for my part, that I now go to God and the place of the blessed." He seemed to detect in my expression some inquietude at his words; and he exclaimed, "What, my brother, would you make me entertain apprehensions? Had I any, whom would it become so much as yourself to remove them?"

The notary, who had been summoned to draw up his will, came in the evening, and when he had the documents prepared, I inquired of La Boetie if he would sign them. "Sign them," cried he; "I will do so with my own hand; but I could desire more time, for I feel exceedingly timid and weak, and in a manner exhausted." But when I was going to change the conversation, he suddenly rallied, said he had but a short time to live, and asked if the notary wrote rapidly, for he should dictate without making any pause. The notary was called, and he dictated his will there and then with such speed that the man could scarcely keep up with him; and when he had done, he asked me to read it out, saying to me, "What a good thing it is to look after what are called our riches." 'Sunt haec, quae hominibus vocantur bona'. As soon as the will was signed, the chamber being full, he asked me if it would hurt him to talk. I answered, that it would not, if he did not speak too loud. He then summoned Mademoiselle de Saint Quentin, his niece, to him, and addressed her thus: "Dear niece, since my earliest acquaintance with thee, I have observed the marks of, great natural goodness in thee; but the services which thou rendered to me, with so much affectionate diligence, in my present and last necessity, inspire me with high hopes of thee; and I am under great obligations to thee, and give thee most affectionate thanks. Let me relieve my conscience by counselling thee to be, in the first place, devout, to God: for this doubtless is our first duty, failing which all others can be of little advantage or grace, but which, duly observed, carries with it necessarily all other virtues. After God, thou shouldst love thy father and mother—thy mother, my sister, whom I regard as one of the best and most intelligent of women, and by whom I beg of thee to let thy own life be regulated. Allow not thyself to be led away by pleasures; shun, like the plague, the foolish familiarities thou seest between some men and women; harmless enough at first, but which by insidious degrees corrupt the heart, and thence lead it to negligence, and then into the vile slough of vice. Credit me, the greatest safeguard to female chastity is sobriety of demeanour. I beseech and direct that thou often call to mind the friendship which was betwixt us; but I do not wish thee to mourn for me too much—an injunction which, so far as it is in my power, I lay on all my friends, since it might seem that by

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

doing so they felt a jealousy of that blessed condition in which I am about to be placed by death. I assure thee, my dear, that if I had the option now of continuing in life or of completing the voyage on which I have set out, I should find it very hard to choose. Adieu, dear niece."

Mademoiselle d'Arsat, his stepdaughter, was next called. He said to her: "Daughter, you stand in no great need of advice from me, insomuch as you have a mother, whom I have ever found most sagacious, and entirely in conformity with my own opinions and wishes, and whom I have never found faulty; with such a preceptress, you cannot fail to be properly instructed. Do not account it singular that I, with no tie of blood to you, am interested in you; for, being the child of one who is so closely allied to me, I am necessarily concerned in what concerns you; and consequently the affairs of your brother, M. d'Arsat, have ever been watched by me with as much care as my own; nor perhaps will it be to your disadvantage that you were my step-daughter. You enjoy sufficient store of wealth and beauty; you are a lady of good family; it only remains for you to add to these possessions the cultivation of your mind, in which I exhort you not to fail. I do not think necessary to warn you against vice, a thing so odious in women, for I would not even suppose that you could harbour any inclination for it—nay, I believe that you hold the very name in abhorrence. Dear daughter, farewell."

All in the room were weeping and lamenting; but he held without interruption the thread of his discourse, which was pretty long. But when he had done, he directed us all to leave the room, except the women attendants, whom he styled his garrison. But first, calling to him my brother, M. de Beauregard, he said to him: "M. de Beauregard, you have my best thanks for all the care you have taken of me. I have now a thing which I am very anxious indeed to mention to you, and with your permission I will do so." As my brother gave him encouragement to proceed, he added: "I assure you that I never knew any man who engaged in the reformation of our Church with greater sincerity, earnestness, and single-heartedness than yourself. I consider that you were led to it by observing the vicious character of our prelates, which no doubt much requires setting in order, and by imperfections which time has brought into our Church. It is not my desire at present discourage you from this course, for I would have no one act in opposition to his conscience; but I wish, having regard to the good repute acquired by your family from its enduring concord—a family than which none can be dearer to me; a family, thank God! no member of which has ever been guilty of dishonour— in regard, further, to the will of your good father to whom you owe so much, and of your, uncle, I wish you to avoid extreme means; avoid harshness and violence: be reconciled with your relatives; do not act apart, but unite. You perceive what disasters our quarrels have brought upon this kingdom, and I anticipate still worse mischiefs; and in your goodness and wisdom, beware of involving your family in such broils; let it continue to enjoy its former reputation and happiness. M. de Beauregard, take what I say in good part, and as a proof of the friendship I feel for you. I postponed till now any communication with you on the subject, and perhaps the condition in which you see me address you, may cause my advice and opinion to carry greater authority." My brother expressed his thanks to him cordially.

On the Monday morning he had become so ill that he quite despaired of himself; and he said to me very pitifully: "Brother, do not you feel pain for all the pain I am suffering? Do you not perceive now that the help you give me has no other effect than that of lengthening my suffering?"

Shortly afterwards he fainted, and we all thought him gone; but by the application of vinegar and wine he rallied. But he soon sank, and when he heard us in lamentation, he murmured, "O God! who is it that teases me so? Why did you break the agreeable repose I was enjoying? I beg of you to leave me." And then, when he caught the sound of my voice, he continued: "And art thou, my brother, likewise unwilling to see me at peace? O, how thou robbest me of my repose!" After a while, he seemed to gain more strength, and called for wine, which he relished, and declared it to be the finest drink possible. I, in order to change the current of his thoughts, put in, "Surely not; water is the best." "Ah, yes," he returned, "doubtless so; —(Greek)——." He had now become, icy-cold at his extremities, even to his face; a deathly perspiration was upon him, and his pulse was scarcely perceptible.

This morning he confessed, but the priest had omitted to bring with him the necessary apparatus for celebrating Mass. On the Tuesday, however, M. de la Boetie summoned him to aid him, as he said, in discharging the last



office of a Christian. After the conclusion of Mass, he took the sacrament; when the priest was about to depart, he said to him: "Spiritual father, I implore you humbly, as well as those over whom you are set, to pray to the Almighty on my behalf; that, if it be decreed in heaven that I am now to end my life, He will take compassion on my soul, and pardon me my sins, which are manifold, it not being possible for so weak and poor a creature as I to obey completely the will of such a Master; or, if He think fit to keep me longer here, that it may please Him to release my present extreme anguish, and to direct my footsteps in the right path, that I may become a better man than I have been. He paused to recover breath a little; priest was about to go away, he called him back and proceeded: "I desire to say, besides, in your hearing this: I declare that I was christened and I have lived, and that so I wish to die, in the faith which Moses preached in Egypt; which afterwards the Patriarchs accepted and professed in Judaea; and which, in the course of time, has been transmitted to France and to us." He seemed desirous of adding something more, but he ended with a request to his uncle and me to send up prayers for him; "for those are," he said, "the best duties that Christians can fulfil one for another." In the course of talking, his shoulder was uncovered, and although a man-servant stood near him, he asked his uncle to re-adjust the clothes. Then, turning his eyes towards me, he said, "Ingenui est, cui multum debeas, ei plurimum velle debere."

M. de Belot called in the afternoon to see him, and M. de la Boetie, taking his hand, said to him: "I was on the point of discharging my debt, but my kind creditor has given me a little further time." A little while after, appearing to wake out of a sort of reverie, he uttered words which he had employed once or twice before in the course of his sickness: "Ah well, ah well, whenever the hour comes, I await it with pleasure and fortitude." And then, as they were holding his mouth open by force to give him a draught, he observed to M. de Belot: "An vivere tanti est?"

As the evening approached, he began perceptibly to sink; and while I supped, he sent for me to come, being no more than the shadow of a man, or, as he put it himself, 'non homo, sed species hominis'; and he said to me with the utmost difficulty: "My brother, my friend, please God I may realise the imaginations I have just enjoyed." Afterwards, having waited for some time while he remained silent, and by painful efforts was drawing long sighs (for his tongue at this point began to refuse its functions), I said, "What are they?" "Grand, grand!" he replied. "I have never yet failed," returned I, "to have the honour of hearing your conceptions and imaginations communicated to me; will you not now still let me enjoy them?" "I would indeed," he answered; "but, my brother, I am not able to do so; they are admirable, infinite, and unspeakable." We stopped short there, for he could not go on. A little before, indeed, he had shown a desire to speak to his wife, and had told her, with as gay a countenance as he could contrive to assume, that he had a story to tell her. And it seemed as if he was making an attempt to gain utterance; but, his strength failing him, he begged a little wine to resuscitate it. It was of no avail, for he fainted away suddenly, and was for some time insensible. Having become so near a neighbour to death, and hearing the sobs of Mademoiselle de la Boetie, he called her, and said to her thus: "My own likeness, you grieve yourself beforehand; will you not have pity on me? take courage. Assuredly, it costs me more than half the pain I endure, to see you suffer; and reasonably so, because the evils which we ourselves feel we do not actually ourselves suffer, but it certain sentient faculties which God plants in us, that feel them: whereas what we feel on account of others, we feel by consequence of a certain reasoning process which goes on within our minds. But I am going away"—That he said because his strength was failing him; and fearing that he had frightened his wife, he resumed, observing: "I am going to sleep. Good night, my wife; go thy way." This was the last farewell he took of her.

After she had left, "My brother," said he to me, "keep near me, if you please;" and then feeling the advance of death more pressing and more acute, or else the effect of some warm draught which they had made him swallow, his voice grew stronger and clearer, and he turned quite with violence in his bed, so that all began again to entertain the hope which we had lost only upon witnessing his extreme prostration.

At this stage he proceeded, among other things, to pray me again and again, in a most affectionate manner, to give him a place; so that I was apprehensive that his reason might be impaired, particularly when, on my pointing out to him that he was doing himself harm, and that these were not of the words of a rational man, he did not yield at

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

first, but redoubled his outcry, saying, "My brother, my brother! dost thou then refuse me a place?" insomuch that he constrained me to demonstrate to him that, as he breathed and spoke, and had his physical being, therefore he had his place. "Yes, yes," he responded, "I have; but it is not that which I need; and, besides, when all is said, I have no longer any existence." "God," I replied, "will grant you a better one soon." "Would it were now, my brother," was his answer. "It is now three days since I have been eager to take my departure."

Being in this extremity, he frequently called me, merely to satisfy him that I was at his side. At length, he composed himself a little to rest, which strengthened our hopes; so much so, indeed, that I left the room, and went to rejoice thereupon with Mademoiselle de la Boetie. But, an hour or so afterwards, he called me by name once or twice, and then with a long sigh expired at three o'clock on Wednesday morning, the 18th August 1563, having lived thirty-two years, nine months, and seventeen days."

### **II. To Monseigneur, Monseigneur de MONTAIGNE.**

[This letter is prefixed to Montaigne's translation of the "Natural Theology of Raymond de Sebonde, printed at Paris in 1569.]

In pursuance of the instructions which you gave me last year in your house at Montaigne, Monseigneur, I have put into a French dress, with my own hand, Raymond de Sebonde, that great Spanish theologian and philosopher; and I have divested him, so far as I could, of that rough bearing and barbaric appearance which you saw him wear at first; that, in my opinion, he is now qualified to present himself in the best company. It is perfectly possible that some fastidious persons will detect in the book some trace of Gascon parentage; but it will be so much the more to their discredit, that they allowed the task to devolve on one who is quite a novice in these things. It is only right, Monseigneur, that the work should come before the world under your auspices, since whatever emendations and polish it may have received, are owing to you. Still I see well that, if you think proper to balance accounts with the author, you will find yourself much his debtor; for against his excellent and religious discourses, his lofty and, so to speak, divine conceptions, you will find that you will have to set nothing but words and phraseology; a sort of merchandise so ordinary and commonplace, that whoever has the most of it, peradventure is the worst off.

Monseigneur, I pray God to grant you a very long and happy life. From Paris, this 18th of June 1568. Your most humble and most obedient son,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

### **III. To Monsieur, Monsieur de LANSAC,**

—[This letter appears to belong to 1570.]—  
Knight of the King's Order, Privy Councillor, Sub-controller of  
his Finance, and Captain of the Cent Gardes of his Household.

MONSIEUR,—I send you the OEconomics of Xenophon, put into French by the late M. de la Boetie,—[Printed at Paris, 8vo, 1571, and reissued, with the addition of some notes, in 1572, with a fresh title-page.]—a present which appears to me to be appropriate, as well because it is the work of a gentleman of mark,—[Meaning Xenophon.]—a man illustrious in war and peace, as because it has taken its second shape from a personage whom I know to have been held by you in affectionate regard during his life. This will be an inducement to you to continue to cherish towards his memory, your good opinion and goodwill. And to be bold with you, Monsieur, do not fear to increase these sentiments somewhat; for, as you had knowledge of his high qualities only in his public capacity, it rests with me to assure you how many endowments he possessed beyond your personal experience of him. He did me the honour, while he lived, and I count it amongst the most fortunate circumstances in my own career, to have with me a friendship so close and so intricately knit, that no movement, impulse, thought, of his mind was kept from me, and if I have not formed a right judgment of him, I must suppose it to be from my own

want of scope. Indeed, without exaggeration, he was so nearly a prodigy, that I am afraid of not being credited when I speak of him, even though I should keep much within the mark of my own actual knowledge. And for this time, Monsieur, I shall content myself with praying you, for the honour and respect we owe to truth, to testify and believe that our Guienne never beheld his peer among the men of his vocation. Under the hope, therefore, that you will pay him his just due, and in order to refresh him in your memory, I present you this book, which will answer for me that, were it not for the insufficiency of my power, I would offer you as willingly something of my own, as an acknowledgment of the obligations I owe to you, and of the ancient favour and friendship which you have borne towards the members of our house. But, Monsieur, in default of better coin, I offer you in payment the assurance of my desire to do you humble service.

Monsieur, I pray God to have you in His keeping. Your obedient servant, MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

#### **IV. To Monsieur, Monsieur de MESMES, Lord of Roissy and Malassize, Privy Councillor to the King.**

MONSIEUR,—It is one of the most conspicuous follies committed by men, to employ the strength of their understanding in overturning and destroying those opinions which are commonly received among us, and which afford us satisfaction and content; for while everything beneath heaven employs the ways and means placed at its disposal by nature for the advancement and commodity of its being, these, in order to appear of a more sprightly and enlightened wit, not accepting anything which has not been tried and balanced a thousand times with the most subtle reasoning, sacrifice their peace of mind to doubt, uneasiness, and feverish excitement. It is not without reason that childhood and simplicity have been recommended by holy writ itself. For my part, I prefer to be quiet rather than clever: give me content, even if I am not to be so wide in my range. This is the reason, Monsieur, why, although persons of an ingenious turn laugh at our care as to what will happen after our own time, for instance, to our souls, which, lodged elsewhere, will lose all consciousness of what goes on here below, yet I consider it to be a great consolation for the frailty and brevity of life, to reflect that we have the power of prolonging it by reputation and fame; and I embrace very readily this pleasant and favourable notion original with our being, without inquiring too critically how or why it is. Inasmuch that having loved, beyond everything, the late M. de la Boetie, the greatest man, in my judgment, of our age, I should think myself very negligent of my duty if I failed, to the utmost of my power, to prevent such a name as his, and a memory so richly meriting remembrance, from falling into oblivion; and if I did not use my best endeavour to keep them fresh. I believe that he feels something of what I do on his behalf, and that my services touch and rejoice him. In fact, he lives in my heart so vividly and so wholly, that I am loath to believe him committed to the dull ground, or altogether cast off from communication with us. Therefore, Monsieur, since every new light I can shed on him and his name, is so much added to his second period of existence, and, moreover, since his name is ennobled and honoured by the place which receives it, it falls to me not only to extend it as widely as I can, but to confide it to the keeping of persons of honour and virtue; among whom you hold such a rank, that, to afford you the opportunity of receiving this new guest, and giving him good entertainment, I decided on presenting to you this little work, not for any profit you are likely to derive from it, being well aware that you do not need to have Plutarch and his companions interpreted to you—but it is possible that Madame de Roissy, reading in it the order of her household management and of your happy accord painted to the life, will be pleased to see how her own natural inclination has not only reached but surpassed the theories of the wisest philosophers, regarding the duties and laws of the wedded state. And, at all events, it will be always an honour to me, to be able to do anything which shall be for the pleasure of you and yours, on account of the obligation under which I lie to serve you.

Monsieur, I pray God to grant you a long and happy life. From Montaigne, this 30th April 1570. Your humble servant, MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

## V. To Monsieur, Monsieur de L'HOSPITAL, Chancellor of France

MONSEIGNEUR,—I am of the opinion that persons such as you, to whom fortune and reason have committed the charge of public affairs, are not more inquisitive in any point than in ascertaining the character of those in office under you; for no society is so poorly furnished, but that, if a proper distribution of authority be used, it has persons sufficient for the discharge of all official duties; and when this is the case, nothing is wanting to make a State perfect in its constitution. Now, in proportion as this is so much to be desired, so it is the more difficult of accomplishment, since you cannot have eyes to embrace a multitude so large and so widely extended, nor to see to the bottom of hearts, in order that you may discover intentions and consciences, matters principally to be considered; so that there has never been any commonwealth so well organised, in which we might not detect often enough defect in such a department or such a choice; and in those systems, where ignorance and malice, favouritism, intrigue, and violence govern, if any selection happens to be made on the ground of merit and regularity, we may doubtless thank Fortune, which, in its capricious movements, has for once taken the path of reason.

This consideration, Monseigneur, often consoled me, when I beheld M. Etienne de la Boetie, one of the fittest men for high office in France, pass his whole life without employment and notice, by his domestic hearth, to the singular detriment of the public; for, so far as he was concerned, I may assure you, Monseigneur, that he was so rich in those treasures which defy fortune, that never was man more satisfied or content. I know, indeed, that he was raised to the dignities connected with his neighbourhood—dignities accounted considerable; and I know also, that no one ever acquitted himself better of them; and when he died at the age of thirty-two, he enjoyed a reputation in that way beyond all who had preceded him.

But for all that, it is no reason that a man should be left a common soldier, who deserves to become a captain; nor to assign mean functions to those who are perfectly equal to the highest. In truth, his powers were badly economised and too sparingly employed; insomuch that, over and above his actual work, there was abundant capacity lying idle which might have been called into service, both to the public advantage and his own private glory.

Therefore, Monseigneur, since he was so indifferent to his own fame (for virtue and ambition, unfortunately, seldom lodge together), and since he lived in an age when others were too dull or too jealous to witness to his character, I have it marvellously at heart that his memory, at all events, to which I owe the good offices of a friend, should enjoy the recompense of his brave life; and that it should survive in the good report of men of honour and virtue. On this account, sir, I have been desirous to bring to light, and present to you, such few Latin verses as he left behind. Different from the builder, who places the most attractive, portion of his house towards the street, and to the draper, who displays in his window his best goods, that which was most precious in my friend, the juice and marrow of his genius, departed with him, and there have remained to us but the bark and the leaves.

The exactly regulated movements of his mind, his piety, his virtue, his justice, his vivacity, the solidity and soundness of his judgment, the loftiness of his ideas, raised so far above the common level, his learning, the grace which accompanied his most ordinary actions, the tender affection he had for his miserable country, and his supreme and sworn detestation of all vice, but principally of that villainous traffic which disguises itself under the honourable name of justice, should certainly impress all well-disposed persons with a singular love towards him, and an extraordinary regret for his loss. But, sir, I am unable to do justice to all these qualities; and of the fruit of his own studies it had not entered into his mind to leave any proof to posterity; all that remains, is the little which, as a pastime, he did at intervals.

However this may be, I beg you, sir, to receive it kindly; and as our judgment of great things is many times formed from lesser things, and as even the recreations of illustrious men carry with them, to intelligent observers,

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

some honourable traits of their origin, I would have you form from this, some knowledge of him, and hence lovingly cherish his name and his memory. In this, sir, you will only reciprocate the high opinion which he had of your virtue, and realise what he infinitely desired in his lifetime; for there was no one in the world in whose acquaintance and friendship he would have been so happy to see himself established, as in your own. But if any man is offended by the freedom which I use with the belongings of another, I can tell him that nothing which has been written or been laid down, even in the schools of philosophy, respecting the sacred duties and rights of friendship, could give an adequate idea of the relations which subsisted between this personage and myself.

Moreover, sir, this slender gift, to make two throws of one stone at the same time, may likewise serve, if you please, to testify the honour and respect which I entertain for your ability and high qualities; for as to those gifts which are adventitious and accidental, it is not to my taste to take them into account.

Sir, I pray God to grant you a very happy and a very long life. From Montaigne, this 30th of April 1570.—Your humble and obedient servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

To Monsieur, Monsieur de Folx, Privy Councillor, and Ambassador of His Majesty to the Signory of Venice.—[Printed before the 'Vers Francois' of Etienne de la Boetie, 8vo, Paris, 1572.]

SIR,—Being on the point of commending to you and to posterity the memory of the late Etienne de la Boetie, as well for his extreme virtue as for the singular affection which he bore to me, it struck me as an indiscretion very serious in its results, and meriting some coercion from our laws, the practice which often prevails of robbing virtue of glory, its faithful associate, in order to confer it, in accordance with our private interests and without discrimination, on the first comer; seeing that our two principal guiding reins are reward and punishment, which only touch us properly, and as men, through the medium of honour and dishonour, forasmuch as these penetrate the mind, and come home to our most intimate feelings: just where animals themselves are susceptible, more or less, to all other kinds of recompense and corporal chastisement. Moreover, it is well to notice that the custom of praising virtue, even in those who are no longer with us, impalpable as it is to them, serves as a stimulant to the living to imitate their example; just as capital sentences are carried out by the law, more for the sake of warning to others, than in relation to those who suffer. Now, commendation and its opposite being analogous as regards effects, we cannot easily deny the fact, that although the law prohibits one man from slandering the reputation of another, it does not prevent us from bestowing reputation without cause. This pernicious licence in respect to the distribution of praise, has formerly been confined in its area of operations; and it may be the reason why poetry once lost favour with the more judicious. However this may be, it cannot be concealed that the vice of falsehood is one very unbecoming in gentleman, let it assume what guise it will.

As for that personage of whom I am speaking to you, sir he leads me far away indeed from this kind of language; for the danger in his case is not, lest I should lend him anything, but that I might take something from him; and it is his ill-fortune that, while he has supplied me, so far as ever a man could, with just and obvious opportunities for commendation, I find myself unable and unqualified to render it to him— I, who am his debtor for so many vivid communications, and who alone have it in my power to answer for a million of accomplishments, perfections, and virtues, latent (thanks to his unkind stars) in so noble a soul. For the nature of things having (I know not how) permitted that truth, fair and acceptable—as it may be of itself, is only embraced where there are arts of persuasion, to insinuate it into our minds, I see myself so wanting, both in authority to support my simple testimony, and in the eloquence requisite for lending it value and weight, that I was on the eve of relinquishing the task, having nothing of his which would enable me to exhibit to the world a proof of his genius and knowledge.

In truth, sir, having been overtaken by his fate in the flower of his age, and in the full enjoyment of the most vigorous health, it had been his design to publish some day works which would have demonstrated to posterity what sort of a man he was; and, peradventure, he was indifferent enough to fame, having formed such a plan in

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

his head, to proceed no further in it. But I have come to the conclusion, that it was far more excusable in him to bury with him all his rare endowments, than it would be on my part to bury also with me the knowledge of them which I had acquired from him; and, therefore, having collected with care all the remains which I found scattered here and there among his papers, I intend to distribute them so as to recommend his memory to as many persons as possible, selecting the most suitable and worthy of my acquaintance, and those whose testimony might do him greatest honour: such as you, sir, who may very possibly have had some knowledge of him during his life, but assuredly too slight to discover the perfect extent of his worth. Posterity may credit me, if it chooses, when I swear upon my conscience, that I knew and saw him to be such as, all things considered, I could neither desire nor imagine a genius surpassing his.

I beg you very humbly, sir, not only to take his name under your general protection, but also these ten or twelve French stanzas, which lay themselves, as of necessity, under shadow of your patronage. For I will not disguise from you, that their publication was deferred, upon the appearance of his other writings, under the pretext (as it was alleged yonder at Paris) that they were too crude to come to light. You will judge, sir, how much truth there is in this; and since it is thought that hereabout nothing can be produced in our own dialect but what is barbarous and unpolished, it falls to you, who, besides your rank as the first house in Guienne, indeed down from your ancestors, possess every other sort of qualification, to establish, not merely by your example, but by your authoritative testimony, that such is not always the case: the more so that, though 'tis more natural with the Gascons to act than talk, yet sometimes they employ the tongue more than the arm, and wit in place of valour.

For my own part; sir, it is not in my way to judge of such matters; but I have heard persons who are supposed to understand them, say that these stanzas are not only worthy to be presented in the market-place, but, independently of that, as regards beauty and wealth of invention, they are full of marrow and matter as any compositions of the kind, which have appeared in our language. Naturally each workman feels himself more strong in some special part his art, and those are to be regarded as most fortunate, who lay hands on the noblest, for all the parts essential to the construction of any whole are not equally precious. We find elsewhere, perhaps, greater delicacy phrase, greater softness and harmony of language; but imaginative grace, and in the store of pointed wit, I do not think he has been surpassed; and we should take the account that he made these things neither his occupation nor his study, and that he scarcely took a pen in his hand more than once a year, as is shown by the very slender quantity of his remains. For you see here, sir, green wood and dry, without any sort of selection, all that has come into my possession; insomuch that there are among the rest efforts even of his boyhood. In point of fact, he seems to have written them merely to show that he was capable of dealing with all subjects: for otherwise, thousands of times, in the course of ordinary conversation, I have heard things drop from him infinitely more worthy of being admired, infinitely more worthy of being preserved.

Such, sir, is what justice and affection, forming in this instance a rare conjunction, oblige me to say of this great and good man; and if I have at all offended by the freedom which I have taken in addressing myself to you on such a subject at such a length, be pleased to recollect that the principal result of greatness and eminence is to lay one open to importunate appeals on behalf of the rest of the world. Herewith, after desiring you to accept my affectionate devotion to your service, I beseech God to vouchsafe you, sir, a fortunate and prolonged life. From Montaigne, this 1st of September 1570.—Your obedient servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

To Mademoiselle de MONTAIGNE, my Wife.—[Printed as a preface to the "Consolation of Plutarch to his Wife," pub. fished by Montaigne, with several other tracts by La Boetie, about 1571.]

MY WIFE,—You understand well that it is not proper for a man of the world, according to the rules of this our time, to continue to court and caress you; for they say that a sensible person may take a wife indeed, but that to espouse her is to act like a fool. Let them talk; I adhere for my part the custom of the good old days; I also wear my hair as it used to be then; and, in truth, novelty costs this poor country up to the present moment so dear (and I

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

do not know whether we have reached the highest pitch yet), that everywhere and in everything I renounce the fashion. Let us live, my wife, you and I, in the old French method. Now, you may recollect that the late M. de la Boetie, my brother and inseparable companion, gave me, on his death-bed, all his books and papers, which have remained ever since the most precious part of my effects. I do not wish to keep them niggardly to myself alone, nor do I deserve to have the exclusive use of them ; so that I have resolved to communicate them to my friends; and because I have none, I believe, more particularly intimate you, I send you the Consolatory Letter written by Plutarch to his Wife, translated by him into French; regretting much that fortune has made it so suitable a present you, and that, having had but one child, and that a daughter, long looked for, after four years of your married life it was your lot to lose her in the second year of her age. But I leave to Plutarch the duty of comforting you, acquainting you with your duty herein, begging you to put your faith in him for my sake; for he will reveal to you my own ideas, and will express the matter far better than I should myself. Hereupon, my wife, I commend myself very heartily to your good will, and pray God to have you in His keeping. From Paris, this 10th September 1570.—Your good husband,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE.

### VIII. To Monsieur DUPUY,—

[This is probably the Claude Dupuy, born at Paris in 1545, and one of the fourteen judges sent into Guienne after the treaty of Fleix in 1580. It was perhaps under these circumstances that Montaigne addressed to him the present letter.]—the King's Councillor in his Court and Parliament of Paris.

MONSIEUR,— The business of the Sieur de Verres, a prisoner, who is extremely well known to me, deserves, in the arrival at a decision, the exercise of the clemency natural to you, if, in the public interest, you can fairly call it into play. He has done a thing not only excusable, according to the military laws of this age, but necessary and (as we are of opinion) commendable. He committed the act, without doubt, unwillingly and under pressure; there is no other passage of his life which is open to reproach. I beseech you, sir, to lend the matter your attentive consideration; you will find the character of it as I represent it to you. He is persecuted on this crime, in a way which is far worse than the offence itself. If it is likely to be of use to him, I desire to inform you that he is a man brought up in my house, related to several respectable families, and a person who, having led an honourable life, is my particular friend. By saving him you lay me under an extreme obligation. I beg you very humbly to regard him as recommended by me, and, after kissing your hands, I pray God, sir, to grant you a long and happy life. From Castera, this 23 d of April [1580]. Your affectionate servant, MONTAIGNE.

IX.

To the Jurats of Bordeaux.—[Published from the original among the archives of the town of Bordeaux, M. Gustave Brunet in the Bulletin du Bibliophile, July 1839.]

GENTLEMEN,—I trust that the journey of Monsieur de Cursol will be of advantage to the town. Having in hand a case so just and so favourable, you did all in your power to put the business in good trim; and matters being so well situated, I beg you to excuse my absence for some little time longer, and I will abridge my stay so far as the pressure of my affairs permits. I hope that the delay will be short; however, you will keep me, if you please, in your good grace, and will command me, if the occasion shall arise, in employing me in the public service and in yours. Monsieur de Cursol has also written to me and apprised me of his journey. I humbly commend myself to you, and pray God, gentlemen, to grant you long and happy life. From Montaigne, this 21st of May 1582. Your humble brother and servant, MONTAIGNE.

X.

VIII. To Monsieur DUPUY,—

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

To the same.—[The original is among the archives of Toulouse.]

GENTLEMEN,—I have taken my fair share of the satisfaction which you announce to me as feeling at the good despatch of your business, as reported to you by your deputies, and I regard it as a favourable sign that you have made such an auspicious commencement of the year. I hope to join you at the earliest convenient opportunity. I recommend myself very humbly to your gracious consideration, and pray God to grant you, gentlemen, a happy and long life. From Montaigne, this 8th February 1585. Your humble brother and servant, MONTAIGNE.

XI.

To the same.

GENTLEMEN,—I have here received news of you from M. le Marechal. I will not spare either my life or anything else for your service, and will leave it to your judgment whether the assistance I might be able to render by my presence at the forthcoming election, would be worth the risk I should run by going into the town, seeing the bad state it is in, —[This refers to the plague then raging, and which carried off 14,000 persons at Bordeaux.]— particularly for people coming away from so fine an air as this is where I am. I will draw as near to you on Wednesday as I can, that is, to Feuillas, if the malady has not reached that place, where, as I write to M. de la Molte, I shall be very pleased to have the honour of seeing one of you to take your directions, and relieve myself of the credentials which M. le Marechal will give me for you all: commending myself hereupon humbly to your good grace, and praying God to grant you, gentlemen, long and happy life. At Libourne, this 30th of July 1585. Your humble servant and brother, MONTAIGNE.

## XII.

—["According to Dr. Payen, this letter belongs to 1588. Its authenticity has been called in question; but wrongly, in our opinion. See 'Documents inedits', 1847, p. 12.—Note in 'Essais', ed. Paris, 1854, iv. 381. It does not appear to whom the letter was addressed.]

MONSEIGNEUR,—You have heard of our baggage being taken from us under our eyes in the forest of Villebois: then, after a good deal of discussion and delay, of the capture being pronounced illegal by the Prince. We dared not, however, proceed on our way, from an uncertainty as to the safety of our persons, which should have been clearly expressed on our passports. The League has done this, M. de Barrant and M. de la Rochefocault; the storm has burst on me, who had my money in my box. I have recovered none of it, and most of my papers and cash—[The French word is *hardes*, which St. John renders things. But compare Chambers's "Domestic Annals of Scotland," 2d ed. i. 48.]—remain in their possession. I have not seen the Prince. Fifty were lost . . . as for the Count of Thorigny, he lost some ver plate and a few articles of clothing. He diverged from his route to pay a visit to the mourning ladies at Montresor, where are the remains of his two brothers and his grandmother, and came to us again in this town, whence we shall resume our journey shortly. The journey to Normandy is postponed. The King has despatched MM. De Bellieure and de la Guiche to M. de Guise to summon him to court; we shall be there on Thursday.

From Orleans, this 16th of February, in the morning [1588–9?].—Your very humble servant,  
MONTAIGNE.

## XIII. To Mademoiselle PAULMIER.

—[This letter, at the time of the publication of the variorum edition of 1854, appears to have been in private hands. See vol. iv. p. 382.]

XII.



## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

MADemoiselle,—My friends know that, from the first moment of our acquaintance, I have destined a copy of my book for you; for I feel that you have done it much honour. The courtesy of M. Paulmier would deprive me of the pleasure of giving it to you now, for he has obliged me since a great deal beyond the worth of my book. You will accept it then, if you please, as having been yours before I owed it to you, and will confer on me the favour of loving it, whether for its own sake or for mine; and I will keep my debt to M. Paulmier undischarged, that I may requite him, if I have at some other time the means of serving him.

### XIV. To the KING, HENRY IV.

—[The original is in the French national library, in the Dupuy collection. It was first discovered by M. Achille Jubinal, who printed it with a facsimile of the entire autograph, in 1850. St. John gives the date wrongly as the 1st January 1590.]

SIRE, It is to be above the weight and crowd of your great and important affairs, to know, as you do, how to lend yourself, and attend to small matters in their turn, according to the duty of your royal dignity, which exposes you at all times to every description and degree of person and employment. Yet, that your Majesty should have deigned to consider my letter, and direct a reply to be made to it, I prefer to owe, less to your strong understanding, than to your kindness of heart. I have always looked forward to your enjoyment of your present fortune, and you may recollect that, even when I had to make confession of it to my cure, I viewed your successes with satisfaction: now, with the greater propriety and freedom, I embrace them affectionately. They serve you where you are as positive matters of fact; but they serve us here no less by the fame which they diffuse: the echo carries as much weight as the blow. We should not be able to derive from the justice of your cause such powerful arguments for the maintenance and reduction of your subjects, as we do from the reports of the success of your undertaking; and then I have to assure your Majesty, that the recent changes to your advantage, which you observe hereabouts, the prosperous issue of your proceedings at Dieppe, have opportunely seconded the honest zeal and marvellous prudence of M. the Marshal de Matignon, from whom I flatter myself that you do not receive day by day accounts of such good and signal services without remembering my assurances and expectations. I look to the next summer, not only for fruits which we may eat, but for those to grow out of our common tranquillity, and that it will pass over our heads with the same even tenor of happiness, dissipating, like its predecessors, all the fine promises with which your adversaries sustain the spirits of their followers. The popular inclinations resemble a tidal wave; if the current once commences in your favour, it will go on of its own force to the end. I could have desired much that the private gain of the soldiers of your army, and the necessity for satisfying them, had not deprived you, especially in this principal town, of the glorious credit of treating your mutinous subjects, in the midst of victory, with greater clemency than their own protectors, and that, as distinguished from a passing and usurped repute, you could have shown them to be really your own, by the exercise of a protection truly paternal and royal. In the conduct of such affairs as you have in hand, men are obliged to have recourse to unusual expedients. It is always seen that they are surmounted by their magnitude and difficulty; it not being found easy to complete the conquest by arms and force, the end has been accomplished by clemency and generosity, excellent lures to draw men particularly towards the just and legitimate side. If there is to be severity and punishment, let it be deferred till success has been assured. A great conqueror of past times boasts that he gave his enemies as great an inducement to love him, as his friends. And here we feel already some effect of the favourable impression produced upon our rebellious towns by the contrast between their rude treatment, and that of those which are loyal to you. Desiring your Majesty a happiness more tangible and less hazardous, and that you may be beloved rather than feared by your people, and believing that your welfare and theirs are of necessity knit together, I rejoice to think that the progress which you make is one towards more practicable conditions of peace, as well as towards victory!

Sire, your letter of the last of November came to my hand only just now, when the time which it pleased you to name for meeting you at Tours had already passed. I take it as a singular favour that you should have deigned to desire a visit from so useless a person, but one who is wholly yours, and more so even by affection than from

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

duty. You have acted very commendably in adapting yourself, in the matter of external forms, to your new fortunes; but the preservation of your old affability and frankness in private intercourse is entitled to an equal share of praise. You have condescended to take thought for my age, no less than for the desire which I have to see you, where you may be at rest from these laborious agitations. Will not that be soon at Paris, Sire? and may nothing prevent me from presenting myself there!—Your very humble and very obedient servant and subject, MONTAIGNE.

From Montaigne, this 18th of January [1590].

### **XV. To the same.**

—[ This letter is also in the national collection, among the Dupuy papers. It was first printed in the "Journal de l'Instruction Publique," 4th November 1846.]

SIRE,—The letter which it pleased your majesty to write to me on the 20th of July, was not delivered to me till this morning, and found me laid up with a very violent tertian ague, a complaint very common in this part of the country during the last month. Sire, I consider myself greatly honoured by the receipt of your commands, and I have not omitted to communicate to M. the Marshal de Matignon three times most emphatically my intention and obligation to proceed to him, and even so far as to indicate the route by which I proposed to join him secretly, if he thought proper. Having received no answer, I consider that he has weighed the difficulty and risk of the journey to me. Sire, your Majesty dill do me the favour to believe, if you please, that I shall never complain of the expense on occasions where I should not hesitate to devote my life. I have never derived any substantial benefit whatever from the bounty of kings, which I have neither sought nor merited; nor have I had any recompense for the services which I have performed for them: whereof your majesty is in part aware. What I have done for your predecessors I shall do still more readily for you. I am as rich, Sire, as I desire to be. When I shall have exhausted my purse in attendance on your Majesty at Paris, I will take the liberty to tell you, and then, if you should regard me as worthy of being retained any longer in your suite, you will find me more modest in my claims upon you than the humblest of your officers.

Sire, I pray God for your prosperity and health. Your very humble and very obedient servant and subject, MONTAIGNE.

From Montaigne, this 2d of September [1590].

### **XVI. To the Governor of Guienne.**

MONSEIGNEUR,—I have received this morning your letter, which I have communicated to M. de Gourgues, and we have dined together at the house of M.[the mayor] of Bourdeaux. As to the inconvenience of transporting the money named in your memorandum, you see how difficult a thing it is to provide for; but you may be sure that we shall keep as close a watch over it as possible. I used every exertion to discover the man of whom you spoke. He has not been here; and M. de Bordeaux has shown me a letter in which he mentions that he could not come to see the Director of Bordeaux, as he intended, having been informed that you mistrust him. The letter is of the day before yesterday. If I could have found him, I might perhaps have pursued the gentler course, being uncertain of your views; but I entreat you nevertheless to feel no manner of doubt that I refuse to carry out any wishes of yours, and that, where your commands are concerned, I know no distinction of person or matter. I hope that you have in Guienne many as well affected to you as I am. They report that the Nantes galleys are advancing towards Brouage. M. the Marshal de Biron has not yet left. Those who were charged to convey the message to M. d'Usee say that they cannot find him; and I believe that, if he has been here, he is so no longer. We keep a vigilant eye on our gates and guards, and we look after them a little more attentively in your absence, which makes me apprehensive, not merely on account of the preservation of the town, but likewise for your oven sake, knowing

XV. To the same.

that the enemies of the king feel how necessary you are to his service, and how ill we should prosper without you. I am afraid that, in the part where you are, you will be overtaken by so many affairs requiring your attention on every side, that it will take you a long time and involve great difficulty before you have disposed of everything. If there is any important news, I will despatch an express at once, and you may conclude that nothing is stirring if you do not hear from me: at the same time begging you to bear in mind that movements of this kind are wont to be so sudden and unexpected that, if they occur, they will grasp me by the throat, before they say a word. I will do what I can to collect news, and for this purpose I will make a point of visiting and seeing men of every shade of opinion. Down to the present time nothing is stirring. M. de Londel has seen me this morning, and we have been arranging for some advances for the place, where I shall go to-morrow morning. Since I began this letter, I have learnt from Chartreux that two gentlemen, describing themselves as in the service of M. de Guise, and coming from Agen, have passed near Chartreux; but I was not able to ascertain which road they have taken. They are expecting you at Agen. The Sieur de Mauvesin came as far as Canteloup, and thence returned, having got some intelligence. I am in search of one Captain Rous, to whom . . . wrote, trying to draw him into his cause by all sorts of promises. The rumour of the two Nantes galleys ready to descend on Brouage is confirmed as certain; they carry two companies of foot. M. de Mercure is at Nantes. The Sieur de la Courbe said to M. the President Nesmond that M. d'Elbeuf is on this side of Angiers, and lodges with his father. He is drawing towards Lower Poitou with 4000 foot and 400 or 500 horse, having been reinforced by the troops of M. de Brissac and others, and M. de Mercure is to join him. The report goes also that M. du Maine is about to take the command of all the forces they have collected in Auvergne, and that he will cross Le Foret to advance on Rouergue and us, that is to say, on the King of Navarre, against whom all this is being directed. M. de Lansac is at Bourg, and has two war vessels, which remain in attendance on him. His functions are naval. I tell you what I learn, and mix up together the more or less probable hearsay of the town with actual matter of fact, that you may be in possession of everything. I beg you most humbly to return directly affairs may allow you to do so, and assure you that, meanwhile, we shall not spare our labour, or (if that were necessary) our life, to maintain the king's authority throughout. Monseigneur, I kiss your hands very respectfully, and pray God to have you in His keeping. From Bordeaux, Wednesday night, 22d May (1590–91).—Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE.

I have seen no one from the king of Navarre; they say that M. de Biron has seen him.

### **THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.—[Omitted by Cotton.]**

READER, thou hast here an honest book; it doth at the outset forewarn thee that, in contriving the same, I have proposed to myself no other than a domestic and private end: I have had no consideration at all either to thy service or to my glory. My powers are not capable of any such design. I have dedicated it to the particular commodity of my kinsfolk and friends, so that, having lost me (which they must do shortly), they may therein recover some traits of my conditions and humours, and by that means preserve more whole, and more life-like, the knowledge they had of me. Had my intention been to seek the world's favour, I should surely have adorned myself with borrowed beauties: I desire therein to be viewed as I appear in mine own genuine, simple, and ordinary manner, without study and artifice: for it is myself I paint. My defects are therein to be read to the life, and any imperfections and my natural form, so far as public reverence hath permitted me. If I had lived among those nations, which (they say) yet dwell under the sweet liberty of nature's primitive laws, I assure thee I would most willingly have painted myself quite fully and quite naked. Thus, reader, myself am the matter of my book: there's no reason thou shouldst employ thy leisure about so frivolous and vain a subject. Therefore farewell.

From Montaigne, the 12th June 1580—[So in the edition of 1595; the edition of 1588 has 12th June 1588]

From Montaigne, the 1st March 1580.

—[See Bonnefon, *Montaigne*, 1893, p. 254. The book had been

## The Essays of Montaigne, V1

licensed for the press on the 9th May previous. The edition of 1588  
has 12th June 1588;]-