

# **The Essays of Montaigne, V14**

Michel de Montaigne

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Translated by Charles Cotton,  
Edited by William Carew Hazlitt, 1877

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## BOOK THE THIRD

### CHAPTER I. OF PROFIT AND HONESTY

No man is free from speaking foolish things; but the worst on't is, when a man labours to play the fool:

"Nae iste magno conatu magnas nugas dixerit."

["Truly he, with a great effort will shortly say a mighty trifle."

—Terence, Heaut., act iii., s. 4.]

This does not concern me; mine slip from me with as little care as they are of little value, and 'tis the better for them. I would presently part with them for what they are worth, and neither buy nor sell them, but as they weigh. I speak on paper, as I do to the first person I meet; and that this is true, observe what follows.

To whom ought not treachery to be hateful, when Tiberius refused it in a thing of so great importance to him? He had word sent him from Germany that if he thought fit, they would rid him of Arminius by poison: this was the most potent enemy the Romans had, who had defeated them so ignominiously under Varus, and who alone prevented their aggrandisement in those parts.

He returned answer, "that the people of Rome were wont to revenge themselves of their enemies by open ways, and with their swords in their hands, and not clandestinely and by fraud": wherein he quitted the profitable for the honest. You will tell me that he was a braggadocio; I believe so too: and 'tis no great miracle in men of his profession. But the acknowledgment of virtue is not less valid in the mouth of him who hates it, forasmuch as truth forces it from him, and if he will not inwardly receive it, he at least puts it on for a decoration.

Our outward and inward structure is full of imperfection; but there is nothing useless in nature, not even inutility itself; nothing has insinuated itself into this universe that has not therein some fit and proper place. Our being is cemented with sickly qualities: ambition, jealousy, envy, revenge, superstition, and despair have so natural a possession in us, that its image is discerned in beasts; nay, and cruelty, so unnatural a vice; for even in the midst of compassion we feel within, I know not what tart-sweet titillation of ill-natured pleasure in seeing others suffer; and the children feel it:

"Suave mari magno, turbantibus aequora ventis,

E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem:"

[It is sweet, when the winds disturb the waters of the vast sea, to

witness from land the peril of other persons."—Lucretius, ii. I.]

of the seeds of which qualities, whoever should divest man, would destroy the fundamental conditions of human life. Likewise, in all governments there are necessary offices, not only abject, but vicious also. Vices there help to make up the seam in our piecing, as poisons are useful for the conservation of health. If they become excusable because they are of use to us, and that the common necessity covers their true qualities, we are to resign this part to the strongest and boldest citizens, who sacrifice their honour and conscience, as others of old sacrificed their lives, for the good of their country: we, who are weaker, take upon us parts both that are more easy and less hazardous. The public weal requires that men should betray, and lie, and massacre; let us leave this commission to men who are more obedient and more supple.

In earnest, I have often been troubled to see judges, by fraud and false hopes of favour or pardon, allure a criminal to confess his fact, and therein to make use of cozenage and impudence. It would become justice, and Plato himself, who countenances this manner of proceeding, to furnish me with other means more suitable to my own liking: this is a malicious kind of justice, and I look upon it as no less wounded by itself than by others. I said not long since to some company in discourse, that I should hardly be drawn to betray my prince for a particular man, who should be much ashamed to betray any particular man for my prince; and I do not only hate deceiving myself, but that any one should deceive through me; I will neither afford matter nor occasion to any such thing.

In the little I have had to mediate betwixt our princes —[Between the King of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV., and the Duc de Guise. See De Thou, *De Vita Sua*, iii. 9.]— in the divisions and subdivisions by which we are at this time torn to pieces, I have been very careful that they should neither be deceived in me nor deceive others by me. People of that kind of trading are very reserved, and pretend to be the most moderate imaginable and nearest to the opinions of those with whom they have to do; I expose myself in my stiff opinion, and after a method the most my own; a tender negotiator, a novice, who had rather fail in the affair than be wanting to myself. And yet it has been hitherto with so good luck (for fortune has doubtless the best share in it), that few things have passed from hand to hand with less suspicion or more favour and privacy. I have a free and open way that easily insinuates itself and obtains belief with those with whom I am to deal at the first meeting. Sincerity and pure truth, in what age soever, pass for current; and besides, the liberty and freedom of a man who treats without any interest of his own is never hateful or suspected, and he may very well make use of the answer of Hyperides to the Athenians, who complained of his blunt way of speaking: "Messieurs, do not consider whether or no I am free, but whether I am so without a bribe, or without any advantage to my own affairs." My liberty of speaking has also easily cleared me from all suspicion of dissembling by its vehemency, leaving nothing unsaid, how home and bitter soever (so that I could have said no worse behind their backs), and in that it carried along with it a manifest show of simplicity and indifference. I pretend to no other fruit by acting than to act, and add to it no long arguments or propositions; every action plays its own game, win if it can.

As to the rest, I am not swayed by any passion, either of love or hatred, towards the great, nor has my will captivated either by particular injury or obligation. I look upon our kings with an affection simply loyal and respectful, neither prompted nor restrained by any private interest, and I love myself for it. Nor does the general and just cause attract me otherwise than with moderation, and without heat. I am not subject to those penetrating and close compacts and engagements. Anger and hatred are beyond the duty of justice; and are passions only useful to those who do not keep themselves strictly to their duty by simple reason:

"Utatur motu animi, qui uti ratione non potest."

["He may employ his passion, who can make no use of his reason."

—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, iv. 25.]

All legitimate intentions are temperate and equable of themselves; if otherwise, they degenerate into seditious and unlawful. This is it which makes me walk everywhere with my head erect, my face and my heart open. In truth, and I am not afraid to confess it, I should easily, in case of need, hold up one candle to St. Michael and another to his dragon, like the old woman; I will follow the right side even to the fire, but exclusively, if I can. Let

Montaigne be overwhelmed in the public ruin if need be; but if there be no need, I should think myself obliged to fortune to save me, and I will make use of all the length of line my duty allows for his preservation. Was it not Atticus who, being of the just but losing side, preserved himself by his moderation in that universal shipwreck of the world, amongst so many mutations and diversities? For private man, as he was, it is more easy; and in such kind of work, I think a man may justly not be ambitious to offer and insinuate himself. For a man, indeed, to be wavering and irresolute, to keep his affection unmoved and without inclination in the troubles of his country and public divisions, I neither think it handsome nor honest:

"Ea non media, sed nulla via est, velut eventum  
expectantium, quo fortunae consilia sua applicent."

["That is not a middle way, but no way, to await events, by which they refer their resolutions to fortune."—Livy, xxxii. 21.]

This may be allowed in our neighbours' affairs; and thus Gelo, the tyrant of Syracuse, suspended his inclination in the war betwixt the Greeks and barbarians, keeping a resident ambassador with presents at Delphos, to watch and see which way fortune would incline, and then take fit occasion to fall in with the victors. It would be a kind of treason to proceed after this manner in our own domestic affairs, wherein a man must of necessity be of the one side or the other; though for a man who has no office or express command to call him out, to sit still I hold it more excusable (and yet I do not excuse myself upon these terms) than in foreign expeditions, to which, however, according to our laws, no man is pressed against his will. And yet even those who wholly engage themselves in such a war may behave themselves with such temper and moderation, that the storm may fly over their heads without doing them any harm. Had we not reason to hope such an issue in the person of the late Bishop of Orleans, the Sieur de Morvilliers?

[An able negotiator, who, though protected by the Guises, and strongly supporting them, was yet very far from persecuting the Reformists. He died 1577.]

And I know, amongst those who behave themselves most bravely in the present war, some whose manners are so gentle, obliging, and just, that they will certainly stand firm, whatever event Heaven is preparing for us. I am of opinion that it properly belongs to kings only to quarrel with kings; and I laugh at those spirits who, out of lightness of heart, lend themselves to so disproportioned disputes; for a man has never the more particular quarrel with a prince, by marching openly and boldly against him for his own honour and according to his duty; if he does not love such a person, he does better, he esteems him. And notably the cause of the laws and of the ancient government of a kingdom, has this always annexed to it, that even those who, for their own private interest, invade them, excuse, if they do not honour, the defenders.

But we are not, as we nowadays do, to call peevishness and inward discontent, that spring from private interest and passion, duty, nor a treacherous and malicious conduct, courage; they call their proneness to mischief and violence zeal; 'tis not the cause, but their interest, that inflames them; they kindle and begin a war, not because it is just, but because it is war.

A man may very well behave himself commodiously and loyally too amongst those of the adverse party; carry yourself, if not with the same equal affection (for that is capable of different measure), at least with an affection moderate, well tempered, and such as shall not so engage you to one party, that it may demand all you are able to do for that side, content yourself with a moderate proportion of their, favour and goodwill; and to swim in troubled waters without fishing in them.

The other way, of offering a man's self and the utmost service he is able to do, both to one party and the other, has still less of prudence in it than conscience. Does not he to whom you betray another, to whom you were as welcome as to himself, know that you will at another time do as much for him? He holds you for a villain; and in the meantime hears what you will say, gathers intelligence from you, and works his own ends out of your disloyalty; double-dealing men are useful for bringing in, but we must have a care they carry out as little as is

possible.

I say nothing to one party that I may not, upon occasion, say to the other, with a little alteration of accent; and report nothing but things either indifferent or known, or what is of common consequence. I cannot permit myself, for any consideration, to tell them a lie. What is intrusted to my secrecy, I religiously conceal; but I take as few trusts of that nature upon me as I can. The secrets of princes are a troublesome burthen to such as are not interested in them. I very willingly bargain that they trust me with little, but confidently rely upon what I tell them. I have ever known more than I desired. One open way of speaking introduces another open way of speaking, and draws out discoveries, like wine and love. Philippides, in my opinion, answered King Lysimachus very discreetly, who, asking him what of his estate he should bestow upon him? "What you will," said he, "provided it be none of your secrets." I see every one is displeased if the bottom of the affair be concealed from him wherein he is employed, or that there be any reservation in the thing; for my part, I am content to know no more of the business than what they would have me employ myself in, nor desire that my knowledge should exceed or restrict what I have to say. If I must serve for an instrument of deceit, let It be at least with a safe conscience: I will not be reputed a servant either so affectionate or so loyal as to be fit to betray any one: he who is unfaithful to himself, is excusably so to his master. But they are princes who do not accept men by halves, and despise limited and conditional services: I cannot help it: I frankly tell them how far I can go; for a slave I should not be, but to reason, and I can hardly submit even to that. And they also are to blame to exact from a freeman the same subjection and obligation to their service that they do from him they have made and bought, or whose fortune particularly and expressly depends upon theirs. The laws have delivered me from a great anxiety; they have chosen a side for me, and given me a master; all other superiority and obligation ought to be relative to that, and cut, off from all other. Yet this is not to say, that if my affection should otherwise incline me, my hand should presently obey it; the will and desire are a law to themselves; but actions must receive commission from the public appointment.

All this proceeding of mine is a little dissonant from the ordinary forms; it would produce no great effects, nor be of any long duration; innocence itself could not, in this age of ours, either negotiate without dissimulation, or traffic without lying; and, indeed, public employments are by no means for my palate: what my profession requires, I perform after the most private manner that I can. Being young, I was engaged up to the ears in business, and it succeeded well; but I disengaged myself in good time. I have often since avoided meddling in it, rarely accepted, and never asked it; keeping my back still turned to ambition; but if not like rowers who so advance backward, yet so, at the same time, that I am less obliged to my resolution than to my good fortune, that I was not wholly embarked in it. For there are ways less displeasing to my taste, and more suitable to my ability, by which, if she had formerly called me to the public service, and my own advancement towards the world's opinion, I know I should, in spite of all my own arguments to the contrary, have pursued them. Such as commonly say, in opposition to what I profess, that what I call freedom, simplicity, and plainness in my manners, is art and subtlety, and rather prudence than goodness, industry than nature, good sense than good luck, do me more honour than disgrace: but, certainly, they make my subtlety too subtle; and whoever has followed me close, and pryed narrowly into me, I will give him the victory, if he does not confess that there is no rule in their school that could match this natural motion, and maintain an appearance of liberty and licence, so equal and inflexible, through so many various and crooked paths, and that all their wit and endeavour could never have led them through. The way of truth is one and simple; that of particular profit, and the commodity of affairs a man is entrusted with, is double, unequal, and casual. I have often seen these counterfeit and artificial liberties practised, but, for the most part, without success; they relish of AEsop's ass who, in emulation of the dog, obligingly clapped his two fore-feet upon his master's shoulders; but as many caresses as the dog had for such an expression of kindness, twice so many blows with a cudgel had the poor ass for his compliment:

"Id maxime quemque decet, quod est cujusque suum maxime."

["That best becomes every man which belongs most to him;"]

—Cicero, De Offic., i. 31.]

I will not deprive deceit of its due; that were but ill to understand the world: I know it has often been of great use, and that it maintains and supplies most men's employment. There are vices that are lawful, as there are many actions, either good or excusable, that are not lawful in themselves.

The justice which in itself is natural and universal is otherwise and more nobly ordered than that other justice which is special, national, and constrained to the ends of government,

"Veri juris germanaeque justitiae solidam et expressam  
effigiem nullam tenemus; umbra et imaginibus utimur;"

["We retain no solid and express portraiture of true right and  
germane justice; we have only the shadow and image of it."]

—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 17.]

insomuch that the sage Dandamis, hearing the lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes read, judged them to be great men every way, excepting that they were too much subjected to the reverence of the laws, which, to second and authorise, true virtue must abate very much of its original vigour; many vicious actions are introduced, not only by their permission, but by their advice:

"Ex senatus consultis plebisquescitis scelera exercentur."

["Crimes are committed by the decrees of the Senate and the  
popular assembly."—Seneca, *Ep.*, 95.]

I follow the common phrase that distinguishes betwixt profitable and honest things, so as to call some natural actions, that are not only profitable but necessary, dishonest and foul.

But let us proceed in our examples of treachery two pretenders to the kingdom of Thrace —[Rhescuporis and Cotys. Tacitus, *Annal.*, ii. 65]— were fallen into dispute about their title; the emperor hindered them from proceeding to blows: but one of them, under colour of bringing things to a friendly issue by an interview, having invited his competitor to an entertainment in his own house, imprisoned and killed him. Justice required that the Romans should have satisfaction for this offence; but there was a difficulty in obtaining it by ordinary ways; what, therefore, they could not do legitimately, without war and without danger, they resolved to do by treachery; and what they could not honestly do, they did profitably. For which end, one Pomponius Flaccus was found to be a fit instrument. This man, by dissembled words and assurances, having drawn the other into his toils, instead of the honour and favour he had promised him, sent him bound hand and foot to Rome. Here one traitor betrayed another, contrary to common custom: for they are full of mistrust, and 'tis hard to overreach them in their own art: witness the sad experience we have lately had. —[Montaigne here probably refers to the feigned reconciliation between Catherine de Medici and Henri, Duc de Guise, in 1588.]

Let who will be Pomponius Flaccus, and there are enough who would: for my part, both my word and my faith are, like all the rest, parts of this common body: their best effect is the public service; this I take for presupposed. But should one command me to take charge of the courts of law and lawsuits, I should make answer, that I understood it not; or the place of a leader of pioneers, I would say, that I was called to a more honourable employment; so likewise, he that would employ me to lie, betray, and forswear myself, though not to assassinate or to poison, for some notable service, I should say, "If I have robbed or stolen anything from any man, send me rather to the galleys." For it is permissible in a man of honour to say, as the Lacedaemonians did, —[Plutarch, *Difference between a Flatterer and a Friend*, c. 21.]— having been defeated by Antipater, when just upon concluding an agreement: "You may impose as heavy and ruinous taxes upon us as you please, but to command us to do shameful and dishonest things, you will lose your time, for it is to no purpose." Every one ought to make the same vow to himself that the kings of Egypt made their judges solemnly swear, that they would not do anything contrary to their consciences, though never so much commanded to it by themselves. In such commissions there is evident mark of ignominy and condemnation; and he who gives it at the same time accuses you, and gives it, if you understand it right, for a burden and a punishment. As much as the public affairs are bettered by your exploit, so much are your own the worse, and the better you behave yourself in it, 'tis so much

the worse for yourself; and it will be no new thing, nor, peradventure, without some colour of justice, if the same person ruin you who set you on work.

If treachery can be in any case excusable, it must be only so when it is practised to chastise and betray treachery. There are examples enough of treacheries, not only rejected, but chastised and punished by those in favour of whom they were undertaken. Who is ignorant of Fabricius sentence against the physician of Pyrrhus?

But this we also find recorded, that some persons have commanded a thing, who afterward have severely avenged the execution of it upon him they had employed, rejecting the reputation of so unbridled an authority, and disowning so abandoned and base a servitude and obedience. Jaropelk, Duke of Russia, tampered with a gentleman of Hungary to betray Boleslaus, king of Poland, either by killing him, or by giving the Russians opportunity to do him some notable mischief. This worthy went ably to work: he was more assiduous than before in the service of that king, so that he obtained the honour to be of his council, and one of the chiefest in his trust. With these advantages, and taking an opportune occasion of his master's absence, he betrayed Vislicza, a great and rich city, to the Russians, which was entirely sacked and burned, and not only all the inhabitants of both sexes, young and old, put to the sword, but moreover a great number of neighbouring gentry, whom he had drawn thither to that end. Jaropelk, his revenge being thus satisfied and his anger appeased, which was not, indeed, without pretence (for Boleslaus had highly offended him, and after the same manner), and sated with the fruit of this treachery, coming to consider the fulness of it, with a sound judgment and clear from passion, looked upon what had been done with so much horror and remorse that he caused the eyes to be bored out and the tongue and shameful parts to be cut off of him who had performed it.

Antigonus persuaded the Argyraspides to betray Eumenes, their general, his adversary, into his hands; but after he had caused him, so delivered, to be slain, he would himself be the commissioner of the divine justice for the punishment of so detestable a crime, and committed them into the hands of the governor of the province, with express command, by whatever means, to destroy and bring them all to an evil end, so that of that great number of men, not so much as one ever returned again into Macedonia: the better he had been served, the more wickedly he judged it to be, and meriting greater punishment.

The slave who betrayed the place where his master, P. Sulpicius, lay concealed, was, according to the promise of Sylla's proscription, manumitted for his pains; but according to the promise of the public justice, which was free from any such engagement, he was thrown headlong from the Tarpeian rock.

Our King Clovis, instead of the arms of gold he had promised them, caused three of Cararie's servants to be hanged after they had betrayed their master to him, though he had debauched them to it: he hanged them with the purse of their reward about their necks; after having satisfied his second and special faith, he satisfied the general and first.

Mohammed II. having resolved to rid himself of his brother, out of jealousy of state, according to the practice of the Ottoman family, he employed one of his officers in the execution, who, pouring a quantity of water too fast into him, choked him. This being done, to expiate the murder, he delivered the murderer into the hands of the mother of him he had so caused to be put to death, for they were only brothers by the father's side; she, in his presence, ripped up the murderer's bosom, and with her own hands rifled his breast for his heart, tore it out, and threw it to the dogs. And even to the worst people it is the sweetest thing imaginable, having once gained their end by a vicious action, to foist, in all security, into it some show of virtue and justice, as by way of compensation and conscientious correction; to which may be added, that they look upon the ministers of such horrid crimes as upon men who reproach them with them, and think by their deaths to erase the memory and testimony of such proceedings.

Or if, perhaps, you are rewarded, not to frustrate the public necessity for that extreme and desperate remedy, he who does it cannot for all that, if he be not such himself, but look upon you as an accursed and execrable fellow,

and conclude you a greater traitor than he does, against whom you are so: for he tries the malignity of your disposition by your own hands, where he cannot possibly be deceived, you having no object of preceding hatred to move you to such an act; but he employs you as they do condemned malefactors in executions of justice, an office as necessary as dishonourable. Besides the baseness of such commissions, there is, moreover, a prostitution of conscience. Seeing that the daughter of Sejanus could not be put to death by the law of Rome, because she was a virgin, she was, to make it lawful, first ravished by the hangman and then strangled: not only his hand but his soul is slave to the public convenience.

When Amurath I., more grievously to punish his subjects who had taken part in the parricide rebellion of his son, ordained that their nearest kindred should assist in the execution, I find it very handsome in some of them to have rather chosen to be unjustly thought guilty of the parricide of another than to serve justice by a parricide of their own. And where I have seen, at the taking of some little fort by assault in my time, some rascals who, to save their own lives, would consent to hang their friends and companions, I have looked upon them to be of worse condition than those who were hanged. 'Tis said, that Witold, Prince of Lithuania, introduced into the nation the practice that the criminal condemned to death should with his own hand execute the sentence, thinking it strange that a third person, innocent of the fault, should be made guilty of homicide.

A prince, when by some urgent circumstance or some impetuous and unforeseen accident that very much concerns his state, compelled to forfeit his word and break his faith, or otherwise forced from his ordinary duty, ought to attribute this necessity to a lash of the divine rod: vice it is not, for he has given up his own reason to a more universal and more powerful reason; but certainly 'tis a misfortune: so that if any one should ask me what remedy? "None," say I, "if he were really racked between these two extremes: 'sed videat, ne quœratur latebya perjurio', he must do it: but if he did it without regret, if it did not weigh on him to do it, 'tis a sign his conscience is in a sorry condition." If there be a person to be found of so tender a conscience as to think no cure whatever worth so important a remedy, I shall like him never the worse; he could not more excusably or more decently perish. We cannot do all we would, so that we must often, as the last anchorage, commit the protection of our vessels to the simple conduct of heaven. To what more just necessity does he reserve himself? What is less possible for him to do than what he cannot do but at the expense of his faith and honour, things that, perhaps, ought to be dearer to him than his own safety, or even the safety of his people. Though he should, with folded arms, only call God to his assistance, has he not reason to hope that the divine goodness will not refuse the favour of an extraordinary arm to just and pure hands? These are dangerous examples, rare and sickly exceptions to our natural rules: we must yield to them, but with great moderation and circumspection: no private utility is of such importance that we should upon that account strain our consciences to such a degree: the public may be, when very manifest and of very great concern.

Timoleon made a timely expiation for his strange exploit by the tears he shed, calling to mind that it was with a fraternal hand that he had slain the tyrant; and it justly pricked his conscience that he had been necessitated to purchase the public utility at so great a price as the violation of his private morality. Even the Senate itself, by his means delivered from slavery, durst not positively determine of so high a fact, and divided into two so important and contrary aspects; but the Syracusans, sending at the same time to the Corinthians to solicit their protection, and to require of them a captain fit to re-establish their city in its former dignity and to clear Sicily of several little tyrants by whom it was oppressed, they deputed Timoleon for that service, with this cunning declaration; "that according as he should behave himself well or ill in his employment, their sentence should incline either to favour the deliverer of his country, or to disfavour the murderer of his brother." This fantastic conclusion carries along with it some excuse, by reason of the danger of the example, and the importance of so strange an action: and they did well to discharge their own judgment of it, and to refer it to others who were not so much concerned. But Timoleon's comportment in this expedition soon made his cause more clear, so worthily and virtuously he demeaned himself upon all occasions; and the good fortune that accompanied him in the difficulties he had to overcome in this noble employment, seemed to be strewed in his way by the gods, favourably conspiring for his justification.

The end of this matter is excusable, if any can be so; but the profit of the augmentation of the public revenue, that served the Roman Senate for a pretence to the foul conclusion I am going to relate, is not sufficient to warrant any such injustice.

Certain cities had redeemed themselves and their liberty by money, by the order and consent of the Senate, out of the hands of L. Sylla: the business coming again in question, the Senate condemned them to be taxable as they were before, and that the money they had disbursed for their redemption should be lost to them. Civil war often produces such villainous examples; that we punish private men for confiding in us when we were public ministers: and the self-same magistrate makes another man pay the penalty of his change that has nothing to do with it; the pedagogue whips his scholar for his docility; and the guide beats the blind man whom he leads by the hand; a horrid image of justice.

There are rules in philosophy that are both false and weak. The example that is proposed to us for preferring private utility before faith given, has not weight enough by the circumstances they put to it; robbers have seized you, and after having made you swear to pay them a certain sum of money, dismiss you. 'Tis not well done to say, that an honest man can be quit of his oath without payment, being out of their hands. 'Tis no such thing: what fear has once made me willing to do, I am obliged to do it when I am no longer in fear; and though that fear only prevailed with my tongue without forcing my will, yet am I bound to keep my word. For my part, when my tongue has sometimes inconsiderately said something that I did not think, I have made a conscience of disowning it: otherwise, by degrees, we shall abolish all the right another derives from our promises and oaths:

"Quasi vero forti viro vis possit adhiberi."

["As though a man of true courage could be compelled."

—Cicero, *De Offic.*, iii. 30.]

And 'tis only lawful, upon the account of private interest, to excuse breach of promise, when we have promised something that is unlawful and wicked in itself; for the right of virtue ought to take place of the right of any obligation of ours.

I have formerly placed Epaminondas in the first rank of excellent men, and do not repent it. How high did he stretch the consideration of his own particular duty? he who never killed a man whom he had overcome; who, for the inestimable benefit of restoring the liberty of his country, made conscience of killing a tyrant or his accomplices without due form of justice: and who concluded him to be a wicked man, how good a citizen soever otherwise, who amongst his enemies in battle spared not his friend and his guest. This was a soul of a rich composition: he married goodness and humanity, nay, even the tenderest and most delicate in the whole school of philosophy, to the roughest and most violent human actions. Was it nature or art that had intenerated that great courage of his, so full, so obstinate against pain and death and poverty, to such an extreme degree of sweetness and compassion? Dreadful in arms and blood, he overran and subdued a nation invincible by all others but by him alone; and yet in the heat of an encounter, could turn aside from his friend and guest. Certainly he was fit to command in war who could so rein himself with the curb of good nature, in the height and heat of his fury, a fury inflamed and foaming with blood and slaughter. 'Tis a miracle to be able to mix any image of justice with such violent actions: and it was only possible for such a steadfastness of mind as that of Epaminondas therein to mix sweetness and the facility of the gentlest manners and purest innocence. And whereas one told the Mamertini that statutes were of no efficacy against armed men; and another told the tribune of the people that the time of justice and of war were distinct things; and a third said that the noise of arms deafened the voice of laws, this man was not precluded from listening to the laws of civility and pure courtesy. Had he not borrowed from his enemies the custom of sacrificing to the Muses when he went to war, that they might by their sweetness and gaiety soften his martial and rigorous fury? Let us not fear, by the example of so great a master, to believe that there is something unlawful, even against an enemy, and that the common concern ought not to require all things of all men, against private interest:

"Manente memoria, etiam in dissidio publicorum  
foederum, privati juris:"

["The memory of private right remaining even amid public dissensions."—Livy, xxv. 18.]

"Et nulla potentia vires

Praestandi, ne quid peccet amicus, habet;"

["No power on earth can sanction treachery against a friend."

—Ovid, De Ponto, i. 7, 37.]

and that all things are not lawful to an honest man for the service of his prince, the laws, or the general quarrel:

"Non enim patria praestat omnibus officiis....

et ipsi conducit pios habere cives in parentes."

["The duty to one's country does not supersede all other duties.

The country itself requires that its citizens should act piously

toward their parents."— Cicero, De Offic., iii. 23.]

'Tis an instruction proper for the time wherein we live: we need not harden our courage with these arms of steel; 'tis enough that our shoulders are inured to them: 'tis enough to dip our pens in ink without dipping them in blood. If it be grandeur of courage, and the effect of a rare and singular virtue, to contemn friendship, private obligations, a man's word and relationship, for the common good and obedience to the magistrate, 'tis certainly sufficient to excuse us, that 'tis a grandeur that can have no place in the grandeur of Epaminondas' courage.

I abominate those mad exhortations of this other discomposed soul,

"Dum tela micant, non vos pietatis imago

Ulla, nec adversa conspecti fronte parentes

Commoveant; vultus gladio turbate verendos."

["While swords glitter, let no idea of piety, nor the face even of a

father presented to you, move you: mutilate with your sword those

venerable features "—Lucan, vii. 320.]

Let us deprive wicked, bloody, and treacherous natures of such a pretence of reason: let us set aside this guilty and extravagant justice, and stick to more human imitations. How great things can time and example do! In an encounter of the civil war against Cinna, one of Pompey's soldiers having unawares killed his brother, who was of the contrary party, he immediately for shame and sorrow killed himself: and some years after, in another civil war of the same people, a soldier demanded a reward of his officer for having killed his brother.

A man but ill proves the honour and beauty of an action by its utility: and very erroneously concludes that every one is obliged to it, and that it becomes every one to do it, if it be of utility:

"Omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta."

["All things are not equally fit for all men."

—Propertius, iii. 9, 7.]

Let us take that which is most necessary and profitable for human society; it will be marriage; and yet the council of the saints find the contrary much better, excluding from it the most venerable vocation of man: as we design those horses for stallions of which we have the least esteem.

## CHAPTER II. OF REPENTANCE

Others form man; I only report him: and represent a particular one, ill fashioned enough, and whom, if I had to model him anew, I should certainly make something else than what he is but that's past recalling. Now, though the

features of my picture alter and change, 'tis not, however, unlike: the world eternally turns round; all things therein are incessantly moving, the earth, the rocks of Caucasus, and the pyramids of Egypt, both by the public motion and their own. Even constancy itself is no other but a slower and more languishing motion. I cannot fix my object; 'tis always tottering and reeling by a natural giddiness; I take it as it is at the instant I consider it; I do not paint its being, I paint its passage; not a passing from one age to another, or, as the people say, from seven to seven years, but from day to day, from minute to minute, I must accommodate my history to the hour: I may presently change, not only by fortune, but also by intention. 'Tis a counterpart of various and changeable accidents, and of irresolute imaginations, and, as it falls out, sometimes contrary: whether it be that I am then another self, or that I take subjects by other circumstances and considerations: so it is that I may peradventure contradict myself, but, as Demades said, I never contradict the truth. Could my soul once take footing, I would not essay but resolve: but it is always learning and making trial.

I propose a life ordinary and without lustre: 'tis all one; all moral philosophy may as well be applied to a common and private life, as to one of richer composition: every man carries the entire form of human condition. Authors communicate themselves to the people by some especial and extrinsic mark; I, the first of any, by my universal being; as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer. If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that they do not so much as think of themselves. But is it reason that, being so particular in my way of living, I should pretend to recommend myself to the public knowledge? And is it also reason that I should produce to the world, where art and handling have so much credit and authority, crude and simple effects of nature, and of a weak nature to boot? Is it not to build a wall without stone or brick, or some such thing, to write books without learning and without art? The fancies of music are carried on by art; mine by chance. I have this, at least, according to discipline, that never any man treated of a subject he better understood and knew than I what I have undertaken, and that in this I am the most understanding man alive: secondly, that never any man penetrated farther into his matter, nor better and more distinctly sifted the parts and sequences of it, nor ever more exactly and fully arrived at the end he proposed to himself. To perfect it, I need bring nothing but fidelity to the work; and that is there, and the most pure and sincere that is anywhere to be found. I speak truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more, as I grow older; for, methinks, custom allows to age more liberty of prating, and more indiscretion of talking of a man's self. That cannot fall out here, which I often see elsewhere, that the work and the artificer contradict one another: "Can a man of such sober conversation have written so foolish a book?" Or "Do so learned writings proceed from a man of so weak conversation?" He who talks at a very ordinary rate, and writes rare matter, 'tis to say that his capacity is borrowed and not his own. A learned man is not learned in all things: but a sufficient man is sufficient throughout, even to ignorance itself; here my book and I go hand in hand together. Elsewhere men may commend or censure the work, without reference to the workman; here they cannot: who touches the one, touches the other. He who shall judge of it without knowing him, will more wrong himself than me; he who does know him, gives me all the satisfaction I desire. I shall be happy beyond my desert, if I can obtain only thus much from the public approbation, as to make men of understanding perceive that I was capable of profiting by knowledge, had I had it; and that I deserved to have been assisted by a better memory.

Be pleased here to excuse what I often repeat, that I very rarely repent, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not as the conscience of an angel, or that of a horse, but as the conscience of a man; always adding this clause, not one of ceremony, but a true and real submission, that I speak inquiring and doubting, purely and simply referring myself to the common and accepted beliefs for the resolution. I do not teach; I only relate.

There is no vice that is absolutely a vice which does not offend, and that a sound judgment does not accuse; for there is in it so manifest a deformity and inconvenience, that peradventure they are in the right who say that it is chiefly begotten by stupidity and ignorance: so hard is it to imagine that a man can know without abhorring it. Malice sucks up the greatest part of its own venom, and poisons itself. Vice leaves repentance in the soul, like an ulcer in the flesh, which is always scratching and lacerating itself: for reason effaces all other grief and sorrows, but it begets that of repentance, which is so much the more grievous, by reason it springs within, as the cold and heat of fevers are more sharp than those that only strike upon the outward skin. I hold for vices (but every one

according to its proportion), not only those which reason and nature condemn, but those also which the opinion of men, though false and erroneous, have made such, if authorised by law and custom.

There is likewise no virtue which does not rejoice a well-descended nature: there is a kind of, I know not what, congratulation in well-doing that gives us an inward satisfaction, and a generous boldness that accompanies a good conscience: a soul daringly vicious may, peradventure, arm itself with security, but it cannot supply itself with this complacency and satisfaction. 'Tis no little satisfaction to feel a man's self preserved from the contagion of so depraved an age, and to say to himself: "Whoever could penetrate into my soul would not there find me guilty either of the affliction or ruin of any one, or of revenge or envy, or any offence against the public laws, or of innovation or disturbance, or failure of my word; and though the licence of the time permits and teaches every one so to do, yet have I not plundered any Frenchman's goods, or taken his money, and have lived upon what is my own, in war as well as in peace; neither have I set any man to work without paying him his hire." These testimonies of a good conscience please, and this natural rejoicing is very beneficial to us, and the only reward that we can never fail of.

To ground the recompense of virtuous actions upon the approbation of others is too uncertain and unsafe a foundation, especially in so corrupt and ignorant an age as this, wherein the good opinion of the vulgar is injurious: upon whom do you rely to show you what is recommendable? God defend me from being an honest man, according to the descriptions of honour I daily see every one make of himself:

"Quae fuerant vitia, mores sunt."

["What before had been vices are now manners."—Seneca, Ep., 39.]

Some of my friends have at times schooled and scolded me with great sincerity and plainness, either of their own voluntary motion, or by me entreated to it as to an office, which to a well-composed soul surpasses not only in utility, but in kindness, all other offices of friendship: I have always received them with the most open arms, both of courtesy and acknowledgment; but to say the truth, I have often found so much false measure, both in their reproaches and praises, that I had not done much amiss, rather to have done ill, than to have done well according to their notions. We, who live private lives, not exposed to any other view than our own, ought chiefly to have settled a pattern within ourselves by which to try our actions: and according to that, sometimes to encourage and sometimes to correct ourselves. I have my laws and my judicature to judge of myself, and apply myself more to these than to any other rules: I do, indeed, restrain my actions according to others; but extend them not by any other rule than my own. You yourself only know if you are cowardly and cruel, loyal and devout: others see you not, and only guess at you by uncertain conjectures, and do not so much see your nature as your art; rely not therefore upon their opinions, but stick to your own:

"Tuo tibi iudicio est utendum.... Virtutis et vitiorum grave ipsius conscientiae pondus est: qua sublata, jacent omnia."

["Thou must employ thy own judgment upon thyself; great is the weight of thy own conscience in the discovery of virtues and vices: which taken away, all things are lost."

—Cicero, De Nat. Dei, iii. 35; Tusc. Quaes., i. 25.]

But the saying that repentance immediately follows the sin seems not to have respect to sin in its high estate, which is lodged in us as in its own proper habitation. One may disown and retract the vices that surprise us, and to which we are hurried by passions; but those which by a long habit are rooted in a strong and vigorous will are not subject to contradiction. Repentance is no other but a recanting of the will and an opposition to our fancies, which lead us which way they please. It makes this person disown his former virtue and continency:

"Quae mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fait?

Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genae?

[What my mind is, why was it not the same, when I was a boy? or why do not the cheeks return to these feelings?"

—Horace, Od., v. 10, 7.]

'Tis an exact life that maintains itself in due order in private. Every one may juggle his part, and represent an honest man upon the stage: but within, and in his own bosom, where all may do as they list, where all is concealed, to be regular, there's the point. The next degree is to be so in his house, and in his ordinary actions, for which we are accountable to none, and where there is no study nor artifice. And therefore Bias, setting forth the excellent state of a private family, says: "of which a the master is the same within, by his own virtue and temper, that he is abroad, for fear of the laws and report of men." And it was a worthy saying of Julius Drusus, to the masons who offered him, for three thousand crowns, to put his house in such a posture that his neighbours should no longer have the same inspection into it as before; "I will give you," said he, " six thousand to make it so that everybody may see into every room." 'Tis honourably recorded of Agesilaus, that he used in his journeys always to take up his lodgings in temples, to the end that the people and the gods themselves might pry into his most private actions. Such a one has been a miracle to the world, in whom neither his wife nor servant has ever seen anything so much as remarkable; few men have been admired by their own domestics; no one was ever a prophet, not merely in his own house, but in his own country, says the experience of histories: —[No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, said Marshal Catinat]—'tis the same in things of nought, and in this low example the image of a greater is to be seen. In my country of Gascony, they look upon it as a drollery to see me in print; the further off I am read from my own home, the better I am esteemed. I purchase printers in Guienne; elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this it is that they lay their foundation who conceal themselves present and living, to obtain a name when they are dead and absent. I had rather have a great deal less in hand, and do not expose myself to the world upon any other account than my present share; when I leave it I quit the rest. See this functionary whom the people escort in state, with wonder and applause, to his very door; he puts off the pageant with his robe, and falls so much the lower by how much he was higher exalted: in himself within, all is tumult and degraded. And though all should be regular there, it will require a vivid and well-chosen judgment to perceive it in these low and private actions; to which may be added, that order is a dull, sombre virtue. To enter a breach, conduct an embassy, govern a people, are actions of renown; to reprehend, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and gently and justly converse with a man's own family and with himself; not to relax, not to give a man's self the lie, is more rare and hard, and less remarkable. By which means, retired lives, whatever is said to the contrary, undergo duties of as great or greater difficulty than the others do; and private men, says Aristotle, 'serve virtue more painfully and highly than those in authority do: we prepare ourselves for eminent occasions, more out of glory than conscience. The shortest way to arrive at glory, would be to do that for conscience which we do for glory: and the virtue of Alexander appears to me of much less vigour in his great theatre, than that of Socrates in his mean and obscure employment. I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander, but Alexander in that of Socrates, I cannot. Who shall ask the one what he can do, he will answer, "Subdue the world": and who shall put the same question to the other, he will say, "Carry on human life conformably with its natural condition"; a much more general, weighty, and legitimate science than the other.—[Montaigne added here, "To do for the world that for which he came into the world," but he afterwards erased these words from the manuscript.—Nageon.]

The virtue of the soul does not consist in flying high, but in walking orderly; its grandeur does not exercise itself in grandeur, but in mediocrity. As they who judge and try us within, make no great account of the lustre of our public actions, and see they are only streaks and rays of clear water springing from a slimy and muddy bottom so, likewise, they who judge of us by this gallant outward appearance, in like manner conclude of our internal constitution; and cannot couple common faculties, and like their own, with the other faculties that astonish them, and are so far out of their sight. Therefore it is that we give such savage forms to demons: and who does not give Tamerlane great eyebrows, wide nostrils, a dreadful visage, and a prodigious stature, according to the imagination he has conceived by the report of his name? Had any one formerly brought me to Erasmus, I should hardly have believed but that all was adage and apothegm he spoke to his man or his hostess. We much more aptly imagine an artisan upon his close-stool, or upon his wife, than a great president venerable by his port and sufficiency: we fancy that they, from their high tribunals, will not abase themselves so much as to live. As vicious souls are often incited by some foreign impulse to do well, so are virtuous souls to do ill; they are therefore to be judged by their settled state, when they are at home, whenever that may be; and, at all events, when they are nearer repose, and in their native station.

Natural inclinations are much assisted and fortified by education; but they seldom alter and overcome their institution: a thousand natures of my time have escaped towards virtue or vice, through a quite contrary discipline:

"Sic ubi, desuetae silvis, in carcere clausae  
Mansuevere ferx, et vultus posuere minaces,  
Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus  
Venit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiesque fororque,  
Admonitaeque tument gustato sanguine fauces  
Fervet, et a trepido vix abstinet ira magistro;"

["So savage beasts, when shut up in cages and grown unaccustomed to the woods, have become tame, and have laid aside their fierce looks, and submit to the rule of man; if again a slight taste of blood comes into their mouths, their rage and fury return, their jaws are erected by thirst of blood, and their anger scarcely abstains from their trembling masters."—Lucan, iv. 237.]

these original qualities are not to be rooted out; they may be covered and concealed. The Latin tongue is as it were natural to me; I understand it better than French; but I have not been used to speak it, nor hardly to write it, these forty years. Unless upon extreme and sudden emotions which I have fallen into twice or thrice in my life, and once seeing my father in perfect health fall upon me in a swoon, I have always uttered from the bottom of my heart my first words in Latin; nature deafened, and forcibly expressing itself, in spite of so long a discontinuation; and this example is said of many others.

They who in my time have attempted to correct the manners of the world by new opinions, reform seeming vices; but the essential vices they leave as they were, if indeed they do not augment them, and augmentation is therein to be feared; we defer all other well doing upon the account of these external reformation, of less cost and greater show, and thereby expiate good cheap, for the other natural, consubstantial, and intestine vices. Look a little into our experience: there is no man, if he listen to himself, who does not in himself discover a particular and governing form of his own, that jostles his education, and wrestles with the tempest of passions that are contrary to it. For my part, I seldom find myself agitated with surprises; I always find myself in my place, as heavy and unwieldy bodies do; if I am not at home, I am always near at hand; my dissipations do not transport me very far; there is nothing strange or extreme in the case; and yet I have sound and vigorous turns.

The true condemnation, and which touches the common practice of men, is that their very retirement itself is full of filth and corruption; the idea of their reformation composed, their repentance sick and faulty, very nearly as much as their sin. Some, either from having been linked to vice by a natural propension or long practice, cannot see its deformity. Others (of which constitution I am) do indeed feel the weight of vice, but they counterbalance it with pleasure, or some other occasion; and suffer and lend themselves to it for a certain price, but viciously and basely. Yet there might, haply, be imagined so vast a disproportion of measure, where with justice the pleasure might excuse the sin, as we say of utility; not only if accidental and out of sin, as in thefts, but in the very exercise of sin, or in the enjoyment of women, where the temptation is violent, and, 'tis said, sometimes not to be overcome.

Being the other day at Armagnac, on the estate of a kinsman of mine, I there saw a peasant who was by every one nicknamed the thief. He thus related the story of his life: that, being born a beggar, and finding that he should not be able, so as to be clear of indigence, to get his living by the sweat of his brow, he resolved to turn thief, and by means of his strength of body had exercised this trade all the time of his youth in great security; for he ever made his harvest and vintage in other men's grounds, but a great way off, and in so great quantities, that it was not to be imagined one man could have carried away so much in one night upon his shoulders; and, moreover, he was careful equally to divide and distribute the mischief he did, that the loss was of less importance to every particular man. He is now grown old, and rich for a man of his condition, thanks to his trade, which he openly confesses to every one. And to make his peace with God, he says, that he is daily ready by good offices to make satisfaction to

the successors of those he has robbed, and if he do not finish (for to do it all at once he is not able), he will then leave it in charge to his heirs to perform the rest, proportionably to the wrong he himself only knows he has done to each. By this description, true or false, this man looks upon theft as a dishonest action, and hates it, but less than poverty, and simply repents; but to the extent he has thus recompensed he repents not. This is not that habit which incorporates us into vice, and conforms even our understanding itself to it; nor is it that impetuous whirlwind that by gusts troubles and blinds our souls, and for the time precipitates us, judgment and all, into the power of vice.

I customarily do what I do thoroughly and make but one step on't; I have rarely any movement that hides itself and steals away from my reason, and that does not proceed in the matter by the consent of all my faculties, without division or intestine sedition; my judgment is to have all the blame or all the praise; and the blame it once has, it has always; for almost from my infancy it has ever been one: the same inclination, the same turn, the same force; and as to universal opinions, I fixed myself from my childhood in the place where I resolved to stick. There are some sins that are impetuous, prompt, and sudden; let us set them aside: but in these other sins so often repeated, deliberated, and contrived, whether sins of complexion or sins of profession and vocation, I cannot conceive that they should have so long been settled in the same resolution, unless the reason and conscience of him who has them, be constant to have them; and the repentance he boasts to be inspired with on a sudden, is very hard for me to imagine or form. I follow not the opinion of the Pythagorean sect, "that men take up a new soul when they repair to the images of the gods to receive their oracles," unless he mean that it must needs be extrinsic, new, and lent for the time; our own showing so little sign of purification and cleanness, fit for such an office.

They act quite contrary to the stoical precepts, who do indeed command us to correct the imperfections and vices we know ourselves guilty of, but forbid us therefore to disturb the repose of our souls: these make us believe that they have great grief and remorse within: but of amendment, correction, or interruption, they make nothing appear. It cannot be a cure if the malady be not wholly discharged; if repentance were laid upon the scale of the balance, it would weigh down sin. I find no quality so easy to counterfeit as devotion, if men do not conform their manners and life to the profession; its essence is abstruse and occult; the appearance easy and ostentatious.

For my own part, I may desire in general to be other than I am; I may condemn and dislike my whole form, and beg of Almighty God for an entire reformation, and that He will please to pardon my natural infirmity: but I ought not to call this repentance, methinks, no more than the being dissatisfied that I am not an angel or Cato. My actions are regular, and conformable to what I am and to my condition; I can do no better; and repentance does not properly touch things that are not in our power; sorrow does.. I imagine an infinite number of natures more elevated and regular than mine; and yet I do not for all that improve my faculties, no more than my arm or will grow more strong and vigorous for conceiving those of another to be so. If to conceive and wish a nobler way of acting than that we have should produce a repentance of our own, we must then repent us of our most innocent actions, forasmuch as we may well suppose that in a more excellent nature they would have been carried on with greater dignity and perfection; and we would that ours were so. When I reflect upon the deportment of my youth, with that of my old age, I find that I have commonly behaved myself with equal order in both according to what I understand: this is all that my resistance can do. I do not flatter myself; in the same circumstances I should do the same things. It is not a patch, but rather an universal tincture, with which I am stained. I know no repentance, superficial, half-way, and ceremonious; it must sting me all over before I can call it so, and must prick my bowels as deeply and universally as God sees into me.

As to business, many excellent opportunities have escaped me for want of good management; and yet my deliberations were sound enough, according to the occurrences presented to me: 'tis their way to choose always the easiest and safest course. I find that, in my former resolves, I have proceeded with discretion, according to my own rule, and according to the state of the subject proposed, and should do the same a thousand years hence in like occasions; I do not consider what it is now, but what it was then, when I deliberated on it: the force of all counsel consists in the time; occasions and things eternally shift and change. I have in my life committed some important errors, not for want of good understanding, but for want of good luck. There are secret, and not to be

foreseen, parts in matters we have in hand, especially in the nature of men; mute conditions, that make no show, unknown sometimes even to the possessors themselves, that spring and start up by incidental occasions; if my prudence could not penetrate into nor foresee them, I blame it not: 'tis commissioned no further than its own limits; if the event be too hard for me, and take the side I have refused, there is no remedy; I do not blame myself, I accuse my fortune, and not my work; this cannot be called repentance.

Phocion, having given the Athenians an advice that was not followed, and the affair nevertheless succeeding contrary to his opinion, some one said to him, "Well, Phocion, art thou content that matters go so well?"—"I am very well content," replied he, "that this has happened so well, but I do not repent that I counselled the other." When any of my friends address themselves to me for advice, I give it candidly and clearly, without sticking, as almost all other men do, at the hazard of the thing's falling out contrary to my opinion, and that I may be reproached for my counsel; I am very indifferent as to that, for the fault will be theirs for having consulted me, and I could not refuse them that office. —[We may give advice to others, says Rochefoucauld, but we cannot supply them with the wit to profit by it.]

I, for my own part, can rarely blame any one but myself for my oversights and misfortunes, for indeed I seldom solicit the advice of another, if not by honour of ceremony, or excepting where I stand in need of information, special science, or as to matter of fact. But in things wherein I stand in need of nothing but judgment, other men's reasons may serve to fortify my own, but have little power to dissuade me; I hear them all with civility and patience; but, to my recollection, I never made use of any but my own. With me, they are but flies and atoms, that confound and distract my will; I lay no great stress upon my opinions; but I lay as little upon those of others, and fortune rewards me accordingly: if I receive but little advice, I also give but little. I am seldom consulted, and still more seldom believed, and know no concern, either public or private, that has been mended or bettered by my advice. Even they whom fortune had in some sort tied to my direction, have more willingly suffered themselves to be governed by any other counsels than mine. And as a man who am as jealous of my repose as of my authority, I am better pleased that it should be so; in leaving me there, they humour what I profess, which is to settle and wholly contain myself within myself. I take a pleasure in being uninterested in other men's affairs, and disengaged from being their warranty, and responsible for what they do.

In all affairs that are past, be it how it will, I have very little regret; for this imagination puts me out of my pain, that they were so to fall out they are in the great revolution of the world, and in the chain of stoical 'causes: your fancy cannot, by wish and imagination, move one tittle, but that the great current of things will not reverse both the past and the future.

As to the rest, I abominate that incidental repentance which old age brings along with it. He, who said of old, that he was obliged to his age for having weaned him from pleasure, was of another opinion than I am; I can never think myself beholden to impotency for any good it can do to me:

"Nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab opere suo providentia,  
ut debilitas inter optima inventa sit."

["Nor can Providence ever seem so averse to her own work, that debility should be found to be amongst the best things."

—Quintilian, *Instit. Orat.*, v. 12.]

Our appetites are rare in old age; a profound satiety seizes us after the act; in this I see nothing of conscience; chagrin and weakness imprint in us a drowsy and rheumatic virtue. We must not suffer ourselves to be so wholly carried away by natural alterations as to suffer our judgments to be imposed upon by them. Youth and pleasure have not formerly so far prevailed with me, that I did not well enough discern the face of vice in pleasure; neither does the distaste that years have brought me, so far prevail with me now, that I cannot discern pleasure in vice. Now that I am no more in my flourishing age, I judge as well of these things as if I were.

["Old though I am, for ladies' love unfit,  
The power of beauty I remember yet."—Chaucer.]

I, who narrowly and strictly examine it, find my reason the very same it was in my most licentious age, except, perhaps, that 'tis weaker and more decayed by being grown older; and I find that the pleasure it refuses me upon the account of my bodily health, it would no more refuse now, in consideration of the health of my soul, than at any time heretofore. I do not repute it the more valiant for not being able to combat; my temptations are so broken and mortified, that they are not worth its opposition; holding but out my hands, I repel them. Should one present the old concupiscence before it, I fear it would have less power to resist it than heretofore; I do not discern that in itself it judges anything otherwise now than it formerly did, nor that it has acquired any new light: wherefore, if there be convalescence, 'tis an enchanted one. Miserable kind of remedy, to owe one's health to one's disease! 'Tis not that our misfortune should perform this office, but the good fortune of our judgment. I am not to be made to do anything by persecutions and afflictions, but to curse them: that is, for people who cannot be roused but by a whip. My reason is much more free in prosperity, and much more distracted, and put to't to digest pains than pleasures: I see best in a clear sky; health admonishes me more cheerfully, and to better purpose, than sickness. I did all that in me lay to reform and regulate myself from pleasures, at a time when I had health and vigour to enjoy them; I should be ashamed and envious that the misery and misfortune of my old age should have credit over my good healthful, sprightly, and vigorous years, and that men should estimate me, not by what I have been, but by what I have ceased to be.

In my opinion, 'tis the happy living, and not (as Antisthenes' said) the happy dying, in which human felicity consists. I have not made it my business to make a monstrous addition of a philosopher's tail to the head and body of a libertine; nor would I have this wretched remainder give the lie to the pleasant, sound, and long part of my life: I would present myself uniformly throughout. Were I to live my life over again, I should live it just as I have lived it; I neither complain of the past, nor do I fear the future; and if I am not much deceived, I am the same within that I am without. 'Tis one main obligation I have to my fortune, that the succession of my bodily estate has been carried on according to the natural seasons; I have seen the grass, the blossom, and the fruit, and now see the withering; happily, however, because naturally. I bear the infirmities I have the better, because they came not till I had reason to expect them, and because also they make me with greater pleasure remember that long felicity of my past life. My wisdom may have been just the same in both ages, but it was more active, and of better grace whilst young and sprightly, than now it is when broken, peevish, and uneasy. I repudiate, then, these casual and painful reformations. God must touch our hearts; our consciences must amend of themselves, by the aid of our reason, and not by the decay of our appetites; pleasure is, in itself, neither pale nor discoloured, to be discerned by dim and decayed eyes.

We ought to love temperance for itself, and because God has commanded that and chastity; but that which we are reduced to by catarrhs, and for which I am indebted to the stone, is neither chastity nor temperance; a man cannot boast that he despises and resists pleasure if he cannot see it, if he knows not what it is, and cannot discern its graces, its force, and most alluring beauties; I know both the one and the other, and may therefore the better say it. But; methinks, our souls in old age are subject to more troublesome maladies and imperfections than in youth; I said the same when young and when I was reproached with the want of a beard; and I say so now that my grey hairs give me some authority. We call the difficulty of our humours and the disrelish of present things wisdom; but, in truth, we do not so much forsake vices as we change them, and in my opinion, for worse. Besides a foolish and feeble pride, an impertinent prating, froward and insociable humours, superstition, and a ridiculous desire of riches when we have lost the use of them, I find there more envy, injustice, and malice. Age imprints more wrinkles in the mind than it does on the face; and souls are never, or very rarely seen, that, in growing old, do not smell sour and musty. Man moves all together, both towards his perfection and decay. In observing the wisdom of Socrates, and many circumstances of his condemnation, I should dare to believe that he in some sort himself purposely, by collusion, contributed to it, seeing that, at the age of seventy years, he might fear to suffer the lofty motions of his mind to be cramped and his wonted lustre obscured. What strange metamorphoses do I see age every day make in many of my acquaintance! 'Tis a potent malady, and that naturally and imperceptibly steals into us; a vast provision of study and great precaution are required to evade the imperfections it loads us with, or at least to weaken their progress. I find that, notwithstanding all my entrenchments, it gets foot by foot upon me: I make the best resistance I can, but I do not know to what at last it will reduce me. But fall out what will, I am

content the world may know, when I am fallen, from what I fell.

### CHAPTER III. OF THREE COMMERCES

We must not rivet ourselves so fast to our humours and complexions: our chiefest sufficiency is to know how to apply ourselves to divers employments. 'Tis to be, but not to live, to keep a man's self tied and bound by necessity to one only course; those are the bravest souls that have in them the most variety and pliancy. Of this here is an honourable testimony of the elder Cato:

"Huic versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit,  
ut natum ad id unum diceret, quodcumque ageret."

["His parts were so pliable to all uses, that one would say he had been born only to that which he was doing."—Livy, xxxix. 49.]

Had I liberty to set myself forth after my own mode, there is no so graceful fashion to which I would be so fixed as not to be able to disengage myself from it; life is an unequal, irregular and multiform motion. 'Tis not to be a friend to one's self, much less a master 'tis to be a slave, incessantly to be led by the nose by one's self, and to be so fixed in one's previous inclinations, that one cannot turn aside nor writhe one's neck out of the collar. I say this now in this part of my life, wherein I find I cannot easily disengage myself from the importunity of my soul, which cannot ordinarily amuse itself but in things of limited range, nor employ itself otherwise than entirely and with all its force; upon the lightest subject offered it expands and stretches it to that degree as therein to employ its utmost power; wherefore it is that idleness is to me a very painful labour, and very prejudicial to my health. Most men's minds require foreign matter to exercise and enliven them; mine has rather need of it to sit still and repose itself,

"Vitia otii negotio discutienda sunt,"

["The vices of sloth are to be shaken off by business."]

—Seneca, Ep. 56.]

for its chiefest and hardest study is to study itself. Books are to it a sort of employment that debauch it from its study. Upon the first thoughts that possess it, it begins to bustle and make trial of its vigour in all directions, exercises its power of handling, now making trial of force, now fortifying, moderating, and ranging itself by the way of grace and order. It has of its own wherewith to rouse its faculties: nature has given to it, as to all others, matter enough of its own to make advantage of, and subjects proper enough where it may either invent or judge.

Meditation is a powerful and full study to such as can effectually taste and employ themselves; I had rather fashion my soul than furnish it. There is no employment, either more weak or more strong, than that of entertaining a man's own thoughts, according as the soul is; the greatest men make it their whole business,

"Quibus vivere est cogitare;"

["To whom to live is to think."—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., v. 28.]

nature has therefore favoured it with this privilege, that there is nothing we can do so long, nor any action to which we more frequently and with greater facility addict ourselves. 'Tis the business of the gods, says Aristotle, and from which both their beatitude and ours proceed.

The principal use of reading to me is, that by various objects it rouses my reason, and employs my judgment, not my memory. Few conversations detain me without force and effort; it is true that beauty and elegance of speech take as much or more with me than the weight and depth of the subject; and forasmuch as I am apt to be sleepy in all other communication, and give but the rind of my attention, it often falls out that in such poor and pitiful discourses, mere chatter, I either make drowsy, unmeaning answers, unbecoming a child, and ridiculous, or more foolishly and rudely still, maintain an obstinate silence. I have a pensive way that withdraws me into myself, and,

with that, a heavy and childish ignorance of many very ordinary things, by which two qualities I have earned this, that men may truly relate five or six as ridiculous tales of me as of any other man whatever.

But, to proceed in my subject, this difficult complexion of mine renders me very nice in my conversation with men, whom I must cull and pick out for my purpose; and unfits me for common society. We live and negotiate with the people; if their conversation be troublesome to us, if we disdain to apply ourselves to mean and vulgar souls (and the mean and vulgar are often as regular as those of the finest thread, and all wisdom is folly that does not accommodate itself to the common ignorance), we must no more intermeddle either with other men's affairs or our own; for business, both public and private, has to do with these people. The least forced and most natural motions of the soul are the most beautiful; the best employments, those that are least strained. My God! how good an office does wisdom to those whose desires it limits to their power! that is the most useful knowledge: "according to what a man can," was the favourite sentence and motto of Socrates. A motto of great solidity.

We must moderate and adapt our desires to the nearest and easiest to be acquired things. Is it not a foolish humour of mine to separate myself from a thousand to whom my fortune has conjoined me, and without whom I cannot live, and cleave to one or two who are out of my intercourse; or rather a fantastic desire of a thing I cannot obtain? My gentle and easy manners, enemies of all sourness and harshness, may easily enough have secured me from envy and animosities; to be beloved, I do not say, but never any man gave less occasion of being hated; but the coldness of my conversation has, reasonably enough, deprived me of the goodwill of many, who are to be excused if they interpret it in another and worse sense.

I am very capable of contracting and maintaining rare and exquisite friendships; for by reason that I so greedily seize upon such acquaintance as fit my liking, I throw myself with such violence upon them that I hardly fail to stick, and to make an impression where I hit; as I have often made happy proof. In ordinary friendships I am somewhat cold and shy, for my motion is not natural, if not with full sail: besides which, my fortune having in my youth given me a relish for one sole and perfect friendship, has, in truth, created in me a kind of distaste to others, and too much imprinted in my fancy that it is a beast of company, as the ancient said, but not of the herd. —[Plutarch, On the Plurality of Friends, c. 2.]— And also I have a natural difficulty of communicating myself by halves, with the modifications and the servile and jealous prudence required in the conversation of numerous and imperfect friendships: and we are principally enjoined to these in this age of ours, when we cannot talk of the world but either with danger or falsehood.

Yet do I very well discern that he who has the conveniences (I mean the essential conveniences) of life for his end, as I have, ought to fly these difficulties and delicacy of humour, as much as the plague. I should commend a soul of several stages, that knows both how to stretch and to slacken itself; that finds itself at ease in all conditions whither fortune leads it; that can discourse with a neighbour, of his building, his hunting, his quarrels; that can chat with a carpenter or a gardener with pleasure. I envy those who can render themselves familiar with the meanest of their followers, and talk with them in their own way; and dislike the advice of Plato, that men should always speak in a magisterial tone to their servants, whether men or women, without being sometimes facetious and familiar; for besides the reasons I have given, 'tis inhuman and unjust to set so great a value upon this pitiful prerogative of fortune, and the polities wherein less disparity is permitted betwixt masters and servants seem to me the most equitable. Others study how to raise and elevate their minds; I, how to humble mine and to bring it low; 'tis only vicious in extension:

"Narras et genus AEaci,  
Et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio  
Quo Chium pretio cadum  
Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,  
Quo praebente domum, et quota,  
Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces."

["You tell us long stories about the race of AEacus, and the battles fought under sacred Ilium; but what to give for a cask of Chian

wine, who shall prepare the warm bath, and in whose house, and when  
I may escape from the Pelignian cold, you do not tell us."  
—Horace, *Od.*, iii. 19, 3.]

Thus, as the Lacedaemonian valour stood in need of moderation, and of the sweet and harmonious sound of flutes to soften it in battle, lest they should precipitate themselves into temerity and fury, whereas all other nations commonly make use of harsh and shrill sounds, and of loud and imperious cries, to incite and heat the soldier's courage to the last degree; so, methinks, contrary to the usual method, in the practice of our minds, we have for the most part more need of lead than of wings; of temperance and composedness than of ardour and agitation. But, above all things, 'tis in my opinion egregiously to play the fool, to put on the grave airs of a man of lofty mind amongst those who are nothing of the sort: ever to speak in print (by the book),

"Favellare in puma di forchetta."

["To talk with the point of a fork," (affectedly)]

You must let yourself down to those with whom you converse; and sometimes affect ignorance: lay aside power and subtilty in common conversation; to preserve decorum and order 'tis enough—nay, crawl on the earth, if they so desire it.

The learned often stumble at this stone; they will always be parading their pedantic science, and strew their books everywhere; they have, in these days, so filled the cabinets and ears of the ladies with them, that if they have lost the substance, they at least retain the words; so as in all discourse upon all sorts of subjects, how mean and common soever, they speak and write after a new and learned way,

"Hoc sermone pavent, hoc iram, gaudia, curas,  
Hoc cuncta effundunt animi secreta; quid ultra?  
Concumbunt docte;"

["In this language do they express their fears, their anger, their  
joys, their cares; in this pour out all their secrets; what more?  
they lie with their lovers learnedly."—Juvenal, vi. 189.]

and quote Plato and Aquinas in things the first man they meet could determine as well; the learning that cannot penetrate their souls hangs still upon the tongue. If people of quality will be persuaded by me, they shall content themselves with setting out their proper and natural treasures; they conceal and cover their beauties under others that are none of theirs: 'tis a great folly to put out their own light and shine by a borrowed lustre: they are interred and buried under 'de capsula totae' —[Painted and perfumed from head to foot." (Or:) "as if they were things carefully deposited in a band-box."—Seneca, *Ep.* 115]—It is because they do not sufficiently know themselves or do themselves justice: the world has nothing fairer than they; 'tis for them to honour the arts, and to paint painting. What need have they of anything but to live beloved and honoured? They have and know but too much for this: they need do no more but rouse and heat a little the faculties they have of their own. When I see them tampering with rhetoric, law, logic, and other drugs, so improper and unnecessary for their business, I begin to suspect that the men who inspire them with such fancies, do it that they may govern them upon that account; for what other excuse can I contrive? It is enough that they can, without our instruction, compose the graces of their eyes to gaiety, severity, sweetness, and season a denial with asperity, suspense, or favour: they need not another to interpret what we speak for their service; with this knowledge, they command with a switch, and rule both the tutors and the schools. But if, nevertheless, it angers them to give place to us in anything whatever, and will, out of curiosity, have their share in books, poetry is a diversion proper for them; 'tis a wanton, subtle, dissembling, and prating art, all pleasure and all show, like themselves. They may also abstract several commodities from history. In philosophy, out of the moral part of it, they may select such instructions as will teach them to judge of our humours and conditions, to defend themselves from our treacheries, to regulate the ardour of their own desires, to manage their liberty, to lengthen the pleasures of life, and gently to bear the inconstancy of a lover, the rudeness of a husband; and the importunity of years, wrinkles, and the like. This is the utmost of what I would allow them in the sciences.

There are some particular natures that are private and retired: my natural way is proper for communication, and apt to lay me open; I am all without and in sight, born for society and friendship. The solitude that I love myself and recommend to others, is chiefly no other than to withdraw my thoughts and affections into myself; to restrain and check, not my steps, but my own cares and desires, resigning all foreign solicitude, and mortally avoiding servitude and obligation, and not so much the crowd of men as the crowd of business. Local solitude, to say the truth, rather gives me more room and sets me more at large; I more readily throw myself upon affairs of state and the world when I am alone. At the Louvre and in the bustle of the court, I fold myself within my own skin; the crowd thrusts me upon myself; and I never entertain myself so wantonly, with so much licence, or so especially, as in places of respect and ceremonious prudence: our follies do not make me laugh, it is our wisdom which does. I am naturally no enemy to a court, life; I have therein passed a part of my own, and am of a humour cheerfully to frequent great company, provided it be by intervals and at my own time: but this softness of judgment whereof I speak ties me perforce to solitude. Even at home, amidst a numerous family, and in a house sufficiently frequented, I see people enough, but rarely such with whom I delight to converse; and I there reserve both for myself and others an unusual liberty: there is in my house no such thing as ceremony, ushering, or waiting upon people down to the coach, and such other troublesome ceremonies as our courtesy enjoins (O the servile and importunate custom!). Every one there governs himself according to his own method; let who will speak his thoughts, I sit mute, meditating and shut up in my closet, without any offence to my guests.

The men whose society and familiarity I covet are those they call sincere and able men; and the image of these makes me disrelish the rest. It is, if rightly taken, the rarest of our forms, and a form that we chiefly owe to nature. The end of this commerce is simply privacy, frequentation and conference, the exercise of souls, without other fruit. In our discourse, all subjects are alike to me; let there be neither weight, nor depth, 'tis all one: there is yet grace and pertinency; all there is tinted with a mature and constant judgment, and mixed with goodness, freedom, gaiety, and friendship. 'Tis not only in talking of the affairs of kings and state that our wits discover their force and beauty, but every whit as much in private conferences. I understand my men even by their silence and smiles; and better discover them, perhaps, at table than in the council. Hippomachus said, very well, " that he could know the good wrestlers by only seeing them walk in the street." If learning please to step into our talk, it shall not be rejected, not magisterial, imperious, and importunate, as—it commonly is, but suffragan and docile itself; we there only seek to pass away our time; when we have a mind to be instructed and preached to, we will go seek this in its throne; please let it humble itself to us for the nonce; for, useful and profitable as it is, I imagine that, at need, we may manage well enough without it, and do our business without its assistance. A well-descended soul, and practised in the conversation of men, will of herself render herself sufficiently agreeable; art is nothing but the counterpart and register of what such souls produce.

The conversation also of beautiful and honourable women is for me a sweet commerce:

"*Nam nos quoque oculos eruditos habemus.*"

["For we also have eyes that are versed in the matter."]

—Cicero, *Paradox*, v. 2.]

If the soul has not therein so much to enjoy, as in the first the bodily senses, which participate more of this, bring it to a proportion next to, though, in my opinion, not equal to the other. But 'tis a commerce wherein a man must stand a little upon his guard, especially those, where the body can do much, as in me. I there scalded myself in my youth, and suffered all the torments that poets say befall those who precipitate themselves into love without order and judgment. It is true that that whipping has made me wiser since:

"*Quicumque Argolica de classe Capharea fugit,  
Semper ab Euboicis vela retorquet aquis.*"

["Whoever of the Grecian fleet has escaped the Capharean rocks, ever takes care to steer from the Euboean sea."—Ovid, *Trist.*, i. i, 83.]

'Tis folly to fix all a man's thoughts upon it, and to engage in it with a furious and indiscreet affection; but, on the other hand, to engage there without love and without inclination, like comedians, to play a common part, without

putting anything to it of his own but words, is indeed to provide for his safety, but, withal, after as cowardly a manner as he who should abandon his honour, profit, or pleasure for fear of danger. For it is certain that from such a practice, they who set it on foot can expect no fruit that can please or satisfy a noble soul. A man must have, in good earnest, desired that which he, in good earnest, expects to have a pleasure in enjoying; I say, though fortune should unjustly favour their dissimulation; which often falls out, because there is none of the sex, let her be as ugly as the devil, who does not think herself well worthy to be beloved, and who does not prefer herself before other women, either for her youth, the colour of her hair, or her graceful motion (for there are no more women universally ugly, than there are women universally beautiful, and such of the Brahmin virgins as have nothing else to recommend them, the people being assembled by the common crier to that effect, come out into the market-place to expose their matrimonial parts to public view, to try if these at least are not of temptation sufficient to get them a husband). Consequently, there is not one who does not easily suffer herself to be overcome by the first vow that they make to serve her. Now from this common and ordinary treachery of the men of the present day, that must fall out which we already experimentally see, either that they rally together, and separate themselves by themselves to evade us, or else form their discipline by the example we give them, play their parts of the farce as we do ours, and give themselves up to the sport, without passion, care, or love;

"Neque affectui suo, aut alieno, obnoxiae;"

["Neither amenable to their own affections, nor those of others."]

— Tacitus, *Annal.*, xiii. 45.]

believing, according to the persuasion of Lysias in Plato, that they may with more utility and convenience surrender themselves up to us the less we love them; where it will fall out, as in comedies, that the people will have as much pleasure or more than the comedians. For my part, I no more acknowledge a Venus without a Cupid than, a mother without issue: they are things that mutually lend and owe their essence to one another. Thus this cheat recoils upon him who is guilty of it; it does not cost him much, indeed, but he also gets little or nothing by it. They who have made Venus a goddess have taken notice that her principal beauty was incorporeal and spiritual; but the Venus whom these people hunt after is not so much as human, nor indeed brutal; the very beasts will not accept it so gross and so earthly; we see that imagination and desire often heat and incite them before the body does; we see in both the one sex and the other, they have in the herd choice and particular election in their affections, and that they have amongst themselves a long commerce of good will. Even those to whom old age denies the practice of their desire, still tremble, neigh, and twitter for love; we see them, before the act, full of hope and ardour, and when the body has played its game, yet please themselves with the sweet remembrance of the past delight; some that swell with pride after they have performed, and others who, tired and sated, still by vociferation express a triumphing joy. He who has nothing to do but only to discharge his body of a natural necessity, need not trouble others with so curious preparations: it is not meat for a gross, coarse appetite.

As one who does not desire that men should think me better than I am, I will here say this as to the errors of my youth. Not only from the danger of impairing my health (and yet I could not be so careful but that I had two light mischances), but moreover upon the account of contempt, I have seldom given myself up to common and mercenary embraces: I would heighten the pleasure by the difficulty, by desire, and a certain kind of glory, and was of Tiberius's mind, who in his amours was as much taken with modesty and birth as any other quality, and of the courtesan Flora's humour, who never lent herself to less than a dictator, a consul, or a censor, and took pleasure in the dignity of her lovers. Doubtless pearls and gold tissue, titles and train, add something to it.

As to the rest, I had a great esteem for wit, provided the person was not exceptionable; for, to confess the truth, if the one or the other of these two attractions must of necessity be wanting, I should rather have quitted that of the understanding, that has its use in better things; but in the subject of love, a subject principally relating to the senses of seeing and touching, something may be done without the graces of the mind: without the graces of the body, nothing. Beauty is the true prerogative of women, and so peculiarly their own, that ours, though naturally requiring another sort of feature, is never in its lustre but when youthful and beardless, a sort of confused image of theirs. 'Tis said that such as serve the Grand Signior upon the account of beauty, who are an infinite number, are, at the latest, dismissed at two-and-twenty years of age. Reason, prudence, and the offices of friendship are better

found amongst men, and therefore it is that they govern the affairs of the world.

These two engagements are fortuitous, and depending upon others; the one is troublesome by its rarity, the other withers with age, so that they could never have been sufficient for the business of my life. That of books, which is the third, is much more certain, and much more our own. It yields all other advantages to the two first, but has the constancy and facility of its service for its own share. It goes side by side with me in my whole course, and everywhere is assisting me: it comforts me in old age and solitude; it eases me of a troublesome weight of idleness, and delivers me at all hours from company that I dislike: it blunts the point of griefs, if they are not extreme, and have not got an entire possession of my soul. To divert myself from a troublesome fancy, 'tis but to run to my books; they presently fix me to them and drive the other out of my thoughts, and do not mutiny at seeing that I have only recourse to them for want of other more real, natural, and lively commodities; they always receive me with the same kindness. He may well go a foot, they say, who leads his horse in his hand; and our James, King of Naples and Sicily, who, handsome, young and healthful, caused himself to be carried about on a barrow, extended upon a pitiful mattress in a poor robe of grey cloth, and a cap of the same, yet attended withal by a royal train, litters, led horses of all sorts, gentlemen and officers, did yet herein represent a tender and unsteady authority: "The sick man has not to complain who has his cure in his sleeve." In the experience and practice of this maxim, which is a very true one, consists all the benefit I reap from books. As a matter of fact, I make no more use of them, as it were, than those who know them not. I enjoy them as misers do their money, in knowing that I may enjoy them when I please: my mind is satisfied with this right of possession. I never travel without books, either in peace or war; and yet sometimes I pass over several days, and sometimes months, without looking on them. I will read by—and—by, say I to myself, or to-morrow, or when I please; and in the interim, time steals away without any inconvenience. For it is not to be imagined to what degree I please myself and rest content in this consideration, that I have them by me to divert myself with them when I am so disposed, and to call to mind what a refreshment they are to my life. 'Tis the best viaticum I have yet found out for this human journey, and I very much pity those men of understanding who are unprovided of it. I the rather accept of any other sort of diversion, how light soever, because this can never fail me.

When at home, I a little more frequent my library, whence I overlook at once all the concerns of my family. 'Tis situated at the entrance into my house, and I thence see under me my garden, court, and base-court, and almost all parts of the building. There I turn over now one book, and then another, on various subjects, without method or design. One while I meditate, another I record and dictate, as I walk to and fro, such whimsies as these I present to you here. 'Tis in the third storey of a tower, of which the ground-room is my chapel, the second storey a chamber with a withdrawing-room and closet, where I often lie, to be more retired; and above is a great wardrobe. This formerly was the most useless part of the house. I there pass away both most of the days of my life and most of the hours of those days. In the night I am never there. There is by the side of it a cabinet handsome enough, with a fireplace very commodiously contrived, and plenty of light; and were I not more afraid of the trouble than the expense—the trouble that frights me from all business—I could very easily adjoin on either side, and on the same floor, a gallery of an hundred paces long and twelve broad, having found walls already raised for some other design to the requisite height. Every place of retirement requires a walk: my thoughts sleep if I sit still: my fancy does not go by itself, as when my legs move it: and all those who study without a book are in the same condition. The figure of my study is round, and there is no more open wall than what is taken up by my table and my chair, so that the remaining parts of the circle present me a view of all my books at once, ranged upon five rows of shelves round about me. It has three noble and free prospects, and is sixteen paces in diameter. I am not so continually there in winter; for my house is built upon an eminence, as its name imports, and no part of it is so much exposed to the wind and weather as this, which pleases me the better, as being of more difficult access and a little remote, as well upon the account of exercise, as also being there more retired from the crowd. 'Tis there that I am in my kingdom, and there I endeavour to make myself an absolute monarch, and to sequester this one corner from all society, conjugal, filial, and civil; elsewhere I have but verbal authority only, and of a confused essence. That man, in my opinion, is very miserable, who has not at home where to be by himself, where to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. Ambition sufficiently plagues her proselytes, by keeping them always in show, like the statue of a public square:

"Magna servitus est magna fortuna."  
["A great fortune is a great slavery."  
—Seneca, De Consol. ad. Polyb., c. 26.]

They cannot so much as be private in the watercloset. I have thought nothing so severe in the austerity of life that our monks affect, as what I have observed in some of their communities; namely, by rule, to have a perpetual society of place, and numerous persons present in every action whatever; and think it much more supportable to be always alone than never to be so.

If any one shall tell me that it is to undervalue the Muses to make use of them only for sport and to pass away the time, I shall tell him, that he does not know so well as I the value of the sport, the pleasure, and the pastime; I can hardly forbear to add that all other end is ridiculous. I live from day to day, and, with reverence be it spoken, I only live for myself; there all my designs terminate. I studied, when young, for ostentation; since, to make myself a little wiser; and now for my diversion, but never for any profit. A vain and prodigal humour I had after this sort of furniture, not only for the supplying my own need, but, moreover, for ornament and outward show, I have since quite cured myself of.

Books have many charming qualities to such as know how to choose them; but every good has its ill; 'tis a pleasure that is not pure and clean, no more than others: it has its inconveniences, and great ones too. The soul indeed is exercised therein; but the body, the care of which I must withal never neglect, remains in the meantime without action, and grows heavy and sombre. I know no excess more prejudicial to me, nor more to be avoided in this my declining age.

These have been my three favourite and particular occupations; I speak not of those I owe to the world by civil obligation.

## CHAPTER IV. OF DIVERSION

I was once employed in consoling a lady truly afflicted. Most of their mournings are artificial and ceremonious:

"Uberibus semper lacrymis, semperque paratis,  
In statione subatque expectantibus illam,  
Quo jubeat manare modo."

["A woman has ever a fountain of tears ready to gush up whenever she requires to make use of them."—Juvenal, vi. 272.]

A man goes the wrong way to work when he opposes this passion; for opposition does but irritate and make them more obstinate in sorrow; the evil is exasperated by discussion. We see, in common discourse, that what I have indifferently let fall from me, if any one takes it up to controvert it, I justify it with the best arguments I have; and much more a thing wherein I had a real interest. And besides, in so doing you enter roughly upon your operation; whereas the first addresses of a physician to his patient should be gracious, gay, and pleasing; never did any ill-looking, morose physician do anything to purpose. On the contrary, then, a man should, at the first approaches, favour their grief and express some approbation of their sorrow. By this intelligence you obtain credit to proceed further, and by a facile and insensible gradation fall into discourses more solid and proper for their cure. I, whose aim it was principally to gull the company who had their eyes fixed upon me, took it into my head only to palliate the disease. And indeed I have found by experience that I have an unlucky hand in persuading. My arguments are either too sharp and dry, or pressed too roughly, or not home enough. After I had some time applied myself to her grief, I did not attempt to cure her by strong and lively reasons, either because I had them not at hand, or because I thought to do my business better another way; neither did I make choice of any of those methods of consolation which philosophy prescribes: that what we complain of is no evil, according to Cleanthes; that it is a light evil, according to the Peripatetics; that to bemoan one's self is an action neither commendable nor just, according to

Chrysippus; nor this of Epicurus, more suitable to my way, of shifting the thoughts from afflicting things to those that are pleasing; nor making a bundle of all these together, to make use of upon occasion, according to Cicero; but, gently bending my discourse, and by little and little digressing, sometimes to subjects nearer, and sometimes more remote from the purpose, according as she was more intent on what I said, I imperceptibly led her from that sorrowful thought, and kept her calm and in good-humour whilst I continued there. I herein made use of diversion. They who succeeded me in the same service did not, for all that, find any amendment in her, for I had not gone to the root.

I, peradventure, may elsewhere have glanced upon some sort of public diversions; and the practice of military ones, which Pericles made use of in the Peloponnesian war, and a thousand others in other places, to withdraw the adverse forces from their own countries, is too frequent in history. It was an ingenious evasion whereby Monseigneur d'Hempricourt saved both himself and others in the city of Liege, into which the Duke of Burgundy, who kept it besieged, had made him enter to execute the articles of their promised surrender; the people, being assembled by night to consider of it, began to mutiny against the agreement, and several of them resolved to fall upon the commissioners, whom they had in their power; he, feeling the gusts of this first popular storm, who were coming to rush into his lodgings, suddenly sent out to them two of the inhabitants of the city (of whom he had some with him) with new and milder terms to be proposed in their council, which he had then and there contrived for his need: These two diverted the first tempest, carrying back the enraged rabble to the town-hall to hear and consider of what they had to say. The deliberation was short; a second storm arose as violent as the other, whereupon he despatched four new mediators of the same quality to meet them, protesting that he had now better conditions to present them with, and such as would give them absolute satisfaction, by which means the tumult was once more appeased, and the people again turned back to the conclave. In fine, by this dispensation of amusements, one after another, diverting their fury and dissipating it in frivolous consultations, he laid it at last asleep till the day appeared, which was his principal end.

This other story that follows is also of the same category. Atalanta, a virgin of excelling beauty and of wonderful disposition of body, to disengage herself from the crowd of a thousand suitors who sought her in marriage, made this proposition, that she would accept of him for her husband who should equal her in running, upon condition that they who failed should lose their lives. There were enough who thought the prize very well worth the hazard, and who suffered the cruel penalty of the contract. Hippomenes, about to make trial after the rest, made his address to the goddess of love, imploring her assistance; and she, granting his request, gave him three golden apples, and instructed him how to use them. The race beginning, as Hippomenes perceived his mistress to press hard up to him; he, as it were by chance, let fall one of these apples; the maid, taken with the beauty of it, failed not to step out of her way to pick it up:

"Obstupuit Virgo, nitidique cupidine pomi  
Declinat cursus, aurumque volubile tollit."

["The virgin, astonished and attracted by the glittering apple,  
stops her career, and seizes the rolling gold."]

—Ovid, *Metam.*, x. 666.]

He did the same, when he saw his time, by the second and the third, till by so diverting her, and making her lose so much ground, he won the race. When physicians cannot stop a catarrh, they divert and turn it into some other less dangerous part. And I find also that this is the most ordinary practice for the diseases of the mind:

"Abducendus etiam nonnunquam animus est ad alia studia,  
sollicitudines, curas, negotia: loci denique mutatione,  
tanquam aegroti non convalescentes, saepe curandus est."

["The mind is sometimes to be diverted to other studies, thoughts,  
cares, business: in fine, by change of place, as where sick persons  
do not become convalescent."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, iv. 35.]

'Tis to little effect directly to jostle a man's infirmities; we neither make him sustain nor repel the attack; we only make him decline and evade it.

This other lesson is too high and too difficult: 'tis for men of the first form of knowledge purely to insist upon the thing, to consider and judge it; it appertains to one sole Socrates to meet death with an ordinary countenance, to grow acquainted with it, and to sport with it; he seeks no consolation out of the thing itself; dying appears to him a natural and indifferent accident; 'tis there that he fixes his sight and resolution, without looking elsewhere. The disciples of Hegesias, who starved themselves to death, animated thereunto by his fine lectures, and in such numbers that King Ptolemy ordered he should be forbidden to entertain his followers with such homicidal doctrines, did not consider death in itself, neither did they judge of it; it was not there they fixed their thoughts; they ran towards and aimed at a new being.

The poor wretches whom we see brought upon the scaffold, full of ardent devotion, and therein, as much as in them lies, employing all their senses, their ears in hearing the instructions given them, their eyes and hands lifted up towards heaven, their voices in loud prayers, with a vehement and continual emotion, do doubtless things very commendable and proper for such a necessity: we ought to commend them for their devotion, but not properly for their constancy; they shun the encounter, they divert their thoughts from the consideration of death, as children are amused with some toy or other when the surgeon is going to give them a prick with his lancet. I have seen some, who, casting their eyes upon the dreadful instruments of death round about, have fainted, and furiously turned their thoughts another way; such as are to pass a formidable precipice are advised either to shut their eyes or to look another way.

Subrius Flavius, being by Nero's command to be put to death, and by the hand of Niger, both of them great captains, when they lead him to the place appointed for his execution, seeing the grave that Niger had caused to be hollowed to put him into ill-made: "Neither is this," said he, turning to the soldiers who guarded him, "according to military discipline." And to Niger, who exhorted him to keep his head firm: "Do but thou strike as firmly," said he. And he very well foresaw what would follow when he said so; for Niger's arm so trembled that he had several blows at his head before he could cut it off. This man seems to have had his thoughts rightly fixed upon the subject.

He who dies in a battle, with his sword in his hand, does not then think of death; he feels or considers it not; the ardour of the fight diverts his thought another way. A worthy man of my acquaintance, falling as he was fighting a duel, and feeling himself nailed to the earth by nine or ten thrusts of his enemy, every one present called to him to think of his conscience; but he has since told me, that though he very well heard what they said, it nothing moved him, and that he never thought of anything but how to disengage and revenge himself. He afterwards killed his man in that very duel. He who brought to L. Silanus the sentence of death, did him a very great kindness, in that, having received his answer, that he was well prepared to die, but not by base hands, he ran upon him with his soldiers to force him, and as he, unarmed as he was, obstinately defended himself with his fists and feet, he made him lose his life in the contest, by that means dissipating and diverting in a sudden and furious rage the painful apprehension of the lingering death to which he was designed.

We always think of something else; either the hope of a better life comforts and supports us, or the hope of our children's worth, or the future glory of our name, or the leaving behind the evils of this life, or the vengeance that threatens those who are the causes of our death, administers consolation to us:

*"Spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,*

*Supplicia hausurum scopulis, et nomine Dido*

*Saepe vocaturum . . . .*

*Audiam; et haec Manes veniet mihi fama sub imos."*

["I hope, however, if the pious gods have any power, thou wilt feel thy punishment amid the rocks, and will call on the name of Dido;

I shall hear, and this report will come to me below."—Aeneid, iv.

382, 387.]

Xenophon was sacrificing with a crown upon his head when one came to bring him news of the death of his son Gryllus, slain in the battle of Mantinea: at the first surprise of the news, he threw his crown to the ground; but understanding by the sequel of the narrative the manner of a most brave and valiant death, he took it up and replaced it upon his head. Epicurus himself, at his death, consoles himself upon the utility and eternity of his writings:

"Omnes clari et nobilitati labores fiunt tolerabiles;"

["All labours that are illustrious and famous become supportable."

—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 26.]

and the same wound, the same fatigue, is not, says Xenophon, so intolerable to a general of an army as to a common soldier. Epaminondas took his death much more cheerfully, having been informed that the victory remained to him:

"Haec sunt solatia, haec fomenta summorum dolorum;"

["These are sedatives and alleviations to the greatest pains."

—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 23.]

and such like circumstances amuse, divert, and turn our thoughts from the consideration of the thing in itself. Even the arguments of philosophy are always edging and glancing on the matter, so as scarce to rub its crust; the greatest man of the first philosophical school, and superintendent over all the rest, the great Zeno, forms this syllogism against death: "No evil is honourable; but death is honourable; therefore death is no evil"; against drunkenness this: "No one commits his secrets to a drunkard; but every one commits his secrets to a wise man: therefore a wise man is no drunkard." Is this to hit the white? I love to see that these great and leading souls cannot rid themselves of our company: perfect men as they are, they are yet simply men.

Revenge is a sweet passion, of great and natural impression; I discern it well enough, though I have no manner of experience of it. From this not long ago to divert a young prince, I did not tell him that he must, to him that had struck him upon the one cheek, turn the other, upon account of charity; nor go about to represent to him the tragical events that poetry attributes to this passion. I left that behind; and I busied myself to make him relish the beauty of a contrary image: and, by representing to him what honour, esteem, and goodwill he would acquire by clemency and good nature, diverted him to ambition. Thus a man is to deal in such cases.

If your passion of love be too violent, disperse it, say they, and they say true; for I have often tried it with advantage: break it into several desires, of which let one be regent, if you will, over the rest; but, lest it should tyrannise and domineer over you, weaken and protract, by dividing and diverting it:

"Cum morosa vago singultiet inguine vena,"

["When you are tormented with fierce desire, satisfy it with the first person that presents herself."—Persius, Sat., vi. 73.]

"Conjicito humorem collectum in corpora quaeque,"

[Lucretius, vi. 1062, to the like effect.]

and provide for it in time, lest it prove troublesome to deal with, when it has once seized you:

"Si non prima novis conturbes vulnera plagis,

Volgivaque vagus venere ante recentia cures."

["Unless you cure old wounds by new."—Lucretius, iv. 1064.]

I was once wounded with a vehement displeasure, and withal, more just than vehement; I might peradventure have lost myself in it, if I had merely trusted to my own strength. Having need of a powerful diversion to disengage me, by art and study I became amorous, wherein I was assisted by my youth: love relieved and rescued me from the evil wherein friendship had engaged me. 'Tis in everything else the same; a violent imagination hath

seized me: I find it a nearer way to change than to subdue it: I depute, if not one contrary, yet another at least, in its place. Variation ever relieves, dissolves, and dissipates.

If I am not able to contend with it, I escape from it; and in avoiding it, slip out of the way, and make, my doubles; shifting place, business, and company, I secure myself in the crowd of other thoughts and fancies, where it loses my trace, and I escape.

After the same manner does nature proceed, by the benefit of inconstancy; for time, which she has given us for the sovereign physician of our passions, chiefly works by this, that supplying our imaginations with other and new affairs, it loosens and dissolves the first apprehension, how strong soever. A wise man little less sees his friend dying at the end of five—and—twenty years than on the first year; and according to Epicurus, no less at all; for he did not attribute any alleviation of afflictions, either to their foresight or their antiquity; but so many other thoughts traverse this, that it languishes and tires at last.

Alcibiades, to divert the inclination of common rumours, cut off the ears and tail of his beautiful dog, and turned him out into the public place, to the end that, giving the people this occasion to prate, they might let his other actions alone. I have also seen, for this same end of diverting the opinions and conjectures of the people and to stop their mouths, some women conceal their real affections by those that were only counterfeit; but I have also seen some of them, who in counterfeiting have suffered themselves to be caught indeed, and who have quitted the true and original affection for the feigned: and so have learned that they who find their affections well placed are fools to consent to this disguise: the public and favourable reception being only reserved for this pretended lover, one may conclude him a fellow of very little address and less wit, if he does not in the end put himself into your place, and you into his; this is precisely to cut out and make up a shoe for another to draw on.

A little thing will turn and divert us, because a little thing holds us. We do not much consider subjects in gross and singly; they are little and superficial circumstances, or images that touch us, and the outward useless rinds that peel off from the subjects themselves:

"Folliculos ut nunc teretes aestate cicadae  
Linguunt."

["As husks we find grasshoppers leave behind them in summer."  
—"Lucretius, v. 801.]

Even Plutarch himself laments his daughter for the little apish tricks of her infancy. —[Consolation to his Wife on the Death of their Daughter, c. I.]— The remembrance of a farewell, of the particular grace of an action, of a last recommendation, afflict us. The sight of Caesar's robe troubled all Rome, which was more than his death had done. Even the sound of names ringing in our ears, as "my poor master,"—"my faithful friend,"—"alas, my dear father," or, "my sweet daughter," afflict us. When these repetitions annoy me, and that I examine it a little nearer, I find 'tis no other but a grammatical and word complaint; I am only wounded with the word and tone, as the exclamations of preachers very often work more upon their auditory than their reasons, and as the pitiful eyes of a beast killed for our service; without my weighing or penetrating meanwhile into the true and solid essence of my subject:

"His se stimulis dolor ipse lacessit."  
["With these incitements grief provokes itself."  
—Lucretius, ii. 42.]

These are the foundations of our mourning.

The obstinacy of my stone to all remedies especially those in my bladder, has sometimes thrown me into so long suppressions of urine for three or four days together, and so near death, that it had been folly to have hoped to evade it, and it was much rather to have been desired, considering the miseries I endure in those cruel fits. Oh, that good emperor, who caused criminals to be tied that they might die for want of urination, was a great master in

the hangman's' science! Finding myself in this condition, I considered by how many light causes and objects imagination nourished in me the regret of life; of what atoms the weight and difficulty of this dislodging was composed in my soul; to how many idle and frivolous thoughts we give way in so great an affair; a dog, a horse, a book, a glass, and what not, were considered in my loss; to others their ambitious hopes, their money, their knowledge, not less foolish considerations in my opinion than mine. I look upon death carelessly when I look upon it universally as the end of life. I insult over it in gross, but in detail it domineers over me: the tears of a footman, the disposing of my clothes, the touch of a friendly hand, a common consolation, discourages and softens me. So do the complaints in tragedies agitate our souls with grief; and the regrets of Dido and Ariadne, impassionate even those who believe them not in Virgil and Catullus. 'Tis a symptom of an obstinate and obdurate nature to be sensible of no emotion, as 'tis reported for a miracle of Polemon; but then he did not so much as alter his countenance at the biting of a mad dog that tore away the calf of his leg; and no wisdom proceeds so far as to conceive so vivid and entire a cause of sorrow, by judgment that it does not suffer increase by its presence, when the eyes and ears have their share; parts that are not to be moved but by vain accidents.

Is it reason that even the arts themselves should make an advantage of our natural stupidity and weakness? An orator, says rhetoric in the farce of his pleading, shall be moved with the sound of his own voice and feigned emotions, and suffer himself to be imposed upon by the passion he represents; he will imprint in himself a true and real grief, by means of the part he plays, to transmit it to the judges, who are yet less concerned than he: as they do who are hired at funerals to assist in the ceremony of sorrow, who sell their tears and mourning by weight and measure; for although they act in a borrowed form, nevertheless, by habituating and settling their countenances to the occasion, 'tis most certain they often are really affected with an actual sorrow. I was one, amongst several others of his friends, who conveyed the body of Monsieur de Grammont to Spissons from the siege of La Fere, where he was slain; I observed that in all places we passed through we filled the people we met with lamentations and tears by the mere solemn pomp of our convoy, for the name of the defunct was not there so much as known. Quintilian reports as to have seen comedians so deeply engaged in a mourning part, that they still wept in the retiring room, and who, having taken upon them to stir up passion in another, have themselves espoused it to that degree as to find themselves infected with it, not only to tears, but, moreover, with pallor and the comportment of men really overwhelmed with grief.

In a country near our mountains the women play Priest Martin, for as they augment the regret of the deceased husband by the remembrance of the good and agreeable qualities he possessed, they also at the same time make a register of and publish his imperfections; as if of themselves to enter into some composition, and divert themselves from compassion to disdain. Yet with much better grace than we, who, when we lose an acquaintance, strive to give him new and false praises, and to make him quite another thing when we have lost sight of him than he appeared to us when we did see him; as if regret were an instructive thing, or as if tears, by washing our understandings, cleared them. For my part, I henceforth renounce all favourable testimonies men would give of me, not because I shall be worthy of them, but because I shall be dead.

Whoever shall ask a man, "What interest have you in this siege?"— "The interest of example," he will say, "and of the common obedience to my prince: I pretend to no profit by it; and for glory, I know how small a part can affect a private man such as I: I have here neither passion nor quarrel." And yet you shall see him the next day quite another man, chafing and red with fury, ranged in battle for the assault; 'tis the glittering of so much steel, the fire and noise of our cannon and drums, that have infused this new rigidity and fury into his veins. A frivolous cause, you will say. How a cause? There needs none to agitate the mind; a mere whimsy without body and without subject will rule and agitate it. Let me think of building castles in Spain, my imagination suggests to me conveniences and pleasures with which my soul is really tickled and pleased. How often do we torment our mind with anger or sorrow by such shadows, and engage ourselves in fantastic passions that impair both soul and body? What astonished, fleeting, confused grimaces does this raving put our faces into! what sallies and agitations both of members and voices does it inspire us with! Does it not seem that this individual man has false visions amid the crowd of others with whom he has to do, or that he is possessed with some internal demon that persecutes him? Inquire of yourself where is the object of this mutation? is there anything but us in nature which inanity sustains,

over which it has power? Cambyses, from having dreamt that his brother should be one day king of Persia, put him to death: a beloved brother, and one in whom he had always confided. Aristodemus, king of the Messenians, killed himself out of a fancy of ill omen, from I know not what howling of his dogs; and King Midas did as much upon the account of some foolish dream he had dreamed. 'Tis to prize life at its just value, to abandon it for a dream. And yet hear the soul triumph over the miseries and weakness of the body, and that it is exposed to all attacks and alterations; truly, it has reason so to speak!

"O prima infelix finger ti terra Prometheo!  
Ille parum cauti pectoris egit opus  
Corpora disponens, mentem non vidit in arte;  
Recta animi primum debuit esse via."

["O wretched clay, first formed by Prometheus. In his attempt, what little wisdom did he shew! In framing bodies, he did not apply his art to form the mind, which should have been his first care."—Propertius, iii. 5, 7.]