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CHAPTER X

OF MANAGING THE WILL

Few things, in comparison of what commonly affect other men, move, or, to say better, possess me: for 'tis but reason they should concern a man, provided they do not possess him. I am very solicitous, both by study and argument, to enlarge this privilege of insensibility, which is in me naturally raised to a pretty degree, so that consequently I espouse and am very much moved with very few things. I have a clear sight enough, but I fix it upon very few objects; I have a sense delicate and tender enough; but an apprehension and application hard and negligent. I am very unwilling to engage myself; as much as in me lies, I employ myself wholly on myself, and even in that subject should rather choose to curb and restrain my affection from plunging itself over head and ears into it, it being a subject that I possess at the mercy of others, and over which fortune has more right than I; so that even as to health, which I so much value, 'tis all the more necessary for me not so passionately to covet and heed it, than to find diseases so insupportable. A man ought to moderate himself betwixt the hatred of pain and the love of pleasure: and Plato sets down a middle path of life betwixt the two. But against such affections as wholly carry me away from myself and fix me elsewhere, against those, I say, I oppose myself with my utmost power. 'Tis my opinion that a man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself. Were my will easy to lend itself out and to be swayed, I should not stick there; I am too tender both by nature and use:

"Fugax rerum, securaque in otia natus."

["Avoiding affairs and born to secure ease."
—Ovid, De Trist., iii. 2, 9.]

Hot and obstinate disputes, wherein my adversary would at last have the better, the issue that would render my heat and obstinacy disgraceful would peradventure vex me to the last degree. Should I set myself to it at the rate that others do, my soul would never have the force to bear the emotion and alarms of those who grasp at so much; it would immediately be disordered by this inward agitation. If, sometimes, I have been put upon the management of other men's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, but not into my lungs and liver; to take them upon me, not to incorporate them; to take pains, yes: to be impassioned about it, by no means; I have a care of them, but I will not sit upon them. I have enough to do to order and govern the domestic throng of those that I have in my own veins and bowels, without introducing a crowd of other men's affairs; and am sufficiently concerned about my own proper and natural business, without meddling with the concerns of others. Such as know how much they owe to themselves, and how many offices they are bound to of their own, find that nature has cut them out work enough of their own to keep them from being idle. "Thou hast business enough at home: look to that."

Men let themselves out to hire; their faculties are not for themselves, but for those to whom they have enslaved themselves; 'tis their tenants occupy them, not themselves. This common humour pleases not me. We must be thrifty of the liberty of our souls, and never let it out but upon just occasions, which are very few, if we judge aright. Do but observe such as have accustomed themselves to be at every one's call: they do it indifferently upon all, as well little as great, occasions; in that which nothing concerns them; as much as in what imports them most. They thrust themselves in indifferently wherever there is work to do and obligation, and are without life when not in tumultuous bustle:

"In negotiis sunt, negotii cause,"

["They are in business for business' sake."—Seneca, Ep., 22.]

It is not so much that they will go, as it is that they cannot stand still: like a rolling stone that cannot stop till it can go no further. Occupation, with a certain sort of men, is a mark of understanding and dignity: their souls seek repose in agitation, as children do by being rocked in a cradle; they may pronounce themselves as serviceable to their friends, as they are troublesome to themselves. No one distributes his money to others, but every one distributes his time and his life: there is nothing of which we are so prodigal as of these two things, of which to be thrifty would be both commendable and useful. I am of a quite contrary humour; I look to myself, and commonly covet with no great ardour what I do desire, and desire little; and I employ and busy myself at the same rate, rarely and temperately. Whatever they take in hand, they do it with their utmost will and vehemence. There are so many dangerous steps, that, for the more safety, we must a little lightly and superficially glide over the world, and not rush through it. Pleasure itself is painful in profundity:

"Incedis per ignes,
Suppositos cineri doloso."

["You tread on fire, hidden under deceitful ashes."
—Horace, Od., ii. i, 7.]

The Parliament of Bordeaux chose me mayor of their city at a time when I was at a distance from

France,—[At Bagno Della Villa, near Lucca, September 1581]—and still more remote from any such thought. I entreated to be excused, but I was told by my friends that I had committed an error in so doing, and the greater because the king had, moreover, interposed his command in that affair. 'Tis an office that ought to be looked upon so much more honourable, as it has no other salary nor advantage than the bare honour of its execution. It continues two years, but may be extended by a second election, which very rarely happens; it was to me, and had never been so but twice before: some years ago to Monsieur de Lansac, and lately to Monsieur de Biron, Marshal of France, in whose place I succeeded; and, I left mine to Monsieur de Matignon, Marshal of France also: proud of so noble a fraternity—

"Uterque bonus pacis bellique minister."

["Either one a good minister in peace and war."
—AEneid, xi. 658.]

Fortune would have a hand in my promotion, by this particular circumstance which she put in of her own, not altogether vain; for Alexander disdained the ambassadors of Corinth, who came to offer him a burgess-ship of their city; but when they proceeded to lay before him that Bacchus and Hercules were also in the register, he graciously thanked them.

At my arrival, I faithfully and conscientiously represented myself to them for such as I find myself to be—a man without memory, without vigilance, without experience, and without vigour; but withal, without hatred, without ambition, without avarice, and without violence; that they might be informed of my qualities, and know what they were to expect from my service. And whereas the knowledge they had had of my late father, and the honour they had for his memory, had alone incited them to confer this favour upon me, I plainly told them that I should be very sorry anything should make so great an impression upon me as their affairs and the concerns of their city had made upon him, whilst he held the government to which they had preferred me. I remembered, when a boy, to have seen him in his old age cruelly tormented with these public affairs, neglecting the soft repose of his own house, to which the declension of his age had reduced him for several years before, the management of his own affairs, and his health; and certainly despising his own life, which was in great danger of being lost, by being engaged in long and painful journeys on their behalf. Such was he; and this humour of his proceeded from a marvellous good nature; never was there a more charitable and popular soul. Yet this proceeding which I commend in others, I do not love to follow myself, and am not without excuse.

He had learned that a man must forget himself for his neighbour, and that the particular was of no manner of consideration in comparison with the general. Most of the rules and precepts of the world run this way; to drive us out of ourselves into the street for the benefit of public society; they thought to do a great feat to divert and remove us from ourselves, assuming we were but too much fixed there, and by a too natural inclination; and have said all they could to that purpose: for 'tis no new thing for the sages to preach things as they serve, not as they are. Truth has its obstructions, inconveniences, and incompatibilities with us; we must often deceive that we may not deceive ourselves; and shut our eyes and our understandings to redress and amend them:

"Imperiti enim judicant, et qui frequenter
in hoc ipsum fallendi sunt, ne errent."

["For the ignorant judge, and therefore are oft to be deceived,
less they should err."—Quintil., Inst. Orat., xi. 17.]

When they order us to love three, four, or fifty degrees of things above ourselves, they do like archers, who, to hit the white, take their aim a great deal higher than the butt; to make a crooked stick straight, we bend it the contrary way.

I believe that in the Temple of Pallas, as we see in all other religions, there were apparent mysteries to be exposed to the people; and others, more secret and high, that were only to be shown to such as were professed; 'tis likely that in these the true point of friendship that every one owes to himself is to be found; not a false friendship, that makes us embrace glory, knowledge, riches, and the like, with a principal and immoderate affection, as members of our being; nor an indiscreet and effeminate friendship, wherein it happens, as with ivy, that it decays and ruins the walls it embraces; but a sound and regular friendship, equally useful and pleasant. He who knows the duties of this friendship and practises them is truly of the cabinet of the Muses, and has attained to the height of human wisdom and of our happiness, such an one, exactly knowing what he owes to himself, will on his part find that he ought to apply to himself the use of the world and of other men; and to do this, to contribute to public society the duties and offices appertaining to him. He who does not in some sort live for others, does not live much for himself:

"Qui sibi amicus est, scito hunc amicum omnibus esse."

["He who is his own friend, is a friend to everybody else."
—Seneca, Ep., 6.]

The principal charge we have is, to every one his own conduct; and 'tis for this only that we here are. As he who should forget to live a virtuous and holy life, and should think he acquitted himself of his duty in instructing and training others up to it, would be a fool; even so he who abandons his own particular healthful and pleasant living to serve others therewith, takes, in my opinion, a wrong and unnatural course.

I would not that men should refuse, in the employments they take upon them, their attention, pains, eloquence, sweat, and blood if need be:

"Non ipse pro caris amicis
Aut patria, timidus perire:"

["Himself not afraid to die for beloved friends, or for his
country."—Horace, Od., iv. 9, 51.]

but 'tis only borrowed, and accidentally; his mind being always in repose and in health; not without action, but without vexation, without passion. To be simply acting costs him so little, that he acts even sleeping; but it must be set on going with discretion; for the body receives the offices imposed upon it just according to what they are; the mind often extends and makes them heavier at its own expense, giving them what measure it pleases. Men perform like things with several sorts of endeavour, and different contention of will; the one does well enough without the other; for how many people hazard themselves every day in war without any concern which way it goes; and thrust themselves into the dangers of battles, the loss of which will not break their next night's sleep? and such a man may be at home, out of the danger which he durst not have looked upon, who is more passionately concerned for the issue of this war, and whose soul is more anxious about events than the soldier who therein stakes his blood and his life. I could have engaged myself in public employments without quitting my own matters a nail's breadth, and have given myself to others without abandoning myself. This sharpness and violence of desires more hinder than they advance the execution of what we undertake; fill us with impatience against slow or contrary events, and with heat and suspicion against those with whom we have to do. We never carry on that thing well by which we are prepossessed and led:

"Male cuncta ministrat
Impetus."

["Impulse manages all things ill."—Statius, Thebaid, x. 704.]

He who therein employs only his judgment and address proceeds more cheerfully: he counterfeits, he gives way, he defers quite at his ease, according to the necessities of occasions; he fails in his attempt without trouble and affliction, ready and entire for a new enterprise; he always marches with the bridle in his hand. In him who is intoxicated with this violent and tyrannical intention, we discover, of necessity, much imprudence and injustice; the impetuosity of his desire carries him away; these are rash motions, and, if fortune do not very much assist, of very little fruit. Philosophy directs that, in the revenge of injuries received, we should strip ourselves of choler; not that the chastisement should be less, but, on the contrary, that the revenge may be the better and more heavily laid on, which, it conceives, will be by this impetuosity hindered. For anger not only disturbs, but, of itself, also wearies the arms of those who chastise; this fire benumbs and wastes their force; as in precipitation, "festinatio tarda est,"—haste trips up its own heels, fetters, and stops itself:

"Ipsa se velocitas implicat."—Seneca, Ep. 44

For example, according to what I commonly see, avarice has no greater impediment than itself; the more bent and vigorous it is, the less it rakes together, and commonly sooner grows rich when disguised in a visor of liberality.

A very excellent gentleman, and a friend of mine, ran a risk of impairing his faculties by a too passionate attention and affection to the affairs of a certain prince his master;—[Probably the King of Navarre, afterward Henry IV.]—which master has thus portrayed himself to me; "that he foresees the weight of accidents as well as another, but that in those for which there is no remedy, he presently resolves upon suffering; in others, having taken all the necessary precautions which by the vivacity of his understanding he can presently do, he quietly awaits what may follow." And, in truth, I have accordingly seen him maintain a great indifferency and liberty of actions and serenity of countenance in very great and difficult affairs: I find him much greater, and of greater capacity in adverse than in prosperous fortune; his defeats are to him more glorious than his victories, and his mourning than his

triumph.

Consider, that even in vain and frivolous actions, as at chess, tennis, and the like, this eager and ardent engaging with an impetuous desire, immediately throws the mind and members into indiscretion and disorder: a man astounds and hinders himself; he who carries himself more moderately, both towards gain and loss, has always his wits about him; the less peevish and passionate he is at play, he plays much more advantageously and surely.

As to the rest, we hinder the mind's grasp and hold, in giving it so many things to seize upon; some things we should only offer to it; tie it to others, and with others incorporate it. It can feel and discern all things, but ought to feed upon nothing but itself; and should be instructed in what properly concerns itself, and that is properly of its own having and substance. The laws of nature teach us what justly we need. After the sages have told us that no one is indigent according to nature, and that every one is so according to opinion, they very subtly distinguish betwixt the desires that proceed from her, and those that proceed from the disorder of our own fancy: those of which we can see the end are hers; those that fly before us, and of which we can see no end, are our own: the poverty of goods is easily cured; the poverty of the soul is irreparable:

> "Nam si, quod satis est homini, id satis esse potesset
> Hoc sat erat: nunc, quum hoc non est, qui credimus porro
> Divitias ullas animum mi explere potesse?"
>
> ["For if what is for man enough, could be enough, it were enough;
> but since it is not so, how can I believe that any wealth can give
> my mind content."—Lucilius aped Nonium Marcellinum, V. sec. 98.]

Socrates, seeing a great quantity of riches, jewels, and furniture carried in pomp through his city: "How many things," said he, "I do not desire!"—[Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., V. 32.]—Metrodorus lived on twelve ounces a day, Epicurus upon less; Metrocles slept in winter abroad amongst sheep, in summer in the cloisters of churches:

"Sufficit ad id natura, quod poscit."

["Nature suffices for what he requires."—Seneca, Ep., 90.]

Cleanthes lived by the labour of his own hands, and boasted that
Cleanthes, if he would, could yet maintain another Cleanthes.

If that which nature exactly and originally requires of us for the conservation of our being be too little (as in truth what it is, and how good cheap life may be maintained, cannot be better expressed than by this consideration, that it is so little that by its littleness it escapes the gripe and shock of fortune), let us allow ourselves a little more; let us call every one of our habits and conditions nature; let us rate and treat ourselves by this measure; let us stretch our appurtenances and accounts so far; for so far, I fancy, we have some excuse. Custom is a second nature, and no less powerful. What is wanting to my custom, I reckon is wanting to me; and I should be almost as well content that they took away my life as cut me short in the way wherein I have so long lived. I am no longer in condition for any great change, nor to put myself into a new and unwonted course, not even to augmentation. 'Tis past the time for me to become other than what I am; and as I should complain of any great good hap that should now befall me, that it came not in time to be enjoyed:

"Quo mihi fortunas, si non conceditur uti?"

> ["What is the good fortune to me, if it is not granted to me to use it."—Horace, Ep., i. 5, 12.]

so should I complain of any inward acquisition. It were almost better never, than so late, to become an honest man, and well fit to live, when one has no longer to live. I, who am about to make my exit out of the world, would easily resign to any newcomer, who should desire it, all the prudence I am now acquiring in the world's commerce; after meat, mustard. I have no need of goods of which I can make no use; of what use is knowledge to him who has lost his head? 'Tis an injury and unkindness in fortune to tender us presents that will only inspire us with a just despite that we had them not in their due season. Guide me no more; I can no longer go. Of so many parts as make up a sufficiency, patience is the most sufficient. Give the capacity of an excellent treble to the chorister who has rotten lungs, and eloquence to a hermit exiled into the deserts of Arabia. There needs no art to help a fall; the end finds itself of itself at the conclusion of every affair. My world is at an end, my form expired; I am totally of the past, and am bound to authorise it, and to conform my outgoing to it. I will here declare, by way of example, that the Pope's late ten days' diminution

[Gregory XIII., in 1582, reformed the Calendar, and, in consequence, in France they all at once passed from the 9th to the 20th December.]

has taken me so aback that I cannot well reconcile myself to it; I belong to the years wherein we kept another kind of account. So ancient and so long a custom challenges my adherence to it, so that I am constrained to be somewhat heretical on that point incapable of any, though corrective, innovation. My imagination, in spite of my teeth, always pushes me ten days forward or backward, and is ever murmuring in my ears: "This rule concerns those who are to begin to be." If health itself, sweet as it is, returns to me by fits, 'tis rather to give me cause of regret than possession of it; I have no place left to keep it in. Time leaves me; without which nothing can be possessed. Oh, what little account should I make of those great elective dignities that I see in such esteem in the world, that are never conferred but upon men who are taking leave of it; wherein they do not so much regard how well the man will discharge his trust, as how short his administration will be: from the very entry they look at the exit. In short, I am about finishing this man, and not rebuilding another. By long use, this form is in me turned into substance, and fortune into nature.

I say, therefore, that every one of us feeble creatures is excusable in thinking that to be his own which is comprised under this measure; but withal, beyond these limits, 'tis nothing but confusion; 'tis the largest extent we can grant to our own claims. The more we amplify our need and our possession, so much the more do we expose ourselves to the blows of Fortune and adversities. The career of our desires ought to be circumscribed and restrained to a short limit of the nearest and most contiguous commodities; and their course ought, moreover, to be performed not in a right line, that ends elsewhere, but in a circle, of which the two points, by a short wheel, meet and terminate in ourselves. Actions that are carried on without this reflection—a near and essential reflection, I mean—such as those of ambitious and avaricious men, and so many more as run point-blank, and to whose career always carries them before themselves, such actions, I say; are erroneous and sickly.

Most of our business is farce:

"Mundus universus exercet histrioniam."
—[Petronius Arbiter, iii. 8.]

We must play our part properly, but withal as a part of a borrowed personage; we must not make real essence of a mask and outward appearance; nor of a strange person, our own; we cannot distinguish the skin from the shirt: 'tis enough to meal the face, without mealing the breast. I see some who transform and transubstantiate themselves into as many new shapes and new beings as they undertake new employments; and who strut and fume even to the heart and liver, and carry their state along with them even to the close-stool: I cannot make them distinguish the salutations made to themselves from those made to their commission, their train, or their mule:

"Tantum se fortunx permittunt, etiam ut naturam dediscant."

["They so much give themselves up to fortune, as even to unlearn nature."—Quintus Curtius, iii. 2.]

They swell and puff up their souls, and their natural way of speaking, according to the height of their magisterial place. The Mayor of Bordeaux and Montaigne have ever been two by very manifest separation. Because one is an advocate or a financier, he must not ignore the knavery there is in such callings; an honest man is not accountable for the vice or absurdity of his employment, and ought not on that account refuse to take the calling upon him: 'tis the usage of his country, and there is money to be got by it; a man must live by the world; and make his best of it, such as it is. But the judgment of an emperor ought to be above his empire, and see and consider it as a foreign accident; and he ought to know how to enjoy himself apart from it, and to communicate himself as James and Peter, to himself, at all events.

I cannot engage myself so deep and so entire; when my will gives me to anything, 'tis not with so violent an obligation that my judgment is infected with it. In the present broils of this kingdom, my own interest has not made me blind to the laudable qualities of our adversaries, nor to those that are reproachable in those men of our party. Others adore all of their own side; for my part, I do not so much as excuse most things in those of mine: a good work has never the worst grace with me for being made against me. The knot of the controversy excepted, I have always kept myself in equanimity and pure indifference:

"Neque extra necessitates belli praecipuum odium gero;"

["Nor bear particular hatred beyond the necessities of war."]

for which I am pleased with myself; and the more because I see others commonly fail in the contrary

direction. Such as extend their anger and hatred beyond the dispute in question, as most men do, show that they spring from some other occasion and private cause; like one who, being cured of an ulcer, has yet a fever remaining, by which it appears that the ulcer had another more concealed beginning. The reason is that they are not concerned in the common cause, because it is wounding to the state and general interest; but are only nettled by reason of their particular concern. This is why they are so especially animated, and to a degree so far beyond justice and public reason:

> "Non tam omnia universi, quam ea, quae ad quemque pertinent, singuli carpebant."
>
> ["Every one was not so much angry against things in general, as against those that particularly concern himself." —Livy, xxxiv. 36.]

I would have the advantage on our side; but if it be not, I shall not run mad. I am heartily for the right party; but I do not want to be taken notice of as an especial enemy to others, and beyond the general quarrel. I marvellously challenge this vicious form of opinion: "He is of the League because he admires the graciousness of Monsieur de Guise; he is astonished at the King of Navarre's energy, therefore he is a Huguenot; he finds this to say of the manners of the king, he is therefore seditious in his heart." And I did not grant to the magistrate himself that he did well in condemning a book because it had placed a heretic —[Theodore de Beza.]—amongst the best poets of the time. Shall we not dare to say of a thief that he has a handsome leg? If a woman be a strumpet, must it needs follow that she has a foul smell? Did they in the wisest ages revoke the proud title of Capitolinus they had before conferred on Marcus Manlius as conservator of religion and the public liberty, and stifle the memory of his liberality, his feats of arms, and military recompenses granted to his valour, because he, afterwards aspired to the sovereignty, to the prejudice of the laws of his country? If we take a hatred against an advocate, he will not be allowed the next day to be eloquent. I have elsewhere spoken of the zeal that pushed on worthy men to the like faults. For my part, I can say, "Such an one does this thing ill, and another thing virtuously and well." So in the prognostication or sinister events of affairs they would have every one in his party blind or a blockhead, and that our persuasion and judgment should subserve not truth, but to the project of our desires. I should rather incline towards the other extreme; so much I fear being suborned by my desire; to which may be added that I am a little tenderly distrustful of things that I wish.

I have in my time seen wonders in the indiscreet and prodigious facility of people in suffering their hopes and belief to be led and governed, which way best pleased and served their leaders, despite a hundred mistakes one upon another, despite mere dreams and phantasms. I no more wonder at those who have been blinded and seduced by the fooleries of Apollonius and Mahomet. Their sense and understanding are absolutely taken away by their passion; their discretion has no more any other choice than that which smiles upon them and encourages their cause. I had principally observed this in the beginning of our intestine distempers; that other, which has sprung up since, in imitating, has surpassed it; by which I am satisfied that it is a quality inseparable from popular errors; after the first, that rolls, opinions drive on one another like waves with the wind: a man is not a member of the body, if it be in his power to forsake it, and if he do not roll the common way. But, doubtless, they wrong the just side when they go about to assist it with fraud; I have ever been against that practice: 'tis only fit to work upon weak heads; for the sound, there are surer and more honest ways to keep up their courage and to excuse adverse accidents.

Heaven never saw a greater animosity than that betwixt Caesar and Pompey, nor ever shall; and yet I observe, methinks, in those brave souls, a great moderation towards one another: it was a jealousy of honour and command, which did not transport them to a furious and indiscreet hatred, and was without malignity and detraction: in their hottest exploits upon one another, I discover some remains of respect and good-will: and am therefore of opinion that, had, it been possible, each of them would rather have done his business without the ruin of the other than with it. Take notice how much otherwise matters went with Marius and Sylla.

We must not precipitate ourselves so headlong after our affections and interests. As, when I was young, I opposed myself to the progress of love which I perceived to advance too fast upon me, and had a care lest it should at last become so pleasing as to force, captivate, and wholly reduce me to its mercy: so I do the same upon all other occasions where my will is running on with too warm an appetite. I lean opposite to the side it inclines to; as I find it going to plunge and make itself drunk with its own wine; I evade nourishing its pleasure so far, that I cannot recover it without infinite loss. Souls that, through their own stupidity, only discern things by halves, have this happiness, that they smart less with hurtful things: 'tis a spiritual leprosy that has some show of health, and such a health as philosophy does not altogether contemn; but yet we have no reason to call it wisdom, as we often do. And after this manner some one anciently mocked Diogeries, who, in the depth of winter and quite naked, went embracing an image of snow for a trial of his endurance: the other seeing him in this

position, "Art thou now very cold?" said he. "Not at all," replied Diogenes. "Why, then," pursued the other, "what difficult and exemplary thing dost thou think thou doest in embracing that snow?" To take a true measure of constancy, one must necessarily know what the suffering is.

But souls that are to meet with adverse events and the injuries of fortune, in their depth and sharpness, that are to weigh and taste them according to their natural weight and bitterness, let such show their skill in avoiding the causes and diverting the blow. What did King Cotys do? He paid liberally for the rich and beautiful vessel that had been presented to him, but, seeing it was exceedingly brittle, he immediately broke it betimes, to prevent so easy a matter of displeasure against his servants. In like manner, I have willingly avoided all confusion in my affairs, and never coveted to have my estate contiguous to those of my relations, and such with whom I coveted a strict friendship; for thence matter of unkindness and falling out often proceeds. I formerly loved hazardous games of cards and dice; but have long since left them off, only for this reason that, with whatever good air I carried my losses, I could not help feeling vexed within. A man of honour, who ought to be touchily sensible of the lie or of an insult, and who is not to take a scurvy excuse for satisfaction, should avoid occasions of dispute. I shun melancholy, crabbed men, as I would the plague; and in matters I cannot talk of without emotion and concern I never meddle, if not compelled by my duty:

"Melius non incipient, quam desinent."

["They had better never to begin than to have to desist."
—Seneca, Ep., 72.]

The surest way, therefore, is to prepare one's self beforehand for occasions.

I know very well that some wise men have taken another way, and have not feared to grapple and engage to the utmost upon several subjects these are confident of their own strength, under which they protect themselves in all ill successes, making their patience wrestle and contend with disaster:

"Velut rupes, vastum quae prodit in aequor,
Obvia ventorum furiis, expostaque ponto,
Vim cunctam atque minas perfert coelique marisque;
Ipsa immota manens."

["As a rock, which projects into the vast ocean, exposed to the furious winds and the raging sea, defies the force and menaces of sky and sea, itself unshaken."—Virgil, AEneid, x. 693.]

Let us not attempt these examples; we shall never come up to them. They set themselves resolutely, and without agitation, to behold the ruin of their country, which possessed and commanded all their will: this is too much, and too hard a task for our commoner souls. Cato gave up the noblest life that ever was upon this account; we meaner spirits must fly from the storm as far as we can; we must provide for sentiment, and not for patience, and evade the blows we cannot meet. Zeno, seeing Chremonides, a young man whom he loved, draw near to sit down by him, suddenly started up; and Cleanthes demanding of him the reason why he did so, "I hear," said he, "that physicians especially order repose, and forbid emotion in all tumours." Socrates does not say: "Do not surrender to the charms of beauty; stand your ground, and do your utmost to oppose it." "Fly it," says he; "shun the fight and encounter of it, as of a powerful poison that darts and wounds at a distance." And his good disciple, feigning or reciting, but, in my opinion, rather reciting than feigning, the rare perfections of the great Cyrus, makes him distrustful of his own strength to resist the charms of the divine beauty of that illustrous Panthea, his captive, and committing the visiting and keeping her to another, who could not have so much liberty as himself. And the Holy Ghost in like manner:

"Ne nos inducas in tentationem."

["Lead us not into temptation."—St. Matthew, vi. 13.]

We do not pray that our reason may not be combated and overcome by concupiscence, but that it should not be so much as tried by it; that we should not be brought into a state wherein we are so much as to suffer the approaches, solicitations, and temptations of sin: and we beg of Almighty God to keep our consciences quiet, fully and perfectly delivered from all commerce of evil.

Such as say that they have reason for their revenging passion, or any other sort of troublesome agitation of mind, often say true, as things now are, but not as they were: they speak to us when the causes of their error are by themselves nourished and advanced; but look backward—recall these causes to their beginning—and there you will put them to a nonplus. Will they have their faults less, for being of longer continuance; and that of an unjust beginning, the sequel can be just? Whoever shall desire the good of his country, as I do, without fretting or pining himself, will be troubled, but will not

swoon to see it threatening either its own ruin, or a no less ruinous continuance; poor vessel, that the waves, the winds, and the pilot toss and steer to so contrary designs!

"In tam diversa magister
Ventus et unda trahunt."

He who does not gape after the favour of princes, as after a thing he cannot live without, does not much concern himself at the coldness of their reception and countenance, nor at the inconstancy of their wills. He who does not brood over his children or his honours with a slavish propension, ceases not to live commodiously enough after their loss. He who does good principally for his own satisfaction will not be much troubled to see men judge of his actions contrary to his merit. A quarter of an ounce of patience will provide sufficiently against such inconveniences. I find ease in this receipt, redeeming myself in the beginning as good cheap as I can; and find that by this means I have escaped much trouble and many difficulties. With very little ado I stop the first sally of my emotions, and leave the subject that begins to be troublesome before it transports me. He who stops not the start will never be able to stop the course; he who cannot keep them out will never, get them out when they are once got in; and he who cannot arrive at the beginning will never arrive at the end of all. Nor will he bear the fall who cannot sustain the shock:

> "Etenim ipsae se impellunt, ubi semel a ratione discessum est; ipsaque sibi imbecillitas indulget, in altumque provehitur imprudens, nec reperit locum consistendi."
>
> ["For they throw themselves headlong when once they lose their reason; and infirmity so far indulges itself, and from want of prudence is carried out into deep water, nor finds a place to shelter it."—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., iv. 18.]

I am betimes sensible of the little breezes that begin to sing and whistle within, forerunners of the storm:

"Ceu flamina prima
Cum deprensa fremunt sylvis et caeca volutant
Murmura, venturos nautis prodentia ventos."

["As the breezes, pent in the woods, first send out dull murmurs,
announcing the approach of winds to mariners."—AEneid, x. 97.]

How often have I done myself a manifest injustice to avoid the hazard of having yet a worse done me by the judges, after an age of vexations, dirty and vile practices, more enemies to my nature than fire or the rack?

> "Convenit a litibus, quantum licet, et nescio an paulo plus etiam quam licet, abhorrentem esse: est enim non modo liberale, paululum nonnunquam de suo jure decedere, sed interdum etiam fructuosum."
>
> ["A man should abhor lawsuits as much as he may, and I know not whether not something more; for 'tis not only liberal, but sometimes also advantageous, too, a little to recede from one's right. —"Cicero, De Offic., ii. 18.]

Were we wise, we ought to rejoice and boast, as I one day heard a young gentleman of a good family very innocently do, that his mother had lost her cause, as if it had been a cough, a fever, or something very troublesome to keep. Even the favours that fortune might have given me through relationship or acquaintance with those who have sovereign authority in those affairs, I have very conscientiously and very carefully avoided employing them to the prejudice of others, and of advancing my pretensions above their true right. In fine, I have so much prevailed by my endeavours (and happily I may say it) that I am to this day a virgin from all suits in law; though I have had very fair offers made me, and with very just title, would I have hearkened to them, and a virgin from quarrels too. I have almost passed over a long life without any offence of moment, either active or passive, or without ever hearing a worse word than my own name: a rare favour of Heaven.

Our greatest agitations have ridiculous springs and causes: what ruin did our last Duke of Burgundy run into about a cartload of sheepskins! And was not the graving of a seal the first and principal cause of the greatest commotion that this machine of the world ever underwent? —[The civil war between Marius and Sylla; see Plutarch's Life of Marius, c. 3.]—for Pompey and Caesar were but the offsets and continuation of the two others: and I have in my time seen the wisest heads in this kingdom assembled with great ceremony, and at the public expense, about treaties and agreements, of which the true decision, in the meantime, absolutely depended upon the ladies' cabinet council, and the inclination of some bit of a woman.

The poets very well understood this when they put all Greece and Asia to fire and sword about an apple. Look why that man hazards his life and honour upon the fortune of his rapier and dagger; let him acquaint you with the occasion of the quarrel; he cannot do it without blushing: the occasion is so idle and frivolous.

A little thing will engage you in it; but being once embarked, all the cords draw; great provisions are then required, more hard and more important. How much easier is it not to enter in than it is to get out? Now we should proceed contrary to the reed, which, at its first springing, produces a long and straight shoot, but afterwards, as if tired and out of breath, it runs into thick and frequent joints and knots, as so many pauses which demonstrate that it has no more its first vigour and firmness; 'twere better to begin gently and coldly, and to keep one's breath and vigorous efforts for the height and stress of the business. We guide affairs in their beginnings, and have them in our own power; but afterwards, when they are once at work, 'tis they that guide and govern us, and we are to follow them.

Yet do I not mean to say that this counsel has discharged me of all difficulty, and that I have not often had enough to do to curb and restrain my passions; they are not always to be governed according to the measure of occasions, and often have their entries very sharp and violent. But still good fruit and profit may thence be reaped; except for those who in well-doing are not satisfied with any benefit, if reputation be wanting; for, in truth, such an effect is not valued but by every one to himself; you are better contented, but not more esteemed, seeing you reformed yourself before you got into the whirl of the dance, or that the provocative matter was in sight. Yet not in this only, but in all other duties of life also, the way of those who aim at honour is very different from that they proceed by, who propose to themselves order and reason. I find some who rashly and furiously rush into the lists and cool in the course. As Plutarch says, that those who, through false shame, are soft and facile to grant whatever is desired of them, are afterwards as facile to break their word and to recant; so he who enters lightly into a quarrel is apt to go as lightly out of it. The same difficulty that keeps me from entering into it, would, when once hot and engaged in quarrel, incite me to maintain it with great obstinacy and resolution. 'Tis the tyranny of custom; when a man is once engaged; he must go through with it, or die. "Undertake coolly," said Bias, "but pursue with ardour." For want of prudence, men fall into want of courage, which is still more intolerable.

Most accommodations of the quarrels of these days of ours are shameful and false; we only seek to save appearances, and in the meantime betray and disavow our true intentions; we salve over the fact. We know very well how we said the thing, and in what sense we spoke it, and the company know it, and our friends whom we have wished to make sensible of our advantage, understand it well enough too: 'tis at the expense of our frankness and of the honour of our courage, that we disown our thoughts, and seek refuge in falsities, to make matters up. We give ourselves the lie, to excuse the lie we have given to another. You are not to consider if your word or action may admit of another interpretation; 'tis your own true and sincere interpretation, your real meaning in what you said or did, that you are thenceforward to maintain, whatever it cost you. Men speak to your virtue and conscience, which are not things to be put under a mask; let us leave these pitiful ways and expedients to the jugglers of the law. The excuses and reparations that I see every day made and given to repair indiscretion, seem to me more scandalous than the indiscretion itself. It were better to affront your adversary a second time than to offend yourself by giving him so unmanly a satisfaction. You have braved him in your heat and anger, and you would flatter and appease him in your cooler and better sense; and by that means lay yourself lower and at his feet, whom before you pretended to overtop. I do not find anything a gentleman can say so vicious in him as unsaying what he has said is infamous, when to unsay it is authoritatively extracted from him; forasmuch as obstinacy is more excusable in a man of honour than pusillanimity. Passions are as easy for me to evade, as they are hard for me to moderate:

"Exscinduntur facilius ammo, quam temperantur."

["They are more easily to be eradicated than governed."]

He who cannot attain the noble Stoical impassibility, let him secure himself in the bosom of this popular stolidity of mine; what they performed by virtue, I inure myself to do by temperament. The middle region harbours storms and tempests; the two extremes, of philosophers and peasants, concur in tranquillity and happiness:

> "Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
> Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
> Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari!
> Fortunatus et ille, Deos qui novit agrestes,
> Panaque, Sylvanumque senem, Nymphasque sorores!"

> ["Happy is he who could discover the causes of things, and place under his feet all fears and inexorable fate, and the sound of rapacious Acheron: he is blest who knows the

country gods, and Pan, and old Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs."—Virgil, Georg., ii. 490.]

The births of all things are weak and tender; and therefore we should have our eyes intent on beginnings; for as when, in its infancy, the danger is not perceived, so when it is grown up, the remedy is as little to be found. I had every day encountered a million of crosses, harder to digest in the progress of ambition, than it has been hard for me to curb the natural propension that inclined me to it:

"Jure perhorrui
Lath conspicuum tollere verticem."

["I ever justly feared to raise my head too high."
—Horace, Od.,iii. 16, 18.]

All public actions are subject to uncertain and various interpretations; for too many heads judge of them. Some say of this civic employment of mine (and I am willing to say a word or two about it, not that it is worth so much, but to give an account of my manners in such things), that I have behaved myself in it as a man who is too supine and of a languid temperament; and they have some colour for what they say. I endeavoured to keep my mind and my thoughts in repose;

"Cum semper natura, tum etiam aetate jam quietus;"

["As being always quiet by nature, so also now by age."
—Cicero, De Petit. Consul., c. 2.]

and if they sometimes lash out upon some rude and sensible impression, 'tis in truth without my advice. Yet from this natural heaviness of mine, men ought not to conclude a total inability in me (for want of care and want of sense are two very different things), and much less any unkindness or ingratitude towards that corporation who employed the utmost means they had in their power to oblige me, both before they knew me and after; and they did much more for me in choosing me anew than in conferring that honour upon me at first. I wish them all imaginable good; and assuredly had occasion been, there is nothing I would have spared for their service; I did for them as I would have done for myself. 'Tis a good, warlike, and generous people, but capable of obedience and discipline, and of whom the best use may be made, if well guided. They say also that my administration passed over without leaving any mark or trace. Good! They moreover accuse my cessation in a time when everybody almost was convicted of doing too much. I am impatient to be doing where my will spurs me on; but this itself is an enemy to perseverance. Let him who will make use of me according to my own way, employ me in affairs where vigour and liberty are required, where a direct, short, and, moreover, a hazardous conduct are necessary; I may do something; but if it must be long, subtle, laborious, artificial and intricate, he had better call in somebody else. All important offices are not necessarily difficult: I came prepared to do somewhat rougher work, had there been great occasion; for it is in my power to do something more than I do, or than I love to do. I did not, to my knowledge, omit anything that my duty really required. I easily forgot those offices that ambition mixes with duty and palliates with its title; these are they that, for the most part, fill the eyes and ears, and give men the most satisfaction; not the thing but the appearance contents them; if they hear no noise, they think men sleep. My humour is no friend to tumult; I could appease a commotion without commotion, and chastise a disorder without being myself disorderly; if I stand in need of anger and inflammation, I borrow it, and put it on. My manners are languid, rather faint than sharp. I do not condemn a magistrate who sleeps, provided the people under his charge sleep as well as he: the laws in that case sleep too. For my part, I commend a gliding, staid, and silent life:

"Neque submissam et abjectam, neque se efferentem;"

["Neither subject and abject, nor obtrusive."
—Cicero, De Offic., i. 34]

my fortune will have it so. I am descended from a family that has lived without lustre or tumult, and, time out of mind, particularly ambitious of a character for probity.

Our people nowadays are so bred up to bustle and ostentation, that good nature, moderation, equability, constancy, and such like quiet and obscure qualities, are no more thought on or regarded. Rough bodies make themselves felt; the smooth are imperceptibly handled: sickness is felt, health little or not at all; no more than the oils that foment us, in comparison of the pains for which we are fomented. 'Tis acting for one's particular reputation and profit, not for the public good, to refer that to be done in the public squares which one may do in the council chamber; and to noon day what might have been done the night before; and to be jealous to do that himself which his colleague can do as well as he; so were some surgeons of Greece wont to perform their operations upon scaffolds in the sight of the people, to draw more practice and profit. They think that good rules cannot be understood but by

the sound of trumpet. Ambition is not a vice of little people, nor of such modest means as ours. One said to Alexander: "Your father will leave you a great dominion, easy and pacific"; this youth was emulous of his father's victories and of the justice of his government; he would not have enjoyed the empire of the world in ease and peace. Alcibiades, in Plato, had rather die young, beautiful, rich, noble, and learned, and all this in full excellence, than to stop short of such condition; this disease is, peradventure, excusable in so strong and so full a soul. When wretched and dwarfish little souls cajole and deceive themselves, and think to spread their fame for having given right judgment in an affair, or maintained the discipline of the guard of a gate of their city, the more they think to exalt their heads the more they show their tails. This little well-doing has neither body nor life; it vanishes in the first mouth, and goes no further than from one street to another. Talk of it by all means to your son or your servant, like that old fellow who, having no other auditor of his praises nor approver of his valour, boasted to his chambermaid, crying, "O Perrete, what a brave, clever man hast thou for thy master!" At the worst, talk of it to yourself, like a councillor of my acquaintance, who, having disgorged a whole cartful of law jargon with great heat and as great folly, coming out of the council chamber to make water, was heard very complacently to mutter betwixt his teeth:

"Non nobis, domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam."

["Not unto us, O Lord, not to us: but unto Thy name be the glory." —Psalm cxiii. I.]

He who gets it of nobody else, let him pay himself out of his own purse.

Fame is not prostituted at so cheap a rate: rare and exemplary actions, to which it is due, would not endure the company of this prodigious crowd of petty daily performances. Marble may exalt your titles, as much as you please, for having repaired a rod of wall or cleansed a public sewer; but not men of sense. Renown does not follow all good deeds, if novelty and difficulty be not conjoined; nay, so much as mere esteem, according to the Stoics, is not due to every action that proceeds from virtue; nor will they allow him bare thanks who, out of temperance, abstains from an old blear-eyed crone. Those who have known the admirable qualities of Scipio Africanus, deny him the glory that Panaetius attributes to him, of being abstinent from gifts, as a glory not so much his as that of his age. We have pleasures suitable to our lot; let us not usurp those of grandeur: our own are more natural, and by so much more solid and sure, as they are lower. If not for that of conscience, yet at least for ambition's sake, let us reject ambition; let us disdain that thirst of honour and renown, so low and mendicant, that it makes us beg it of all sorts of people:

"Quae est ista laus quae: possit e macello peti?"

["What praise is that which is to be got in the market-place (meat market)?" Cicero, De Fin., ii. 15.]

by abject means, and at what cheap rate soever: 'tis dishonour to be so honoured. Let us learn to be no more greedy, than we are capable, of glory. To be puffed up with every action that is innocent or of use, is only for those with whom such things are extraordinary and rare: they will value it as it costs them. The more a good effect makes a noise, the more do I abate of its goodness as I suspect that it was more performed for the noise, than upon account of the goodness: exposed upon the stall, 'tis half sold. Those actions have much more grace and lustre, that slip from the hand of him that does them, negligently and without noise, and that some honest man thereafter finds out and raises from the shade, to produce it to the light upon its own account,

"Mihi quidem laudabiliora videntur omnia, quae sine venditatione, et sine populo teste fiunt,"

["All things truly seem more laudable to me that are performed without ostentation, and without the testimony of the people." —Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 26.]

says the most ostentatious man that ever lived.

I had but to conserve and to continue, which are silent and insensible effects: innovation is of great lustre; but 'tis interdicted in this age, when we are pressed upon and have nothing to defend ourselves from but novelties. To forbear doing is often as generous as to do; but 'tis less in the light, and the little good I have in me is of this kind. In fine, occasions in this employment of mine have been confederate with my humour, and I heartily thank them for it. Is there any who desires to be sick, that he may see his physician at work? and would not the physician deserve to be whipped who should wish the plague amongst us, that he might put his art in practice? I have never been of that wicked humour, and common enough, to desire that troubles and disorders in this city should elevate and honour my government; I have ever heartily contributed all I could to their tranquillity and ease.

He who will not thank me for the order, the sweet and silent calm that has accompanied my administration, cannot, however, deprive me of the share that belongs to me by title of my good fortune. And I am of such a composition, that I would as willingly be lucky as wise, and had rather owe my successes purely to the favour of Almighty God, than to any operation of my own. I had sufficiently published to the world my unfitness for such public offices; but I have something in me yet worse than incapacity itself; which is, that I am not much displeased at it, and that I do not much go about to cure it, considering the course of life that I have proposed to myself.

Neither have I satisfied myself in this employment; but I have very near arrived at what I expected from my own performance, and have much surpassed what I promised them with whom I had to do: for I am apt to promise something less than what I am able to do, and than what I hope to make good. I assure myself that I have left no offence or hatred behind me; to leave regret or desire for me amongst them, I at least know very well that I never much aimed at it:

> "Mene huic confidere monstro!
> Mene salis placidi vultum, fluctusque quietos
> Ignorare?"

["Should I place confidence in this monster? Should I be ignorant of the dangers of that seeming placid sea, those now quiet waves?" —Virgil, Aeneid, V. 849.]

CHAPTER XI

OF CRIPPLES

'Tis now two or three years ago that they made the year ten days shorter in France.—[By the adoption of the Gregorian calendar.]—How many changes may we expect should follow this reformation! it was really moving heaven and earth at once. Yet nothing for all that stirs from its place my neighbours still find their seasons of sowing and reaping, the opportunities of doing their business, the hurtful and propitious days, dust at the same time where they had, time out of mind, assigned them; there was no more error perceived in our old use, than there is amendment found in the alteration; so great an uncertainty there is throughout; so gross, obscure, and obtuse is our perception. 'Tis said that this regulation might have been carried on with less inconvenience, by subtracting for some years, according to the example of Augustus, the Bissextile, which is in some sort a day of impediment and trouble, till we had exactly satisfied this debt, the which itself is not done by this correction, and we yet remain some days in arrear: and yet, by this means, such order might be taken for the future, arranging that after the revolution of such or such a number of years, the supernumerary day might be always thrown out, so that we could not, henceforward, err above four-and-twenty hours in our computation. We have no other account of time but years; the world has for many ages made use of that only; and yet it is a measure that to this day we are not agreed upon, and one that we still doubt what form other nations have variously given to it, and what was the true use of it. What does this saying of some mean, that the heavens in growing old bow themselves down nearer towards us, and put us into an uncertainty even of hours and days? and that which Plutarch says of the months, that astrology had not in his time determined as to the motion of the moon; what a fine condition are we in to keep records of things past.

I was just now ruminating, as I often do, what a free and roving thing human reason is. I ordinarily see that men, in things propounded to them, more willingly study to find out reasons than to ascertain truth: they slip over presuppositions, but are curious in examination of consequences; they leave the things, and fly to the causes. Pleasant talkers! The knowledge of causes only concerns him who has the conduct of things; not us, who are merely to undergo them, and who have perfectly full and accomplished use of them, according to our need, without penetrating into the original and essence; wine is none the more pleasant to him who knows its first faculties. On the contrary, both the body and the soul interrupt and weaken the right they have of the use of the world and of themselves, by mixing with it the opinion of learning; effects concern us, but the means not at all. To determine and to distribute appertain to superiority and command; as it does to subjection to accept. Let me reprehend our custom. They commonly begin thus: "How is such a thing done?" Whereas they should say, "Is such a thing done?" Our reason is able to create a hundred other worlds, and to find out the beginnings and contexture; it needs neither matter nor foundation: let it but run on, it builds as well in the air as on the earth, and with inanity as well as with matter:

"Dare pondus idonea fumo."

["Able to give weight to smoke."—Persius, v. 20.]

I find that almost throughout we should say, "there is no such thing," and should myself often make use of this answer, but I dare not: for they cry that it is an evasion produced from ignorance and weakness of understanding; and I am fain, for the most part, to juggle for company, and prate of frivolous subjects and tales that I believe not a word of; besides that, in truth, 'tis a little rude and quarrelsome flatly to deny a stated fact; and few people but will affirm, especially in things hard to be believed, that they have seen them, or at least will name witnesses whose authority will stop our mouths from contradiction. In this way, we know the foundations and means of things that never were; and the world scuffles about a thousand questions, of which both the Pro and the Con are false.

> "Ita finitima sunt falsa veris, ut in praecipitem
> locum non debeat se sapiens committere."
>
> ["False things are so near the true, that a wise man should not
> trust himself in a precipitous place"—Cicero, Acad., ii. 21.]

Truth and lies are faced alike; their port, taste, and proceedings are the same, and we look upon them with the same eye. I find that we are not only remiss in defending ourselves from deceit, but that we seek and offer ourselves to be gulled; we love to entangle ourselves in vanity, as a thing conformable to our being.

I have seen the birth of many miracles in my time; which, although they were abortive, yet have we not failed to foresee what they would have come to, had they lived their full age. 'Tis but finding the end of the clew, and a man may wind off as much as he will; and there is a greater distance betwixt nothing and the least thing in the world than there is betwixt this and the greatest. Now the first that are imbued with this beginning of novelty, when they set out with their tale, find, by the oppositions they meet with, where the difficulty of persuasion lies, and so caulk up that place with some false piece;

> [Voltaire says of this passage, "He who would learn to doubt should read this whole chapter of Montaigne, the least methodical of all philosophers, but the wisest and most amiable." —Melanges Historiques, xvii. 694, ed. of Lefevre.]

besides that:

"Insita hominibus libido alendi de industria rumores,"

> ["Men having a natural desire to nourish reports."
> —Livy, xxviii. 24.]

we naturally make a conscience of restoring what has been lent us, without some usury and accession of our own. The particular error first makes the public error, and afterwards, in turn, the public error makes the particular one; and thus all this vast fabric goes forming and piling itself up from hand to hand, so that the remotest witness knows more about it than those who were nearest, and the last informed is better persuaded than the first.

'Tis a natural progress; for whoever believes anything, thinks it a work of charity to persuade another into the same opinion; which the better to do, he will make no difficulty of adding as much of his own invention as he conceives necessary to his tale to encounter the resistance or want of conception he meets with in others. I myself, who make a great conscience of lying, and am not very solicitous of giving credit and authority to what I say, yet find that in the arguments I have in hand, being heated with the opposition of another, or by the proper warmth of my own narration, I swell and puff up my subject by voice, motion, vigour, and force of words, and moreover, by extension and amplification, not without some prejudice to the naked truth; but I do it conditionally withal, that to the first who brings me to myself, and who asks me the plain and bare truth, I presently surrender my passion, and deliver the matter to him without exaggeration, without emphasis, or any painting of my own. A quick and earnest way of speaking, as mine is, is apt to run into hyperbole. There is nothing to which men commonly are more inclined than to make way for their own opinions; where the ordinary means fail us, we add command, force, fire, and sword. 'Tis a misfortune to be at such a pass, that the best test of truth is the multitude of believers in a crowd, where the number of fools so much exceeds the wise:

"Quasi vero quidquam sit tam valde, quam nil sapere, vulgare."

> ["As if anything were so common as ignorance."
> —Cicero, De Divin., ii.]

"Sanitatis patrocinium est, insanientium turba."

["The multitude of fools is a protection to the wise."
—St. Augustine, De Civit. Dei, vi. 10.]

'Tis hard to resolve a man's judgment against the common opinions: the first persuasion, taken from the very subject itself, possesses the simple, and from them diffuses itself to the wise, under the authority of the number and antiquity of the witnesses. For my part, what I should not believe from one, I should not believe from a hundred and one: and I do not judge opinions by years.

'Tis not long since one of our princes, in whom the gout had spoiled an excellent nature and sprightly disposition, suffered himself to be so far persuaded with the report made to him of the marvellous operations of a certain priest who by words and gestures cured all sorts of diseases, as to go a long journey to seek him out, and by the force of his mere imagination, for some hours so persuaded and laid his legs asleep, as to obtain that service from them they had long time forgotten. Had fortune heaped up five or six such-like incidents, it had been enough to have brought this miracle into nature. There was afterwards discovered so much simplicity and so little art in the author of these performances, that he was thought too contemptible to be punished, as would be thought of most such things, were they well examined:

"Miramur ex intervallo fallentia."

["We admire after an interval (or at a distance) things that deceive."—Seneca, Ep., 118, 2.]

So does our sight often represent to us strange images at a distance that vanish on approaching near:

"Nunquam ad liquidum fama perducitur."

["Report is never fully substantiated."
—Quintus Curtius, ix. 2.]

'Tis wonderful from how many idle beginnings and frivolous causes such famous impressions commonly, proceed. This it is that obstructs information; for whilst we seek out causes and solid and weighty ends, worthy of so great a name, we lose the true ones; they escape our sight by their littleness. And, in truth, a very prudent, diligent, and subtle inquisition is required in such searches, indifferent, and not prepossessed. To this very hour, all these miracles and strange events have concealed themselves from me: I have never seen greater monster or miracle in the world than myself: one grows familiar with all strange things by time and custom, but the more I frequent and the better I know myself, the more does my own deformity astonish me, the less I understand myself.

The principal right of advancing and producing such accidents is reserved to fortune. Passing the day before yesterday through a village two leagues from my house, I found the place yet warm with a miracle that had lately failed of success there, where with first the neighbourhood had been several months amused; then the neighbouring provinces began to take it up, and to run thither in great companies of all sorts of people. A young fellow of the place had one night in sport counterfeited the voice of a spirit in his own house, without any other design at present, but only for sport; but this having succeeded with him better than he expected, to extend his farce with more actors he associated with him a stupid silly country girl, and at last there were three of them of the same age and understanding, who from domestic, proceeded to public, preachings, hiding themselves under the altar of the church, never speaking but by night, and forbidding any light to be brought. From words which tended to the conversion of the world, and threats of the day of judgment (for these are subjects under the authority and reverence of which imposture most securely lurks), they proceeded to visions and gesticulations so simple and ridiculous that—nothing could hardly be so gross in the sports of little children. Yet had fortune never so little favoured the design, who knows to what height this juggling might have at last arrived? These poor devils are at present in prison, and are like shortly to pay for the common folly; and I know not whether some judge will not also make them smart for his. We see clearly into this, which is discovered; but in many things of the like nature that exceed our knowledge, I am of opinion that we ought to suspend our judgment, whether as to rejection or as to reception.

Great abuses in the world are begotten, or, to speak more boldly, all the abuses of the world are begotten, by our being taught to be afraid of professing our ignorance, and that we are bound to accept all things we are not able to refute: we speak of all things by precepts and decisions. The style at Rome was that even that which a witness deposed to having seen with his own eyes, and what a judge determined with his most certain knowledge, was couched in this form of speaking: "it seems to me." They make me hate things that are likely, when they would impose them upon me as infallible. I love these words which mollify and moderate the temerity of our propositions: "peradventure; in some sort;

some; 'tis said, I think," and the like: and had I been set to train up children I had put this way of answering into their mouths, inquiring and not resolving: "What does this mean? I understand it not; it may be: is it true?" so that they should rather have retained the form of pupils at threescore years old than to go out doctors, as they do, at ten. Whoever will be cured of ignorance must confess it.

Iris is the daughter of Thaumas;

> ["That is, of Admiration. She (Iris, the rainbow) is beautiful, and for that reason, because she has a face to be admired, she is said to have been the daughter of Thamus." —Cicero, De Nat. Deor., iii. 20.]

admiration is the foundation of all philosophy, inquisition the progress, ignorance the end. But there is a sort of ignorance, strong and generous, that yields nothing in honour and courage to knowledge; an ignorance which to conceive requires no less knowledge than to conceive knowledge itself. I read in my younger years a trial that Corras,

> [A celebrated Calvinist lawyer, born at Toulouse; 1513, and assassinated there, 4th October 1572.]

a councillor of Toulouse, printed, of a strange incident, of two men who presented themselves the one for the other. I remember (and I hardly remember anything else) that he seemed to have rendered the imposture of him whom he judged to be guilty, so wonderful and so far exceeding both our knowledge and his own, who was the judge, that I thought it a very bold sentence that condemned him to be hanged. Let us have some form of decree that says, "The court understands nothing of the matter" more freely and ingenuously than the Areopagites did, who, finding themselves perplexed with a cause they could not unravel, ordered the parties to appear again after a hundred years.

The witches of my neighbourhood run the hazard of their lives upon the report of every new author who seeks to give body to their dreams. To accommodate the examples that Holy Writ gives us of such things, most certain and irrefragable examples, and to tie them to our modern events, seeing that we neither see the causes nor the means, will require another sort-of wit than ours. It, peradventure, only appertains to that sole all-potent testimony to tell us. "This is, and that is, and not that other." God ought to be believed; and certainly with very good reason; but not one amongst us for all that who is astonished at his own narration (and he must of necessity be astonished if he be not out of his wits), whether he employ it about other men's affairs or against himself.

I am plain and heavy, and stick to the solid and the probable, avoiding those ancient reproaches:

> "Majorem fidem homines adhibent iis, quae non intelligunt;
> —Cupidine humani ingenii libentius obscura creduntur."
>
> ["Men are most apt to believe what they least understand: and from the acquisitiveness of the human intellect, obscure things are more easily credited." The second sentence is from Tacitus, Hist. 1. 22.]

I see very well that men get angry, and that I am forbidden to doubt upon pain of execrable injuries; a new way of persuading! Thank God, I am not to be cuffed into belief. Let them be angry with those who accuse their opinion of falsity; I only accuse it of difficulty and boldness, and condemn the opposite affirmation equally, if not so imperiously, with them. He who will establish this proposition by authority and huffing discovers his reason to be very weak. For a verbal and scholastic altercation let them have as much appearance as their contradictors;

"Videantur sane, non affirmentur modo;"

> ["They may indeed appear to be; let them not be affirmed (Let them state the probabilities, but not affirm.)" —Cicero, Acad., n. 27.]

but in the real consequence they draw from it these have much the advantage. To kill men, a clear and strong light is required, and our life is too real and essential to warrant these supernatural and fantastic accidents.

As to drugs and poisons, I throw them out of my count, as being the worst sort of homicides: yet even in this, 'tis said, that men are not always to rely upon the personal confessions of these people; for they have sometimes been known to accuse themselves of the murder of persons who have afterwards been found living and well. In these other extravagant accusations, I should be apt to say, that it is sufficient a man, what recommendation soever he may have, be believed as to human things; but of what is beyond his conception, and of supernatural effect, he ought then only to be believed when authorised by a supernatural approbation. The privilege it has pleased Almighty God to give to some of our

witnesses, ought not to be lightly communicated and made cheap. I have my ears battered with a thousand such tales as these: "Three persons saw him such a day in the east three, the next day in the west: at such an hour, in such a place, and in such habit"; assuredly I should not believe it myself. How much more natural and likely do I find it that two men should lie than that one man in twelve hours' time should fly with the wind from east to west? How much more natural that our understanding should be carried from its place by the volubility of our disordered minds, than that one of us should be carried by a strange spirit upon a broomstaff, flesh and bones as we are, up the shaft of a chimney? Let not us seek illusions from without and unknown, we who are perpetually agitated with illusions domestic and our own. Methinks one is pardonable in disbelieving a miracle, at least, at all events where one can elude its verification as such, by means not miraculous; and I am of St. Augustine's opinion, that, "'tis better to lean towards doubt than assurance, in things hard to prove and dangerous to believe."

'Tis now some years ago that I travelled through the territories of a sovereign prince, who, in my favour, and to abate my incredulity, did me the honour to let me see, in his own presence, and in a private place, ten or twelve prisoners of this kind, and amongst others, an old woman, a real witch in foulness and deformity, who long had been famous in that profession. I saw both proofs and free confessions, and I know not what insensible mark upon the miserable creature: I examined and talked with her and the rest as much and as long as I would, and gave the best and soundest attention I could, and I am not a man to suffer my judgment to be made captive by prepossession. In the end, and in all conscience, I should rather have prescribed them hellebore than hemlock;

"Captisque res magis mentibus, quam consceleratis similis visa;"

["The thing was rather to be attributed to madness, than malice."
("The thing seemed to resemble minds possessed rather than guilty.")
—Livy, viii, 18.]

justice has its corrections proper for such maladies. As to the oppositions and arguments that worthy men have made to me, both there, and often in other places, I have met with none that have convinced me, and that have not admitted a more likely solution than their conclusions. It is true, indeed, that the proofs and reasons that are founded upon experience and fact, I do not go about to untie, neither have they any end; I often cut them, as Alexander did the Gordian knot. After all, 'tis setting a man's conjectures at a very high price upon them to cause a man to be roasted alive.

We are told by several examples, as Praestantius of his father, that being more profoundly, asleep than men usually are, he fancied himself to be a mare, and that he served the soldiers for a sumpter; and what he fancied himself to be, he really proved. If sorcerers dream so materially; if dreams can sometimes so incorporate themselves with effects, still I cannot believe that therefore our will should be accountable to justice; which I say as one who am neither judge nor privy councillor, and who think myself by many degrees unworthy so to be, but a man of the common sort, born and avowed to the obedience of the public reason, both in its words and acts. He who should record my idle talk as being to the prejudice of the pettiest law, opinion, or custom of his parish, would do himself a great deal of wrong, and me much more; for, in what I say, I warrant no other certainty, but that 'tis what I had then in my thought, a tumultuous and wavering thought. All I say is by way of discourse, and nothing by way of advice:

"Nec me pudet, ut istos fateri nescire, quod nesciam;"

["Neither am I ashamed, as they are, to confess my ignorance of what
I do not know."—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., i. 25.]

I should not speak so boldly, if it were my due to be believed; and so I told a great man, who complained of the tartness and contentiousness of my exhortations. Perceiving you to be ready and prepared on one part, I propose to you the other, with all the diligence and care I can, to clear your judgment, not to compel it. God has your hearts in His hands, and will furnish you with the means of choice. I am not so presumptuous even as to desire that my opinions should bias you—in a thing of so great importance: my fortune has not trained them up to so potent and elevated conclusions. Truly, I have not only a great many humours, but also a great many opinions, that I would endeavour to make my son dislike, if I had one. What, if the truest are not always the most commodious to man, being of so wild a composition?

Whether it be to the purpose or not, tis no great matter: 'tis a common proverb in Italy, that he knows not Venus in her perfect sweetness who has never lain with a lame mistress. Fortune, or some particular incident, long ago put this saying into the mouths of the people; and the same is said of men as well as of women; for the queen of the Amazons answered the Scythian who courted her to love, "Lame men perform best." In this feminine republic, to evade the dominion of the males, they lamed them in their infancy—arms, legs, and other members that gave them advantage over them, and only

made use of them in that wherein we, in these parts of the world, make use of them. I should have been apt to think; that the shuffling pace of the lame mistress added some new pleasure to the work, and some extraordinary titillation to those who were at the sport; but I have lately learnt that ancient philosophy has itself determined it, which says that the legs and thighs of lame women, not receiving, by reason of their imperfection, their due aliment, it falls out that the genital parts above are fuller and better supplied and much more vigorous; or else that this defect, hindering exercise, they who are troubled with it less dissipate their strength, and come more entire to the sports of Venus; which also is the reason why the Greeks decried the women-weavers as being more hot than other women by reason of their sedentary trade, which they carry on without any great exercise of the body. What is it we may not reason of at this rate? I might also say of these, that the jaggling about whilst so sitting at work, rouses and provokes their desire, as the swinging and jolting of coaches does that of our ladies.

Do not these examples serve to make good what I said at first: that our reasons often anticipate the effect, and have so infinite an extent of jurisdiction that they judge and exercise themselves even on inanity itself and non-existency? Besides the flexibility of our invention to forge reasons of all sorts of dreams, our imagination is equally facile to receive impressions of falsity by very frivolous appearances; for, by the sole authority of the ancient and common use of this proverb, I have formerly made myself believe that I have had more pleasure in a woman by reason she was not straight, and accordingly reckoned that deformity amongst her graces.

Torquato Tasso, in the comparison he makes betwixt France and Italy, says that he has observed that our legs are generally smaller than those of the Italian gentlemen, and attributes the cause of it to our being continually on horseback; which is the very same cause from which Suetonius draws a quite opposite conclusion; for he says, on the contrary, that Germanicus had made his legs bigger by the continuation of the same exercise.

Nothing is so supple and erratic as our understanding; it is the shoe of Theramenes, fit for all feet. It is double and diverse, and the matters are double and diverse too. "Give me a drachm of silver," said a Cynic philosopher to Antigonus. "That is not a present befitting a king," replied he. "Give me then a talent," said the other. "That is not a present befitting a Cynic."

> "Seu plures calor ille vias et caeca relaxat
> Spiramenta, novas veniat qua succus in herbas
> Seu durat magis, et venas astringit hiantes;
> Ne tenues pluviae, rapidive potentia colic
> Acrior, aut Boreae penetrabile frigus adurat."

> ["Whether the heat opens more passages and secret pores through which the sap may be derived into the new-born herbs; or whether it rather hardens and binds the gaping veins that the small showers and keen influence of the violent sun or penetrating cold of Boreas may not hurt them."—Virg., Georg., i. 89.]

"Ogni medaglia ha il suo rovescio."

["Every medal has its reverse."—Italian Proverb.]

This is the reason why Clitomachus said of old that Carneades had outdone the labours of Hercules, in having eradicated consent from men, that is to say, opinion and the courage of judging. This so vigorous fancy of Carneades sprang, in my opinion, anciently from the impudence of those who made profession of knowledge and their immeasurable self-conceit. AEsop was set to sale with two other slaves; the buyer asked the first of these what he could do; he, to enhance his own value, promised mountains and marvels, saying he could do this and that, and I know not what; the second said as much of himself or more: when it came to AEsop's turn, and that he was also asked what he could do; "Nothing," said he, "for these two have taken up all before me; they know everything." So has it happened in the school of philosophy: the pride of those who attributed the capacity of all things to the human mind created in others, out of despite and emulation, this opinion, that it is capable of nothing: the one maintain the same extreme in ignorance that the others do in knowledge; to make it undeniably manifest that man is immoderate throughout, and can never stop but of necessity and the want of ability to proceed further.

CHAPTER XII

Almost all the opinions we have are taken on authority and trust; and 'tis not amiss; we could not choose worse than by ourselves in so weak an age. That image of Socrates' discourses, which his friends have transmitted to us, we approve upon no other account than a reverence to public sanction: 'tis not according to our own knowledge; they are not after our way; if anything of the kind should spring up now, few men would value them. We discern no graces that are not pointed and puffed out and inflated by art; such as glide on in their own purity and simplicity easily escape so gross a sight as ours; they have a delicate and concealed beauty, such as requires a clear and purified sight to discover its secret light. Is not simplicity, as we take it, cousin-german to folly and a quality of reproach? Socrates makes his soul move a natural and common motion: a peasant said this; a woman said that; he has never anybody in his mouth but carters, joiners, cobblers, and masons; his are inductions and similitudes drawn from the most common and known actions of men; every one understands him. We should never have recognised the nobility and splendour of his admirable conceptions under so mean a form; we, who think all things low and flat that are not elevated, by learned doctrine, and who discern no riches but in pomp and show. This world of ours is only formed for ostentation: men are only puffed up with wind, and are bandied to and fro like tennis-balls. He proposed to himself no vain and idle fancies; his design was to furnish us with precepts and things that more really and fitly serve to the use of life;

> "Servare modum, finemque tenere,
> Naturamque sequi."
>
> ["To keep a just mean, to observe a just limit,
> and to follow Nature."—Lucan, ii. 381.]

He was also always one and the same, and raised himself, not by starts but by complexion, to the highest pitch of vigour; or, to say better, mounted not at all, but rather brought down, reduced, and subjected all asperities and difficulties to his original and natural condition; for in Cato 'tis most manifest that 'tis a procedure extended far beyond the common ways of men: in the brave exploits of his life, and in his death, we find him always mounted upon the great horse; whereas the other ever creeps upon the ground, and with a gentle and ordinary pace, treats of the most useful matters, and bears himself, both at his death and in the rudest difficulties that could present themselves, in the ordinary way of human life.

It has fallen out well that the man most worthy to be known and to be presented to the world for example should be he of whom we have the most certain knowledge; he has been pried into by the most clear-sighted men that ever were; the testimonies we have of him are admirable both in fidelity and fulness. 'Tis a great thing that he was able so to order the pure imaginations of a child, that, without altering or wresting them, he thereby produced the most beautiful effects of our soul: he presents it neither elevated nor rich; he only represents it sound, but assuredly with a brisk and full health. By these common and natural springs, by these ordinary and popular fancies, without being moved or put out, he set up not only the most regular, but the most high and vigorous beliefs, actions, and manners that ever were. 'Tis he who brought again from heaven, where she lost her time, human wisdom, to restore her to man with whom her most just and greatest business lies. See him plead before his judges; observe by what reasons he rouses his courage to the hazards of war; with what arguments he fortifies his patience against calumny, tyranny, death, and the perverseness of his wife: you will find nothing in all this borrowed from arts and sciences: the simplest may there discover their own means and strength; 'tis not possible more to retire or to creep more low. He has done human nature a great kindness in showing it how much it can do of itself.

We are all of us richer than we think we are; but we are taught to borrow and to beg, and brought up more to make use of what is another's than of our own. Man can in nothing fix himself to his actual necessity: of pleasure, wealth, and power, he grasps at more than he can hold; his greediness is incapable of moderation. And I find that in curiosity of knowing he is the same; he cuts himself out more work than he can do, and more than he needs to do: extending the utility of knowledge to the full of its matter:

> "Ut omnium rerum, sic litterarum quoque, intemperantia laboramus."
>
> ["We carry intemperance into the study of literature, as well as
> into everything else."—Seneca, Ep., 106.]

And Tacitus had reason to commend the mother of Agricola for having restrained her son in his too violent appetite for learning.

Tis a good, if duly considered, which has in it, as the other goods of men have, a great deal of vanity

and weakness, proper and natural to itself, and that costs very dear. Its acquisition is far more hazardous than that of all other meat or drink; for, as to other things, what we have bought we carry home in some vessel, and there have full leisure to examine our purchase, how much we shall eat or drink of it, and when: but sciences we can, at the very first, stow into no other vessel than the soul; we swallow them in buying, and return from the market, either already infected or amended: there are some that only burden and overcharge the stomach, instead of nourishing; and, moreover, some that, under colour of curing, poison us. I have been pleased, in places where I have been, to see men in devotion vow ignorance as well as chastity, poverty, and penitence: 'tis also a gelding of our unruly appetites, to blunt this cupidity that spurs us on to the study of books, and to deprive the soul of this voluptuous complacency that tickles us with the opinion of knowledge: and 'tis plenarily to accomplish the vow of poverty, to add unto it that of the mind. We need little doctrine to live at our ease; and Socrates teaches us that this is in us, and the way how to find it, and the manner how to use it: All our sufficiency which exceeds the natural is well-nigh superfluous and vain: 'tis much if it does not rather burden and cumber us than do us good:

"Paucis opus est literis ad mentem bonam:"

["Little learning is needed to form a sound mind."
—Seneca, Ep., 106.]

'tis a feverish excess of the mind; a tempestuous and unquiet instrument. Do but recollect yourself, and you will find in yourself natural arguments against death, true, and the fittest to serve you in time of necessity: 'tis they that make a peasant, and whole nations, die with as much firmness as a philosopher. Should I have died less cheerfully before I had read Cicero's Tusculan Quastiones? I believe not; and when I find myself at the best, I perceive that my tongue is enriched indeed, but my courage little or nothing elevated by them; that is just as nature framed it at first, and defends itself against the conflict only after a natural and ordinary way. Books have not so much served me for instruction as exercise. What if knowledge, trying to arm us with new defences against natural inconveniences, has more imprinted in our fancies their weight and greatness, than her reasons and subtleties to secure us from them? They are subtleties, indeed, with which she often alarms us to little purpose. Do but observe how many slight and frivolous, and, if nearly examined, incorporeal arguments, the closest and wisest authors scatter about one good one: they are but verbal quirks and fallacies to amuse and gull us: but forasmuch as it may be with some profit, I will sift them no further; many of that sort are here and there dispersed up and down this book, either borrowed or by imitation. Therefore one ought to take a little heed not to call that force which is only a pretty knack of writing, and that solid which is only sharp, or that good which is only fine:

"Quae magis gustata quam potata, delectant,"

["Which more delight in the tasting than in being drunk."
—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., v. 5.]

everything that pleases does not nourish:

"Ubi non ingenii, sed animi negotium agitur."

["Where the question is not about the wit, but about the soul."
—Seneca, Ep., 75.]

To see the trouble that Seneca gives himself to fortify himself against death; to see him so sweat and pant to harden and encourage himself, and bustle so long upon this perch, would have lessened his reputation with me, had he not very bravely held himself at the last. His so ardent and frequent agitations discover that he was in himself impetuous and passionate,

"Magnus animus remissius loquitur, et securius . . . non est alius ingenio,
alius ammo color;"

["A great courage speaks more calmly and more securely. There is not one complexion
for the wit and another for the mind." —Seneca, Ep. 114, 115]

he must be convinced at his own expense; and he in some sort discovers that he was hard pressed by his enemy. Plutarch's way, by how much it is more disdainful and farther stretched, is, in my opinion, so much more manly and persuasive: and I am apt to believe that his soul had more assured and more regular motions. The one more sharp, pricks and makes us start, and more touches the soul; the other more constantly solid, forms, establishes, and supports us, and more touches the understanding. That ravishes the judgment, this wins it. I have likewise seen other writings, yet more reverenced than these, that in the representation of the conflict they maintain against the temptations of the flesh, paint them, so sharp, so powerful and invincible, that we ourselves, who are of the common herd, are as

much to wonder at the strangeness and unknown force of their temptation, as at the resisting it.

To what end do we so arm ourselves with this harness of science? Let us look down upon the poor people that we see scattered upon the face of the earth, prone and intent upon their business, that neither know Aristotle nor Cato, example nor precept; from these nature every day extracts effects of constancy and patience, more pure and manly than those we so inquisitively study in the schools: how many do I ordinarily see who slight poverty? how many who desire to die, or who die without alarm or regret? He who is now digging in my garden, has this morning buried his father or his son. The very names by which they call diseases sweeten and mollify the sharpness of them: the phthisic is with them no more than a cough, dysentery but a looseness, the pleurisy but a stitch; and, as they gently name them, so they patiently endure them; they are very great and grievous indeed when they hinder their ordinary labour; they never keep their beds but to die:

"Simplex illa et aperta virtus in obscuram et solertem
scientiam versa est."

["That overt and simple virtue is converted into an obscure and subtle science."—Seneca, Ep., 95.]

I was writing this about the time when a great load of our intestine troubles for several months lay with all its weight upon me; I had the enemy at my door on one side, and the freebooters, worse enemies, on the other,

"Non armis, sed vitiis, certatur;"

["The fight is not with arms, but with vices."—Seneca, Ep. 95.]

and underwent all sorts of military injuries at once:

"Hostis adest dextra laevaque a parte timendus.
Vicinoque malo terret utrumque latus."

["Right and left a formidable enemy is to be feared, and threatens me on both sides with impending danger."—Ovid, De Ponto, i. 3, 57.]

A monstrous war! Other wars are bent against strangers, this against itself, destroying itself with its own poison. It is of so malignant and ruinous a nature, that it ruins itself with the rest; and with its own rage mangles and tears itself to pieces. We more often see it dissolve of itself than through scarcity of any necessary thing or by force of the enemy. All discipline evades it; it comes to compose sedition, and is itself full of it; would chastise disobedience, and itself is the example; and, employed for the defence of the laws, rebels against its own. What a condition are we in! Our physic makes us sick!

"Nostre mal s'empoisonne
Du secours qu'on luy donne."

"Exuperat magis, aegrescitque medendo."

["Our disease is poisoned with its very remedies"—AEnead, xii. 46.]

"Omnia fanda, nefanda, malo permista furore,
Justificam nobis mentem avertere deorum."

["Right and wrong, all shuffled together in this wicked fury, have deprived us of the gods' protection."
—Catullus, De Nuptiis Pelei et Thetidos, V. 405.]

In the beginning of these popular maladies, one may distinguish the sound from the sick; but when they come to continue, as ours have done, the whole body is then infected from head to foot; no part is free from corruption, for there is no air that men so greedily draw in that diffuses itself so soon and that penetrates so deep as that of licence. Our armies only subsist and are kept together by the cement of foreigners; for of Frenchmen there is now no constant and regular army to be made. What a shame it is! there is no longer any discipline but what we see in the mercenary soldiers. As to ourselves, our conduct is at discretion, and that not of the chief, but every one at his own. The general has a harder game to play within than he has without; he it is who has to follow, to court the soldiers, to give way to them; he alone has to obey: all the rest if disolution and free licence. It pleases me to observe how much pusillanimity and cowardice there is in ambition; by how abject and servile ways it must arrive at its end; but it displeases me to see good and generous natures, and that are capable of justice, every day corrupted in the management and command of this confusion. Long toleration begets habit; habit, consent and imitation. We had ill-formed souls enough, without spoiling those that were generous and

good; so that, if we hold on, there will scarcely remain any with whom to intrust the health of this State of ours, in case fortune chance to restore it:

"Hunc saltem everso juvenem succurrere seclo,
Ne prohibete."

["Forbid not, at least, that this young man repair this ruined age." —Virgil, Georg., i. 500. Montaigne probably refers to Henry, king of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV.]

What has become of the old precept, "That soldiers ought more to fear their chief than the enemy"?—[Valerius Maximus, Ext. 2.]—and of that wonderful example, that an orchard being enclosed within the precincts of a camp of the Roman army, was seen at their dislodgment the next day in the same condition, not an apple, though ripe and delicious, being pulled off, but all left to the possessor? I could wish that our youth, instead of the time they spend in less fruitful travels and less honourable employments, would bestow one half of that time in being an eye-witness of naval exploits, under some good captain of Rhodes, and the other half in observing the discipline of the Turkish armies; for they have many differences and advantages over ours; one of these is, that our soldiers become more licentious in expeditions, theirs more temperate and circumspect; for the thefts and insolencies committed upon the common people, which are only punished with a cudgel in peace, are capital in war; for an egg taken by a Turkish soldier without paying for it, fifty blows with a stick is the fixed rate; for anything else, of what sort or how trivial soever, not necessary to nourishment, they are presently impaled or beheaded without mercy. I am astonished, in the history of Selim, the most cruel conqueror that ever was, to see that when he subdued Egypt, the beautiful gardens about Damascus being all open, and in a conquered land, and his army encamped upon the very place, should be left untouched by the hands of the soldiers, by reason they had not received the signal of pillage.

But is there any disease in a government that it is worth while to physic with such a mortal drug?—[i.e. as civil war.]—No, said Favonius, not even the tyrannical usurpation of a Commonwealth. Plato, likewise, will not consent that a man should violate the peace of his country in order to cure it, and by no means approves of a reformation that disturbs and hazards all, and that is to be purchased at the price of the citizens' blood and ruin; determining it to be the duty of a good patriot in such a case to let it alone, and only to pray to God for his extraordinary assistance: and he seems to be angry with his great friend Dion, for having proceeded somewhat after another manner. I was a Platonist in this point before I knew there had ever been such a man as Plato in the world. And if this person ought absolutely to be rejected from our society (he who by the sincerity of his conscience merited from the divine favour to penetrate so far into the Christian light, through the universal darkness wherein the world was involved in his time), I do not think it becomes us to suffer ourselves to be instructed by a heathen, how great an impiety it is not to expect from God any relief simply his own and without our co-operation. I often doubt, whether amongst so many men as meddle in such affairs, there is not to be found some one of so weak understanding as to have been really persuaded that he went towards reformation by the worst of deformations; and advanced towards salvation by the most express causes that we have of most assured damnation; that by overthrowing government, the magistracy, and the laws, in whose protection God has placed him, by dismembering his good mother, and giving her limbs to be mangled by her old enemies, filling fraternal hearts with parricidal hatreds, calling devils and furies to his aid, he can assist the most holy sweetness and justice of the divine law. Ambition, avarice, cruelty, and revenge have not sufficient natural impetuosity of their own; let us bait them with the glorious titles of justice and devotion. There cannot a worse state of things be imagined than where wickedness comes to be legitimate, and assumes, with the magistrates' permission, the cloak of virtue:

"Nihil in speciem fallacius, quam prava religio,
ubi deorum numen prxtenditur sceleribus."

["Nothing has a more deceiving face than false religion, where the divinity of the gods is obscured by crimes."—Livy, xxxix. 16.]

The extremest sort of injustice, according to Plato, is where that which is unjust should be reputed for just.

The common people then suffered very much, and not present damage only:

"Undique totis
Usque adeo turbatur agris,"

["Such great disorders overtake our fields on every side." —Virgil, Eclog., i. II.]

but future too; the living were to suffer, and so were they who were yet unborn; they stript them, and consequently myself, even of hope, taking from them all they had laid up in store to live on for many years:

"Quae nequeunt secum ferre aut abducere, perdunt;
Et cremat insontes turba scelesta casas . . .
Muris nulla fides, squalent populatibus agri."

["What they cannot bear away, they spoil; and the wicked mob burn harmless houses; walls cannot secure their masters, and the fields are squalid with devastation." —Ovid, Trist., iii. 10, 35; Claudianus, In Eutyop., i. 244.]

Besides this shock, I suffered others: I underwent the inconveniences that moderation brings along with it in such a disease: I was robbed on all hands; to the Ghibelline I was a Guelph, and to the Guelph a Ghibelline; one of my poets expresses this very well, but I know not where it is.

["So Tories called me Whig, and Whigs a Tory."—Pope, after Horace.]

The situation of my house, and my friendliness with my neighbours, presented me with one face; my life and my actions with another. They did not lay formal accusations to my charge, for they had no foundation for so doing; I never hide my head from the laws, and whoever would have questioned me, would have done himself a greater prejudice than me; they were only mute suspicions that were whispered about, which never want appearance in so confused a mixture, no more than envious or idle heads. I commonly myself lend a hand to injurious presumptions that fortune scatters abroad against me, by a way I have ever had of evading to justify, excuse, or explain myself; conceiving that it were to compromise my conscience to plead in its behalf:

"Perspicuitas enim argumentatione elevatur;"

["For perspicuity is lessened by argument."
("The clearness of a cause is clouded by argumentation.")
—Cicero, De Nat. Deor., iii. 4.]

and, as if every one saw as clearly into me as I do myself, instead of retiring from an accusation, I step up to meet it, and rather give it some kind of colour by an ironical and scoffing confession, if I do not sit totally mute, as of a thing not worth my answer. But such as look upon this kind of behaviour of mine as too haughty a confidence, have as little kindness for me as they who interpret the weakness of an indefensible cause; namely, the great folks, towards whom want of submission is the great fault, harsh towards all justice that knows and feels itself, and is not submissive humble, and suppliant; I have often knocked my head against this pillar. So it is that at what then befell me, an ambitious man would have hanged himself, and a covetous man would have done the same. I have no manner of care of getting;

"Si mihi, quod nunc est, etiam minus; et mihi vivam
Quod superest aevi, si quid superesse volent dii:"

["If I may have what I now own, or even less, and may live for myself what of life remains, if the gods grant me remaining years."
—Horace, Ep., i. 18, 107.]

but the losses that befall me by the injury of others, whether by theft or violence, go almost as near my heart as they would to that of the most avaricious man. The offence troubles me, without comparison, more than the loss. A thousand several sorts of mischiefs fell upon me in the neck of one another; I could more cheerfully have borne them all at once.

I was already considering to whom, amongst my friends, I might commit a necessitous and discredited old age; and having turned my eyes quite round, I found myself bare. To let one's self fall plump down, and from so great a height, it ought to be in the arms of a solid, vigorous, and fortunate friendship: these are very rare, if there be any. At last, I saw that it was safest for me to trust to myself in my necessity; and if it should so fall out, that I should be but upon cold terms in Fortune's favour, I should so much the more pressingly recommend me to my own, and attach myself and look to myself all the more closely. Men on all occasions throw themselves upon foreign assistance to spare their own, which is alone certain and sufficient to him who knows how therewith to arm himself. Every one runs elsewhere, and to the future, forasmuch as no one is arrived at himself. And I was satisfied that they were profitable inconveniences; forasmuch as, first, ill scholars are to be admonished with the rod, when reason will not do, as a crooked piece of wood is by fire and straining reduced to straightness. I have a great while preached to myself to stick close to my own concerns, and separate myself from the affairs of others; yet I am still turning my eyes aside. A bow, a favourable word, a kind look from a

great person tempts me; of which God knows if there is scarcity in these days, and what they signify. I, moreover, without wrinkling my forehead, hearken to the persuasions offered me, to draw me into the marketplace, and so gently refuse, as if I were half willing to be overcome. Now for so indocile a spirit blows are required; this vessel which thus chops and cleaves, and is ready to fall one piece from another, must have the hoops forced down with good sound strokes of a mallet. Secondly, that this accident served me for exercise to prepare me for worse, if I, who both by the benefit of fortune, and by the condition of my manners, hoped to be among the last, should happen to be one of the first assailed by this storm; instructing myself betimes to constrain my life, and fit it for a new state. The true liberty is to be able to do what a man will with himself:

"Potentissimus est, qui se habet in potestate."

["He is most potent who is master of himself."—Seneca, Ep., 94.]

In an ordinary and quiet time, a man prepares himself for moderate and common accidents; but in the confusion wherein we have been for these thirty years, every Frenchman, whether personal or in general, sees himself every hour upon the point of the total ruin and overthrow of his fortune: by so much the more ought he to have his courage supplied with the strongest and most vigorous provisions. Let us thank fortune, that has not made us live in an effeminate, idle, and languishing age; some who could never have been so by other means will be made famous by their misfortunes. As I seldom read in histories the confusions of other states without regret that I was not present, the better to consider them, so does my curiosity make me in some sort please myself in seeing with my own eyes this notable spectacle of our public death, its form and symptoms; and since I cannot hinder it, I am content to have been destined to be present therein, and thereby to instruct myself. So do we eagerly covet to see, though but in shadow and the fables of theatres, the pomp of tragic representations of human fortune; 'tis not without compassion at what we hear, but we please ourselves in rousing our displeasure, by the rarity of these pitiable events. Nothing tickles that does not pinch. And good historians skip over, as stagnant water and dead sea, calm narrations, to return to seditions, to wars, to which they know that we invite them.

I question whether I can decently confess with how small a sacrifice of its repose and tranquillity I have passed over above the one half of my life amid the ruin of my country. I lend myself my patience somewhat too cheap, in accidents that do not privately assail me; and do not so much regard what they take from me, as what remains safe, both within and without. There is comfort in evading, one while this, another while that, of the evils that are levelled at ourselves too, at last, but at present hurt others only about us; as also, that in matters of public interest, the more universally my affection is dispersed, the weaker it is: to which may be added, that it is half true:

"Tantum ex publicis malis sentimus,
quantum ad privatas res pertinet;"

["We are only so far sensible of public evils as they respect our private affairs."—Livy, xxx. 44.]

and that the health from which we fell was so ill, that itself relieves the regret we should have for it. It was health, but only in comparison with the sickness that has succeeded it: we are not fallen from any great height; the corruption and brigandage which are in dignity and office seem to me the least supportable: we are less injuriously rifled in a wood than in a place of security. It was an universal juncture of particular members, each corrupted by emulation of the others, and most of them with old ulcers, that neither received nor required any cure. This convulsion, therefore, really more animated than pressed me, by the assistance of my conscience, which was not only at peace within itself, but elevated, and I did not find any reason to complain of myself. Also, as God never sends evils, any more than goods, absolutely pure to men, my health continued at that time more than usually good; and, as I can do nothing without it, there are few things that I cannot do with it. It afforded me means to rouse up all my faculties, and to lay my hand before the wound that would else, peradventure, have gone farther; and I experienced, in my patience, that I had some stand against fortune, and that it must be a great shock could throw me out of the saddle. I do not say this to provoke her to give me a more vigorous charge: I am her humble servant, and submit to her pleasure: let her be content, in God's name. Am I sensible of her assaults? Yes, I am. But, as those who are possessed and oppressed with sorrow sometimes suffer themselves, nevertheless, by intervals to taste a little pleasure, and are sometimes surprised with a smile, so have I so much power over myself, as to make my ordinary condition quiet and free from disturbing thoughts; yet I suffer myself, withal, by fits to be surprised with the stings of those unpleasing imaginations that assault me, whilst I am arming myself to drive them away, or at least to wrestle with them.

But behold another aggravation of the evil which befell me in the tail of the rest: both without doors and within I was assailed with a most violent plague, violent in comparison of all others; for as sound

bodies are subject to more grievous maladies, forasmuch as they, are not to be forced but by such, so my very healthful air, where no contagion, however near, in the memory of man, ever took footing, coming to be corrupted, produced strange effects:

"Mista senum et juvenum densentur funera; nullum
Saeva caput Proserpina fugit;"

["Old and young die in mixed heaps. Cruel Proserpine forbears none."—Horace, Od., i. 28, 19.]

I had to suffer this pleasant condition, that the sight of my house, was frightful to me; whatever I had there was without guard, and left to the mercy of any one who wished to take it. I myself, who am so hospitable, was in very great distress for a retreat for my family; a distracted family, frightful both to its friends and itself, and filling every place with horror where it attempted to settle, having to shift its abode so soon as any one's finger began but to ache; all diseases are then concluded to be the plague, and people do not stay to examine whether they are so or no. And the mischief on't is that, according to the rules of art, in every danger that a man comes near, he must undergo a quarantine in fear of the evil, your imagination all the while tormenting you at pleasure, and turning even your health itself into a fever. Yet all this would have much less affected me had I not withal been compelled to be sensible of the sufferings of others, and miserably to serve six months together for a guide to this caravan; for I carry my own antidotes within myself, which are resolution and patience. Apprehension, which is particularly feared in this disease, does not much trouble me; and, if being alone, I should have been taken, it had been a less cheerless and more remote departure; 'tis a kind of death that I do not think of the worst sort; 'tis commonly short, stupid, without pain, and consoled by the public condition; without ceremony, without mourning, without a crowd. But as to the people about us, the hundredth part of them could not be saved:

"Videas desertaque regna
Pastorum, et longe saltus lateque vacantes."

["You would see shepherds' haunts deserted, and far and wide empty pastures."—Virgil, Georg., iii. 476.]

In this place my largest revenue is manual: what an hundred men ploughed for me, lay a long time fallow.

But then, what example of resolution did we not see in the simplicity of all this people? Generally, every one renounced all care of life; the grapes, the principal wealth of the country, remained untouched upon the vines; every man indifferently prepared for and expected death, either to-night or to-morrow, with a countenance and voice so far from fear, as if they had come to terms with this necessity, and that it was an universal and inevitable sentence. 'Tis always such; but how slender hold has the resolution of dying? The distance and difference of a few hours, the sole consideration of company, renders its apprehension various to us. Observe these people; by reason that they die in the same month, children, young people, and old, they are no longer astonished at it; they no longer lament. I saw some who were afraid of staying behind, as in a dreadful solitude; and I did not commonly observe any other solicitude amongst them than that of sepulture; they were troubled to see the dead bodies scattered about the fields, at the mercy of the wild beasts that presently flocked thither. How differing are the fancies of men; the Neorites, a nation subjected by Alexander, threw the bodies of their dead into the deepest and less frequented part of their woods, on purpose to have them there eaten; the only sepulture reputed happy amongst them. Some, who were yet in health, dug their own graves; others laid themselves down in them whilst alive; and a labourer of mine, in dying, with his hands and feet pulled the earth upon him. Was not this to nestle and settle himself to sleep at greater ease? A bravery in some sort like that of the Roman soldiers who, after the battle of Cannae, were found with their heads thrust into holes in the earth, which they had made, and in suffocating themselves, with their own hands pulled the earth about their ears. In short, a whole province was, by the common usage, at once brought to a course nothing inferior in undauntedness to the most studied and premeditated resolution.

Most of the instructions of science to encourage us herein have in them more of show than of force, and more of ornament than of effect. We have abandoned Nature, and will teach her what to do; teach her who so happily and so securely conducted us; and in the meantime, from the footsteps of her instruction, and that little which, by the benefit of ignorance, remains of her image imprinted in the life of this rustic rout of unpolished men, science is constrained every day to borrow patterns for her disciples of constancy, tranquillity, and innocence. It is pretty to see that these persons, full of so much fine knowledge, have to imitate this foolish simplicity, and this in the primary actions of virtue; and that our wisdom must learn even from beasts the most profitable instructions in the greatest and most necessary concerns of our life; as, how we are to live and die, manage our property, love and bring up

our children, maintain justice: a singular testimony of human infirmity; and that this reason we so handle at our pleasure, finding evermore some diversity and novelty, leaves in us no apparent trace of nature. Men have done with nature as perfumers with oils; they have sophisticated her with so many argumentations and far-fetched discourses, that she is become variable and particular to each, and has lost her proper, constant, and universal face; so that we must seek testimony from beasts, not subject to favour, corruption, or diversity of opinions. It is, indeed, true that even these themselves do not always go exactly in the path of nature, but wherein they swerve, it is so little that you may always see the track; as horses that are led make many bounds and curvets, but 'tis always at the length of the halter, and still follow him that leads them; and as a young hawk takes its flight, but still under the restraint of its tether:

> "Exsilia, torments, bells, morbos, naufragia meditare . . . ut nullo sis malo tiro."
>
> ["To meditate upon banishments, tortures, wars, diseases, and shipwrecks, that thou mayest not be a novice in any disaster." —Seneca, Ep., 91, 107.]

What good will this curiosity do us, to anticipate all the inconveniences of human nature, and to prepare ourselves with so much trouble against things which, peradventure, will never befall us?

"Parem passis tristitiam facit, pati posse;"

> ["It troubles men as much that they may possibly suffer, as if they really did suffer."—Idem, ibid., 74.]

not only the blow, but the wind of the blow strikes us: or, like phrenetic people—for certainly it is a phrensy—to go immediately and whip yourself, because it may so fall out that Fortune may one day make you undergo it; and to put on your furred gown at Midsummer, because you will stand in need of it at Christmas! Throw yourselves, say they, into the experience of all the evils, the most extreme evils that can possibly befall you, and so be assured of them. On the contrary, the most easy and most natural way would be to banish even the thoughts of them; they will not come soon enough; their true being will not continue with us long enough; our mind must lengthen and extend them; we must incorporate them in us beforehand, and there entertain them, as if they would not otherwise sufficiently press upon our senses. "We shall find them heavy enough when they come," says one of our masters, of none of the tender sects, but of the most severe; "in the meantime, favour thyself; believe what pleases thee best; what good will it do thee to anticipate thy ill fortune, to lose the present for fear of the future: and to make thyself miserable now, because thou art to be so in time?" These are his words. Science, indeed, does us one good office in instructing us exactly as to the dimensions of evils,

"Curis acuens mortalia corda!"

["Probing mortal hearts with cares."—Virgil, Georg., i. 23.]

'Twere pity that any part of their greatness should escape our sense and knowledge.

'Tis certain that for the most part the preparation for death has administered more torment than the thing itself. It was of old truly said, and by a very judicious author:

"Minus afficit sensus fatigatio, quam cogitatio."

> ["Suffering itself less afflicts the senses than the apprehension of suffering."—Quintilian, Inst. Orat., i. 12.]

The sentiment of present death sometimes, of itself, animates us with a prompt resolution not to avoid a thing that is utterly inevitable: many gladiators have been seen in the olden time, who, after having fought timorously and ill, have courageously entertained death, offering their throats to the enemies' sword and bidding them despatch. The sight of future death requires a courage that is slow, and consequently hard to be got. If you know not how to die, never trouble yourself; nature will, at the time, fully and sufficiently instruct you: she will exactly do that business for you; take you no care—

> "Incertam frustra, mortales, funeris horam,
> Quaeritis et qua sit mors aditura via....
> Poena minor certam subito perferre ruinam;
> Quod timeas, gravius sustinuisse diu."
>
> ["Mortals, in vain you seek to know the uncertain hour of death, and by what channel it will come upon you."—Propertius, ii. 27, 1.

"'Tis less painful to undergo sudden destruction; 'tis hard to bear that which you long fear."—Incert. Auct.]

We trouble life by the care of death, and death by the care of life: the one torments, the other frights us. It is not against death that we prepare, that is too momentary a thing; a quarter of an hour's suffering, without consequence and without damage, does not deserve especial precepts: to say the truth, we prepare ourselves against the preparations of death. Philosophy ordains that we should always have death before our eyes, to see and consider it before the time, and then gives us rules and precautions to provide that this foresight and thought do us no harm; just so do physicians, who throw us into diseases, to the end they may have whereon to employ their drugs and their art. If we have not known how to live, 'tis injustice to teach us how to die, and make the end difform from all the rest; if we have known how to live firmly and quietly, we shall know how to die so too. They may boast as much as they please:

"Tota philosophorum vita commentatio mortis est;"

["The whole life of philosophers is the meditation of death."—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 30.]

but I fancy that, though it be the end, it is not the aim of life; 'tis its end, its extremity, but not, nevertheless, its object; it ought itself to be its own aim and design; its true study is to order, govern, and suffer itself. In the number of several other offices, that the general and principal chapter of Knowing how to live comprehends, is this article of Knowing how to die; and, did not our fears give it weight, one of the lightest too.

To judge of them by utility and by the naked truth, the lessons of simplicity are not much inferior to those which learning teaches us: nay, quite the contrary. Men differ in sentiment and force; we must lead them to their own good according to their capacities and by various ways:

"Quo me comque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes."

["Wherever the season takes me,(where the tempest drives me) there I am carried as a guest."—Horace, Ep., i. i, 15.]

I never saw any peasant among my neighbours cogitate with what countenance and assurance he should pass over his last hour; nature teaches him not to think of death till he is dying; and then he does it with a better grace than Aristotle, upon whom death presses with a double weight, both of itself and from so long a premeditation; and, therefore, it was the opinion of Caesar, that the least premeditated death was the easiest and the most happy:

"Plus dolet quam necesse est, qui ante dolet, quam necesse est."

["He grieves more than is necessary, who grieves before it is necessary."—Seneca, Ep., 98.]

The sharpness of this imagination springs from our curiosity: 'tis thus we ever impede ourselves, desiring to anticipate and regulate natural prescripts. It is only for the doctors to dine worse for it, when in the best health, and to frown at the image of death; the common sort stand in need of no remedy or consolation, but just in the shock, and when the blow comes; and consider on't no more than just what they endure. Is it not then, as we say, that the stolidity and want of apprehension in the vulgar give them that patience m present evils, and that profound carelessness of future sinister accidents? That their souls, in being more gross and dull, are less penetrable and not so easily moved? If it be so, let us henceforth, in God's name, teach nothing but ignorance; 'tis the utmost fruit the sciences promise us, to which this stolidity so gently leads its disciples.

We have no want of good masters, interpreters of natural simplicity. Socrates shall be one; for, as I remember, he speaks something to this purpose to the judges who sat upon his life and death.

[That which follows is taken from the Apology of Socrates in Plato, chap. 17, &c.]

"I am afraid, my masters, that if I entreat you not to put me to death, I shall confirm the charge of my accusers, which is, that I pretend to be wiser than others, as having some more secret knowledge of things that are above and below us. I have neither frequented nor known death, nor have ever seen any person that has tried its qualities, from whom to inform myself. Such as fear it, presuppose they know it; as for my part, I neither know what it is, nor what they do in the other world. Death is, peradventure, an indifferent thing; peradventure, a thing to be desired. 'Tis nevertheless to be believed, if it be a transmigration from one place to another, that it is a bettering of one's condition to go and live with so many great persons deceased, and to be exempt from having any more to do with unjust and corrupt

judges; if it be an annihilation of our being, 'tis yet a bettering of one's condition to enter into a long and peaceable night; we find nothing more sweet in life than quiet repose and a profound sleep without dreams. The things that I know to be evil, as to injure one's neighbour and to disobey one's superior, whether it be God or man, I carefully avoid; such as I do not know whether they be good or evil, I cannot fear them. If I am to die and leave you alive, the gods alone only know whether it will go better with you or with me. Wherefore, as to what concerns me, you may do as you shall think fit. But according to my method of advising just and profitable things, I say that you will do your consciences more right to set me at liberty, unless you see further into my cause than I do; and, judging according to my past actions, both public and private, according to my intentions, and according to the profit that so many of our citizens, both young and old, daily extract from my conversation, and the fruit that you all reap from me, you cannot more duly acquit yourselves towards my merit than in ordering that, my poverty considered, I should be maintained at the Prytanaeum, at the public expense, a thing that I have often known you, with less reason, grant to others. Do not impute it to obstinacy or disdain that I do not, according to the custom, supplicate and go about to move you to commiseration. I have both friends and kindred, not being, as Homer says, begotten of wood or of stone, no more than others, who might well present themselves before you with tears and mourning, and I have three desolate children with whom to move you to compassion; but I should do a shame to our city at the age I am, and in the reputation of wisdom which is now charged against me, to appear in such an abject form. What would men say of the other Athenians? I have always admonished those who have frequented my lectures, not to redeem their lives by an unbecoming action; and in the wars of my country, at Amphipolis, Potidea, Delia, and other expeditions where I have been, I have effectually manifested how far I was from securing my safety by my shame. I should, moreover, compromise your duty, and should invite you to unbecoming things; for 'tis not for my prayers to persuade you, but for the pure and solid reasons of justice. You have sworn to the gods to keep yourselves upright; and it would seem as if I suspected you, or would recriminate upon you that I do not believe that you are so; and I should testify against myself, not to believe them as I ought, mistrusting their conduct, and not purely committing my affair into their hands. I wholly rely upon them; and hold myself assured they will do in this what shall be most fit both for you and for me: good men, whether living or dead, have no reason to fear the gods."

Is not this an innocent child's pleading of an unimaginable loftiness, true, frank, and just, unexampled?—and in what a necessity employed! Truly, he had very good reason to prefer it before that which the great orator Lysias had penned for him: admirably couched, indeed, in the judiciary style, but unworthy of so noble a criminal. Had a suppliant voice been heard out of the mouth of Socrates, that lofty virtue had struck sail in the height of its glory; and ought his rich and powerful nature to have committed her defence to art, and, in her highest proof, have renounced truth and simplicity, the ornaments of his speaking, to adorn and deck herself with the embellishments of figures and the flourishes of a premeditated speech? He did very wisely, and like himself, not to corrupt the tenor of an incorrupt life, and so sacred an image of the human form, to spin out his decrepitude another year, and to betray the immortal memory of that glorious end. He owed his life not to himself, but to the example of the world; had it not been a public damage, that he should have concluded it after a lazy and obscure manner? Assuredly, that careless and indifferent consideration of his death deserved that posterity should consider it so much the more, as indeed they did; and there is nothing so just in justice than that which fortune ordained for his recommendation; for the Athenians abominated all those who had been causers of his death to such a degree, that they avoided them as excommunicated persons, and looked upon everything as polluted that had been touched by them; no one would wash with them in the public baths, none would salute or own acquaintance with them: so that, at last, unable longer to support this public hatred, they hanged themselves.

If any one shall think that, amongst so many other examples that I had to choose out of in the sayings of Socrates for my present purpose, I have made an ill choice of this, and shall judge this discourse of his elevated above common conceptions, I must tell them that I have properly selected it; for I am of another opinion, and hold it to be a discourse, in rank and simplicity, much below and behind common conceptions. He represents, in an inartificial boldness and infantine security, the pure and first impression and ignorance of nature; for it is to be believed that we have naturally a fear of pain, but not of death, by reason of itself; 'tis a part of our being, and no less essential than living.

To what end should nature have begotten in us a hatred to it and a horror of it, considering that it is of so great utility to her in maintaining the succession and vicissitude of her works? and that in this universal republic, it conduces more to birth and augmentation than to loss or ruin?

"Sic rerum summa novatur."

"Mille animas una necata dedit."

"The failing of one life is the passage to a thousand other lives."

Nature has imprinted in beasts the care of themselves and of their conservation; they proceed so far as hitting or hurting to be timorous of being worse, of themselves, of our haltering and beating them, accidents subject to their sense and experience; but that we should kill them, they cannot fear, nor have they the faculty to imagine and conclude such a thing as death; it is said, indeed, that we see them not only cheerfully undergo it, horses for the most part neighing and swans singing when they die, but, moreover, seek it at need, of which elephants have given many examples.

Besides, the method of arguing, of which Socrates here makes use, is it not equally admirable both in simplicity and vehemence? Truly it is much more easy to speak like Aristotle and to live like Caesar than to speak and live as Socrates did; there lies the extreme degree of perfection and difficulty; art cannot reach it. Now, our faculties are not so trained up; we do not try, we do not know them; we invest ourselves with those of others, and let our own lie idle; as some one may say of me, that I have here only made a nosegay of foreign flowers, having furnished nothing of my own but the thread to tie them.

Certainly I have so far yielded to public opinion, that those borrowed ornaments accompany me; but I do not mean that they shall cover me and hide me; that is quite contrary to my design, who desire to make a show of nothing but what is my own, and what is my own by nature; and had I taken my own advice, I had at all hazards spoken purely alone, I more and more load myself every day,

> [In fact, the first edition of the Essays (Bordeaux, 1580) has very few quotations. These became more numerous in the edition of 1588; but the multitude of classical texts which at times encumber Montaigne's text, only dates from the posthumous edition of 1595, he had made these collections in the four last years of his life, as an amusement of his "idleness."—Le Clerc. They grow, however, more sparing in the Third Book.]

beyond my purpose and first method, upon the account of idleness and the humour of the age. If it misbecome me, as I believe it does, 'tis no matter; it may be of use to some others. Such there are who quote Plato and Homer, who never saw either of them; and I also have taken things out of places far enough distant from their source. Without pains and without learning, having a thousand volumes about me in the place where I write, I can presently borrow, if I please, from a dozen such scrap-gatherers, people about whom I do not much trouble myself, wherewith to trick up this treatise of Physiognomy; there needs no more but a preliminary epistle of a German to stuff me with quotations. And so it is we go in quest of a tickling story to cheat the foolish world. These lumber pies of commonplaces, wherewith so many furnish their studies, are of little use but to common subjects, and serve but to show us, and not to direct us: a ridiculous fruit of learning, that Socrates so pleasantly discusses against Euthydemus. I have seen books made of things that were never either studied or understood; the author committing to several of his learned friends the examination of this and t'other matter to compile it, contenting himself, for his share, with having projected the design, and by his industry to have tied together this faggot of unknown provisions; the ink and paper, at least, are his. This is to buy or borrow a book, and not to make one; 'tis to show men not that he can make a book, but that, whereof they may be in doubt, he cannot make one. A president, where I was, boasted that he had amassed together two hundred and odd commonplaces in one of his judgments; in telling which, he deprived himself of the glory he had got by it: in my opinion, a pusillanimous and absurd vanity for such a subject and such a person. I do the contrary; and amongst so many borrowed things, am glad if I can steal one, disguising and altering it for some new service; at the hazard of having it said that 'tis for want of understanding its natural use; I give it some particular touch of my own hand, to the end it may not be so absolutely foreign. These set their thefts in show and value themselves upon them, and so have more credit with the laws than I have: we naturalists I think that there is a great and incomparable preference in the honour of invention over that of allegation.

If I would have spoken by learning, I had spoken sooner; I had written of the time nearer to my studies, when I had more wit and better memory, and should sooner have trusted to the vigour of that age than of this, would I have made a business of writing. And what if this gracious favour —[His acquaintance with Mademoiselle de Gournay.]—which Fortune has lately offered me upon the account of this work, had befallen me in that time of my life, instead of this, wherein 'tis equally desirable to possess, soon to be lost! Two of my acquaintance, great men in this faculty, have, in my opinion, lost half, in refusing to publish at forty years old, that they might stay till threescore. Maturity has its defects as well as green years, and worse; and old age is as unfit for this kind of business as any other. He who commits his decrepitude to the press plays the fool if he think to squeeze anything out thence that does not relish of dreaming, dotage, and drivelling; the mind grows costive and thick in growing old. I deliver my ignorance in pomp and state, and my learning meagrely and poorly; this accidentally and accessorily, that principally and expressly; and write specifically of nothing but nothing, nor of any science but of that inscience. I have chosen a time when my life, which I am to give an account of, lies wholly before me; what remains has more to do with death; and of my death itself, should I find it a prating death, as others do, I would willingly give an account at my departure.

Socrates was a perfect exemplar in all great qualities, and I am vexed that he had so deformed a face and body as is said, and so unsuitable to the beauty of his soul, himself being so amorous and such an admirer of beauty: Nature did him wrong. There is nothing more probable than the conformity and relation of the body to the soul:

> "Ipsi animi magni refert, quali in corpore locati sint: multo enim a corpore existunt, qux acuant mentem: multa qua obtundant;"
>
> ["It is of great consequence in what bodies minds are placed, for many things spring from the body that may sharpen the mind, and many that may blunt it."—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., i. 33.]

this refers to an unnatural ugliness and deformity of limbs; but we call ugliness also an unseemliness at first sight, which is principally lodged in the face, and disgusts us on very slight grounds: by the complexion, a spot, a rugged countenance, for some reasons often wholly inexplicable, in members nevertheless of good symmetry and perfect. The deformity, that clothed a very beautiful soul in La Boetie, was of this predicament: that superficial ugliness, which nevertheless is always the most imperious, is of least prejudice to the state of the mind, and of little certainty in the opinion of men. The other, which is never properly called deformity, being more substantial, strikes deeper in. Not every shoe of smooth shining leather, but every shoe well-made, shews the shape of the foot within. As Socrates said of his, it betrayed equal ugliness in his soul, had he not corrected it by education; but in saying so, I hold he was in jest, as his custom was; never so excellent a soul formed itself.

I cannot often enough repeat how great an esteem I have for beauty, that potent and advantageous quality; he (La Boetie) called it "a short tyranny," and Plato, "the privilege of nature." We have nothing that excels it in reputation; it has the first place in the commerce of men; it presents itself in the front; seduces and prepossesses our judgments with great authority and wonderful impression. Phryne had lost her cause in the hands of an excellent advocate, if, opening her robe, she had not corrupted her judges by the lustre of her beauty. And I find that Cyrus, Alexander, and Caesar, the three masters of the world, never neglected beauty in their greatest affairs; no more did the first Scipio. The same word in Greek signifies both fair and good; and the Holy Word often says good when it means fair: I should willingly maintain the priority in good things, according to the song that Plato calls an idle thing, taken out of some ancient poet: "health, beauty, riches." Aristotle says that the right of command appertains to the beautiful; and that, when there is a person whose beauty comes near the images of the gods, veneration is equally due to him. To him who asked why people oftener and longer frequent the company of handsome persons: "That question," said he, "is only to be asked by the blind." Most of the philosophers, and the greatest, paid for their schooling, and acquired wisdom by the favour and mediation of their beauty. Not only in the men that serve me, but also in the beasts, I consider it within two fingers' breadth of goodness.

And yet I fancy that those features and moulds of face, and those lineaments, by which men guess at our internal complexions and our fortunes to come, is a thing that does not very directly and simply lie under the chapter of beauty and deformity, no more than every good odour and serenity of air promises health, nor all fog and stink infection in a time of pestilence. Such as accuse ladies of contradicting their beauty by their manners, do not always hit right; for, in a face which is none of the best, there may dwell some air of probity and trust; as, on the contrary, I have read, betwixt two beautiful eyes, menaces of a dangerous and malignant nature. There are favourable physiognomies, so that in a crowd of victorious enemies, you shall presently choose, amongst men you never saw before, one rather than another to whom to surrender, and with whom to intrust your life; and yet not properly upon the consideration of beauty.

A person's look is but a feeble warranty; and yet it is something considerable too; and if I had to lash them, I would most severely scourge the wicked ones who belie and betray the promises that nature has planted in their foreheads; I should with greater severity punish malice under a mild and gentle aspect. It seems as if there were some lucky and some unlucky faces; and I believe there is some art in distinguishing affable from merely simple faces, severe from rugged, malicious from pensive, scornful from melancholic, and such other bordering qualities. There are beauties which are not only haughty, but sour, and others that are not only gentle, but more than that, insipid; to prognosticate from them future events is a matter that I shall leave undecided.

I have, as I have said elsewhere as to my own concern, simply and implicitly embraced this ancient rule, "That we cannot fail in following Nature," and that the sovereign precept is to conform ourselves to her. I have not, as Socrates did, corrected my natural composition by the force of reason, and have not in the least disturbed my inclination by art; I have let myself go as I came: I contend not; my two principal parts live, of their own accord, in peace and good intelligence, but my nurse's milk, thank God, was tolerably wholesome and good. Shall I say this by the way, that I see in greater esteem than

'tis worth, and in use solely among ourselves, a certain image of scholastic probity, a slave to precepts, and fettered with hope and fear? I would have it such as that laws and religions should not make, but perfect and authorise it; that finds it has wherewithal to support itself without help, born and rooted in us from the seed of universal reason, imprinted in every man by nature. That reason which strengthens Socrates from his vicious bend renders him obedient to the gods and men of authority in his city: courageous in death, not because his soul is immortal, but because he is mortal. 'Tis a doctrine ruinous to all government, and much more hurtful than ingenious and subtle, which persuades the people that a religious belief is alone sufficient, and without conduct, to satisfy the divine justice. Use demonstrates to us a vast distinction betwixt devotion and conscience.

I have a favourable aspect, both in form and in interpretation:

"Quid dixi, habere me? imo habui, Chreme."

["What did I say? that I have? no, Chremes, I had."
—Terence, Heaut., act i., sec. 2, v. 42.]

"Heu! tantum attriti corporis ossa vides;"

["Alas! of a worn body thou seest only the bones"]

and that makes a quite contrary show to that of Socrates. It has often befallen me, that upon the mere credit of my presence and air, persons who had no manner of knowledge of me have put a very great confidence in me, whether in their own affairs or mine; and I have in foreign parts thence obtained singular and rare favours. But the two following examples are, peradventure, worth particular relation. A certain person planned to surprise my house and me in it; his scheme was to come to my gates alone, and to be importunate to be let in. I knew him by name, and had fair reason to repose confidence in him, as being my neighbour and something related to me. I caused the gates to be opened to him, as I do to every one. There I found him, with every appearance of alarm, his horse panting and very tired. He entertained me with this story: "That, about half a league off, he had met with a certain enemy of his, whom I also knew, and had heard of their quarrel; that his enemy had given him a very brisk chase, and that having been surprised in disorder, and his party being too weak, he had fled to my gates for refuge; and that he was in great trouble for his followers, whom (he said) he concluded to be all either dead or taken." I innocently did my best to comfort, assure, and refresh him. Shortly after came four or five of his soldiers, who presented themselves in the same countenance and affright, to get in too; and after them more, and still more, very well mounted and armed, to the number of five-and-twenty or thirty, pretending that they had the enemy at their heels. This mystery began a little to awaken my suspicion; I was not ignorant what an age I lived in, how much my house might be envied, and I had several examples of others of my acquaintance to whom a mishap of this sort had happened. But thinking there was nothing to be got by having begun to do a courtesy, unless I went through with it, and that I could not disengage myself from them without spoiling all, I let myself go the most natural and simple way, as I always do, and invited them all to come in. And in truth I am naturally very little inclined to suspicion and distrust; I willingly incline towards excuse and the gentlest interpretation; I take men according to the common order, and do not more believe in those perverse and unnatural inclinations, unless convinced by manifest evidence, than I do in monsters and miracles; and I am, moreover, a man who willingly commit myself to Fortune, and throw myself headlong into her arms; and I have hitherto found more reason to applaud than to blame myself for so doing, having ever found her more discreet about, and a greater friend to, my affairs than I am myself. There are some actions in my life whereof the conduct may justly be called difficult, or, if you please, prudent; of these, supposing the third part to have been my own, doubtless the other two-thirds were absolutely hers. We make, methinks, a mistake in that we do not enough trust Heaven with our affairs, and pretend to more from our own conduct than appertains to us; and therefore it is that our designs so often miscarry. Heaven is jealous of the extent that we attribute to the right of human prudence above its own, and cuts it all the shorter by how much the more we amplify it. The last comers remained on horseback in my courtyard, whilst their leader, who was with me in the parlour, would not have his horse put up in the stable, saying he should immediately retire, so soon as he had news of his men. He saw himself master of his enterprise, and nothing now remained but its execution. He has since several times said (for he was not ashamed to tell the story himself) that my countenance and frankness had snatched the treachery out of his hands. He again mounted his horse; his followers, who had their eyes intent upon him, to see when he would give the signal, being very much astonished to find him come away and leave his prey behind him.

Another time, relying upon some truce just published in the army, I took a journey through a very ticklish country. I had not ridden far, but I was discovered, and two or three parties of horse, from various places, were sent out to seize me; one of them overtook me on the third day, and I was attacked by fifteen or twenty gentlemen in vizors, followed at a distance by a band of foot-soldiers. I was taken,

withdrawn into the thick of a neighbouring forest, dismounted, robbed, my trunks rifled, my money-box taken, and my horses and equipage divided amongst new masters. We had, in this copse, a very long contest about my ransom, which they set so high, that it was manifest that I was not known to them. They were, moreover, in a very great debate about my life; and, in truth, there were various circumstances that clearly showed the danger I was in:

"Tunc animis opus, AEnea, tunc pectore firmo."

["Then, AEneas, there is need of courage, of a firm heart."
—AEneid, vi. 261.]

I still insisted upon the truce, too willing they should have the gain of what they had already taken from me, which was not to be despised, without promise of any other ransom. After two or three hours that we had been in this place, and that they had mounted me upon a horse that was not likely to run from them, and committed me to the guard of fifteen or twenty harquebusiers, and dispersed my servants to others, having given order that they should carry us away prisoners several ways, and I being already got some two or three musket-shots from the place,

"Jam prece Pollucis, jam Castoris, implorata,"

["By a prayer addressed now to Pollux, now to Castor."
—Catullus, lxvi. 65.]

behold a sudden and unexpected alteration; I saw the chief return to me with gentler language, making search amongst the troopers for my scattered property, and causing as much as could be recovered to be restored to me, even to my money-box; but the best present they made was my liberty, for the rest did not much concern me at that time. The true cause of so sudden a change, and of this reconsideration, without any apparent impulse, and of so miraculous a repentance, in such a time, in a planned and deliberate enterprise, and become just by usage (for, at the first dash, I plainly confessed to them of what party I was, and whither I was going), truly, I do not yet rightly understand. The most prominent amongst them, who pulled off his vizor and told me his name, repeatedly told me at the time, over and over again, that I owed my deliverance to my countenance, and the liberty and boldness of my speech, that rendered me unworthy of such a misadventure, and should secure me from its repetition. 'Tis possible that the Divine goodness willed to make use of this vain instrument for my preservation; and it, moreover, defended me the next day from other and worse ambushes, of which these my assailants had given me warning. The last of these two gentlemen is yet living himself to tell the story; the first was killed not long ago.

If my face did not answer for me, if men did not read in my eyes and in my voice the innocence of intention, I had not lived so long without quarrels and without giving offence, seeing the indiscreet whatever comes into my head, and to judge so rashly of things. This way may, with reason, appear uncivil, and ill adapted to our way of conversation; but I have never met with any who judged it outrageous or malicious, or that took offence at my liberty, if he had it from my own mouth; words repeated have another kind of sound and sense. Nor do I hate any person; and I am so slow to offend, that I cannot do it, even upon the account of reason itself; and when occasion has required me to sentence criminals, I have rather chosen to fail in point of justice than to do it:

"Ut magis peccari nolim, quam satis animi
ad vindicanda peccata habeam."

["So that I had rather men should not commit faults than that I
should have sufficient courage to condemn them."—-Livy, xxxix. 21.]

Aristotle, 'tis said, was reproached for having been too merciful to a wicked man: "I was indeed," said he, "merciful to the man, but not to his wickedness." Ordinary judgments exasperate themselves to punishment by the horror of the fact: but it cools mine; the horror of the first murder makes me fear a second; and the deformity of the first cruelty makes me abhor all imitation of it.' That may be applied to me, who am but a Squire of Clubs, which was said of Charillus, king of Sparta: "He cannot be good, seeing he is not evil even to the wicked." Or thus—for Plutarch delivers it both these ways, as he does a thousand other things, variously and contradictorily—"He must needs be good, because he is so even to the wicked." Even as in lawful actions I dislike to employ myself when for such as are displeased at it; so, to say the truth, in unlawful things I do not make conscience enough of employing myself when it is for such as are willing.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A man should abhor lawsuits as much as he may
A person's look is but a feeble warranty
Accept all things we are not able to refute
Admiration is the foundation of all philosophy
Advantageous, too, a little to recede from one's right
All I say is by way of discourse, and nothing by way of advice
Apt to promise something less than what I am able to do
As if anything were so common as ignorance
Authority of the number and antiquity of the witnesses
Best test of truth is the multitude of believers in a crowd
Books have not so much served me for instruction as exercise
Books of things that were never either studied or understood
Condemn the opposite affirmation equally
Courageous in death, not because his soul is immortal—Socrates
Death conduces more to birth and augmentation than to loss
Decree that says, "The court understands nothing of the matter"
Deformity of the first cruelty makes me abhor all imitation
Enters lightly into a quarrel is apt to go as lightly out of it
Establish this proposition by authority and huffing
Extend their anger and hatred beyond the dispute in question
Fabric goes forming and piling itself up from hand to hand
Fortune heaped up five or six such-like incidents
Hard to resolve a man's judgment against the common opinions
Haste trips up its own heels, fetters, and stops itself
He cannot be good, seeing he is not evil even to the wicked
He who stops not the start will never be able to stop the course
"How many things," said he, "I do not desire!"
How much easier is it not to enter in than it is to get out
I am a little tenderly distrustful of things that I wish
I am no longer in condition for any great change
I am not to be cuffed into belief
I am plain and heavy, and stick to the solid and the probable
I do not judge opinions by years
I ever justly feared to raise my head too high
I would as willingly be lucky as wise
If I stand in need of anger and inflammation, I borrow it
If they hear no noise, they think men sleep
Impose them upon me as infallible
Inconveniences that moderation brings (in civil war)
Lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself
Let not us seek illusions from without and unknown
"Little learning is needed to form a sound mind."—Seneca
Long toleration begets habit; habit, consent and imitation
Men are not always to rely upon the personal confessions
Merciful to the man, but not to his wickedness—Aristotle
Miracles and strange events have concealed themselves from me
My humour is no friend to tumult
Nosegay of foreign flowers, having furnished nothing of my own
Not believe from one, I should not believe from a hundred
Nothing is so supple and erratic as our understanding
Number of fools so much exceeds the wise
Opinions we have are taken on authority and trust
Others adore all of their own side
Pitiful ways and expedients to the jugglers of the law
Prepare ourselves against the preparations of death
Profession of knowledge and their immeasurable self-conceit
Quiet repose and a profound sleep without dreams
Reasons often anticipate the effect
Refusin to justify, excuse, or explain myself
Remotest witness knows more about it than those who were nearest
Restoring what has been lent us, wit usury and accession

Richer than we think we are; but we are taught to borrow
Right of command appertains to the beautiful-Aristotle
Rude and quarrelsome flatly to deny a stated fact
Suffer my judgment to be made captive by prepossession
Swell and puff up their souls, and their natural way of speaking
Taught to be afraid of professing our ignorance
The last informed is better persuaded than the first
The mind grows costive and thick in growing old
The particular error first makes the public error
Their souls seek repose in agitation
They gently name them, so they patiently endure them (diseases)
Those oppressed with sorrow sometimes surprised by a smile
Threats of the day of judgment
Tis better to lean towards doubt than assurance—Augustine
Tis no matter; it may be of use to some others
To forbear doing is often as generous as to do
To kill men, a clear and strong light is required
Too contemptible to be punished
True liberty is to be able to do what a man will with himself
Vast distinction betwixt devotion and conscience
We have naturally a fear of pain, but not of death
What did I say? that I have? no, Chremes, I had
Who discern no riches but in pomp and show
Whoever will be cured of ignorance must confess it
Would have every one in his party blind or a blockhead
Wrong the just side when they go about to assist it with fraud
Yet at least for ambition's sake, let us reject ambition

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