

# **The Essays of Montaigne, V6**

Michel de Montaigne

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Michel de Montaigne

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## CHAPTER XXVII. OF FRIENDSHIP

Having considered the proceedings of a painter that serves me, I had a mind to imitate his way. He chooses the fairest place and middle of any wall, or panel, wherein to draw a picture, which he finishes with his utmost care and art, and the vacuity about it he fills with grotesques, which are odd fantastic figures without any grace but what they derive from their variety, and the extravagance of their shapes. And in truth, what are these things I scribble, other than grotesques and monstrous bodies, made of various parts, without any certain figure, or any other than accidental order, coherence, or proportion?

"Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne."

["A fair woman in her upper form terminates in a fish."

—Horace, De Arte Poetica, v. 4.]

In this second part I go hand in hand with my painter; but fall very short of him in the first and the better, my power of handling not being such, that I dare to offer at a rich piece, finely polished, and set off according to art. I have therefore thought fit to borrow one of Estienne de la Boetie, and such a one as shall honour and adorn all the rest of my work—namely, a discourse that he called 'Voluntary Servitude'; but, since, those who did not know him have properly enough called it "Le contr Un." He wrote in his youth,—["Not being as yet eighteen years old."—Edition of 1588.] by way of essay, in honour of liberty against tyrants; and it has since run through the hands of men of great learning and judgment, not without singular and merited commendation; for it is finely written, and as full as anything can possibly be. And yet one may confidently say it is far short of what he was able to do; and if in that more mature age, wherein I had the happiness to know him, he had taken a design like this of mine, to commit his thoughts to writing, we should have seen a great many rare things, and such as would have gone very near to have rivalled the best writings of antiquity: for in natural parts especially, I know no man comparable to him. But he has left nothing behind him, save this treatise only (and that too by chance, for I believe he never saw it after it first went out of his hands), and some observations upon that edict of January

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—[1562, which granted to the Huguenots the public exercise of their religion.]— made famous by our civil-wars, which also shall elsewhere, peradventure, find a place. These were all I could recover of his remains, I to whom with so affectionate a remembrance, upon his death-bed, he by his last will bequeathed his library and papers, the little book of his works only excepted, which I committed to the press. And this particular obligation I have to this treatise of his, that it was the occasion of my first coming acquainted with him; for it was showed to me long before I had the good fortune to know him; and the first knowledge of his name, proving the first cause and foundation of a friendship, which we afterwards improved and maintained, so long as God was pleased to continue us together, so perfect, inviolate, and entire, that certainly the like is hardly to be found in story, and amongst the men of this age, there is no sign nor trace of any such thing in use; so much concurrence is required to the building of such a one, that 'tis much, if fortune bring it but once to pass in three ages.

There is nothing to which nature seems so much to have inclined us, as to society; and Aristotle, says that the good legislators had more respect to friendship than to justice. Now the most supreme point of its perfection is this: for, generally, all those that pleasure, profit, public or private interest create and nourish, are so much the less beautiful and generous, and so much the less friendships, by how much they mix another cause, and design, and fruit in friendship, than itself. Neither do the four ancient kinds, natural, social, hospitable, venereal, either separately or jointly, make up a true and perfect friendship.

That of children to parents is rather respect: friendship is nourished by communication, which cannot by reason of the great disparity, be betwixt these, but would rather perhaps offend the duties of nature; for neither are all the secret thoughts of fathers fit to be communicated to children, lest it beget an indecent familiarity betwixt them; nor can the advices and reproofs, which is one of the principal offices of friendship, be properly performed by the son to the father. There are some countries where 'twas the custom for children to kill their fathers; and others, where the fathers killed their children, to avoid their being an impediment one to another in life; and naturally the expectations of the one depend upon the ruin of the other. There have been great philosophers who have made nothing of this tie of nature, as Aristippus for one, who being pressed home about the affection he owed to his children, as being come out of him, presently fell to spit, saying, that this also came out of him, and that we also breed worms and lice; and that other, that Plutarch endeavoured to reconcile to his brother: "I make never the more account of him," said he, "for coming out of the same hole." This name of brother does indeed carry with it a fine and delectable sound, and for that reason, he and I called one another brothers but the complication of interests, the division of estates, and that the wealth of the one should be the property of the other, strangely relax and weaken the fraternal tie: brothers pursuing their fortune and advancement by the same path, 'tis hardly possible but they must of necessity often jostle and hinder one another. Besides, why is it necessary that the correspondence of manners, parts, and inclinations, which begets the true and perfect friendships, should always meet in these relations? The father and the son may be of quite contrary humours, and so of brothers: he is my son, he is my brother; but he is passionate, ill-natured, or a fool. And moreover, by how much these are friendships that the law and natural obligation impose upon us, so much less is there of our own choice and voluntary freedom; whereas that voluntary liberty of ours has no production more promptly and; properly its own than affection and friendship. Not that I have not in my own person experimented all that can possibly be expected of that kind, having had the best and most indulgent father, even to his extreme old age, that ever was, and who was himself descended from a family for many generations famous and exemplary for brotherly concord:

"Et ipse  
Notus in fratres animi paterni."  
["And I myself, known for paternal love toward my brothers."  
—Horace, Ode, ii. 2, 6.

We are not here to bring the love we bear to women, though it be an act of our own choice, into comparison, nor rank it with the others. The fire of this, I confess,

"Neque enim est dea nescia nostri

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Qux dulcem curis miscet amaritiam,"

["Nor is the goddess unknown to me who mixes a sweet bitterness with my love."—Catullus, lxxviii. 17.]

is more active, more eager, and more sharp: but withal, 'tis more precipitant, fickle, moving, and inconstant; a fever subject to intermissions and paroxysms, that has seized but on one part of us. Whereas in friendship, 'tis a general and universal fire, but temperate and equal, a constant established heat, all gentle and smooth, without poignancy or roughness. Moreover, in love, 'tis no other than frantic desire for that which flies from us:

"Come segue la lepre il cacciatore  
Al freddo, al caldo, alla montagna, al lito;  
Ne piu l'estima poi the presa vede;  
E sol dietro a chi fugge affretta il piede"

["As the hunter pursues the hare, in cold and heat, to the mountain, to the shore, nor cares for it farther when he sees it taken, and only delights in chasing that which flees from him."—Aristo, x. 7.]

so soon as it enters unto the terms of friendship, that is to say, into a concurrence of desires, it vanishes and is gone, fruition destroys it, as having only a fleshly end, and such a one as is subject to satiety. Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed proportionably as it is desired; and only grows up, is nourished and improved by enjoyment, as being of itself spiritual, and the soul growing still more refined by practice. Under this perfect friendship, the other fleeting affections have in my younger years found some place in me, to say nothing of him, who himself so confesses but too much in his verses; so that I had both these passions, but always so, that I could myself well enough distinguish them, and never in any degree of comparison with one another; the first maintaining its flight in so lofty and so brave a place, as with disdain to look down, and see the other flying at a far humbler pitch below.

As concerning marriage, besides that it is a covenant, the entrance into which only is free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory, having another dependence than that of our own free will, and a bargain commonly contracted to other ends, there almost always happens a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread and to divert the current of a lively affection: whereas friendship has no manner of business or traffic with aught but itself. Moreover, to say truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to maintain the conference and communication required to the support of this sacred tie; nor do they appear to be endued with constancy of mind, to sustain the pinch of so hard and durable a knot. And doubtless, if without this, there could be such a free and voluntary familiarity contracted, where not only the souls might have this entire fruition, but the bodies also might share in the alliance, and a man be engaged throughout, the friendship would certainly be more full and perfect; but it is without example that this sex has ever yet arrived at such perfection; and, by the common consent of the ancient schools, it is wholly rejected from it.

That other Grecian licence is justly abhorred by our manners, which also, from having, according to their practice, a so necessary disparity of age and difference of offices betwixt the lovers, answered no more to the perfect union and harmony that we here require than the other:

"Quis est enim iste amor amicitiae? cur neque deformem adolescentem quisquam amat, neque formosum senem?"

["For what is that friendly love? why does no one love a deformed youth or a comely old man?"—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., iv. 33.]

Neither will that very picture that the Academy presents of it, as I conceive, contradict me, when I say, that this first fury inspired by the son of Venus into the heart of the lover, upon sight of the flower and prime of a springing and blossoming youth, to which they allow all the insolent and passionate efforts that an immoderate ardour can produce, was simply founded upon external beauty, the false image of corporal generation; for it could not ground this love upon the soul, the sight of which as yet lay concealed, was but now springing, and not of

maturity to blossom; that this fury, if it seized upon a low spirit, the means by which it preferred its suit were rich presents, favour in advancement to dignities, and such trumpery, which they by no means approve; if on a more generous soul, the pursuit was suitably generous, by philosophical instructions, precepts to revere religion, to obey the laws, to die for the good of one's country; by examples of valour, prudence, and justice, the lover studying to render himself acceptable by the grace and beauty of the soul, that of his body being long since faded and decayed, hoping by this mental society to establish a more firm and lasting contract. When this courtship came to effect in due season (for that which they do not require in the lover, namely, leisure and discretion in his pursuit, they strictly require in the person loved, forasmuch as he is to judge of an internal beauty, of difficult knowledge and abstruse discovery), then there sprung in the person loved the desire of a spiritual conception; by the mediation of a spiritual beauty. This was the principal; the corporeal, an accidental and secondary matter; quite the contrary as to the lover. For this reason they prefer the person beloved, maintaining that the gods in like manner preferred him too, and very much blame the poet AEschylus for having, in the loves of Achilles and Patroclus, given the lover's part to Achilles, who was in the first and beardless flower of his adolescence, and the handsomest of all the Greeks. After this general community, the sovereign, and most worthy part presiding and governing, and performing its proper offices, they say, that thence great utility was derived, both by private and public concerns; that it constituted the force and power of the countries where it prevailed, and the chiefest security of liberty and justice. Of which the healthy loves of Harmodius and Aristogiton are instances. And therefore it is that they called it sacred and divine, and conceive that nothing but the violence of tyrants and the baseness of the common people are inimical to it. Finally, all that can be said in favour of the Academy is, that it was a love which ended in friendship, which well enough agrees with the Stoical definition of love:

"Amorem conatum esse amicitiae faciendae  
ex pulchritudinis specie."

["Love is a desire of contracting friendship arising from the beauty of the object."—Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, vi. 34.]

I return to my own more just and true description:

"Omnino amicitiae, corroboratis jam confirmatisque,  
et ingeniis, et aetatibus, judicandae sunt."

["Those are only to be reputed friendships that are fortified and confirmed by judgement and the length of time."]

—Cicero, *De Amicit.*, c. 20.]

For the rest, what we commonly call friends and friendships, are nothing but acquaintance and familiarities, either occasionally contracted, or upon some design, by means of which there happens some little intercourse betwixt our souls. But in the friendship I speak of, they mix and work themselves into one piece, with so universal a mixture, that there is no more sign of the seam by which they were first conjoined. If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could no otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I. There is, beyond all that I am able to say, I know not what inexplicable and fated power that brought on this union. We sought one another long before we met, and by the characters we heard of one another, which wrought upon our affections more than, in reason, mere reports should do; I think 'twas by some secret appointment of heaven. We embraced in our names; and at our first meeting, which was accidentally at a great city entertainment, we found ourselves so mutually taken with one another, so acquainted, and so endeared betwixt ourselves, that from thenceforward nothing was so near to us as one another. He wrote an excellent Latin satire, since printed, wherein he excuses the precipitation of our intelligence, so suddenly come to perfection, saying, that destined to have so short a continuance, as begun so late (for we were both full-grown men, and he some years the older), there was no time to lose, nor were we tied to conform to the example of those slow and regular friendships, that require so many precautions of long preliminary conversation: This has no other idea than that of itself, and can only refer to itself: this is no one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand; 'tis I know not what quintessence of all this mixture, which, seizing my whole will, carried it to plunge and lose itself in his, and that having seized his whole will, brought it back with equal concurrence and appetite to plunge and lose itself in mine. I may truly say lose, reserving nothing to ourselves that was either his or mine.

—[All this relates to Estienne de la Boetie.]

When Laelius, —[Cicero, De Amicit., c. II.]— in the presence of the Roman consuls, who after they had sentenced Tiberius Gracchus, prosecuted all those who had had any familiarity with him also; came to ask Caius Blossius, who was his chiefest friend, how much he would have done for him, and that he made answer: "All things."— "How! All things!" said Laelius. "And what if he had commanded you to fire our temples?"— "He would never have commanded me that," replied Blossius.— "But what if he had?" said Laelius.— "I would have obeyed him," said the other. If he was so perfect a friend to Gracchus as the histories report him to have been, there was yet no necessity of offending the consuls by such a bold confession, though he might still have retained the assurance he had of Gracchus' disposition. However, those who accuse this answer as seditious, do not well understand the mystery; nor presuppose, as it was true, that he had Gracchus' will in his sleeve, both by the power of a friend, and the perfect knowledge he had of the man: they were more friends than citizens, more friends to one another than either enemies or friends to their country, or than friends to ambition and innovation; having absolutely given up themselves to one another, either held absolutely the reins of the other's inclination; and suppose all this guided by virtue, and all this by the conduct of reason, which also without these it had not been possible to do, Blossius' answer was such as it ought to be. If any of their actions flew out of the handle, they were neither (according to my measure of friendship) friends to one another, nor to themselves. As to the rest, this answer carries no worse sound, than mine would do to one that should ask me: "If your will should command you to kill your daughter, would you do it?" and that I should make answer, that I would; for this expresses no consent to such an act, forasmuch as I do not in the least suspect my own will, and as little that of such a friend. 'Tis not in the power of all the eloquence in the world, to dispossess me of the certainty I have of the intentions and resolutions of my friend; nay, no one action of his, what face soever it might bear, could be presented to me, of which I could not presently, and at first sight, find out the moving cause. Our souls had drawn so unanimously together, they had considered each other with so ardent an affection, and with the like affection laid open the very bottom of our hearts to one another's view, that I not only knew his as well as my own; but should certainly in any concern of mine have trusted my interest much more willingly with him, than with myself.

Let no one, therefore, rank other common friendships with such a one as this. I have had as much experience of these as another, and of the most perfect of their kind: but I do not advise that any should confound the rules of the one and the other, for they would find themselves much deceived. In those other ordinary friendships, you are to walk with bridle in your hand, with prudence and circumspection, for in them the knot is not so sure that a man may not half suspect it will slip. "Love him," said Chilo,—[Aulus Gellius, i. 3.]— "so as if you were one day to hate him; and hate him so as you were one day to love him." This precept, though abominable in the sovereign and perfect friendship I speak of, is nevertheless very sound as to the practice of the ordinary and customary ones, and to which the saying that Aristotle had so frequent in his mouth, "O my friends, there is no friend," may very fitly be applied. In this noble commerce, good offices, presents, and benefits, by which other friendships are supported and maintained, do not deserve so much as to be mentioned; and the reason is the concurrence of our wills; for, as the kindness I have for myself receives no increase, for anything I relieve myself withal in time of need (whatever the Stoics say), and as I do not find myself obliged to myself for any service I do myself: so the union of such friends, being truly perfect, deprives them of all idea of such duties, and makes them loathe and banish from their conversation these words of division and distinction, benefits, obligation, acknowledgment, entreaty, thanks, and the like. All things, wills, thoughts, opinions, goods, wives, children, honours, and lives, being in effect common betwixt them, and that absolute concurrence of affections being no other than one soul in two bodies (according to that very proper definition of Aristotle), they can neither lend nor give anything to one another. This is the reason why the lawgivers, to honour marriage with some resemblance of this divine alliance, interdict all gifts betwixt man and wife; inferring by that, that all should belong to each of them, and that they have nothing to divide or to give to each other.

If, in the friendship of which I speak, one could give to the other, the receiver of the benefit would be the man that obliged his friend; for each of them contending and above all things studying how to be useful to the other, he that administers the occasion is the liberal man, in giving his friend the satisfaction of doing that towards him which

above all things he most desires. When the philosopher Diogenes wanted money, he used to say, that he redemanded it of his friends, not that he demanded it. And to let you see the practical working of this, I will here produce an ancient and singular example. Eudamidas, a Corinthian, had two friends, Charixenus a Sicyonian and Areteus a Corinthian; this man coming to die, being poor, and his two friends rich, he made his will after this manner. "I bequeath to Areteus the maintenance of my mother, to support and provide for her in her old age; and to Charixenus I bequeath the care of marrying my daughter, and to give her as good a portion as he is able; and in case one of these chance to die, I hereby substitute the survivor in his place." They who first saw this will made themselves very merry at the contents: but the legatees, being made acquainted with it, accepted it with very great content; and one of them, Charixenus, dying within five days after, and by that means the charge of both duties devolving solely on him, Areteus nurtured the old woman with very great care and tenderness, and of five talents he had in estate, he gave two and a half in marriage with an only daughter he had of his own, and two and a half in marriage with the daughter of Eudamidas, and on one and the same day solemnised both their nuptials.

This example is very full, if one thing were not to be objected, namely the multitude of friends for the perfect friendship I speak of is indivisible; each one gives himself so entirely to his friend, that he has nothing left to distribute to others: on the contrary, is sorry that he is not double, treble, or quadruple, and that he has not many souls and many wills, to confer them all upon this one object. Common friendships will admit of division; one may love the beauty of this person, the good-humour of that, the liberality of a third, the paternal affection of a fourth, the fraternal love of a fifth, and so of the rest: but this friendship that possesses the whole soul, and there rules and sways with an absolute sovereignty, cannot possibly admit of a rival. If two at the same time should call to you for succour, to which of them would you run? Should they require of you contrary offices, how could you serve them both? Should one commit a thing to your silence that it were of importance to the other to know, how would you disengage yourself? A unique and particular friendship dissolves all other obligations whatsoever: the secret I have sworn not to reveal to any other, I may without perjury communicate to him who is not another, but myself. 'Tis miracle enough certainly, for a man to double himself, and those that talk of tripling, talk they know not of what. Nothing is extreme, that has its like; and he who shall suppose, that of two, I love one as much as the other, that they mutually love one another too, and love me as much as I love them, multiplies into a confraternity the most single of units, and whereof, moreover, one alone is the hardest thing in the world to find. The rest of this story suits very well with what I was saying; for Eudamidas, as a bounty and favour, bequeaths to his friends a legacy of employing themselves in his necessity; he leaves them heirs to this liberality of his, which consists in giving them the opportunity of conferring a benefit upon him; and doubtless, the force of friendship is more eminently apparent in this act of his, than in that of Areteus. In short, these are effects not to be imagined nor comprehended by such as have not experience of them, and which make me infinitely honour and admire the answer of that young soldier to Cyrus, by whom being asked how much he would take for a horse, with which he had won the prize of a race, and whether he would exchange him for a kingdom?—"No, truly, sir," said he, "but I would give him with all my heart, to get thereby a true friend, could I find out any man worthy of that alliance." —[Xenophon, Cyropadia, viii. 3.]— He did not say ill in saying, "could I find": for though one may almost everywhere meet with men sufficiently qualified for a superficial acquaintance, yet in this, where a man is to deal from the very bottom of his heart, without any manner of reservation, it will be requisite that all the wards and springs be truly wrought and perfectly sure.

In confederations that hold but by one end, we are only to provide against the imperfections that particularly concern that end. It can be of no importance to me of what religion my physician or my lawyer is; this consideration has nothing in common with the offices of friendship which they owe me; and I am of the same indifference in the domestic acquaintance my servants must necessarily contract with me. I never inquire, when I am to take a footman, if he be chaste, but if he be diligent; and am not solicitous if my muleteer be given to gaming, as if he be strong and able; or if my cook be a swearer, if he be a good cook. I do not take upon me to direct what other men should do in the government of their families, there are plenty that meddle enough with that, but only give an account of my method in my own:

"Mihi sic usus est: tibi, ut opus est facto, face."

["This has been my way; as for you, do as you find needful.



—"Terence, Heaut., i. I., 28.]

For table—talk, I prefer the pleasant and witty before the learned and the grave; in bed, beauty before goodness; in common discourse the ablest speaker, whether or no there be sincerity in the case. And, as he that was found astride upon a hobby—horse, playing with his children, entreated the person who had surprised him in that posture to say nothing of it till himself came to be a father, —[Plutarch, Life of Agesilaus, c. 9.]— supposing that the fondness that would then possess his own soul, would render him a fairer judge of such an action; so I, also, could wish to speak to such as have had experience of what I say: though, knowing how remote a thing such a friendship is from the common practice, and how rarely it is to be found, I despair of meeting with any such judge. For even these discourses left us by antiquity upon this subject, seem to me flat and poor, in comparison of the sense I have of it, and in this particular, the effects surpass even the precepts of philosophy

"Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico."

["While I have sense left to me, there will never be anything more acceptable to me than an agreeable friend."

—Horace, Sat., i. 5, 44.]

The ancient Menander declared him to be happy that had had the good fortune to meet with but the shadow of a friend: and doubtless he had good reason to say so, especially if he spoke by experience: for in good earnest, if I compare all the rest of my life, though, thanks be to God, I have passed my time pleasantly enough, and at my ease, and the loss of such a friend excepted, free from any grievous affliction, and in great tranquillity of mind, having been contented with my natural and original commodities, without being solicitous after others; if I should compare it all, I say, with the four years I had the happiness to enjoy the sweet society of this excellent man, 'tis nothing but smoke, an obscure and tedious night. From the day that I lost him:

"Quern semper acerbum,

Semper honoratum (sic, di, voluistis) habebo,"

["A day for me ever sad, for ever sacred, so have you willed ye gods."—Aeneid, v. 49.]

I have only led a languishing life; and the very pleasures that present themselves to me, instead of administering anything of consolation, double my affliction for his loss. We were halves throughout, and to that degree, that methinks, by outliving him, I defraud him of his part.

"Nec fas esse ulla me voluptate hic frui

Decrevi, tantisper dum ille abest meus particeps."

["I have determined that it will never be right for me to enjoy any pleasure, so long as he, with whom I shared all pleasures is away."

—"Terence, Heaut., i. I. 97.]

I was so grown and accustomed to be always his double in all places and in all things, that methinks I am no more than half of myself:

"Illam meae si partem anima tulit

Maturior vis, quid moror altera?

Nec carus aequae, nec superstes

Integer? Ille dies utramque

Duxit ruinam."

["If that half of my soul were snatch away from me by an untimely stroke, why should the other stay? That which remains will not be equally dear, will not be whole: the same day will involve the destruction of both."

or:

["If a superior force has taken that part of my soul, why do I, the

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remaining one, linger behind? What is left is not so dear, nor an entire thing: this day has wrought the destruction of both."  
—Horace, Ode, ii. 17, 5.]

There is no action or imagination of mine wherein I do not miss him; as I know that he would have missed me: for as he surpassed me by infinite degrees in virtue and all other accomplishments, so he also did in the duties of friendship:

"Quis desiderio sit pudor, aut modus  
Tam cari capitis?"

["What shame can there, or measure, in lamenting so dear a friend?"  
—Horace, Ode, i. 24, 1.]

"O misero frater adempte mihi!  
Omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra,  
Quae tuus in vita dulcis alebat amor.  
Tu mea, tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater;  
Tecum una tota est nostra sepulta anima  
Cujus ego interitu tota de mente fugavi  
Haec studia, atque omnes delicias animi.  
Alloquar? audiero nunquam tua verba loquentem?  
Nunquam ego te, vita frater amabilior  
Aspiciam posthac; at certe semper amabo;"

["O brother, taken from me miserable! with thee, all our joys have vanished, those joys which, in thy life, thy dear love nourished. Dying, thou, my brother, hast destroyed all my happiness. My whole soul is buried with thee. Through whose death I have banished from my mind these studies, and all the delights of the mind. Shall I address thee? I shall never hear thy voice. Never shall I behold thee hereafter. O brother, dearer to me than life. Nought remains, but assuredly I shall ever love thee."—Catullus, lxviii. 20; lxv.]

But let us hear a boy of sixteen speak:

—[In Cotton's translation the work referred to is "those Memoirs upon the famous edict of January," of which mention has already been made in the present edition. The edition of 1580, however, and the Variorum edition of 1872–1900, indicate no particular work; but the edition of 1580 has it "this boy of eighteen years"(which was the age at which La Boetie wrote his "Servitude Volontaire"), speaks of "a boy of sixteen" as occurring only in the common editions, and it would seem tolerably clear that this more important work was, in fact, the production to which Montaigne refers, and that the proper reading of the text should be "sixteen years." What "this boy spoke" is not given by Montaigne, for the reason stated in the next following paragraph.

"Because I have found that that work has been since brought out, and with a mischievous design, by those who aim at disturbing and changing the condition of our government, without troubling themselves to think whether they are likely to improve it: and because they have mixed up his work with some of their own performance, I have refrained from inserting it here. But that the memory of the author may not be injured, nor suffer with such as could not come near-hand to be acquainted with his principles, I here give them to understand, that it was written by him in his boyhood, and that by way of exercise only, as a common theme that has been hackneyed by a thousand writers. I make no question but that he himself believed what he wrote, being so conscientious that he

would not so much as lie in jest: and I moreover know, that could it have been in his own choice, he had rather have been born at Venice, than at Sarlac; and with reason. But he had another maxim sovereignty imprinted in his soul, very religiously to obey and submit to the laws under which he was born. There never was a better citizen, more affectionate to his country; nor a greater enemy to all the commotions and innovations of his time: so that he would much rather have employed his talent to the extinguishing of those civil flames, than have added any fuel to them; he had a mind fashioned to the model of better ages. Now, in exchange of this serious piece, I will present you with another of a more gay and frolic air, from the same hand, and written at the same age."

## CHAPTER XXVIII. NINE AND TWENTY SONNETS OF ESTIENNE DE LA BOITIE

TO MADAME DE GRAMMONT, COMTESSE DE GUISSEN.

[They scarce contain anything but amorous complaints, expressed in a very rough style, discovering the follies and outrages of a restless passion, overgorged, as it were, with jealousies, fears and suspicions. —Coste.]

[These....contained in the edition of 1588 nine—and—twenty sonnets of La Boetie, accompanied by a dedicatory epistle to Madame de Grammont. The former, which are referred to at the end of Chap. XXVII, do not really belong to the book, and are of very slight interest at this time; the epistle is transferred to the Correspondence. The sonnets, with the letter, were presumably sent some time after Letters V. et seq. Montaigne seems to have had several copies written out to forward to friends or acquaintances.]

## CHAPTER XXIX.. OF MODERATION

As if we had an infectious touch, we, by our manner of handling, corrupt things that in themselves are laudable and good: we may grasp virtue so that it becomes vicious, if we embrace it too stringently and with too violent a desire. Those who say, there is never any excess in virtue, forasmuch as it is not virtue when it once becomes excess, only play upon words:

"Insani sapiens nomen ferat, aequus iniqui,  
Ultra quam satis est, virtutem si petat ipsam."

["Let the wise man bear the name of a madman, the just one of an unjust, if he seek wisdom more than is sufficient."

—Horace, Ep., i. 6, 15.]

["The wise man is no longer wise, the just man no longer just, if he seek to carry his love for wisdom or virtue beyond that which is necessary.]

This is a subtle consideration of philosophy. A man may both be too much in love with virtue, and be excessive in a just action. Holy Writ agrees with this, Be not wiser than you should, but be soberly wise.—[St. Paul, Epistle to the Romans, xii. 3.]— I have known a great man,

—["It is likely that Montaigne meant Henry III., king of France.

The Cardinal d'Ossat, writing to Louise, the queen—dowager, told her, in his frank manner, that he had lived as much or more like a monk than a monarch (Letter XXIII.) And Pope Sextus V., speaking of that prince one day to the Cardinal de Joyeuse, protector of the affairs of France, said to him pleasantly, "There is nothing that your king hath not done, and does not do so still, to be a monk, nor

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anything that I have not done, not to be a monk."—Coste.

prejudice the opinion men had of his devotion, by pretending to be devout beyond all examples of others of his condition. I love temperate and moderate natures. An immoderate zeal, even to that which is good, even though it does not offend, astonishes me, and puts me to study what name to give it. Neither the mother of Pausanias,

—["Montaigne would here give us to understand, upon the authority of Diodorus Siculus, that Pausanias' mother gave the first hint of the punishment that was to be inflicted on her son. 'Pausanias,' says this historian, 'perceiving that the ephori, and some other Lacedaemonians, aimed at apprehending him, got the start of them, and went and took sanctuary in Minerva's temple: and the Lacedaemonians, being doubtful whether they ought to take him from thence in violation of the franchise there, it is said that his own mother came herself to the temple but spoke nothing nor did anything more than lay a piece of brick, which she brought with her, on the threshold of the temple, which, when she had done, she returned home. The Lacedaemonians, taking the hint from the mother, caused the gate of the temple to be walled up, and by this means starved Pausanias, so that he died with hunger, (lib. xi. cap. 10., of Amyot's translation). The name of Pausanias' mother was Alcihea, as we are informed by Thucydides' scholiast, who only says that it was reported, that when they set about walling up the gates of the chapel in which Pausanias had taken refuge, his mother Alcihea laid the first stone."—Coste.]

who was the first instructor of her son's process, and threw the first stone towards his death, nor Posthumius the dictator, who put his son to death, whom the ardour of youth had successfully pushed upon the enemy a little more advanced than the rest of his squadron, do appear to me so much just as strange; and I should neither advise nor like to follow so savage a virtue, and that costs so dear.

—["Opinions differ as to the truth of this fact. Livy thinks he has good authority for rejecting it because it does not appear in history that Posthumius was branded with it, as Titus Manlius was, about 100 years after his time; for Manlius, having put his son to death for the like cause, obtained the odious name of Imperiosus, and since that time Manliana imperia has been used as a term to signify orders that are too severe; Manliana Imperia, says Livy, were not only horrible for the time present, but of a bad example to posterity. And this historian makes no doubt but such commands would have been actually styled Posthumiana Imperia, if Posthumius had been the first who set so barbarous an example (Livy, lib. iv. cap. 29, and lib. viii. cap. 7). But, however, Montaigne has Valer. Maximus on his side, who says expressly, that Posthumius caused his son to be put to death, and Diodorus of Sicily (lib. xii. cap. 19)."]—Coste.]

The archer that shoots over, misses as much as he that falls short, and 'tis equally troublesome to my sight, to look up at a great light, and to look down into a dark abyss. Callicles in Plato says, that the extremity of philosophy is hurtful, and advises not to dive into it beyond the limits of profit; that, taken moderately, it is pleasant and useful; but that in the end it renders a man brutish and vicious, a contemner of religion and the common laws, an enemy to civil conversation, and all human pleasures, incapable of all public administration, unfit either to assist others or to relieve himself, and a fit object for all sorts of injuries and affronts. He says true; for in its excess, it enslaves

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our natural freedom, and by an impertinent subtlety, leads us out of the fair and beaten way that nature has traced for us.

The love we bear to our wives is very lawful, and yet theology thinks fit to curb and restrain it. As I remember, I have read in one place of St. Thomas Aquinas,—[Secunda Secundx, Quaest. 154, art. 9.]— where he condemns marriages within any of the forbidden degrees, for this reason, amongst others, that there is some danger, lest the friendship a man bears to such a woman, should be immoderate; for if the conjugal affection be full and perfect betwixt them, as it ought to be, and that it be over and above surcharged with that of kindred too, there is no doubt, but such an addition will carry the husband beyond the bounds of reason.

Those sciences that regulate the manners of men, divinity and philosophy, will have their say in everything; there is no action so private and secret that can escape their inspection and jurisdiction. They are best taught who are best able to control and curb their own liberty; women expose their nudities as much as you will upon the account of pleasure, though in the necessities of physic they are altogether as shy. I will, therefore, in their behalf:

—[Coste translates this: "on the part of philosophy and theology," observing that but few wives would think themselves obliged to Montaigne for any such lesson to their husbands.]—

teach the husbands, that is, such as are too vehement in the exercise of the matrimonial duty—if such there still be—this lesson, that the very pleasures they enjoy in the society of their wives are reproachable if immoderate, and that a licentious and riotous abuse of them is a fault as reprobable here as in illicit connections. Those immodest and debauched tricks and postures, that the first ardour suggests to us in this affair, are not only indecently but detrimentally practised upon our wives. Let them at least learn impudence from another hand; they are ever ready enough for our business, and I for my part always went the plain way to work.

Marriage is a solemn and religious tie, and therefore the pleasure we extract from it should be a sober and serious delight, and mixed with a certain kind of gravity; it should be a sort of discreet and conscientious pleasure. And seeing that the chief end of it is generation, some make a question, whether when men are out of hopes as when they are superannuated or already with child, it be lawful to embrace our wives. 'Tis homicide, according to Plato. —[Laws, 8.]— Certain nations (the Mohammedan, amongst others abominate all conjunction with women with child, others also, with those who are in their courses. Zenobia would never admit her husband for more than one encounter, after which she left him to his own swing for the whole time of her conception, and not till after that would again receive him: —[Trebellius Pollio, Triginta Tyran., c. 30.]— a brave and generous example of conjugal continence. It was doubtless from some lascivious poet,—[The lascivious poet is Homer; see his Iliad, xiv. 294.]— and one that himself was in great distress for a little of this sport, that Plato borrowed this story; that Jupiter was one day so hot upon his wife, that not having so much patience as till she could get to the couch, he threw her upon the floor, where the vehemence of pleasure made him forget the great and important resolutions he had but newly taken with the rest of the gods in his celestial council, and to brag that he had had as good a bout, as when he got her maidenhead, unknown to their parents.

The kings of Persia were wont to invite their wives to the beginning of their festivals; but when the wine began to work in good earnest, and that they were to give the reins to pleasure, they sent them back to their private apartments, that they might not participate in their immoderate lust, sending for other women in their stead, with whom they were not obliged to so great a decorum of respect.—[Plutarch, Precepts of Marriage, c. 14.]— All pleasures and all sorts of gratifications are not properly and fitly conferred upon all sorts of persons. Epaminondas had committed to prison a young man for certain debauches; for whom Pelopidas mediated, that at his request he might be set at liberty, which Epaminondas denied to him, but granted it at the first word to a wench of his, that made the same intercession; saying, that it was a gratification fit for such a one as she, but not for a captain. Sophocles being joint praetor with Pericles, seeing accidentally a fine boy pass by: "O what a charming boy is that!" said he. "That might be very well," answered Pericles, "for any other than a praetor, who ought not only to have his hands, but his eyes, too, chaste." —[Cicero, De Offic., i. 40.] Aelius Verus, the emperor, answered his

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wife, who reproached him with his love to other women, that he did it upon a conscientious account, forasmuch as marriage was a name of honour and dignity, not of wanton and lascivious desire; and our ecclesiastical history preserves the memory of that woman in great veneration, who parted from her husband because she would not comply with his indecent and inordinate desires. In fine, there is no pleasure so just and lawful, where intemperance and excess are not to be condemned.

But, to speak the truth, is not man a most miserable creature the while? It is scarce, by his natural condition, in his power to taste one pleasure pure and entire; and yet must he be contriving doctrines and precepts to curtail that little he has; he is not yet wretched enough, unless by art and study he augment his own misery:

"Fortunae miseras auximus arte vias."

["We artificially augment the wretchedness of fortune."

—Properitius, lib. iii. 7, 44.]

Human wisdom makes as ill use of her talent, when she exercises it in rescinding from the number and sweetness of those pleasures that are naturally our due, as she employs it favourably and well in artificially disguising and tricking out the ills of life, to alleviate the sense of them. Had I ruled the roast, I should have taken another and more natural course, which, to say the truth, is both commodious and holy, and should, peradventure, have been able to have limited it too; notwithstanding that both our spiritual and corporal physicians, as by compact betwixt themselves, can find no other way to cure, nor other remedy for the infirmities of the body and the soul, than by misery and pain. To this end, watchings, fastings, hair-shirts, remote and solitary banishments, perpetual imprisonments, whips and other afflictions, have been introduced amongst men: but so, that they should carry a sting with them, and be real afflictions indeed; and not fall out as it once did to one Gallio, who having been sent an exile into the isle of Lesbos, news was not long after brought to Rome, that he there lived as merry as the day was long; and that what had been enjoined him for a penance, turned to his pleasure and satisfaction: whereupon the Senate thought fit to recall him home to his wife and family, and confine him to his own house, to accommodate their punishment to his feeling and apprehension. For to him whom fasting would make more healthful and more sprightly, and to him to whose palate fish were more acceptable than flesh, the prescription of these would have no curative effect; no more than in the other sort of physic, where drugs have no effect upon him who swallows them with appetite and pleasure: the bitterness of the potion and the abhorrence of the patient are necessary circumstances to the operation. The nature that would eat rhubarb like buttered turnips, would frustrate the use and virtue of it; it must be something to trouble and disturb the stomach, that must purge and cure it; and here the common rule, that things are cured by their contraries, fails; for in this one ill is cured by another.

This belief a little resembles that other so ancient one, of thinking to gratify the gods and nature by massacre and murder: an opinion universally once received in all religions. And still, in these later times wherein our fathers lived, Amurath at the taking of the Isthmus, immolated six hundred young Greeks to his father's soul, in the nature of a propitiatory sacrifice for his sins. And in those new countries discovered in this age of ours, which are pure and virgin yet, in comparison of ours, this practice is in some measure everywhere received: all their idols reek with human blood, not without various examples of horrid cruelty: some they burn alive, and take, half broiled, off the coals to tear out their hearts and entrails; some, even women, they flay alive, and with their bloody skins clothe and disguise others. Neither are we without great examples of constancy and resolution in this affair the poor souls that are to be sacrificed, old men, women, and children, themselves going about some days before to beg alms for the offering of their sacrifice, presenting themselves to the slaughter, singing and dancing with the spectators.

The ambassadors of the king of Mexico, setting out to Fernando Cortez the power and greatness of their master, after having told him, that he had thirty vassals, of whom each was able to raise an hundred thousand fighting men, and that he kept his court in the fairest and best fortified city under the sun, added at last, that he was obliged yearly to offer to the gods fifty thousand men. And it is affirmed, that he maintained a continual war, with some potent neighbouring nations, not only to keep the young men in exercise, but principally to have wherewithal to furnish his sacrifices with his prisoners of war. At a certain town in another place, for the welcome of the said

Cortez, they sacrificed fifty men at once. I will tell you this one tale more, and I have done; some of these people being beaten by him, sent to acknowledge him, and to treat with him of a peace, whose messengers carried him three sorts of gifts, which they presented in these terms: "Behold, lord, here are five slaves: if thou art a furious god that feedeth upon flesh and blood, eat these, and we will bring thee more; if thou art an affable god, behold here incense and feathers; but if thou art a man, take these fowls and these fruits that we have brought thee."

## CHAPTER XXX. OF CANNIBALS

When King Pyrrhus invaded Italy, having viewed and considered the order of the army the Romans sent out to meet him; "I know not," said he, "what kind of barbarians" (for so the Greeks called all other nations) "these may be; but the disposition of this army that I see has nothing of barbarism in it." —[Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus*, c. 8.]— As much said the Greeks of that which Flaminius brought into their country; and Philip, beholding from an eminence the order and distribution of the Roman camp formed in his kingdom by Publius Sulpicius Galba, spake to the same effect. By which it appears how cautious men ought to be of taking things upon trust from vulgar opinion, and that we are to judge by the eye of reason, and not from common report.

I long had a man in my house that lived ten or twelve years in the New World, discovered in these latter days, and in that part of it where Villegaignon landed,—[At Brazil, in 1557.]— which he called Antarctic France. This discovery of so vast a country seems to be of very great consideration. I cannot be sure, that hereafter there may not be another, so many wiser men than we having been deceived in this. I am afraid our eyes are bigger than our bellies, and that we have more curiosity than capacity; for we grasp at all, but catch nothing but wind.

Plato brings in Solon, —[In *Timaeus*.]— telling a story that he had heard from the priests of Sais in Egypt, that of old, and before the Deluge, there was a great island called Atlantis, situate directly at the mouth of the straits of Gibraltar, which contained more countries than both Africa and Asia put together; and that the kings of that country, who not only possessed that Isle, but extended their dominion so far into the continent that they had a country of Africa as far as Egypt, and extending in Europe to Tuscany, attempted to encroach even upon Asia, and to subjugate all the nations that border upon the Mediterranean Sea, as far as the Black Sea; and to that effect overran all Spain, the Gauls, and Italy, so far as to penetrate into Greece, where the Athenians stopped them: but that some time after, both the Athenians, and they and their island, were swallowed by the Flood.

It is very likely that this extreme irruption and inundation of water made wonderful changes and alterations in the habitations of the earth, as 'tis said that the sea then divided Sicily from Italy—

"Haec loca, vi quondam et vasta convulsa ruina,  
Dissiluisse ferunt, quum protenus utraque tellus  
Una foret"

["These lands, they say, formerly with violence and vast desolation convulsed, burst asunder, where erewhile were."—*Aeneid*, iii. 414.]

Cyprus from Syria, the isle of Negropont from the continent of Beotia, and elsewhere united lands that were separate before, by filling up the channel betwixt them with sand and mud:

"Sterilisque diu palus, aptaque remis,  
Vicinas urbes alit, et grave sentit aratrum."

["That which was once a sterile marsh, and bore vessels on its bosom, now feeds neighbouring cities, and admits the plough."  
—Horace, *De Arte Poetica*, v. 65.]

But there is no great appearance that this isle was this New World so lately discovered: for that almost touched upon Spain, and it were an incredible effect of an inundation, to have tumbled back so prodigious a mass, above twelve hundred leagues: besides that our modern navigators have already almost discovered it to be no island, but

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terra firma, and continent with the East Indies on the one side, and with the lands under the two poles on the other side; or, if it be separate from them, it is by so narrow a strait and channel, that it none the more deserves the name of an island for that.

It should seem, that in this great body, there are two sorts of motions, the one natural and the other febrific, as there are in ours. When I consider the impression that our river of Dordogne has made in my time on the right bank of its descent, and that in twenty years it has gained so much, and undermined the foundations of so many houses, I perceive it to be an extraordinary agitation: for had it always followed this course, or were hereafter to do it, the aspect of the world would be totally changed. But rivers alter their course, sometimes beating against the one side, and sometimes the other, and some times quietly keeping the channel. I do not speak of sudden inundations, the causes of which everybody understands. In Medoc, by the seashore, the Sieur d'Arsac, my brother, sees an estate he had there, buried under the sands which the sea vomits before it: where the tops of some houses are yet to be seen, and where his rents and domains are converted into pitiful barren pasturage. The inhabitants of this place affirm, that of late years the sea has driven so vehemently upon them, that they have lost above four leagues of land. These sands are her harbingers: and we now see great heaps of moving sand, that march half a league before her, and occupy the land.

The other testimony from antiquity, to which some would apply this discovery of the New World, is in Aristotle; at least, if that little book of Unheard of Miracles be his —[one of the spurious publications brought out under his name— D.W.]. He there tells us, that certain Carthaginians, having crossed the Atlantic Sea without the Straits of Gibraltar, and sailed a very long time, discovered at last a great and fruitful island, all covered over with wood, and watered with several broad and deep rivers, far remote from all terra firma; and that they, and others after them, allured by the goodness and fertility of the soil, went thither with their wives and children, and began to plant a colony. But the senate of Carthage perceiving their people by little and little to diminish, issued out an express prohibition, that none, upon pain of death, should transport themselves thither; and also drove out these new inhabitants; fearing, 'tis said, lest' in process of time they should so multiply as to supplant themselves and ruin their state. But this relation of Aristotle no more agrees with our new-found lands than the other.

This man that I had was a plain ignorant fellow, and therefore the more likely to tell truth: for your better-bred sort of men are much more curious in their observation, 'tis true, and discover a great deal more; but then they gloss upon it, and to give the greater weight to what they deliver, and allure your belief, they cannot forbear a little to alter the story; they never represent things to you simply as they are, but rather as they appeared to them, or as they would have them appear to you, and to gain the reputation of men of judgment, and the better to induce your faith, are willing to help out the business with something more than is really true, of their own invention. Now in this case, we should either have a man of irreproachable veracity, or so simple that he has not wherewithal to contrive, and to give a colour of truth to false relations, and who can have no ends in forging an untruth. Such a one was mine; and besides, he has at divers times brought to me several seamen and merchants who at the same time went the same voyage. I shall therefore content myself with his information, without inquiring what the cosmographers say to the business. We should have topographers to trace out to us the particular places where they have been; but for having had this advantage over us, to have seen the Holy Land, they would have the privilege, forsooth, to tell us stories of all the other parts of the world beside. I would have every one write what he knows, and as much as he knows, but no more; and that not in this only but in all other subjects; for such a person may have some particular knowledge and experience of the nature of such a river, or such a fountain, who, as to other things, knows no more than what everybody does, and yet to give a currency to his little pittance of learning, will undertake to write the whole body of physics: a vice from which great inconveniences derive their original.

Now, to return to my subject, I find that there is nothing barbarous and savage in this nation, by anything that I can gather, excepting, that every one gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own country. As, indeed, we have no other level of truth and reason than the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the place wherein we live: there is always the perfect religion, there the perfect government, there the



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most exact and accomplished usage of all things. They are savages at the same rate that we say fruits are wild, which nature produces of herself and by her own ordinary progress; whereas, in truth, we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice and diverted from the common order. In those, the genuine, most useful, and natural virtues and properties are vigorous and sprightly, which we have helped to degenerate in these, by accommodating them to the pleasure of our own corrupted palate. And yet for all this, our taste confesses a flavour and delicacy excellent even to emulation of the best of ours, in several fruits wherein those countries abound without art or culture. Neither is it reasonable that art should gain the pre-eminence of our great and powerful mother nature. We have so surcharged her with the additional ornaments and graces we have added to the beauty and riches of her own works by our inventions, that we have almost smothered her; yet in other places, where she shines in her own purity and proper lustre, she marvellously baffles and disgraces all our vain and frivolous attempts:

"Et veniunt hederæ sponte sua melius;  
Surgit et in solis formosior arbutus antris;  
Et volucres nulls dulcius arte canunt."

["The ivy grows best spontaneously, the arbutus best in shady caves;  
and the wild notes of birds are sweeter than art can teach.  
—"Propertius, i. 2, 10.]

Our utmost endeavours cannot arrive at so much as to imitate the nest of the least of birds, its contexture, beauty, and convenience: not so much as the web of a poor spider.

All things, says Plato,—[Laws, 10.]— are produced either by nature, by fortune, or by art; the greatest and most beautiful by the one or the other of the former, the least and the most imperfect by the last.

These nations then seem to me to be so far barbarous, as having received but very little form and fashion from art and human invention, and consequently to be not much remote from their original simplicity. The laws of nature, however, govern them still, not as yet much vitiated with any mixture of ours: but 'tis in such purity, that I am sometimes troubled we were not sooner acquainted with these people, and that they were not discovered in those better times, when there were men much more able to judge of them than we are. I am sorry that Lycurgus and Plato had no knowledge of them; for to my apprehension, what we now see in those nations, does not only surpass all the pictures with which the poets have adorned the golden age, and all their inventions in feigning a happy state of man, but, moreover, the fancy and even the wish and desire of philosophy itself; so native and so pure a simplicity, as we by experience see to be in them, could never enter into their imagination, nor could they ever believe that human society could have been maintained with so little artifice and human patchwork. I should tell Plato that it is a nation wherein there is no manner of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no name of magistrate or political superiority; no use of service, riches or poverty, no contracts, no successions, no dividends, no properties, no employments, but those of leisure, no respect of kindred, but common, no clothing, no agriculture, no metal, no use of corn or wine; the very words that signify lying, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, pardon, never heard of.

—[This is the famous passage which Shakespeare, through Florio's version, 1603, or ed. 1613, p. 102, has employed in the "Tempest," ii. 1.]

How much would he find his imaginary Republic short of his perfection?

"Viri a diis recentes."

["Men fresh from the gods."—Seneca, Ep., 90.]

"Hos natura modos primum dedit."

["These were the manners first taught by nature."]

—Virgil, Georgics, ii. 20.]

As to the rest, they live in a country very pleasant and temperate, so that, as my witnesses inform me, 'tis rare to hear of a sick person, and they moreover assure me, that they never saw any of the natives, either paralytic, bleareyed, toothless, or crooked with age. The situation of their country is along the sea-shore, enclosed on the other side towards the land, with great and high mountains, having about a hundred leagues in breadth between. They have great store of fish and flesh, that have no resemblance to those of ours: which they eat without any other cookery, than plain boiling, roasting, and broiling. The first that rode a horse thither, though in several other voyages he had contracted an acquaintance and familiarity with them, put them into so terrible a fright, with his centaur appearance, that they killed him with their arrows before they could come to discover who he was. Their buildings are very long, and of capacity to hold two or three hundred people, made of the barks of tall trees, reared with one end upon the ground, and leaning to and supporting one another at the top, like some of our barns, of which the covering hangs down to the very ground, and serves for the side walls. They have wood so hard, that they cut with it, and make their swords of it, and their grills of it to broil their meat. Their beds are of cotton, hung swinging from the roof, like our seamen's hammocks, every man his own, for the wives lie apart from their husbands. They rise with the sun, and so soon as they are up, eat for all day, for they have no more meals but that; they do not then drink, as Suidas reports of some other people of the East that never drank at their meals; but drink very often all day after, and sometimes to a rousing pitch. Their drink is made of a certain root, and is of the colour of our claret, and they never drink it but lukewarm. It will not keep above two or three days; it has a somewhat sharp, brisk taste, is nothing heady, but very comfortable to the stomach; laxative to strangers, but a very pleasant beverage to such as are accustomed to it. They make use, instead of bread, of a certain white compound, like coriander seeds; I have tasted of it; the taste is sweet and a little flat. The whole day is spent in dancing. Their young men go a-hunting after wild beasts with bows and arrows; one part of their women are employed in preparing their drink the while, which is their chief employment. One of their old men, in the morning before they fall to eating, preaches to the whole family, walking from the one end of the house to the other, and several times repeating the same sentence, till he has finished the round, for their houses are at least a hundred yards long. Valour towards their enemies and love towards their wives, are the two heads of his discourse, never failing in the close, to put them in mind, that 'tis their wives who provide them their drink warm and well seasoned. The fashion of their beds, ropes, swords, and of the wooden bracelets they tie about their wrists, when they go to fight, and of the great canes, bored hollow at one end, by the sound of which they keep the cadence of their dances, are to be seen in several places, and amongst others, at my house. They shave all over, and much more neatly than we, without other razor than one of wood or stone. They believe in the immortality of the soul, and that those who have merited well of the gods are lodged in that part of heaven where the sun rises, and the accursed in the west.

They have I know not what kind of priests and prophets, who very rarely present themselves to the people, having their abode in the mountains. At their arrival, there is a great feast, and solemn assembly of many villages: each house, as I have described, makes a village, and they are about a French league distant from one another. This prophet declaims to them in public, exhorting them to virtue and their duty: but all their ethics are comprised in these two articles, resolution in war, and affection to their wives. He also prophesies to them events to come, and the issues they are to expect from their enterprises, and prompts them to or diverts them from war: but let him look to't; for if he fail in his divination, and anything happen otherwise than he has foretold, he is cut into a thousand pieces, if he be caught, and condemned for a false prophet: for that reason, if any of them has been mistaken, he is no more heard of.

Divination is a gift of God, and therefore to abuse it, ought to be a punishable imposture. Amongst the Scythians, where their diviners failed in the promised effect, they were laid, bound hand and foot, upon carts loaded with firs and bavins, and drawn by oxen, on which they were burned to death.—[Herodotus, iv. 69.]— Such as only meddle with things subject to the conduct of human capacity, are excusable in doing the best they can: but those other fellows that come to delude us with assurances of an extraordinary faculty, beyond our understanding, ought they not to be punished, when they do not make good the effect of their promise, and for the temerity of their imposture?

They have continual war with the nations that live further within the mainland, beyond their mountains, to which they go naked, and without other arms than their bows and wooden swords, fashioned at one end like the head of our javelins. The obstinacy of their battles is wonderful, and they never end without great effusion of blood: for as to running away, they know not what it is. Every one for a trophy brings home the head of an enemy he has killed, which he fixes over the door of his house. After having a long time treated their prisoners very well, and given them all the regales they can think of, he to whom the prisoner belongs, invites a great assembly of his friends. They being come, he ties a rope to one of the arms of the prisoner, of which, at a distance, out of his reach, he holds the one end himself, and gives to the friend he loves best the other arm to hold after the same manner; which being done, they two, in the presence of all the assembly, despatch him with their swords. After that, they roast him, eat him amongst them, and send some chops to their absent friends. They do not do this, as some think, for nourishment, as the Scythians anciently did, but as a representation of an extreme revenge; as will appear by this: that having observed the Portuguese, who were in league with their enemies, to inflict another sort of death upon any of them they took prisoners, which was to set them up to the girdle in the earth, to shoot at the remaining part till it was stuck full of arrows, and then to hang them, they thought those people of the other world (as being men who had sown the knowledge of a great many vices amongst their neighbours, and who were much greater masters in all sorts of mischief than they) did not exercise this sort of revenge without a meaning, and that it must needs be more painful than theirs, they began to leave their old way, and to follow this. I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous horror of so cruel an action, but that, seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own. I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive, than when he is dead; in tearing a body limb from limb by racks and torments, that is yet in perfect sense; in roasting it by degrees; in causing it to be bitten and worried by dogs and swine (as we have not only read, but lately seen, not amongst inveterate and mortal enemies, but among neighbours and fellow-citizens, and, which is worse, under colour of piety and religion), than to roast and eat him after he is dead.

Chrysippus and Zeno, the two heads of the Stoic sect, were of opinion that there was no hurt in making use of our dead carcasses, in what way soever for our necessity, and in feeding upon them too;—[Diogenes Laertius, vii. 188.]— as our own ancestors, who being besieged by Caesar in the city Alexia, resolved to sustain the famine of the siege with the bodies of their old men, women, and other persons who were incapable of bearing arms.

"Vascones, ut fama est, alimentis talibus usi  
Produxere animas."

["'Tis said the Gascons with such meats appeased their hunger."  
—Juvenal, Sat., xv. 93.

And the physicians make no bones of employing it to all sorts of use, either to apply it outwardly; or to give it inwardly for the health of the patient. But there never was any opinion so irregular, as to excuse treachery, disloyalty, tyranny, and cruelty, which are our familiar vices. We may then call these people barbarous, in respect to the rules of reason: but not in respect to ourselves, who in all sorts of barbarity exceed them. Their wars are throughout noble and generous, and carry as much excuse and fair pretence, as that human malady is capable of; having with them no other foundation than the sole jealousy of valour. Their disputes are not for the conquest of new lands, for these they already possess are so fruitful by nature, as to supply them without labour or concern, with all things necessary, in such abundance that they have no need to enlarge their borders. And they are, moreover, happy in this, that they only covet so much as their natural necessities require: all beyond that is superfluous to them: men of the same age call one another generally brothers, those who are younger, children; and the old men are fathers to all. These leave to their heirs in common the full possession of goods, without any manner of division, or other title than what nature bestows upon her creatures, in bringing them into the world. If their neighbours pass over the mountains to assault them, and obtain a victory, all the victors gain by it is glory only, and the advantage of having proved themselves the better in valour and virtue: for they never meddle with the goods of the conquered, but presently return into their own country, where they have no want of anything necessary, nor of this greatest of all goods, to know happily how to enjoy their condition and to be content. And those in turn do the same; they demand of their prisoners no other ransom, than acknowledgment that they are overcome: but there is not one found in an age, who will not rather choose to die than make such a confession, or

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either by word or look recede from the entire grandeur of an invincible courage. There is not a man amongst them who had not rather be killed and eaten, than so much as to open his mouth to entreat he may not. They use them with all liberality and freedom, to the end their lives may be so much the dearer to them; but frequently entertain them with menaces of their approaching death, of the torments they are to suffer, of the preparations making in order to it, of the mangling their limbs, and of the feast that is to be made, where their carcass is to be the only dish. All which they do, to no other end, but only to extort some gentle or submissive word from them, or to frighten them so as to make them run away, to obtain this advantage that they were terrified, and that their constancy was shaken; and indeed, if rightly taken, it is in this point only that a true victory consists:

"Victoria nulla est,  
Quam quae confessor animo quoque subjugat hostes."  
["No victory is complete, which the conquered do not admit to be  
so.—"Claudius, De Sexto Consulatu Honorii, v. 248.]

The Hungarians, a very warlike people, never pretend further than to reduce the enemy to their discretion; for having forced this confession from them, they let them go without injury or ransom, excepting, at the most, to make them engage their word never to bear arms against them again. We have sufficient advantages over our enemies that are borrowed and not truly our own; it is the quality of a porter, and no effect of virtue, to have stronger arms and legs; it is a dead and corporeal quality to set in array; 'tis a turn of fortune to make our enemy stumble, or to dazzle him with the light of the sun; 'tis a trick of science and art, and that may happen in a mean base fellow, to be a good fencer. The estimate and value of a man consist in the heart and in the will: there his true honour lies. Valour is stability, not of legs and arms, but of the courage and the soul; it does not lie in the goodness of our horse or our arms but in our own. He that falls obstinate in his courage—

"Si succiderit, de genu pugnat"  
["If his legs fail him, he fights on his knees."  
—Seneca, De Providentia, c. 2.]

—he who, for any danger of imminent death, abates nothing of his assurance; who, dying, yet darts at his enemy a fierce and disdainful look, is overcome not by us, but by fortune; he is killed, not conquered; the most valiant are sometimes the most unfortunate. There are defeats more triumphant than victories. Never could those four sister victories, the fairest the sun ever be held, of Salamis, Plataea, Mycale, and Sicily, venture to oppose all their united glories, to the single glory of the discomfiture of King Leonidas and his men, at the pass of Thermopylae. Who ever ran with a more glorious desire and greater ambition, to the winning, than Captain Iscolas to the certain loss of a battle?—[Diodorus Siculus, xv. 64.]— Who could have found out a more subtle invention to secure his safety, than he did to assure his destruction? He was set to defend a certain pass of Peloponnesus against the Arcadians, which, considering the nature of the place and the inequality of forces, finding it utterly impossible for him to do, and seeing that all who were presented to the enemy, must certainly be left upon the place; and on the other side, reputed it unworthy of his own virtue and magnanimity and of the Lacedaemonian name to fail in any part of his duty, he chose a mean betwixt these two extremes after this manner; the youngest and most active of his men, he preserved for the service and defence of their country, and sent them back; and with the rest, whose loss would be of less consideration, he resolved to make good the pass, and with the death of them, to make the enemy buy their entry as dear as possibly he could; as it fell out, for being presently environed on all sides by the Arcadians, after having made a great slaughter of the enemy, he and his were all cut in pieces. Is there any trophy dedicated to the conquerors which was not much more due to these who were overcome? The part that true conquering is to play, lies in the encounter, not in the coming off; and the honour of valour consists in fighting, not in subduing.

But to return to my story: these prisoners are so far from discovering the least weakness, for all the terrors that can be represented to them, that, on the contrary, during the two or three months they are kept, they always appear with a cheerful countenance; importune their masters to make haste to bring them to the test, defy, rail at them, and reproach them with cowardice, and the number of battles they have lost against those of their country. I have

a song made by one of these prisoners, wherein he bids them "come all, and dine upon him, and welcome, for they shall withal eat their own fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh has served to feed and nourish him. These muscles," says he, "this flesh and these veins, are your own: poor silly souls as you are, you little think that the substance of your ancestors' limbs is here yet; notice what you eat, and you will find in it the taste of your own flesh:" in which song there is to be observed an invention that nothing relishes of the barbarian. Those that paint these people dying after this manner, represent the prisoner spitting in the faces of his executioners and making wry mouths at them. And 'tis most certain, that to the very last gasp, they never cease to brave and defy them both in word and gesture. In plain truth, these men are very savage in comparison of us; of necessity, they must either be absolutely so or else we are savages; for there is a vast difference betwixt their manners and ours.

The men there have several wives, and so much the greater number, by how much they have the greater reputation for valour. And it is one very remarkable feature in their marriages, that the same jealousy our wives have to hinder and divert us from the friendship and familiarity of other women, those employ to promote their husbands' desires, and to procure them many spouses; for being above all things solicitous of their husbands' honour, 'tis their chiefest care to seek out, and to bring in the most companions they can, forasmuch as it is a testimony of the husband's virtue. Most of our ladies will cry out, that 'tis monstrous; whereas in truth it is not so, but a truly matrimonial virtue, and of the highest form. In the Bible, Sarah, with Leah and Rachel, the two wives of Jacob, gave the most beautiful of their handmaids to their husbands; Livia preferred the passions of Augustus to her own interest; —[Suetonius, Life of Augustus, c. 71.]— and the wife of King Deiotarus, Stratonice, did not only give up a fair young maid that served her to her husband's embraces, but moreover carefully brought up the children he had by her, and assisted them in the succession to their father's crown.

And that it may not be supposed, that all this is done by a simple and servile obligation to their common practice, or by any authoritative impression of their ancient custom, without judgment or reasoning, and from having a soul so stupid that it cannot contrive what else to do, I must here give you some touches of their sufficiency in point of understanding. Besides what I repeated to you before, which was one of their songs of war, I have another, a love-song, that begins thus:

"Stay, adder, stay, that by thy pattern my sister may draw the  
fashion and work of a rich ribbon, that I may present to my beloved,  
by which means thy beauty and the excellent order of thy scales  
shall for ever be preferred before all other serpents."

Wherein the first couplet, "Stay, adder," makes the burden of the song. Now I have conversed enough with poetry to judge thus much that not only there is nothing barbarous in this invention, but, moreover, that it is perfectly Anacreontic. To which it may be added, that their language is soft, of a pleasing accent, and something bordering upon the Greek termination.

Three of these people, not foreseeing how dear their knowledge of the corruptions of this part of the world will one day cost their happiness and repose, and that the effect of this commerce will be their ruin, as I presuppose it is in a very fair way (miserable men to suffer themselves to be deluded with desire of novelty and to have left the serenity of their own heaven to come so far to gaze at ours!), were at Rouen at the time that the late King Charles IX. was there. The king himself talked to them a good while, and they were made to see our fashions, our pomp, and the form of a great city. After which, some one asked their opinion, and would know of them, what of all the things they had seen, they found most to be admired? To which they made answer, three things, of which I have forgotten the third, and am troubled at it, but two I yet remember. They said, that in the first place they thought it very strange that so many tall men, wearing beards, strong, and well armed, who were about the king ('tis like they meant the Swiss of the guard), should submit to obey a child, and that they did not rather choose out one amongst themselves to command. Secondly (they have a way of speaking in their language to call men the half of one another), that they had observed that there were amongst us men full and crammed with all manner of commodities, whilst, in the meantime, their halves were begging at their doors, lean and half-starved with hunger and poverty; and they thought it strange that these necessitous halves were able to suffer so great an inequality

and injustice, and that they did not take the others by the throats, or set fire to their houses.

I talked to one of them a great while together, but I had so ill an interpreter, and one who was so perplexed by his own ignorance to apprehend my meaning, that I could get nothing out of him of any moment: Asking him what advantage he reaped from the superiority he had amongst his own people (for he was a captain, and our mariners called him king), he told me, to march at the head of them to war. Demanding of him further how many men he had to follow him, he showed me a space of ground, to signify as many as could march in such a compass, which might be four or five thousand men; and putting the question to him whether or no his authority expired with the war, he told me this remained: that when he went to visit the villages of his dependence, they planed him paths through the thick of their woods, by which he might pass at his ease. All this does not sound very ill, and the last was not at all amiss, for they wear no breeches.

## CHAPTER XXXI. THAT A MAN IS SOBERLY TO JUDGE OF THE DIVINE ORDINANCES

The true field and subject of imposture are things unknown, forasmuch as, in the first place, their very strangeness lends them credit, and moreover, by not being subjected to our ordinary reasons, they deprive us of the means to question and dispute them: For which reason, says Plato, —[In Critias.]— it is much more easy to satisfy the hearers, when speaking of the nature of the gods than of the nature of men, because the ignorance of the auditory affords a fair and large career and all manner of liberty in the handling of abstruse things. Thence it comes to pass, that nothing is so firmly believed, as what we least know; nor any people so confident, as those who entertain us with fables, such as your alchemists, judicial astrologers, fortune-tellers, and physicians,

"Id genus omne."

["All that sort of people."—Horace, Sat., i. 2, 2.]

To which I would willingly, if I durst, join a pack of people that take upon them to interpret and control the designs of God Himself, pretending to find out the cause of every accident, and to pry into the secrets of the divine will, there to discover the incomprehensible motive, of His works; and although the variety, and the continual discordance of events, throw them from corner to corner, and toss them from east to west, yet do they still persist in their vain inquisition, and with the same pencil to paint black and white.

In a nation of the Indies, there is this commendable custom, that when anything befalls them amiss in any encounter or battle, they publicly ask pardon of the sun, who is their god, as having committed an unjust action, always imputing their good or evil fortune to the divine justice, and to that submitting their own judgment and reason. 'Tis enough for a Christian to believe that all things come from God, to receive them with acknowledgment of His divine and inscrutable wisdom, and also thankfully to accept and receive them, with what face soever they may present themselves. But I do not approve of what I see in use, that is, to seek to affirm and support our religion by the prosperity of our enterprises. Our belief has other foundation enough, without going about to authorise it by events: for the people being accustomed to such plausible arguments as these and so proper to their taste, it is to be feared, lest when they fail of success they should also stagger in their faith: as in the war wherein we are now engaged upon the account of religion, those who had the better in the business of Rochelabeille,—[May 1569.]— making great brags of that success as an infallible approbation of their cause, when they came afterwards to excuse their misfortunes of Moncontour and Jarnac, by saying they were fatherly scourges and corrections that they had not a people wholly at their mercy, they make it manifestly enough appear, what it is to take two sorts of grist out of the same sack, and with the same mouth to blow hot and cold. It were better to possess the vulgar with the solid and real foundations of truth. 'Twas a fine naval battle that was gained under the command of Don John of Austria a few months since—[That of Lepanto, October 7, 1571.]— against the Turks; but it has also pleased God at other times to let us see as great victories at our own expense. In fine, 'tis a hard matter to reduce divine things to our balance, without waste and losing a great deal of the weight. And who

would take upon him to give a reason that Arius and his Pope Leo, the principal heads of the Arian heresy, should die, at several times, of so like and strange deaths (for being withdrawn from the disputation by a griping in the bowels, they both of them suddenly gave up the ghost upon the stool), and would aggravate this divine vengeance by the circumstances of the place, might as well add the death of Heliogabalus, who was also slain in a house of office. And, indeed, Irenaeus was involved in the same fortune. God, being pleased to show us, that the good have something else to hope for and the wicked something else to fear, than the fortunes or misfortunes of this world, manages and applies these according to His own occult will and pleasure, and deprives us of the means foolishly to make thereof our own profit. And those people abuse themselves who will pretend to dive into these mysteries by the strength of human reason. They never give one hit that they do not receive two for it; of which St. Augustine makes out a great proof upon his adversaries. 'Tis a conflict that is more decided by strength of memory than by the force of reason. We are to content ourselves with the light it pleases the sun to communicate to us, by virtue of his rays; and who will lift up his eyes to take in a greater, let him not think it strange, if for the reward of his presumption, he there lose his sight.

"Quis hominum potest scire consilium Dei?

Aut quis poterit cogitare quid velit Dominus?"

["Who of men can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of the Lord is."—Book of Wisdom, ix. 13.]

## CHAPTER XXXII. THAT WE ARE TO AVOID PLEASURES, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF LIFE

I had long ago observed most of the opinions of the ancients to concur in this, that it is high time to die when there is more ill than good in living, and that to preserve life to our own torment and inconvenience is contrary to the very rules of nature, as these old laws instruct us.

["Either tranquil life, or happy death. It is well to die when life is wearisome. It is better to die than to live miserable."

—Stobaeus, Serm. xx.]

But to push this contempt of death so far as to employ it to the removing our thoughts from the honours, riches, dignities, and other favours and goods, as we call them, of fortune, as if reason were not sufficient to persuade us to avoid them, without adding this new injunction, I had never seen it either commanded or practised, till this passage of Seneca fell into my hands; who advising Lucilius, a man of great power and authority about the emperor, to alter his voluptuous and magnificent way of living, and to retire himself from this worldly vanity and ambition, to some solitary, quiet, and philosophical life, and the other alleging some difficulties: "I am of opinion," says he, "either that thou leave that life of thine, or life itself; I would, indeed, advise thee to the gentle way, and to untie, rather than to break, the knot thou hast indiscreetly knit, provided, that if it be not otherwise to be untied, thou resolutely break it. There is no man so great a coward, that had not rather once fall than to be always falling." I should have found this counsel conformable enough to the Stoical roughness: but it appears the more strange, for being borrowed from Epicurus, who writes the same thing upon the like occasion to Idomeneus. And I think I have observed something like it, but with Christian moderation, amongst our own people.

St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, that famous enemy of the Arian heresy, being in Syria, had intelligence thither sent him, that Abra, his only daughter, whom he left at home under the eye and tuition of her mother, was sought in marriage by the greatest noblemen of the country, as being a virgin virtuously brought up, fair, rich, and in the flower of her age; whereupon he wrote to her (as appears upon record), that she should remove her affection from all the pleasures and advantages proposed to her; for that he had in his travels found out a much greater and more worthy fortune for her, a husband of much greater power and magnificence, who would present her with robes and jewels of inestimable value; wherein his design was to dispossess her of the appetite and use of worldly delights, to join her wholly to God; but the nearest and most certain way to this, being, as he conceived, the death of his daughter; he never ceased, by vows, prayers, and orisons, to beg of the Almighty, that He would please to

call her out of this world, and to take her to Himself; as accordingly it came to pass; for soon after his return, she died, at which he expressed a singular joy. This seems to outdo the other, forasmuch as he applies himself to this means at the outset, which they only take subsidiarily; and, besides, it was towards his only daughter. But I will not omit the latter end of this story, though it be for my purpose; St. Hilary's wife, having understood from him how the death of their daughter was brought about by his desire and design, and how much happier she was to be removed out of this world than to have stayed in it, conceived so vivid an apprehension of the eternal and heavenly beatitude, that she begged of her husband, with the extremest importunity, to do as much for her; and God, at their joint request, shortly after calling her to Him, it was a death embraced with singular and mutual content.

## CHAPTER XXXIII. THAT FORTUNE IS OFTENTIMES OBSERVED TO ACT BY THE RULE OF REASON

The inconstancy and various motions of Fortune

[The term Fortune, so often employed by Montaigne, and in passages where he might have used Providence, was censured by the doctors who examined his Essays when he was at Rome in 1581. See his Travels, i. 35 and 76.]

may reasonably make us expect she should present us with all sorts of faces. Can there be a more express act of justice than this? The Duc de Valentinois, —[Caesar Borgia.]— having resolved to poison Adrian, Cardinal of Corneto, with whom Pope Alexander VI., his father and himself, were to sup in the Vatican, he sent before a bottle of poisoned wine, and withal, strict order to the butler to keep it very safe. The Pope being come before his son, and calling for drink, the butler supposing this wine had not been so strictly recommended to his care, but only upon the account of its excellency, presented it forthwith to the Pope, and the duke himself coming in presently after, and being confident they had not meddled with his bottle, took also his cup; so that the father died immediately upon the spot —[Other historians assign the Pope several days of misery prior to death. D.W.]—, and the son, after having been long tormented with sickness, was reserved to another and a worse fortune.

Sometimes she seems to play upon us, just in the nick of an affair; Monsieur d'Estrees, at that time ensign to Monsieur de Vendome, and Monsieur de Licques, lieutenant in the company of the Duc d'Ascot, being both pretenders to the Sieur de Fougueselles' sister, though of several parties (as it oft falls out amongst frontier neighbours), the Sieur de Licques carried her; but on the same day he was married, and which was worse, before he went to bed to his wife, the bridegroom having a mind to break a lance in honour of his new bride, went out to skirmish near St. Omer, where the Sieur d'Estrees proving the stronger, took him prisoner, and the more to illustrate his victory, the lady was fain—

"Conjugis ante coacta novi dimittere collum,  
Quam veniens una atque altera rursus hyems  
Noctibus in longis avidum saturasset amorem,"

["Compelled to abstain from embracing her new spouse in her arms before two winters pass in succession, during their long nights had satiated her eager love."—Catullus, lxxviii. 81.]

—to request him of courtesy, to deliver up his prisoner to her, as he accordingly did, the gentlemen of France never denying anything to ladies.

Does she not seem to be an artist here? Constantine, son of Helena, founded the empire of Constantinople, and so many ages after, Constantine, the son of Helen, put an end to it. Sometimes she is pleased to emulate our miracles we are told, that King Clovis besieging Angouleme, the walls fell down of themselves by divine favour and Bouchet has it from some author, that King Robert having sat down before a city, and being stolen away from the



siege to go keep the feast of St. Aignan at Orleans, as he was in devotion at a certain part of the Mass, the walls of the beleaguered city, without any manner of violence, fell down with a sudden ruin. But she did quite contrary in our Milan wars; for, le Capitaine Rense laying siege for us to the city Arona, and having carried a mine under a great part of the wall, the mine being sprung, the wall was lifted from its base, but dropped down again nevertheless, whole and entire, and so exactly upon its foundation, that the besieged suffered no inconvenience by that attempt.

Sometimes she plays the physician. Jason of Pheres being given over by the physicians, by reason of an imposthume in his breast, having a mind to rid himself of his pain, by death at least, threw himself in a battle desperately into the thickest of the enemy, where he was so fortunately wounded quite through the body, that the imposthume broke, and he was perfectly cured. Did she not also excel the painter Protogenes in his art? who having finished the picture of a dog quite tired and out of breath, in all the other parts excellently well to his own liking, but not being able to express, as he would, the slaver and foam that should come out of its mouth, vexed and angry at his work, he took his sponge, which by cleaning his pencils had imbibed several sorts of colours, and threw it in a rage against the picture, with an intent utterly to deface it; when fortune guiding the sponge to hit just upon the mouth of the dog, it there performed what all his art was not able to do. Does she not sometimes direct our counsels and correct them? Isabel, Queen of England, having to sail from Zealand into her own kingdom, —[in 1326]— with an army, in favour of her son against her husband, had been lost, had she come into the port she intended, being there laid wait for by the enemy; but fortune, against her will, threw her into another haven, where she landed in safety. And that man of old who, throwing a stone at a dog, hit and killed his mother-in-law, had he not reason to pronounce this verse:

["Fortune has more judgement than we."—Menander]

Icetes had contracted with two soldiers to kill Timoleon at Adrana in Sicily.—[Plutarch, Life of Timoleon, c. 7.]— They took their time to do it when he was assisting at a sacrifice, and thrusting into the crowd, as they were making signs to one another, that now was a fit time to do their business, in steps a third, who, with a sword takes one of them full drive over the pate, lays him dead upon the place and runs away, which the others see, and concluding himself discovered and lost, runs to the altar and begs for mercy, promising to discover the whole truth, which as he was doing, and laying open the full conspiracy, behold the third man, who being apprehended, was, as a murderer, thrust and hauled by the people through the press, towards Timoleon, and the other most eminent persons of the assembly, before whom being brought, he cries out for pardon, pleading that he had justly slain his father's murderer; which he, also, proving upon the spot, by sufficient witnesses, whom his good fortune very opportunely supplied him withal, that his father was really killed in the city of Leontini, by that very man on whom he had taken his revenge, he was presently awarded ten Attic minae, for having had the good fortune, by designing to revenge the death of his father, to preserve the life of the common father of Sicily. Fortune, truly, in her conduct surpasses all the rules of human prudence.

But to conclude: is there not a direct application of her favour, bounty, and piety manifestly discovered in this action? Ignatius the father and Ignatius the son being proscribed by the triumvirs of Rome, resolved upon this generous act of mutual kindness, to fall by the hands of one another, and by that means to frustrate and defeat the cruelty of the tyrants; and accordingly with their swords drawn, ran full drive upon one another, where fortune so guided the points, that they made two equally mortal wounds, affording withal so much honour to so brave a friendship, as to leave them just strength enough to draw out their bloody swords, that they might have liberty to embrace one another in this dying condition, with so close and hearty an embrace, that the executioner cut off both their heads at once, leaving the bodies still fast linked together in this noble bond, and their wounds joined mouth to mouth, affectionately sucking in the last blood and remainder of the lives of each other.

## CHAPTER XXXIV. OF ONE DEFECT IN OUR GOVERNMENT

My late father, a man that had no other advantages than experience and his own natural parts, was nevertheless of

a very clear judgment, formerly told me that he once had thoughts of endeavouring to introduce this practice; that there might be in every city a certain place assigned to which such as stood in need of anything might repair, and have their business entered by an officer appointed for that purpose. As for example: I want a chapman to buy my pearls; I want one that has pearls to sell; such a one wants company to go to Paris; such a one seeks a servant of such a quality; such a one a master; such a one such an artificer; some inquiring for one thing, some for another, every one according to what he wants. And doubtless, these mutual advertisements would be of no contemptible advantage to the public correspondence and intelligence: for there are evermore conditions that hunt after one another, and for want of knowing one another's occasions leave men in very great necessity.

I have heard, to the great shame of the age we live in, that in our very sight two most excellent men for learning died so poor that they had scarce bread to put in their mouths: Lilius Gregorius Giralduus in Italy and Sebastianus Castalio in Germany: and I believe there are a thousand men would have invited them into their families, with very advantageous conditions, or have relieved them where they were, had they known their wants. The world is not so generally corrupted, but that I know a man that would heartily wish the estate his ancestors have left him might be employed, so long as it shall please fortune to give him leave to enjoy it, to secure rare and remarkable persons of any kind, whom misfortune sometimes persecutes to the last degree, from the dangers of necessity; and at least place them in such a condition that they must be very hard to please, if they are not contented.

My father in his domestic economy had this rule (which I know how to commend, but by no means to imitate), namely, that besides the day-book or memorial of household affairs, where the small accounts, payments, and disbursements, which do not require a secretary's hand, were entered, and which a steward always had in custody, he ordered him whom he employed to write for him, to keep a journal, and in it to set down all the remarkable occurrences, and daily memorials of the history of his house: very pleasant to look over, when time begins to wear things out of memory, and very useful sometimes to put us out of doubt when such a thing was begun, when ended; what visitors came, and when they went; our travels, absences, marriages, and deaths; the reception of good or ill news; the change of principal servants, and the like. An ancient custom, which I think it would not be amiss for every one to revive in his own house; and I find I did very foolishly in neglecting it.

## CHAPTER XXXV. OF THE CUSTOM OF WEARING CLOTHES

Whatever I shall say upon this subject, I am of necessity to invade some of the bounds of custom, so careful has she been to shut up all the avenues. I was disputing with myself in this shivering season, whether the fashion of going naked in those nations lately discovered is imposed upon them by the hot temperature of the air, as we say of the Indians and Moors, or whether it be the original fashion of mankind. Men of understanding, forasmuch as all things under the sun, as the Holy Writ declares, are subject to the same laws, were wont in such considerations as these, where we are to distinguish the natural laws from those which have been imposed by man's invention, to have recourse to the general polity of the world, where there can be nothing counterfeit. Now, all other creatures being sufficiently furnished with all things necessary for the support of their being —[Montaigne's expression is, "with needle and thread."—W.C.H.]— it is not to be imagined that we only are brought into the world in a defective and indigent condition, and in such a state as cannot subsist without external aid. Therefore it is that I believe, that as plants, trees, and animals, and all things that have life, are seen to be by nature sufficiently clothed and covered, to defend them from the injuries of weather:

"Propterea que fere res omnes ant corio sunt,

Aut seta, ant conchis, ant callo, ant cortice tectae,"

["And that for this reason nearly all things are clothed with skin,  
or hair, or shells, or bark, or some such thing."

—Lucretius, iv. 936.]

so were we: but as those who by artificial light put out that of day, so we by borrowed forms and fashions have destroyed our own. And 'tis plain enough to be seen, that 'tis custom only which renders that impossible that

otherwise is nothing so; for of those nations who have no manner of knowledge of clothing, some are situated under the same temperature that we are, and some in much colder climates. And besides, our most tender parts are always exposed to the air, as the eyes, mouth, nose, and ears; and our country labourers, like our ancestors in former times, go with their breasts and bellies open. Had we been born with a necessity upon us of wearing petticoats and breeches, there is no doubt but nature would have fortified those parts she intended should be exposed to the fury of the seasons with a thicker skin, as she has done the finger-ends and the soles of the feet. And why should this seem hard to believe? I observe much greater distance betwixt my habit and that of one of our country boors, than betwixt his and that of a man who has no other covering but his skin. How many men, especially in Turkey, go naked upon the account of devotion? Some one asked a beggar, whom he saw in his shirt in the depth of winter, as brisk and frolic as he who goes muffled up to the ears in furs, how he was able to endure to go so? "Why, sir," he answered, "you go with your face bare: I am all face." The Italians have a story of the Duke of Florence's fool, whom his master asking how, being so thinly clad, he was able to support the cold, when he himself, warmly wrapped up as he was, was hardly able to do it? "Why," replied the fool, "use my receipt to put on all your clothes you have at once, and you'll feel no more cold than I." King Massinissa, to an extreme old age, could never be prevailed upon to go with his head covered, how cold, stormy, or rainy soever the weather might be; which also is reported of the Emperor Severus. Herodotus tells us, that in the battles fought betwixt the Egyptians and the Persians, it was observed both by himself and by others, that of those who were left dead upon the field, the heads of the Egyptians were without comparison harder than those of the Persians, by reason that the last had gone with their heads always covered from their infancy, first with biggins, and then with turbans, and the others always shaved and bare. King Agesilaus continued to a decrepit age to wear always the same clothes in winter that he did in summer. Caesar, says Suetonius, marched always at the head of his army, for the most part on foot, with his head bare, whether it was rain or sunshine, and as much is said of Hannibal:

"Tum vertice nudo,  
Excipere insanos imbres, coelique ruinam."  
["Bareheaded he marched in snow, exposed to pouring rain and the  
utmost rigour of the weather."—Silius Italicus, i. 250.]

A Venetian who has long lived in Pegu, and has lately returned thence, writes that the men and women of that kingdom, though they cover all their other parts, go always barefoot and ride so too; and Plato very earnestly advises for the health of the whole body, to give the head and the feet no other clothing than what nature has bestowed. He whom the Poles have elected for their king,—[Stephen Bathory]—since ours came thence, who is, indeed, one of the greatest princes of this age, never wears any gloves, and in winter or whatever weather can come, never wears other cap abroad than that he wears at home. Whereas I cannot endure to go unbuttoned or untied; my neighbouring labourers would think themselves in chains, if they were so braced. Varro is of opinion, that when it was ordained we should be bare in the presence of the gods and before the magistrate, it was so ordered rather upon the score of health, and to inure us to the injuries of weather, than upon the account of reverence; and since we are now talking of cold, and Frenchmen used to wear variety of colours (not I myself, for I seldom wear other than black or white, in imitation of my father), let us add another story out of Le Capitaine Martin du Bellay, who affirms, that in the march to Luxembourg he saw so great frost, that the munition-wine was cut with hatchets and wedges, and delivered out to the soldiers by weight, and that they carried it away in baskets: and Ovid,

"Nudaque consistunt, formam servantia testae,  
Vina; nec hausta meri, sed data frusta, bibunt."  
["The wine when out of the cask retains the form of the cask;  
and is given out not in cups, but in bits."  
—Ovid, *Trist.*, iii. 10, 23.]

At the mouth of Lake Maeotis the frosts are so very sharp, that in the very same place where Mithridates' lieutenant had fought the enemy dryfoot and given them a notable defeat, the summer following he obtained over them a naval victory. The Romans fought at a very great disadvantage, in the engagement they had with the

Carthaginians near Piacenza, by reason that they went to the charge with their blood congealed and their limbs numbed with cold, whereas Hannibal had caused great fires to be dispersed quite through his camp to warm his soldiers, and oil to be distributed amongst them, to the end that anointing themselves, they might render their nerves more supple and active, and fortify the pores against the violence of the air and freezing wind, which raged in that season.

The retreat the Greeks made from Babylon into their own country is famous for the difficulties and calamities they had to overcome; of which this was one, that being encountered in the mountains of Armenia with a horrible storm of snow, they lost all knowledge of the country and of the ways, and being driven up, were a day and a night without eating or drinking; most of their cattle died, many of themselves were starved to death, several struck blind with the force of the hail and the glare of the snow, many of them maimed in their fingers and toes, and many stiff and motionless with the extremity of the cold, who had yet their understanding entire.

Alexander saw a nation, where they bury their fruit-trees in winter to protect them from being destroyed by the frost, and we also may see the same.

But, so far as clothes go, the King of Mexico changed four times a day his apparel, and never put it on again, employing that he left off in his continual liberalities and rewards; and neither pot, dish, nor other utensil of his kitchen or table was ever served twice.

## CHAPTER XXXVI. OF CATO THE YOUNGER

["I am not possessed with this common error, to judge of others according to what I am my selfe. I am easie to beleeve things differing from my selfe. Though I be engaged to one forme, I do not tie the world unto it, as every man doth. And I beleeve and conceive a thousand manners of life, contrary to the common sorte."  
—Florio, ed. 1613, p. 113.]

I am not guilty of the common error of judging another by myself. I easily believe that in another's humour which is contrary to my own; and though I find myself engaged to one certain form, I do not oblige others to it, as many do; but believe and apprehend a thousand ways of living; and, contrary to most men, more easily admit of difference than uniformity amongst us. I as frankly as any one would have me, discharge a man from my humours and principles, and consider him according to his own particular model. Though I am not continent myself, I nevertheless sincerely approve the continence of the Feuillans and Capuchins, and highly commend their way of living. I insinuate myself by imagination into their place, and love and honour them the more for being other than I am. I very much desire that we may be judged every man by himself, and would not be drawn into the consequence of common examples. My own weakness nothing alters the esteem I ought to have for the force and vigour of those who deserve it:

"Sunt qui nihil suadent, quam quod se imitari posse confidunt."

["There are who persuade nothing but what they believe they can imitate themselves."—Cicero, *De Orator.*, c. 7.]

Crawling upon the slime of the earth, I do not for all that cease to observe up in the clouds the inimitable height of some heroic souls. 'Tis a great deal for me to have my judgment regular and just, if the effects cannot be so, and to maintain this sovereign part, at least, free from corruption; 'tis something to have my will right and good where my legs fail me. This age wherein we live, in our part of the world at least, is grown so stupid, that not only the exercise, but the very imagination of virtue is defective, and seems to be no other but college jargon:

"Virtutem verba putant, ut  
Lucum ligna:"

["They think words virtue, as they think mere wood a sacred grove."  
—Horace, Ep., i. 6, 31.]

"Quam vereri deberent, etiam si percipere non possent."

["Which they ought to reverence, though they cannot comprehend."  
—Cicero, Tusc. Quas., v. 2.]

'Tis a gewgaw to hang in a cabinet or at the end of the tongue, as on the tip of the ear, for ornament only. There are no longer virtuous actions extant; those actions that carry a show of virtue have yet nothing of its essence; by reason that profit, glory, fear, custom, and other suchlike foreign causes, put us on the way to produce them. Our justice also, valour, courtesy, may be called so too, in respect to others and according to the face they appear with to the public; but in the doer it can by no means be virtue, because there is another end proposed, another moving cause. Now virtue owns nothing to be hers, but what is done by herself and for herself alone.

In that great battle of Plataea, that the Greeks under the command of Pausanias gained against Mardonius and the Persians, the conquerors, according to their custom, coming to divide amongst them the glory of the exploit, attributed to the Spartan nation the pre-eminence of valour in the engagement. The Spartans, great judges of virtue, when they came to determine to what particular man of their nation the honour was due of having the best behaved himself upon this occasion, found that Aristodemus had of all others hazarded his person with the greatest bravery; but did not, however, allow him any prize, by reason that his virtue had been incited by a desire to clear his reputation from the reproach of his miscarriage at the business of Thermopylae, and to die bravely to wipe off that former blemish.

Our judgments are yet sick, and obey the humour of our depraved manners. I observe most of the wits of these times pretend to ingenuity, by endeavouring to blemish and darken the glory of the bravest and most generous actions of former ages, putting one vile interpretation or another upon them, and forging and supposing vain causes and motives for the noble things they did: a mighty subtlety indeed! Give me the greatest and most unblemished action that ever the day beheld, and I will contrive a hundred plausible drifts and ends to obscure it. God knows, whoever will stretch them out to the full, what diversity of images our internal wills suffer under. They do not so maliciously play the censurers, as they do it ignorantly and rudely in all their detractions.

The same pains and licence that others take to blemish and bespatter these illustrious names, I would willingly undergo to lend them a shoulder to raise them higher. These rare forms, that are culled out by the consent of the wisest men of all ages, for the world's example, I should not stick to augment in honour, as far as my invention would permit, in all the circumstances of favourable interpretation; and we may well believe that the force of our invention is infinitely short of their merit. 'Tis the duty of good men to portray virtue as beautiful as they can, and there would be nothing wrong should our passion a little transport us in favour of so sacred a form. What these people do, on the contrary, they either do out of malice, or by the vice of confining their belief to their own capacity; or, which I am more inclined to think, for not having their sight strong, clear, and elevated enough to conceive the splendour of virtue in her native purity: as Plutarch complains, that in his time some attributed the cause of the younger Cato's death to his fear of Caesar, at which he seems very angry, and with good reason; and by this a man may guess how much more he would have been offended with those who have attributed it to ambition. Senseless people! He would rather have performed a noble, just, and generous action, and to have had ignominy for his reward, than for glory. That man was in truth a pattern that nature chose out to show to what height human virtue and constancy could arrive.

But I am not capable of handling so rich an argument, and shall therefore only set five Latin poets together, contending in the praise of Cato; and, incidentally, for their own too. Now, a well-educated child will judge the two first, in comparison of the others, a little flat and languid; the third more vigorous, but overthrown by the extravagance of his own force; he will then think that there will be room for one or two gradations of invention to

come to the fourth, and, mounting to the pitch of that, he will lift up his hands in admiration; coming to the last, the first by some space' (but a space that he will swear is not to be filled up by any human wit), he will be astounded, he will not know where he is.

And here is a wonder: we have far more poets than judges and interpreters of poetry; it is easier to write it than to understand it. There is, indeed, a certain low and moderate sort of poetry, that a man may well enough judge by certain rules of art; but the true, supreme, and divine poesy is above all rules and reason. And whoever discerns the beauty of it with the most assured and most steady sight, sees no more than the quick reflection of a flash of lightning: it does not exercise, but ravishes and overwhelms our judgment. The fury that possesses him who is able to penetrate into it wounds yet a third man by hearing him repeat it; like a loadstone that not only attracts the needle, but also infuses into it the virtue to attract others. And it is more evidently manifest in our theatres, that the sacred inspiration of the Muses, having first stirred up the poet to anger, sorrow, hatred, and out of himself, to whatever they will, does moreover by the poet possess the actor, and by the actor consecutively all the spectators. So much do our passions hang and depend upon one another.

Poetry has ever had that power over me from a child to transpierce and transport me; but this vivid sentiment that is natural to me has been variously handled by variety of forms, not so much higher or lower (for they were ever the highest of every kind), as differing in colour. First, a gay and sprightly fluency; afterwards, a lofty and penetrating subtlety; and lastly, a mature and constant vigour. Their names will better express them: Ovid, Lucan, Virgil.

But our poets are beginning their career:

"Sit Cato, dum vivit, sane vel Caesare major,"  
["Let Cato, whilst he live, be greater than Caesar."  
—Martial, vi. 32]

says one.

"Et invictum, devicta morte, Catonem,"  
["And Cato invincible, death being overcome."  
—Manilius, Astron., iv. 87.

says the second. And the third, speaking of the civil wars betwixt Caesar and Pompey,

"Victrix causa diis placuit, set victa Catoni."  
["The victorious cause blessed the gods, the defeated one Cato."  
—"Lucan, i. 128.]

And the fourth, upon the praises of Caesar:

"Et cuncta terrarum subacta,  
Praeter atrocem animum Catonis."  
["And conquered all but the indomitable mind of Cato."  
—Horace, Od., ii. 1, 23.]

And the master of the choir, after having set forth all the great names of the greatest Romans, ends thus:

"His dantem jura Catonem."  
["Cato giving laws to all the rest."—Aeneid, viii. 670.]

## CHAPTER XXXVII. THAT WE LAUGH AND CRY FOR THE SAME THING

When we read in history that Antigonus was very much displeased with his son for presenting him the head of King Pyrrhus his enemy, but newly slain fighting against him, and that seeing it, he wept; and that Rene, Duke of

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Lorraine, also lamented the death of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, whom he had himself defeated, and appeared in mourning at his funeral; and that in the battle of D'Auray (which Count Montfort obtained over Charles de Blois, his competitor for the duchy of Brittany), the conqueror meeting the dead body of his enemy, was very much afflicted at his death, we must not presently cry out:

"E cosi avven, the l'animo ciascuna  
Sua passion sotto 'l contrario manto,  
Ricopre, con la vista or'chiara, or'bruna."

["And thus it happens that the mind of each veils its passion under a different appearance, and beneath a smiling visage, gay beneath a sombre air."—Petrarch.]

When Pompey's head was presented to Caesar, the histories tell us that he turned away his face, as from a sad and unpleasing object. There had been so long an intelligence and society betwixt them in the management of the public affairs, so great a community of fortunes, so many mutual offices, and so near an alliance, that this countenance of his ought not to suffer under any misinterpretation, or to be suspected for either false or counterfeit, as this other seems to believe:

"Tutumque putavit  
Jam bonus esse socer; lacrymae non sponte cadentes,  
Effudit, gemitusque expressit pectore laeto;"  
["And now he thought it safe to play the kind father-in-law,  
shedding forced tears, and from a joyful breast discharging sighs  
and groans."—Lucan, ix. 1037.]

for though it be true that the greatest part of our actions are no other than visor and disguise, and that it may sometimes be true that

"Haeredis fletus sub persona rises est,"  
["The heir's tears behind the mask are smiles."  
—Publius Syrus, apud Gellium, xvii. 14.]

yet, in judging of these accidents, we are to consider how much our souls are oftentimes agitated with divers passions. And as they say that in our bodies there is a congregation of divers humours, of which that is the sovereign which, according to the complexion we are of, is commonly most predominant in us: so, though the soul have in it divers motions to give it agitation, yet must there of necessity be one to overrule all the rest, though not with so necessary and absolute a dominion but that through the flexibility and inconstancy of the soul, those of less authority may upon occasion reassume their place and make a little sally in turn. Thence it is, that we see not only children, who innocently obey and follow nature, often laugh and cry at the same thing, but not one of us can boast, what journey soever he may have in hand that he has the most set his heart upon, but when he comes to part with his family and friends, he will find something that troubles him within; and though he refrain his tears yet he puts foot in the stirrup with a sad and cloudy countenance. And what gentle flame soever may warm the heart of modest and wellborn virgins, yet are they fain to be forced from about their mothers' necks to be put to bed to their husbands, whatever this boon companion is pleased to say:

"Estne novis nuptis odio Venus? anne parentum  
Frustrantur falsis gaudia lachrymulis,  
Ubertim thalami quasi intra limina fundunt?  
Non, ita me divi, vera gemunt, juverint."

["Is Venus really so alarming to the new-made bride, or does she honestly oppose her parent's rejoicing the tears she so abundantly sheds on entering the nuptial chamber? No, by the Gods, these are no true tears."—Catullus, lxvi. 15.]

["Is Venus really so repugnant to newly-married maids? Do they meet

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the smiles of parents with feigned tears? They weep copiously within the very threshold of the nuptial chamber. No, so the gods help me, they do not truly grieve."—Catullus, lxvi. 15.]—  
[A more literal translation. D.W.]

Neither is it strange to lament a person dead whom a man would by no means should be alive. When I rattle my man, I do it with all the mettle I have, and load him with no feigned, but downright real curses; but the heat being over, if he should stand in need of me, I should be very ready to do him good: for I instantly turn the leaf. When I call him calf and coxcomb, I do not pretend to entail those titles upon him for ever; neither do I think I give myself the lie in calling him an honest fellow presently after. No one quality engrosses us purely and universally. Were it not the sign of a fool to talk to one's self, there would hardly be a day or hour wherein I might not be heard to grumble and mutter to myself and against myself, "Confound the fool!" and yet I do not think that to be my definition. Who for seeing me one while cold and presently very fond towards my wife, believes the one or the other to be counterfeited, is an ass. Nero, taking leave of his mother whom he was sending to be drowned, was nevertheless sensible of some emotion at this farewell, and was struck with horror and pity. 'Tis said, that the light of the sun is not one continuous thing, but that he darts new rays so thick one upon another that we cannot perceive the intermission:

"Largus enim liquidi fons luminis, aetherius sol,  
Irrigat assidue coelum candore recenti,  
Supeditatque novo confestim lumine lumen."

["So the wide fountain of liquid light, the ethereal sun, steadily fertilises the heavens with new heat, and supplies a continuous store of fresh light."—Lucretius, v. 282.]

Just so the soul variously and imperceptibly darts out her passions.

Artabanus coming by surprise once upon his nephew Xerxes, chid him for the sudden alteration of his countenance. He was considering the immeasurable greatness of his forces passing over the Hellespont for the Grecian expedition: he was first seized with a palpitation of joy, to see so many millions of men under his command, and this appeared in the gaiety of his looks: but his thoughts at the same instant suggesting to him that of so many lives, within a century at most, there would not be one left, he presently knit his brows and grew sad, even to tears.

We have resolutely pursued the revenge of an injury received, and been sensible of a singular contentment for the victory; but we shall weep notwithstanding. 'Tis not for the victory, though, that we shall weep: there is nothing altered in that but the soul looks upon things with another eye and represents them to itself with another kind of face; for everything has many faces and several aspects.

Relations, old acquaintances, and friendships, possess our imaginations and make them tender for the time, according to their condition; but the turn is so quick, that 'tis gone in a moment:

"Nil adeo fieri celeri ratione videtur,  
Quam si mens fieri proponit, et inchoat ipsa,  
Ocius ergo animus, quam res se perciet ulla,  
Ante oculos quorum in promptu natura videtur;"

["Nothing therefore seems to be done in so swift a manner than if the mind proposes it to be done, and itself begins. It is more active than anything which we see in nature."—Lucretius, iii. 183.]

and therefore, if we would make one continued thing of all this succession of passions, we deceive ourselves. When Timoleon laments the murder he had committed upon so mature and generous deliberation, he does not lament the liberty restored to his country, he does not lament the tyrant; but he laments his brother: one part of his



duty is performed; let us give him leave to perform the other.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII. OF SOLITUDE

Let us pretermitt that long comparison betwixt the active and the solitary life; and as for the fine sayings with which ambition and avarice palliate their vices, that we are not born for ourselves but for the public,—[This is the eulogium passed by Lucan on Cato of Utica, ii. 383.]— let us boldly appeal to those who are in public affairs; let them lay their hands upon their hearts, and then say whether, on the contrary, they do not rather aspire to titles and offices and that tumult of the world to make their private advantage at the public expense. The corrupt ways by which in this our time they arrive at the height to which their ambitions aspire, manifestly enough declares that their ends cannot be very good. Let us tell ambition that it is she herself who gives us a taste of solitude; for what does she so much avoid as society? What does she so much seek as elbowroom? A man many do well or ill everywhere; but if what Bias says be true, that the greatest part is the worse part, or what the Preacher says: there is not one good of a thousand:

"Rari quippe boni: numero vix sunt totidem quot

Thebarum portae, vel divitis ostia Nili,"

["Good men forsooth are scarce: there are hardly as many as there are gates of Thebes or mouths of the rich Nile."

—Juvenal, Sat., xiii. 26.]

the contagion is very dangerous in the crowd. A man must either imitate the vicious or hate them both are dangerous things, either to resemble them because they are many or to hate many because they are unressembling to ourselves. Merchants who go to sea are in the right when they are cautious that those who embark with them in the same bottom be neither dissolute blasphemers nor vicious other ways, looking upon such society as unfortunate. And therefore it was that Bias pleasantly said to some, who being with him in a dangerous storm implored the assistance of the gods: "Peace, speak softly," said he, "that they may not know you are here in my company." —[Diogenes Laertius]— And of more pressing example, Albuquerque, viceroy in the Indies for Emmanuel, king of Portugal, in an extreme peril of shipwreck, took a young boy upon his shoulders, for this only end that, in the society of their common danger his innocence might serve to protect him, and to recommend him to the divine favour, that they might get safe to shore. 'Tis not that a wise man may not live everywhere content, and be alone in the very crowd of a palace; but if it be left to his own choice, the schoolman will tell you that he should fly the very sight of the crowd: he will endure it if need be; but if it be referred to him, he will choose to be alone. He cannot think himself sufficiently rid of vice, if he must yet contend with it in other men. Charondas punished those as evil men who were convicted of keeping ill company. There is nothing so unsociable and sociable as man, the one by his vice, the other by his nature. And Antisthenes, in my opinion, did not give him a satisfactory answer, who reproached him with frequenting ill company, by saying that the physicians lived well enough amongst the sick, for if they contribute to the health of the sick, no doubt but by the contagion, continual sight of, and familiarity with diseases, they must of necessity impair their own.

Now the end, I take it, is all one, to live at more leisure and at one's ease: but men do not always take the right way. They often think they have totally taken leave of all business, when they have only exchanged one employment for another: there is little less trouble in governing a private family than a whole kingdom. Wherever the mind is perplexed, it is in an entire disorder, and domestic employments are not less troublesome for being less important. Moreover, for having shaken off the court and the exchange, we have not taken leave of the principal vexations of life:

"Ratio et prudentia curas,

Non locus effusi late maris arbiter, aufert;"

["Reason and prudence, not a place with a commanding view of the great ocean, banish care."—Horace, Ep., i. 2.]

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ambition, avarice, irresolution, fear, and inordinate desires, do not leave us because we forsake our native country:

"Et  
Post equitem sedet atra cura;"  
["Black care sits behind the horse man."  
—Horace, *Od.*, iii. 1, 40].

they often follow us even to cloisters and philosophical schools; nor deserts, nor caves, hair-shirts, nor fasts, can disengage us from them:

"Haeret lateri lethalis arundo."  
["The fatal shaft adheres to the side."—*Aeneid*, iv. 73.]

One telling Socrates that such a one was nothing improved by his travels: "I very well believe it," said he, "for he took himself along with him"

"Quid terras alio calentes  
Sole mutamus? patriae quis exsul  
Se quoque fugit?"  
["Why do we seek climates warmed by another sun? Who is the man  
that by fleeing from his country, can also flee from himself?"  
—Horace, *Od.*, ii. 16, 18.]

If a man do not first discharge both himself and his mind of the burden with which he finds himself oppressed, motion will but make it press the harder and sit the heavier, as the lading of a ship is of less encumbrance when fast and bestowed in a settled posture. You do a sick man more harm than good in removing him from place to place; you fix and establish the disease by motion, as stakes sink deeper and more firmly into the earth by being moved up and down in the place where they are designed to stand. Therefore, it is not enough to get remote from the public; 'tis not enough to shift the soil only; a man must flee from the popular conditions that have taken possession of his soul, he must sequester and come again to himself:

"Rupi jam vincula, dicas  
Nam luctata canis nodum arripit; attamen illi,  
Quum fugit, a collo trahitur pars longa catenae."  
["You say, perhaps, you have broken your chains: the dog who after  
long efforts has broken his chain, still in his flight drags a heavy  
portion of it after him."—*Persius*, *Sat.*, v. 158.]

We still carry our fetters along with us. 'Tis not an absolute liberty; we yet cast back a look upon what we have left behind us; the fancy is still full of it:

"Nisi purgatum est pectus, quae praelia nobis  
Atque pericula tunc ingratis insinuandum?  
Quantae conncindunt hominem cupidinis acres  
Sollicitum curae? quantique perinde timores?  
Quidve superbia, spurcitia, ac petulantia, quantas  
Efficiunt clades? quid luxus desidiesque?"  
["But unless the mind is purified, what internal combats and dangers  
must we incur in spite of all our efforts! How many bitter  
anxieties, how many terrors, follow upon unregulated passion!  
What destruction befalls us from pride, lust, petulant anger!  
What evils arise from luxury and sloth!"—*Lucretius*, v. 4.]

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Our disease lies in the mind, which cannot escape from itself;

"In culpa est animus, qui se non effugit unquam,"

—Horace, Ep., i. 14, 13.]

and therefore is to be called home and confined within itself: that is the true solitude, and that may be enjoyed even in populous cities and the courts of kings, though more commodiously apart.

Now, since we will attempt to live alone, and to waive all manner of conversation amongst them, let us so order it that our content may depend wholly upon ourselves; let us dissolve all obligations that ally us to others; let us obtain this from ourselves, that we may live alone in good earnest, and live at our ease too.

Stilpo having escaped from the burning of his town, where he lost wife, children, and goods, Demetrius Poliorcetes seeing him, in so great a ruin of his country, appear with an undisturbed countenance, asked him if he had received no loss? To which he made answer, No; and that, thank God, nothing was lost of his.—[Seneca, Ep. 7.]— This also was the meaning of the philosopher Antisthenes, when he pleasantly said, that "men should furnish themselves with such things as would float, and might with the owner escape the storm";—[Diogenes Laertius, vi. 6.] and certainly a wise man never loses anything if he have himself. When the city of Nola was ruined by the barbarians, Paulinus, who was bishop of that place, having there lost all he had, himself a prisoner, prayed after this manner: "O Lord, defend me from being sensible of this loss; for Thou knowest they have yet touched nothing of that which is mine."—[St. Augustin, De Civit. Dei, i. 10.]— The riches that made him rich and the goods that made him good, were still kept entire. This it is to make choice of treasures that can secure themselves from plunder and violence, and to hide them in such a place into which no one can enter and that is not to be betrayed by any but ourselves. Wives, children, and goods must be had, and especially health, by him that can get it; but we are not so to set our hearts upon them that our happiness must have its dependence upon them; we must reserve a backshop, wholly our own and entirely free, wherein to settle our true liberty, our principal solitude and retreat. And in this we must for the most part entertain ourselves with ourselves, and so privately that no exotic knowledge or communication be admitted there; there to laugh and to talk, as if without wife, children, goods, train, or attendance, to the end that when it shall so fall out that we must lose any or all of these, it may be no new thing to be without them. We have a mind pliable in itself, that will be company; that has wherewithal to attack and to defend, to receive and to give: let us not then fear in this solitude to languish under an uncomfortable vacuity.

"In solis sis tibi turba locis."

["In solitude, be company for thyself."—Tibullus, vi. 13. 12.]

Virtue is satisfied with herself, without discipline, without words, without effects. In our ordinary actions there is not one of a thousand that concerns ourselves. He that thou seest scrambling up the ruins of that wall, furious and transported, against whom so many harquebuss-shots are levelled; and that other all over scars, pale, and fainting with hunger, and yet resolved rather to die than to open the gates to him; dost thou think that these men are there upon their own account? No; peradventure in the behalf of one whom they never saw and who never concerns himself for their pains and danger, but lies wallowing the while in sloth and pleasure: this other slaving, blear-eyed, slovenly fellow, that thou seest come out of his study after midnight, dost thou think he has been tumbling over books to learn how to become a better man, wiser, and more content? No such matter; he will there end his days, but he will teach posterity the measure of Plautus' verses and the true orthography of a Latin word. Who is it that does not voluntarily exchange his health, his repose, and his very life for reputation and glory, the most useless, frivolous, and false coin that passes current amongst us? Our own death does not sufficiently terrify and trouble us; let us, moreover, charge ourselves with those of our wives, children, and family: our own affairs do not afford us anxiety enough; let us undertake those of our neighbours and friends, still more to break our brains and torment us:

"Vah! quemquamne hominem in animum instituere, aut

Parare, quod sit carius, quam ipse est sibi?"

["Ah! can any man conceive in his mind or realise what is dearer

than he is to himself?"—Terence, *Adelph.*, i. I, 13.]

Solitude seems to me to wear the best favour in such as have already employed their most active and flourishing age in the world's service, after the example of Thales. We have lived enough for others; let us at least live out the small remnant of life for ourselves; let us now call in our thoughts and intentions to ourselves, and to our own ease and repose. 'Tis no light thing to make a sure retreat; it will be enough for us to do without mixing other enterprises. Since God gives us leisure to order our removal, let us make ready, truss our baggage, take leave betimes of the company, and disentangle ourselves from those violent importunities that engage us elsewhere and separate us from ourselves.

We must break the knot of our obligations, how strong soever, and hereafter love this or that, but espouse nothing but ourselves: that is to say, let the remainder be our own, but not so joined and so close as not to be forced away without flaying us or tearing out part of our whole. The greatest thing in the world is for a man to know that he is his own. 'Tis time to wean ourselves from society when we can no longer add anything to it; he who is not in a condition to lend must forbid himself to borrow. Our forces begin to fail us; let us call them in and concentrate them in and for ourselves. He that can cast off within himself and resolve the offices of friendship and company, let him do it. In this decay of nature which renders him useless, burdensome, and importunate to others, let him take care not to be useless, burdensome, and importunate to himself. Let him soothe and caress himself, and above all things be sure to govern himself with reverence to his reason and conscience to that degree as to be ashamed to make a false step in their presence:

"Rarum est enim, ut satis se quisque vereatur."

["For 'tis rarely seen that men have respect and reverence enough for themselves."—Quintilian, x. 7.]

Socrates says that boys are to cause themselves to be instructed, men to exercise themselves in well-doing, and old men to retire from all civil and military employments, living at their own discretion, without the obligation to any office. There are some complexions more proper for these precepts of retirement than others. Such as are of a soft and dull apprehension, and of a tender will and affection, not readily to be subdued or employed, whereof I am one, both by natural condition and by reflection, will sooner incline to this advice than active and busy souls, which embrace: all, engage in all, are hot upon everything, which offer, present, and give themselves up to every occasion. We are to use these accidental and extraneous commodities, so far as they are pleasant to us, but by no means to lay our principal foundation there; 'tis no true one; neither nature nor reason allows it so to be. Why therefore should we, contrary to their laws, enslave our own contentment to the power of another? To anticipate also the accidents of fortune, to deprive ourselves of the conveniences we have in our own power, as several have done upon the account of devotion, and some philosophers by reasoning; to be one's own servant, to lie hard, to put out our own eyes, to throw our wealth into the river, to go in search of grief; these, by the misery of this life, aiming at bliss in another; those by laying themselves low to avoid the danger of falling: all such are acts of an excessive virtue. The stoutest and most resolute natures render even their seclusion glorious and exemplary:

"Tuta et parvula laudo,

Quum res deficiunt, satis inter vilia fortis

Verum, ubi quid melius contingit et unctius, idem

Hos sapere et solos aio bene vivere, quorum

Conspicitur nitidis fundata pecunia villis."

["When means are deficient, I laud a safe and humble condition, content with little: but when things grow better and more easy, I all the same say that you alone are wise and live well, whose invested money is visible in beautiful villas."

—Horace, *Ep.*, i. 15, 42.]

A great deal less would serve my turn well enough. 'Tis enough for me, under fortune's favour, to prepare myself for her disgrace, and, being at my ease, to represent to myself, as far as my imagination can stretch, the ill to

come; as we do at jousts and tiltings, where we counterfeit war in the greatest calm of peace. I do not think Arcesilaus the philosopher the less temperate and virtuous for knowing that he made use of gold and silver vessels, when the condition of his fortune allowed him so to do; I have indeed a better opinion of him than if he had denied himself what he used with liberality and moderation. I see the utmost limits of natural necessity: and considering a poor man begging at my door, oftentimes more jocund and more healthy than I myself am, I put myself into his place, and attempt to dress my mind after his mode; and running, in like manner, over other examples, though I fancy death, poverty, contempt, and sickness treading on my heels, I easily resolve not to be affrighted, forasmuch as a less than I takes them with so much patience; and am not willing to believe that a less understanding can do more than a greater, or that the effects of precept cannot arrive to as great a height as those of custom. And knowing of how uncertain duration these accidental conveniences are, I never forget, in the height of all my enjoyments, to make it my chiefest prayer to Almighty God, that He will please to render me content with myself and the condition wherein I am. I see young men very gay and frolic, who nevertheless keep a mass of pills in their trunk at home, to take when they've got a cold, which they fear so much the less, because they think they have remedy at hand. Every one should do in like manner, and, moreover, if they find themselves subject to some more violent disease, should furnish themselves with such medicines as may numb and stupefy the part.

The employment a man should choose for such a life ought neither to be a laborious nor an unpleasing one; otherwise 'tis to no purpose at all to be retired. And this depends upon every one's liking and humour. Mine has no manner of complacency for husbandry, and such as love it ought to apply themselves to it with moderation:

["Endeavour to make circumstances subject to me,  
and not me subject to circumstances."

—Horace, Ep., i. i, 19.]

Husbandry is otherwise a very servile employment, as Sallust calls it; though some parts of it are more excusable than the rest, as the care of gardens, which Xenophon attributes to Cyrus; and a mean may be found out betwixt the sordid and low application, so full of perpetual solicitude, which is seen in men who make it their entire business and study, and the stupid and extreme negligence, letting all things go at random which we see in others

"Democriti pecus edit agellos

Cultaque, dum peregre est animus sine corpore velox."

["Democritus' cattle eat his corn and spoil his fields, whilst his  
soaring mind ranges abroad without the body."

—Horace, Ep., i, 12, 12.]

But let us hear what advice the younger Pliny gives his friend Caninius Rufus upon the subject of solitude: "I advise thee, in the full and plentiful retirement wherein thou art, to leave to thy hinds the care of thy husbandry, and to addict thyself to the study of letters, to extract from thence something that may be entirely and absolutely thine own." By which he means reputation; like Cicero, who says that he would employ his solitude and retirement from public affairs to acquire by his writings an immortal life.

"Usque adeone

Scire tuum, nihil est, nisi to scire hoc, sciat alter?

["Is all that thy learning nothing, unless another knows  
that thou knowest?"—Persius, Sat., i. 23.]

It appears to be reason, when a man talks of retiring from the world, that he should look quite out of [for] himself. These do it but by halves: they design well enough for themselves when they shall be no more in it; but still they pretend to extract the fruits of that design from the world, when absent from it, by a ridiculous contradiction.

The imagination of those who seek solitude upon the account of devotion, filling their hopes and courage with certainty of divine promises in the other life, is much more rationally founded. They propose to themselves God,

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an infinite object in goodness and power; the soul has there wherewithal, at full liberty, to satiate her desires: afflictions and sufferings turn to their advantage, being undergone for the acquisition of eternal health and joy; death is to be wished and longed for, where it is the passage to so perfect a condition; the asperity of the rules they impose upon themselves is immediately softened by custom, and all their carnal appetites baffled and subdued, by refusing to humour and feed them, these being only supported by use and exercise. This sole end of another happily immortal life is that which really merits that we should abandon the pleasures and conveniences of this; and he who can really and constantly inflame his soul with the ardour of this vivid faith and hope, erects for himself in solitude a more voluptuous and delicious life than any other sort of existence.

Neither the end, then, nor the means of this advice pleases me, for we often fall out of the frying-pan into the fire. —[or: we always relapse ill from fever into fever.]— This book-employment is as painful as any other, and as great an enemy to health, which ought to be the first thing considered; neither ought a man to be allured with the pleasure of it, which is the same that destroys the frugal, the avaricious, the voluptuous, and the ambitious man.

["This plodding occupation of bookes is as painfull as any other, and as great an enemy vnto health, which ought principally to be considered. And a man should not suffer him selfe to be inveigled by the pleasure he takes in them."—Florio, edit. 1613, p. 122.]

The sages give us caution enough to beware the treachery of our desires, and to distinguish true and entire pleasures from such as are mixed and complicated with greater pain. For the most of our pleasures, say they, wheedle and caress only to strangle us, like those thieves the Egyptians called Philistae; if the headache should come before drunkenness, we should have a care of drinking too much; but pleasure, to deceive us, marches before and conceals her train. Books are pleasant, but if, by being over-studious, we impair our health and spoil our goodhumour, the best pieces we have, let us give it over; I, for my part, am one of those who think, that no fruit derived from them can recompense so great a loss. As men who have long felt themselves weakened by indisposition, give themselves up at last to the mercy of medicine and submit to certain rules of living, which they are for the future never to transgress; so he who retires, weary of and disgusted with the common way of living, ought to model this new one he enters into by the rules of reason, and to institute and establish it by premeditation and reflection. He ought to have taken leave of all sorts of labour, what advantage soever it may promise, and generally to have shaken off all those passions which disturb the tranquillity of body and soul, and then choose the way that best suits with his own humour:

"Unusquisque sua noverit ire via."

In husbandry, study, hunting, and all other exercises, men are to proceed to the utmost limits of pleasure, but must take heed of engaging further, where trouble begins to mix with it. We are to reserve so much employment only as is necessary to keep us in breath and to defend us from the inconveniences that the other extreme of a dull and stupid laziness brings along with it. There are sterile knotty sciences, chiefly hammered out for the crowd; let such be left to them who are engaged in the world's service. I for my part care for no other books, but either such as are pleasant and easy, to amuse me, or those that comfort and instruct me how to regulate my life and death:

"Tacitum sylvas inter reptare salubres,  
Curantem, quidquid dignum sapienti bonoque est."

["Silently meditating in the healthy groves, whatever is worthy of a wise and good man."—Horace, Ep., i. 4, 4.]

Wiser men, having great force and vigour of soul, may propose to themselves a rest wholly spiritual but for me, who have a very ordinary soul, it is very necessary to support myself with bodily conveniences; and age having of late deprived me of those pleasures that were more acceptable to me, I instruct and whet my appetite to those that remain, more suitable to this other reason. We ought to hold with all our force, both of hands and teeth, the use of the pleasures of life that our years, one after another, snatch away from us:

"Carpamus dulcia; nostrum est,  
Quod vivis; cinis, et manes, et fabula fies."  
["Let us pluck life's sweets, 'tis for them we live: by and by we  
shall be ashes, a ghost, a mere subject of talk."  
— Persius, Sat., v. 151.]

Now, as to the end that Pliny and Cicero propose to us of glory, 'tis infinitely wide of my account. Ambition is of all others the most contrary humour to solitude; glory and repose are things that cannot possibly inhabit in one and the same place. For so much as I understand, these have only their arms and legs disengaged from the crowd; their soul and intention remain confined behind more than ever:

"Tun', vetule, auriculis alienis colligis escas?"  
["Dost thou, then, old man, collect food for others' ears?"  
—Persius, Sat., i. 22.

they have only retired to take a better leap, and by a stronger motion to give a brisker charge into the crowd. Will you see how they shoot short? Let us put into the counterpoise the advice of two philosophers, of two very different sects, writing, the one to Idomeneus, the other to Lucilius, their friends, to retire into solitude from worldly honours and affairs. "You have," say they, "hitherto lived swimming and floating; come now and die in the harbour: you have given the first part of your life to the light, give what remains to the shade. It is impossible to give over business, if you do not also quit the fruit; therefore disengage yourselves from all concern of name and glory; 'tis to be feared the lustre of your former actions will give you but too much light, and follow you into your most private retreat. Quit with other pleasures that which proceeds from the approbation of another man: and as to your knowledge and parts, never concern yourselves; they will not lose their effect if yourselves be the better for them. Remember him, who being asked why he took so much pains in an art that could come to the knowledge of but few persons? 'A few are enough for me,' replied he; 'I have enough with one; I have enough with never an one.'—[Seneca, Ep., 7.]— He said true; you and a companion are theatre enough to one another, or you to yourself. Let the people be to you one, and be you one to the whole people. 'Tis an unworthy ambition to think to derive glory from a man's sloth and privacy: you are to do like the beasts of chase, who efface the track at the entrance into their den. You are no more to concern yourself how the world talks of you, but how you are to talk to yourself. Retire yourself into yourself, but first prepare yourself there to receive yourself: it were a folly to trust yourself in your own hands, if you cannot govern yourself. A man may miscarry alone as well as in company. Till you have rendered yourself one before whom you dare not trip, and till you have a bashfulness and respect for yourself,

"Obversentur species honestae animo;"  
["Let honest things be ever present to the mind"  
—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 22.]

present continually to your imagination Cato, Phocion, and Aristides, in whose presence the fools themselves will hide their faults, and make them controllers of all your intentions; should these deviate from virtue, your respect to those will set you right; they will keep you in this way to be contented with yourself; to borrow nothing of any other but yourself; to stay and fix your soul in certain and limited thoughts, wherein she may please herself, and having understood the true and real goods, which men the more enjoy the more they understand, to rest satisfied, without desire of prolongation of life or name." This is the precept of the true and natural philosophy, not of a boasting and prating philosophy, such as that of the two former.