ESSAYS OF

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

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Engraved by C.E. Wagstaff.

MONTAIGNE.

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CHAPTER XXIV——OF PEDANTRY

I was often, when a boy, wonderfully concerned to see, in the Italian farces, a pedant always brought in for the fool of the play, and that the title of Magister was in no greater reverence amongst us: for being delivered up to their tuition, what could I do less than be jealous of their honour and reputation? I sought indeed to excuse them by the natural incompatibility betwixt the vulgar sort and men of a finer thread, both in judgment and knowledge, forasmuch as they go a quite contrary way to one another: but in this, the thing I most stumbled at was, that the finest gentlemen were those who most despised them; witness our famous poet Du Bellay—

"Mais je hay par sur tout un scavoir pedantesque."

["Of all things I hate pedantic learning."—Du Bellay]

And 'twas so in former times; for Plutarch says that Greek and Scholar were terms of reproach and contempt amongst the Romans. But since, with the better experience of age, I find they had very great reason so to do, and that—

"Magis magnos clericos non sunt magis magnos sapientes."

["The greatest clerks are not the wisest men." A proverb given in Rabelais' Gargantua, i. 39.]

But whence it should come to pass, that a mind enriched with the knowledge of so many things should not become more quick and sprightly, and that a gross and vulgar understanding should lodge within it, without correcting and improving itself, all the discourses and judgments of the greatest minds the world ever had, I am yet to seek. To admit so many foreign conceptions, so great, and so high fancies, it is necessary (as a young lady, one of the greatest princesses of the kingdom, said to me once, speaking of a certain person) that a man's own brain must be crowded and squeezed together into a less compass, to make room for the others; I should be apt to conclude, that as plants are suffocated and drowned with too much nourishment, and lamps with too much oil, so with too much study and matter is the active part of the understanding which, being embarrassed, and confounded with a great diversity of things, loses the force and power to disengage itself, and by the pressure of this weight, is bowed, subjected, and doubled up. But it is quite otherwise; for our soul stretches and dilates itself proportionably as it fills; and in the examples of elder times, we see, quite contrary, men very proper for public business, great captains, and great statesmen very learned withal.

And, as to the philosophers, a sort of men remote from all public affairs, they have been sometimes also despised by the comic liberty of their times; their opinions and manners making them appear, to men of another sort, ridiculous. Would you make them judges of a lawsuit, of

the actions of men? they are ready to take it upon them, and straight begin to examine if there be life, if there be motion, if man be any other than an ox; what it is to do and to suffer? what animals law and justice are? Do they speak of the magistrates, or to him, 'tis with a rude, irreverent, and indecent liberty. Do they hear their prince, or a king commended? they make no more of him, than of a shepherd, goatherd, or neatherd: a lazy Coridon, occupied in milking and shearing his herds and flocks, but more rudely and harshly than the herd or shepherd himself. Do you repute any man the greater for being lord of two thousand acres of land? they laugh at such a pitiful pittance, as laying claim themselves to the whole world for their possession. Do you boast of your nobility, as being descended from seven rich successive ancestors? they look upon you with an eye of contempt, as men who have not a right idea of the universal image of nature, and that do not consider how many predecessors every one of us has had, rich, poor, kings, slaves, Greeks, and barbarians; and though you were the fiftieth descendant from Hercules, they look upon it as a great vanity, so highly to value this, which is only a gift of fortune. And 'twas so the vulgar sort contemned them, as men ignorant of the most elementary and ordinary things; as presumptuous and insolent.

But this Platonic picture is far different from that these pedants are presented by. Those were envied for raising themselves above the common sort, for despising the ordinary actions and offices of life, for having assumed a particular and inimitable way of living, and for using a certain method of high-flight and obsolete language, quite different from the ordinary way of speaking: but these are contemned as being as much below the usual form, as incapable of public employment, as leading a life and conforming themselves to the mean and vile manners of the vulgar:

> "Odi ignava opera, philosopha sententia."

> ["I hate men who jabber about philosophy, but do nothing."
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> —Pacuvius, ap Gellium, xiii. 8.]

For what concerns the philosophers, as I have said, if they were in science, they were yet much greater in action. And, as it is said of the geometrician of Syracuse,—[Archimedes.]—who having been disturbed from his contemplation, to put some of his skill in practice for the defence of his country, that he suddenly set on foot dreadful and prodigious engines, that wrought effects beyond all human expectation; himself, notwithstanding, disdaining all his handiwork, and thinking in this he had played the mere mechanic, and violated the dignity of his art, of which these performances of his he accounted but trivial experiments and playthings so they, whenever they have been put upon the proof of action, have been seen to fly to so high a pitch, as made it very well appear, their souls were marvellously elevated, and enriched by the knowledge of things. But some of them, seeing the reins of government in the hands of incapable men, have avoided all management of political affairs; and he who demanded of Crates, how long it was necessary to philosophise, received this answer: "Till our armies are no more commanded by fools." —[Diogenes Laertius, vi. 92.]—Heraclitus resigned the royalty to

his brother; and, to the Ephesians, who reproached him that he spent his time in playing with children before the temple: "Is it not better," said he, "to do so, than to sit at the helm of affairs in your company?" Others having their imagination advanced above the world and fortune, have looked upon the tribunals of justice, and even the thrones of kings, as paltry and contemptible; insomuch, that Empedocles refused the royalty that the Agrigentines offered to him. Thales, once inveighing in discourse against the pains and care men put themselves to become rich, was answered by one in the company, that he did like the fox, who found fault with what he could not obtain. Whereupon, he had a mind, for the jest's sake, to show them to the contrary; and having, for this occasion, made a muster of all his wits, wholly to employ them in the service of profit and gain, he set a traffic on foot, which in one year brought him in so great riches, that the most experienced in that trade could hardly in their whole lives, with all their industry, have raked so much together.—[Diogenes Laertius, Life of Thales, i. 26; Cicero, De Divin., i. 49.]—That which Aristotle reports of some who called both him and Anaxagoras, and others of their profession, wise but not prudent, in not applying their study to more profitable things—though I do not well digest this verbal distinction—that will not, however, serve to excuse my pedants, for to see the low and necessitous fortune wherewith they are content, we have rather reason to pronounce that they are neither wise nor prudent.

But letting this first reason alone, I think it better to say, that this evil proceeds from their applying themselves the wrong way to the study of the sciences; and that, after the manner we are instructed, it is no wonder if neither the scholars nor the masters become, though more learned, ever the wiser, or more able. In plain truth, the cares and expense our parents are at in our education, point at nothing, but to furnish our heads with knowledge; but not a word of judgment and virtue. Cry out, of one that passes by, to the people: "O, what a learned man!" and of another, "O, what a good man!"—[Translated from Seneca, Ep., 88.]—they will not fail to turn their eyes, and address their respect to the former. There should then be a third crier, "O, the blockheads!" Men are apt presently to inquire, does such a one understand Greek or Latin? Is he a poet? or does he write in prose? But whether he be grown better or more discreet, which are qualities of principal concern, these are never thought of. We should rather examine, who is better learned, than who is more learned.

We only labour to stuff the memory, and leave the conscience and the understanding unfurnished and void. Like birds who fly abroad to forage for grain, and bring it home in the beak, without tasting it themselves, to feed their young; so our pedants go picking knowledge here and there, out of books, and hold it at the tongue's end, only to spit it out and distribute it abroad. And here I cannot but smile to think how I have paid myself in showing the foppery of this kind of learning, who myself am so manifest an example; for, do I not the same thing throughout almost this whole composition? I go here and there, culling out of several books the sentences that best please me, not to keep them (for I have no memory to retain them in), but to transplant them into this; where, to say the truth, they are no more mine than in their first places. We are, I conceive, knowing only in present knowledge, and not at all in what is past, or more than is that which is to come. But the worst on't is, their scholars and pupils are no better nourished by this kind of inspiration; and it makes no deeper impression upon them, but passes from hand to hand, only to make a show to be tolerable company, and to tell pretty stories, like

a counterfeit coin in counters, of no other use or value, but to reckon with, or to set up at cards:

"Apud alios loqui didicerunt non ipsi secum."

["They have learned to speak from others, not from themselves."

—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes, v. 36.]

"Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum."

["Speaking is not so necessary as governing."—Seneca, Ep., 108.]

Nature, to shew that there is nothing barbarous where she has the sole conduct, oftentimes, in nations where art has the least to do, causes productions of wit, such as may rival the greatest effect of art whatever. In relation to what I am now speaking of, the Gascon proverb, derived from a cornpipe, is very quaint and subtle:

"Bouha prou bouha, mas a remuda lous dits quem."

["You may blow till your eyes start out; but if once you offer to

stir your fingers, it is all over."]

We can say, Cicero says thus; these were the manners of Plato; these are the very words of Aristotle: but what do we say ourselves? What do we judge? A parrot would say as much as that.

And this puts me in mind of that rich gentleman of Rome,—[Calvisius Sabinus. Seneca, Ep., 27.]—who had been solicitous, with very great expense, to procure men that were excellent in all sorts of science, whom he had always attending his person, to the end, that when amongst his friends any occasion fell out of speaking of any subject whatsoever, they might supply his place, and be ready to prompt him, one with a sentence of Seneca, another with a verse of Homer, and so forth, every one according to his talent; and he fancied this knowledge to be his own, because it was in the heads of those who lived upon his bounty; as they also do, whose learning consists in having noble libraries. I know one, who, when I question him what he knows, he presently calls for a book to shew me, and dares not venture to tell me so much, as

that he has piles in his posteriors, till first he has consulted his dictionary, what piles and what posteriors are.

We take other men's knowledge and opinions upon trust; which is an idle and superficial learning. We must make it our own. We are in this very like him, who having need of fire, went to a neighbour's house to fetch it, and finding a very good one there, sat down to warm himself without remembering to carry any with him home.—[Plutarch, How a Man should Listen.]—What good does it do us to have the stomach full of meat, if it do not digest, if it be not incorporated with us, if it does not nourish and support us? Can we imagine that Lucullus, whom letters, without any manner of experience, made so great a captain, learned to be so after this perfunctory manner?—[Cicero, Acad., ii. I.]—We suffer ourselves to lean and rely so strongly upon the arm of another, that we destroy our own strength and vigour. Would I fortify myself against the fear of death, it must be at the expense of Seneca: would I extract consolation for myself or my friend, I borrow it from Cicero. I might have found it in myself, had I been trained to make use of my own reason. I do not like this relative and mendicant understanding; for though we could become learned by other men's learning, a man can never be wise but by his own wisdom:

["I hate the wise man, who in his own concern is not wise."

—Euripides, ap. Cicero, Ep. Fam., xiii. 15.]

Whence Ennius:

"Nequidquam sapere sapientem, qui ipse sibi prodesse non quiret."

["That wise man knows nothing, who cannot profit himself by his

wisdom."—Cicero, De Offic., iii. 15.]

"Si cupidus, si

Vanus, et Euganea quantumvis mollior agna."

["If he be grasping, or a boaster, and something softer than an

Euganean lamb."—Juvenal, Sat., viii. 14.]

"Non enim paranda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est."

["For wisdom is not only to be acquired, but to be utilised."

—Cicero, De Finib., i. I.]

Dionysius—[It was not Dionysius, but Diogenes the cynic. Diogenes Laertius, vi. 27.]—laughed at the grammarians, who set themselves to inquire into the miseries of Ulysses, and were ignorant of their own; at musicians, who were so exact in tuning their instruments, and never tuned their manners; at orators, who made it a study to declare what is justice, but never took care to do it. If the mind be not better disposed, if the judgment be no better settled, I had much rather my scholar had spent his time at tennis, for, at least, his body would by that means be in better exercise and breath. Do but observe him when he comes back from school, after fifteen or sixteen years that he has been there; there is nothing so unfit for employment; all you shall find he has got, is, that his Latin and Greek have only made him a greater coxcomb than when he went from home. He should bring back his soul replete with good literature, and he brings it only swelled and puffed up with vain and empty shreds and patches of learning; and has really nothing more in him than he had before.—[Plato's Dialogues: Protagoras.]

These pedants of ours, as Plato says of the Sophists, their cousin-germans, are, of all men, they who most pretend to be useful to mankind, and who alone, of all men, not only do not better and improve that which is committed to them, as a carpenter or a mason would do, but make them much worse, and make us pay them for making them worse, to boot. If the rule which Protagoras proposed to his pupils were followed —either that they should give him his own demand, or make affidavit upon oath in the temple how much they valued the profit they had received under his tuition, and satisfy him accordingly—my pedagogues would find themselves sorely gravelled, if they were to be judged by the affidavits of my experience. My Perigordin patois very pleasantly calls these pretenders to learning, 'lettre-ferits', as a man should say, letter-marked—men on whom letters have been stamped by the blow of a mallet. And, in truth, for the most part, they appear to be deprived even of common sense; for you see the husbandman and the cobbler go simply and fairly about their business, speaking only of what they know and understand; whereas these fellows, to make parade and to get opinion, mustering this ridiculous knowledge of theirs, that floats on the superficies of the brain, are perpetually perplexing, and entangling themselves in their own nonsense. They speak fine words sometimes, 'tis true, but let somebody that is wiser apply them. They are wonderfully well acquainted with Galen, but not at all with the disease of the patient; they have already deafened you with a long ribble-row of laws, but understand nothing of the case in hand; they have the theory of all things, let who will put it in practice.

I have sat by, when a friend of mine, in my own house, for sport-sake, has with one of these fellows counterfeited a jargon of Galimatias, patched up of phrases without head or tail, saving that he interlarded here and there some terms that had relation to their dispute, and held the coxcomb in play a whole afternoon together, who all the while thought he had answered pertinently and learnedly to all his objections; and yet this was a man of letters, and reputation, and a fine gentleman of the long robe:

"Vos, O patricius sanguis, quos vivere par est

Occipiti caeco, posticae occurrite sannae."

["O you, of patrician blood, to whom it is permitted to live

with(out) eyes in the back of your head, beware of grimaces at you

from behind."—Persius, Sat., i. 61.]

Whosoever shall narrowly pry into and thoroughly sift this sort of people, wherewith the world is so pestered, will, as I have done, find, that for the most part, they neither understand others, nor themselves; and that their memories are full enough, but the judgment totally void and empty; some excepted, whose own nature has of itself formed them into better fashion. As I have observed, for example, in Adrian Turnebus, who having never made other profession than that of mere learning only, and in that, in my opinion, he was the greatest man that has been these thousand years, had nothing at all in him of the pedant, but the wearing of his gown, and a little exterior fashion, that could not be civilised to courtier ways, which in themselves are nothing. I hate our people, who can worse endure an ill-contrived robe than an ill-contrived mind, and take their measure by the leg a man makes, by his behaviour, and so much as the very fashion of his boots, what kind of man he is. For within there was not a more polished soul upon earth. I have often purposely put him upon arguments quite wide of his profession, wherein I found he had so clear an insight, so quick an apprehension, so solid a judgment, that a man would have thought he had never practised any other thing but arms, and been all his life employed in affairs of State. These are great and vigorous natures,

"Queis arte benigna

Et meliore luto finxit praecordia Titan."

["Whom benign Titan (Prometheus) has framed of better clay."

—Juvenal, xiv. 34.]

that can keep themselves upright in despite of a pedantic education. But it is not enough that our education does not spoil us; it must, moreover, alter us for the better.

Some of our Parliaments, when they are to admit officers, examine only their learning; to which some of the others also add the trial of understanding, by asking their judgment of some case in law; of these the latter, methinks, proceed with the better method; for although both are necessary, and that it is very requisite they should be defective in neither, yet, in truth,

knowledge is not so absolutely necessary as judgment; the last may make shift without the other, but the other never without this. For as the Greek verse says—

["To what use serves learning, if understanding be away."

—Apud Stobaeus, tit. iii., p. 37 (1609).]

Would to God that, for the good of our judicature, these societies were as well furnished with understanding and conscience as they are with knowledge.

"Non vita, sed scolae discimus."

["We do not study for life, but only for the school."

—Seneca, Ep., 106.]

We are not to tie learning to the soul, but to work and incorporate them together: not to tincture it only, but to give it a thorough and perfect dye; which, if it will not take colour, and meliorate its imperfect state, it were without question better to let it alone. 'Tis a dangerous weapon, that will hinder and wound its master, if put into an awkward and unskilful hand:

"Ut fuerit melius non didicisse."

["So that it were better not to have learned."

—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 4.]

And this, peradventure, is the reason why neither we nor theology require much learning in women; and that Francis, Duke of Brittany, son of John V., one talking with him about his marriage with Isabella the daughter of Scotland, and adding that she was homely bred, and without any manner of learning, made answer, that he liked her the better, and that a woman was wise enough, if she could distinguish her husband's shirt from his doublet. So that it is no so great wonder, as they make of it, that our ancestors had letters in no greater esteem, and that even to this day they are but rarely met with in the principal councils of princes; and if the end and design of acquiring riches, which is the only thing we propose to ourselves, by the means of law, physic, pedantry, and even divinity itself, did not uphold and keep them in credit, you would, with doubt, see them in as pitiful a condition as ever. And what loss would this be, if they neither instruct us to think well nor to do well?

"Postquam docti prodierunt, boni desunt."

[Seneca, Ep., 95. "Since the 'savans' have made their appearance

among us, the good people have become eclipsed."

—Rousseau, Discours sur les Lettres.]

All other knowledge is hurtful to him who has not the science of goodness.

But the reason I glanced upon but now, may it not also hence proceed, that, our studies in France having almost no other aim but profit, except as to those who, by nature born to offices and employments rather of glory than gain, addict themselves to letters, if at all, only for so short a time (being taken from their studies before they can come to have any taste of them, to a profession that has nothing to do with books), there ordinarily remain no others to apply themselves wholly to learning, but people of mean condition, who in that only seek the means to live; and by such people, whose souls are, both by nature and by domestic education and example, of the basest alloy the fruits of knowledge are immaturely gathered and ill digested, and delivered to their recipients quite another thing. For it is not for knowledge to enlighten a soul that is dark of itself, nor to make a blind man see. Her business is not to find a man's eyes, but to guide, govern, and direct them, provided he have sound feet and straight legs to go upon. Knowledge is an excellent drug, but no drug has virtue enough to preserve itself from corruption and decay, if the vessel be tainted and impure wherein it is put to keep. Such a one may have a sight clear enough who looks asquint, and consequently sees what is good, but does not follow it, and sees knowledge, but makes no use of it. Plato's principal institution in his Republic is to fit his citizens with employments suitable to their nature. Nature can do all, and does all. Cripples are very unfit for exercises of the body, and lame souls for exercises of the mind. Degenerate and vulgar souls are unworthy of philosophy. If we see a shoemaker with his shoes out at the toes, we say, 'tis no wonder; for, commonly, none go worse shod than they. In like manner, experience often presents us a physician worse physicked, a divine less reformed, and (constantly) a scholar of less sufficiency, than other people.

Old Aristo of Chios had reason to say that philosophers did their auditors harm, forasmuch as most of the souls of those that heard them were not capable of deriving benefit from instruction, which, if not applied to good, would certainly be applied to ill:

["They proceeded effeminate debauchees from the school of

Aristippus, cynics from that of Zeno."

—Cicero, De Natura Deor., iii., 31.]

In that excellent institution that Xenophon attributes to the Persians, we find that they taught their children virtue, as other nations do letters. Plato tells us that the eldest son in their royal succession was thus brought up; after his birth he was delivered, not to women, but to eunuchs of the greatest authority about their kings for their virtue, whose charge it was to keep his body healthful and in good plight; and after he came to seven years of age, to teach him to ride and

to go a-hunting. When he arrived at fourteen he was transferred into the hands of four, the wisest, the most just, the most temperate, and most valiant of the nation; of whom the first was to instruct him in religion, the second to be always upright and sincere, the third to conquer his appetites and desires, and the fourth to despise all danger.

It is a thing worthy of very great consideration, that in that excellent, and, in truth, for its perfection, prodigious form of civil regimen set down by Lycurgus, though so solicitous of the education of children, as a thing of the greatest concern, and even in the very seat of the Muses, he should make so little mention of learning; as if that generous youth, disdaining all other subjection but that of virtue, ought to be supplied, instead of tutors to read to them arts and sciences, with such masters as should only instruct them in valour, prudence, and justice; an example that Plato has followed in his laws. The manner of their discipline was to propound to them questions in judgment upon men and their actions; and if they commended or condemned this or that person or fact, they were to give a reason for so doing; by which means they at once sharpened their understanding, and learned what was right. Astyages, in Xenophon, asks Cyrus to give an account of his last lesson; and thus it was, "A great boy in our school, having a little short cassock, by force took a longer from another that was not so tall as he, and gave him his own in exchange: whereupon I, being appointed judge of the controversy, gave judgment, that I thought it best each should keep the coat he had, for that they both of them were better fitted with that of one another than with their own: upon which my master told me, I had done ill, in that I had only considered the fitness of the garments, whereas I ought to have considered the justice of the thing, which required that no one should have anything forcibly taken from him that is his own." And Cyrus adds that he was whipped for his pains, as we are in our villages for forgetting the first aorist of———.

[Cotton's version of this story commences differently, and includes a passage which is not in any of the editions of the original before me:

"Mandane, in Xenophon, asking Cyrus how he would do to learn justice, and the other virtues amongst the Medes, having left all his masters behind him in Persia? He made answer, that he had learned those things long since; that his master had often made him a judge of the differences amongst his schoolfellows, and had one day whipped him for giving a wrong sentence."—W.C.H.]

My pedant must make me a very learned oration, 'in genere demonstrativo', before he can persuade me that his school is like unto that. They knew how to go the readiest way to work; and seeing that science, when most rightly applied and best understood, can do no more but teach us prudence, moral honesty, and resolution, they thought fit, at first hand, to initiate their children with the knowledge of effects, and to instruct them, not by hearsay and rote, but by the experiment of action, in lively forming and moulding them; not only by words and precepts, but chiefly by works and examples; to the end it might not be a knowledge in the mind only, but its complexion and habit: not an acquisition, but a natural possession. One asking to this purpose, Agesilaus, what he thought most proper for boys to learn? "What they ought to do when they come to be men," said he.—[Plutarch, Apothegms of the Lacedamonians. Rousseau adopts the expression in his Diswuys sur tes Lettres.]—It is no wonder, if such an institution produced so admirable effects.

They used to go, it is said, to the other cities of Greece, to inquire out rhetoricians, painters, and musicians; but to Lacedaemon for legislators, magistrates, and generals of armies; at Athens they learned to speak well: here to do well; there to disengage themselves from a sophistical argument, and to unravel the imposture of captious syllogisms; here to evade the baits and allurements of pleasure, and with a noble courage and resolution to conquer the menaces of fortune and death; those cudgelled their brains about words, these made it their business to inquire into things; there was an eternal babble of the tongue, here a continual exercise of the soul. And therefore it is nothing strange if, when Antipater demanded of them fifty children for hostages, they made answer, quite contrary to what we should do, that they would rather give him twice as many full-grown men, so much did they value the loss of their country's education. When Agesilaus courted Xenophon to send his children to Sparta to be bred, "it is not," said he, "there to learn logic or rhetoric, but to be instructed in the noblest of all sciences, namely, the science to obey and to command."—[Plutarch, Life of Agesilaus, c. 7.]

It is very pleasant to see Socrates, after his manner, rallying Hippias, —[Plato's Dialogues: Hippias Major.]—who recounts to him what a world of money he has got, especially in certain little villages of Sicily, by teaching school, and that he made never a penny at Sparta: "What a sottish and stupid people," said Socrates, "are they, without sense or understanding, that make no account either of grammar or poetry, and only busy themselves in studying the genealogies and successions of their kings, the foundations, rises, and declensions of states, and such tales of a tub!" After which, having made Hippias from one step to another acknowledge the excellency of their form of public administration, and the felicity and virtue of their private life, he leaves him to guess at the conclusion he makes of the inutilities of his pedantic arts.

Examples have demonstrated to us that in military affairs, and all others of the like active nature, the study of sciences more softens and untempers the courages of men than it in any way fortifies and excites them. The most potent empire that at this day appears to be in the whole world is that of the Turks, a people equally inured to the estimation of arms and the contempt of letters. I find Rome was more valiant before she grew so learned. The most warlike nations at this time in being are the most rude and ignorant: the Scythians, the Parthians, Tamerlane, serve for sufficient proof of this. When the Goths overran Greece, the only thing

that preserved all the libraries from the fire was, that some one possessed them with an opinion that they were to leave this kind of furniture entire to the enemy, as being most proper to divert them from the exercise of arms, and to fix them to a lazy and sedentary life. When our King Charles VIII., almost without striking a blow, saw himself possessed of the kingdom of Naples and a considerable part of Tuscany, the nobles about him attributed this unexpected facility of conquest to this, that the princes and nobles of Italy, more studied to render themselves ingenious and learned, than vigorous and warlike.

CHAPTER XIII——OF EXPERIENCE

There is no desire more natural than that of knowledge. We try all ways that can lead us to it; where reason is wanting, we therein employ experience,

"Per varios usus artem experientia fecit,

Exemplo monstrante viam,"

["By various trials experience created art, example shewing the

way."—Manilius, i. 59.]

which is a means much more weak and cheap; but truth is so great a thing that we ought not to disdain any mediation that will guide us to it. Reason has so many forms that we know not to which to take; experience has no fewer; the consequence we would draw from the comparison of events is unsure, by reason they are always unlike. There is no quality so universal in this image of things as diversity and variety. Both the Greeks and the Latins and we, for the most express example of similitude, employ that of eggs; and yet there have been men, particularly one at Delphos, who could distinguish marks of difference amongst eggs so well that he never mistook one for another, and having many hens, could tell which had laid it.

Dissimilitude intrudes itself of itself in our works; no art can arrive at perfect similitude: neither Perrozet nor any other can so carefully polish and blanch the backs of his cards that some gamesters will not distinguish them by seeing them only shuffled by another. Resemblance does not so much make one as difference makes another. Nature has obliged herself to make nothing other that was not unlike.

And yet I am not much pleased with his opinion, who thought by the multitude of laws to curb the authority of judges in cutting out for them their several parcels; he was not aware that there is as much liberty and latitude in the interpretation of laws as in their form; and they but

fool themselves, who think to lessen and stop our disputes by recalling us to the express words of the Bible: forasmuch as our mind does not find the field less spacious wherein to controvert the sense of another than to deliver his own; and as if there were less animosity and tartness in commentary than in invention. We see how much he was mistaken, for we have more laws in France than all the rest of the world put together, and more than would be necessary for the government of all the worlds of Epicurus:

"Ut olim flagitiis, sic nunc legibus, laboramus."

["As we were formerly by crimes, so we are now overburdened by laws."—Tacitus, Annal., iii. 25.]

and yet we have left so much to the opinions and decisions of our judges that there never was so full a liberty or so full a license. What have our legislators gained by culling out a hundred thousand particular cases, and by applying to these a hundred thousand laws? This number holds no manner of proportion with the infinite diversity of human actions; the multiplication of our inventions will never arrive at the variety of examples; add to these a hundred times as many more, it will still not happen that, of events to come, there shall one be found that, in this vast number of millions of events so chosen and recorded, shall so tally with any other one, and be so exactly coupled and matched with it that there will not remain some circumstance and diversity which will require a diverse judgment. There is little relation betwixt our actions, which are in perpetual mutation, and fixed and immutable laws; the most to be desired are those that are the most rare, the most simple and general; and I am even of opinion that we had better have none at all than to have them in so prodigious a number as we have.

Nature always gives them better and happier than those we make ourselves; witness the picture of the Golden Age of the Poets and the state wherein we see nations live who have no other. Some there are, who for their only judge take the first passer-by that travels along their mountains, to determine their cause; and others who, on their market day, choose out some one amongst them upon the spot to decide their controversies. What danger would there be that the wisest amongst us should so determine ours, according to occurrences and at sight, without obligation of example and consequence? For every foot its own shoe. King Ferdinand, sending colonies to the Indies, wisely provided that they should not carry along with them any students of jurisprudence, for fear lest suits should get footing in that new world, as being a science in its own nature, breeder of altercation and division; judging with Plato, "that lawyers and physicians are bad institutions of a country."

Whence does it come to pass that our common language, so easy for all other uses, becomes obscure and unintelligible in wills and contracts? and that he who so clearly expresses himself in whatever else he speaks or writes, cannot find in these any way of declaring himself that does not fall into doubt and contradiction? if it be not that the princes of that art, applying themselves with a peculiar attention to cull out portentous words and to contrive artificial

sentences, have so weighed every syllable, and so thoroughly sifted every sort of quirking connection that they are now confounded and entangled in the infinity of figures and minute divisions, and can no more fall within any rule or prescription, nor any certain intelligence:

"Confusum est, quidquid usque in pulverem sectum est."

["Whatever is beaten into powder is undistinguishable (confused)."

—Seneca, Ep., 89.]

As you see children trying to bring a mass of quicksilver to a certain number of parts, the more they press and work it and endeavour to reduce it to their own will, the more they irritate the liberty of this generous metal; it evades their endeavour and sprinkles itself into so many separate bodies as frustrate all reckoning; so is it here, for in subdividing these subtilties we teach men to increase their doubts; they put us into a way of extending and diversifying difficulties, and lengthen and disperse them. In sowing and retailing questions they make the world fructify and increase in uncertainties and disputes, as the earth is made fertile by being crumbled and dug deep.

"Difficultatem facit doctrina."

["Learning (Doctrine) begets difficulty."

—Quintilian, Insat. Orat., x. 3.]

We doubted of Ulpian, and are still now more perplexed with Bartolus and Baldus. We should efface the trace of this innumerable diversity of opinions; not adorn ourselves with it, and fill posterity with crotchets. I know not what to say to it; but experience makes it manifest, that so many interpretations dissipate truth and break it. Aristotle wrote to be understood; if he could not do this, much less will another that is not so good at it; and a third than he, who expressed his own thoughts. We open the matter, and spill it in pouring out: of one subject we make a thousand, and in multiplying and subdividing them, fall again into the infinity of atoms of Epicurus. Never did two men make the same judgment of the same thing; and 'tis impossible to find two opinions exactly alike, not only in several men, but in the same man, at diverse hours. I often find matter of doubt in things of which the commentary has disdained to take notice; I am most apt to stumble in an even country, like some horses that I have known, that make most trips in the smoothest way.

Who will not say that glosses augment doubts and ignorance, since there's no book to be found, either human or divine, which the world busies itself about, whereof the difficulties are cleared by interpretation. The hundredth commentator passes it on to the next, still more knotty and perplexed than he found it. When were we ever agreed amongst ourselves: "This

book has enough; there is now no more to be said about it"? This is most apparent in the law; we give the authority of law to infinite doctors, infinite decrees, and as many interpretations; yet do we find any end of the need of interpretating? is there, for all that, any progress or advancement towards peace, or do we stand in need of any fewer advocates and judges than when this great mass of law was yet in its first infancy? On the contrary, we darken and bury intelligence; we can no longer discover it, but at the mercy of so many fences and barriers. Men do not know the natural disease of the mind; it does nothing but ferret and inquire, and is eternally wheeling, juggling, and perplexing itself like silkworms, and then suffocates itself in its work; "Mus in pice."—["A mouse in a pitch barrel."]—It thinks it discovers at a great distance, I know not what glimpses of light and imaginary truth: but whilst running to it, so many difficulties, hindrances, and new inquisitions cross it, that it loses its way, and is made drunk with the motion: not much unlike AEsop's dogs, that seeing something like a dead body floating in the sea, and not being able to approach it, set to work to drink the water and lay the passage dry, and so choked themselves. To which what one Crates' said of the writings of Heraclitus falls pat enough, "that they required a reader who could swim well," so that the depth and weight of his learning might not overwhelm and stifle him. 'Tis nothing but particular weakness that makes us content with what others or ourselves have found out in this chase after knowledge: one of better understanding will not rest so content; there is always room for one to follow, nay, even for ourselves; and another road; there is no end of our inquisitions; our end is in the other world. 'Tis a sign either that the mind has grown shortsighted when it is satisfied, or that it has got weary. No generous mind can stop in itself; it will still tend further and beyond its power; it has sallies beyond its effects; if it do not advance and press forward, and retire, and rush and wheel about, 'tis but half alive; its pursuits are without bound or method; its aliment is admiration, the chase, ambiguity, which Apollo sufficiently declared in always speaking to us in a double, obscure, and oblique sense: not feeding, but amusing and puzzling us. 'Tis an irregular and perpetual motion, without model and without aim; its inventions heat, pursue, and interproduce one another:

Estienne de la Boetie; thus translated by Cotton:

"So in a running stream one wave we see

After another roll incessantly,

And as they glide, each does successively

Pursue the other, each the other fly

By this that's evermore pushed on, and this

By that continually preceded is:

The water still does into water swill,

Still the same brook, but different water still."

There is more ado to interpret interpretations than to interpret things, and more books upon books than upon any other subject; we do nothing but comment upon one another. Every place swarms with commentaries; of authors there is great scarcity. Is it not the principal and most reputed knowledge of our later ages to understand the learned? Is it not the common and final end of all studies? Our opinions are grafted upon one another; the first serves as a stock to the second, the second to the third, and so forth; thus step by step we climb the ladder; whence it comes to pass that he who is mounted highest has often more honour than merit, for he is got up but an inch upon the shoulders of the last, but one.

How often, and, peradventure, how foolishly, have I extended my book to make it speak of itself; foolishly, if for no other reason but this, that it should remind me of what I say of others who do the same: that the frequent amorous glances they cast upon their work witness that their hearts pant with self-love, and that even the disdainful severity wherewith they scourge them are but the dandlings and caressings of maternal love; as Aristotle, whose valuing and undervaluing himself often spring from the same air of arrogance. My own excuse is, that I ought in this to have more liberty than others, forasmuch as I write specifically of myself and of my writings, as I do of my other actions; that my theme turns upon itself; but I know not whether others will accept this excuse.

I observed in Germany that Luther has left as many divisions and disputes about the doubt of his opinions, and more, than he himself raised upon the Holy Scriptures. Our contest is verbal: I ask what nature is, what pleasure, circle, and substitution are? the question is about words, and is answered accordingly. A stone is a body; but if a man should further urge: "And what is a body?"—"Substance"; "And what is substance?" and so on, he would drive the respondent to the end of his Calepin.

[Calepin (Ambrogio da Calepio), a famous lexicographer of the

fifteenth century. His Polyglot Dictionary became so famous, that

Calepin became a common appellation for a lexicon]

We exchange one word for another, and often for one less understood. I better know what man is than I know what Animal is, or Mortal, or Rational. To satisfy one doubt, they give me three; 'tis the Hydra's head. Socrates asked Menon, "What virtue was." "There is," says Menon, "the virtue of a man and of a woman, of a magistrate and of a private person, of an old man and of a child." "Very fine," cried Socrates, "we were in quest of one virtue, and thou hast brought us a whole swarm." We put one question, and they return us a whole hive. As no event, no face, entirely resembles another, so do they not entirely differ: an ingenious mixture of nature. If our faces were not alike, we could not distinguish man from beast; if they were not unlike, we could not distinguish one man from another; all things hold by some similitude; every example halts, and the relation which is drawn from experience is always faulty and imperfect. Comparisons are ever-coupled at one end or other: so do the laws serve, and are fitted to every one of our affairs, by some wrested, biassed, and forced interpretation.

Since the ethic laws, that concern the particular duty of every one in himself, are so hard to be framed, as we see they are, 'tis no wonder if those which govern so many particulars are much more so. Do but consider the form of this justice that governs us; 'tis a true testimony of human weakness, so full is it of error and contradiction. What we find to be favour and severity in justice—and we find so much of them both, that I know not whether the medium is as often met with are sickly and unjust members of the very body and essence of justice. Some country people have just brought me news in great haste, that they presently left in a forest of mine a man with a hundred wounds upon him, who was yet breathing, and begged of them water for pity's sake, and help to carry him to some place of relief; they tell me they durst not go near him, but have run away, lest the officers of justice should catch them there; and as happens to those who are found near a murdered person, they should be called in question about this accident, to their utter ruin, having neither money nor friends to defend their innocence. What could I have said to these people? 'Tis certain that this office of humanity would have brought them into trouble.

How many innocent people have we known that have been punished, and this without the judge's fault; and how many that have not arrived at our knowledge? This happened in my time: certain men were condemned to die for a murder committed; their sentence, if not pronounced, at least determined and concluded on. The judges, just in the nick, are informed by the officers of an inferior court hard by, that they have some men in custody, who have directly confessed the murder, and made an indubitable discovery of all the particulars of the fact. Yet it was gravely deliberated whether or not they ought to suspend the execution of the sentence already passed upon the first accused: they considered the novelty of the example judicially, and the consequence of reversing judgments; that the sentence was passed, and the judges deprived of repentance; and in the result, these poor devils were sacrificed by the forms of justice. Philip, or some other, provided against a like inconvenience after this manner. He had condemned a man in a great fine towards another by an absolute judgment. The truth some time after being discovered, he found that he had passed an unjust sentence. On one side was the reason of the cause; on the other side, the reason of the judicial forms: he in some sort satisfied both, leaving the sentence in the state it was, and out of his own purse recompensing the condemned party. But he had to do with a reparable affair; my men were irreparably hanged. How many condemnations have I seen more criminal than the crimes themselves?

All which makes me remember the ancient opinions, "That 'tis of necessity a man must do wrong by retail who will do right in gross; and injustice in little things, who would come to do justice in great: that human justice is formed after the model of physic, according to which, all that is useful is also just and honest: and of what is held by the Stoics, that Nature herself proceeds contrary to justice in most of her works: and of what is received by the Cyrenaics, that there is nothing just of itself, but that customs and laws make justice: and what the Theodorians held that theft, sacrilege, and all sorts of uncleanness, are just in a sage, if he knows them to be profitable to him." There is no remedy: I am in the same case that Alcibiades was, that I will never, if I can help it, put myself into the hands of a man who may determine as to my head, where my life and honour shall more depend upon the skill and diligence of my attorney than on my own innocence. I would venture myself with such justice as would take

notice of my good deeds, as well as my ill; where I had as much to hope as to fear: indemnity is not sufficient pay to a man who does better than not to do amiss. Our justice presents to us but one hand, and that the left hand, too; let him be who he may, he shall be sure to come off with loss.

In China, of which kingdom the government and arts, without commerce with or knowledge of ours, surpass our examples in several excellent features, and of which the history teaches me how much greater and more various the world is than either the ancients or we have been able to penetrate, the officers deputed by the prince to visit the state of his provinces, as they punish those who behave themselves ill in their charge, so do they liberally reward those who have conducted themselves better than the common sort, and beyond the necessity of their duty; these there present themselves, not only to be approved but to get; not simply to be paid, but to have a present made to them.

No judge, thank God, has ever yet spoken to me in the quality of a judge, upon any account whatever, whether my own or that of a third party, whether criminal or civil; nor no prison has ever received me, not even to walk there. Imagination renders the very outside of a jail displeasing to me; I am so enamoured of liberty, that should I be interdicted the access to some corner of the Indies, I should live a little less at my ease; and whilst I can find earth or air open elsewhere, I shall never lurk in any place where I must hide myself. My God! how ill should I endure the condition wherein I see so many people, nailed to a corner of the kingdom, deprived of the right to enter the principal cities and courts, and the liberty of the public roads, for having quarrelled with our laws. If those under which I live should shake a finger at me by way of menace, I would immediately go seek out others, let them be where they would. All my little prudence in the civil wars wherein we are now engaged is employed that they may not hinder my liberty of going and coming.

Now, the laws keep up their credit, not for being just, but because they are laws; 'tis the mystic foundation of their authority; they have no other, and it well answers their purpose. They are often made by fools, still oftener by men who, out of hatred to equality, fail in equity, but always by men, vain and irresolute authors. There is nothing so much, nor so grossly, nor so ordinarily faulty, as the laws. Whoever obeys them because they are just, does not justly obey them as he ought. Our French laws, by their irregularity and deformity, lend, in some sort, a helping hand to the disorder and corruption that all manifest in their dispensation and execution: the command is so perplexed and inconstant, that it in some sort excuses alike disobedience and defect in the interpretation, the administration and the observation of it. What fruit then soever we may extract from experience, that will little advantage our institution, which we draw from foreign examples, if we make so little profit of that we have of our own, which is more familiar to us, and, doubtless, sufficient to instruct us in that whereof we have need. I study myself more than any other subject; 'tis my metaphysic, my physic:

"Quis deus hanc mundi temperet arte domum:

Qua venit exoriens, qua deficit: unde coactis

Cornibus in plenum menstrua luna redit

Unde salo superant venti, quid flamine captet

Eurus, et in nubes unde perennis aqua;

Sit ventura dies mundi quae subruat arces...."

["What god may govern with skill this dwelling of the world? whence rises the monthly moon, whither wanes she? how is it that her horns are contracted and reopen? whence do winds prevail on the main? what does the east wind court with its blasts? and whence are the clouds perpetually supplied with water? is a day to come which may undermine the world?"—Propertius, iii. 5, 26.]

"Quaerite, quos agitat mundi labor."

["Ask whom the cares of the world trouble"—Lucan, i. 417.]

In this universality, I suffer myself to be ignorantly and negligently led by the general law of the world: I shall know it well enough when I feel it; my learning cannot make it alter its course; it will not change itself for me; 'tis folly to hope it, and a greater folly to concern one's self about it, seeing it is necessarily alike public and common. The goodness and capacity of the governor ought absolutely to discharge us of all care of the government: philosophical inquisitions and contemplations serve for no other use but to increase our curiosity. The philosophers; with great reason, send us back to the rules of nature; but they have nothing to do with so sublime a knowledge; they falsify them, and present us her face painted with too high and too adulterate a complexion, whence spring so many different pictures of so uniform a subject. As she has given us feet to walk with, so has she given us prudence to guide us in life: not so ingenious, robust, and pompous a prudence as that of their invention; but yet one that is easy, quiet, and salutary, and that very well performs what the other promises, in him who has the good luck to know how to employ it sincerely and regularly, that is to say, according to nature. The most simply to commit one's self to nature is to do it most wisely. Oh, what a soft, easy, and wholesome pillow is ignorance and incuriosity, whereon to repose a well-ordered head!

I had rather understand myself well in myself, than in Cicero. Of the experience I have of myself, I find enough to make me wise, if I were but a good scholar: whoever will call to mind

the excess of his past anger, and to what a degree that fever transported him, will see the deformity of this passion better than in Aristotle, and conceive a more just hatred against it; whoever will remember the ills he has undergone, those that have threatened him, and the light occasions that have removed him from one state to another, will by that prepare himself for future changes, and the knowledge of his condition. The life of Caesar has no greater example for us than our own: though popular and of command, 'tis still a life subject to all human accidents. Let us but listen to it; we apply to ourselves all whereof we have principal need; whoever shall call to memory how many and many times he has been mistaken in his own judgment, is he not a great fool if he does not ever after suspect it? When I find myself convinced, by the reason of another, of a false opinion, I do not so much learn what he has said to me that is new and the particular ignorance—that would be no great acquisition—as, in general, I learn my own debility and the treachery of my understanding, whence I extract the reformation of the whole mass. In all my other errors I do the same, and find from this rule great utility to life; I regard not the species and individual as a stone that I have stumbled at; I learn to suspect my steps throughout, and am careful to place them right. To learn that a man has said or done a foolish thing is nothing: a man must learn that he is nothing but a fool, a much more ample, and important instruction. The false steps that my memory has so often made, even then when it was most secure and confident of itself, are not idly thrown away; it vainly swears and assures me I shake my ears; the first opposition that is made to its testimony puts me into suspense, and I durst not rely upon it in anything of moment, nor warrant it in another person's concerns: and were it not that what I do for want of memory, others do more often for want of good faith, I should always, in matter of fact, rather choose to take the truth from another's mouth than from my own. If every one would pry into the effects and circumstances of the passions that sway him, as I have done into those which I am most subject to, he would see them coming, and would a little break their impetuosity and career; they do not always seize us on a sudden; there is threatening and degrees

"Fluctus uti primo coepit cum albescere vento,

Paulatim sese tollit mare, et altius undas

Erigit, inde imo consurgit ad aethera fundo."

["As with the first wind the sea begins to foam, and swells, thence

higher swells, and higher raises the waves, till the ocean rises

from its depths to the sky."—AEneid, vii. 528.]

Judgment holds in me a magisterial seat; at least it carefully endeavours to make it so: it leaves my appetites to take their own course, hatred and friendship, nay, even that I bear to myself, without change or corruption; if it cannot reform the other parts according to its own model, at least it suffers not itself to be corrupted by them, but plays its game apart.

The advice to every one, "to know themselves," should be of important effect, since that god of wisdom and light' caused it to be written on the front of his temple,—[At Delphi]—as comprehending all he had to advise us. Plato says also, that prudence is no other thing than the execution of this ordinance; and Socrates minutely verifies it in Xenophon. The difficulties and obscurity are not discerned in any science but by those who are got into it; for a certain degree of intelligence is required to be able to know that a man knows not, and we must push against a door to know whether it be bolted against us or no: whence this Platonic subtlety springs, that "neither they who know are to enquire, forasmuch as they know; nor they who do not know, forasmuch as to inquire they must know what they inquire of." So in this, "of knowing a man's self," that every man is seen so resolved and satisfied with himself, that every man thinks himself sufficiently intelligent, signifies that every one knows nothing about the matter; as Socrates gives Euthydemus to understand. I, who profess nothing else, therein find so infinite a depth and variety, that all the fruit I have reaped from my learning serves only to make me sensible how much I have to learn. To my weakness, so often confessed, I owe the propension I have to modesty, to the obedience of belief prescribed me, to a constant coldness and moderation of opinions, and a hatred of that troublesome and wrangling arrogance, wholly believing and trusting in itself, the capital enemy of discipline and truth. Do but hear them domineer; the first fopperies they utter, 'tis in the style wherewith men establish religions and laws:

"Nihil est turpius, quam cognitioni et perceptions

assertionem approbationemque praecurrere."

["Nothing is worse than that assertion and decision should precede

knowledge and perception."—Cicero, Acad., i. 13.]

Aristarchus said that anciently there were scarce seven sages to be found in the world, and in his time scarce so many fools: have not we more reason than he to say so in this age of ours? Affirmation and obstinacy are express signs of want of wit. This fellow may have knocked his nose against the ground a hundred times in a day, yet he will be at his Ergo's as resolute and sturdy as before. You would say he had had some new soul and vigour of understanding infused into him since, and that it happened to him, as to that ancient son of the earth, who took fresh courage and vigour by his fall;

"Cui cum tetigere parentem,

jam defecta vigent renovata robore membra:"

["Whose broken limbs, when they touched his mother earth,

immediately new force acquired."—Lucan, iv. 599.]

does not this incorrigible coxcomb think that he assumes a new understanding by undertaking a new dispute? 'Tis by my own experience that I accuse human ignorance, which is, in my opinion, the surest part of the world's school. Such as will not conclude it in themselves, by so vain an example as mine, or their own, let them believe it from Socrates, the master of masters; for the philosopher Antisthenes said to his disciples, "Let us go and hear Socrates; there I will be a pupil with you"; and, maintaining this doctrine of the Stoic sect, "that virtue was sufficient to make a life completely happy, having no need of any other thing whatever"; except of the force of Socrates, added he.

That long attention that I employ in considering myself, also fits rile to judge tolerably enough of others; and there are few things whereof I speak better and with better excuse. I happen very often more exactly to see and distinguish the qualities of my friends than they do themselves: I have astonished some with the pertinence of my description, and have given them warning of themselves. By having from my infancy been accustomed to contemplate my own life in those of others, I have acquired a complexion studious in that particular; and when I am once interit upon it, I let few things about me, whether countenances, humours, or discourses, that serve to that purpose, escape me. I study all, both what I am to avoid and what I am to follow. Also in my friends, I discover by their productions their inward inclinations; not by arranging this infinite variety of so diverse and unconnected actions into certain species and chapters, and distinctly distributing my parcels and divisions under known heads and classes;

"Sed neque quam multae species, nec nomina quae sint,

Est numerus."

["But neither can we enumerate how many kinds there what are their

names."—Virgil, Georg., ii. 103.]

The wise speak and deliver their fancies more specifically, and piece by piece; I, who see no further into things than as use informs me, present mine generally without rule and experimentally: I pronounce my opinion by disjointed articles, as a thing that cannot be spoken at once and in gross; relation and conformity are not to be found in such low and common souls as ours. Wisdom is a solid and entire building, of which every piece keeps its place and bears its mark:

"Sola sapientia in se tota conversa est."

["Wisdom only is wholly within itself"—Cicero, De Fin., iii. 7.]

I leave it to artists, and I know not whether or no they will be able to bring it about, in so perplexed, minute, and fortuitous a thing, to marshal into distinct bodies this infinite diversity of faces, to settle our inconstancy, and set it in order. I do not only find it hard to piece our actions to one another, but I moreover find it hard properly to design each by itself by any principal quality, so ambiguous and variform they are with diverse lights. That which is remarked for rare in Perseus, king of Macedon, "that his mind, fixing itself to no one condition, wandered in all sorts of living, and represented manners so wild and erratic that it was neither known to himself or any other what kind of man he was," seems almost to fit all the world; and, especially, I have seen another of his make, to whom I think this conclusion might more properly be applied; no moderate settledness, still running headlong from one extreme to another, upon occasions not to be guessed at; no line of path without traverse and wonderful contrariety: no one quality simple and unmixed; so that the best guess men can one day make will be, that he affected and studied to make himself known by being not to be known. A man had need have sound ears to hear himself frankly criticised; and as there are few who can endure to hear it without being nettled, those who hazard the undertaking it to us manifest a singular effect of friendship; for 'tis to love sincerely indeed, to venture to wound and offend us, for our own good. I think it harsh to judge a man whose ill qualities are more than his good ones: Plato requires three things in him who will examine the soul of another: knowledge, benevolence, boldness.

I was sometimes asked, what I should have thought myself fit for, had any one designed to make use of me, while I was of suitable years:

"Dum melior vires sanguis dabat, aemula necdum

Temporibus geminis canebat sparsa senectus:"

["Whilst better blood gave me vigour, and before envious old age

whitened and thinned my temples."—AEneid, V. 415.]

"for nothing," said I; and I willingly excuse myself from knowing anything which enslaves me to others. But I had told the truth to my master,—[Was this Henri VI.? D.W.]—and had regulated his manners, if he had so pleased, not in gross, by scholastic lessons, which I understand not, and from which I see no true reformation spring in those that do; but by observing them by leisure, at all opportunities, and simply and naturally judging them as an eye-witness, distinctly one by one; giving him to understand upon what terms he was in the common opinion, in opposition to his flatterers. There is none of us who would not be worse than kings, if so continually corrupted as they are with that sort of canaille. How, if Alexander, that great king and philosopher, cannot defend himself from them!

I should have had fidelity, judgment, and freedom enough for that purpose. It would be a nameless office, otherwise it would lose its grace and its effect; and 'tis a part that is not

indifferently fit for all men; for truth itself has not the privilege to be spoken at all times and indiscriminately; its use, noble as it is, has its circumspections and limits. It often falls out, as the world goes, that a man lets it slip into the ear of a prince, not only to no purpose, but moreover injuriously and unjustly; and no man shall make me believe that a virtuous remonstrance may not be viciously applied, and that the interest of the substance is not often to give way to that of the form.

For such a purpose, I would have a man who is content with his own fortune:

> "Quod sit, esse velit, nihilque malit,"
>
> ["Who is pleased with what he is and desires nothing further."
>
> —Martial, x. ii, 18.]

and of moderate station; forasmuch as, on the one hand, he would not be afraid to touch his master's heart to the quick, for fear by that means of losing his preferment: and, on the other hand, being of no high quality, he would have more easy communication with all sorts of people. I would have this office limited to only one person; for to allow the privilege of his liberty and privacy to many, would beget an inconvenient irreverence; and of that one, I would above all things require the fidelity of silence.

A king is not to be believed when he brags of his constancy in standing the shock of the enemy for his glory, if for his profit and amendment he cannot stand the liberty of a friend's advice, which has no other power but to pinch his ear, the remainder of its effect being still in his own hands. Now, there is no condition of men whatever who stand in so great need of true and free advice and warning, as they do: they sustain a public life, and have to satisfy the opinion of so many spectators, that, as those about them conceal from them whatever should divert them from their own way, they insensibly find themselves involved in the hatred and detestation of their people, often upon occasions which they might have avoided without any prejudice even of their pleasures themselves, had they been advised and set right in time. Their favourites commonly have more regard to themselves than to their master; and indeed it answers with them, forasmuch as, in truth, most offices of real friendship, when applied to the sovereign, are under a rude and dangerous hazard, so that therein there is great need, not only of very great affection and freedom, but of courage too.

In fine, all this hodge-podge which I scribble here, is nothing but a register of the essays of my own life, which, for the internal soundness, is exemplary enough to take instruction against the grain; but as to bodily health, no man can furnish out more profitable experience than I, who present it pure, and no way corrupted and changed by art or opinion. Experience is properly upon its own dunghill in the subject of physic, where reason wholly gives it place: Tiberius said that whoever had lived twenty years ought to be responsible to himself for all things that were hurtful or wholesome to him, and know how to order himself without physic;

[All that Suetonius says in his Life of Tiberius is that this

emperor, after he was thirty years old, governed his health without

the aid of physicians; and what Plutarch tells us, in his essay on

the Rules and Precepts of Health, is that Tiberius said that the man

who, having attained sixty years, held out his pulse to a physician

was a fool.]

and he might have learned it of Socrates, who, advising his disciples to be solicitous of their health as a chief study, added that it was hard if a man of sense, having a care to his exercise and diet, did not better know than any physician what was good or ill for him. And physic itself professes always to have experience for the test of its operations: so Plato had reason to say that, to be a right physician, it would be necessary that he who would become such, should first himself have passed through all the diseases he pretends to cure, and through all the accidents and circumstances whereof he is to judge. 'Tis but reason they should get the pox, if they will know how to cure it; for my part, I should put myself into such hands; the others but guide us, like him who paints seas and rocks and ports sitting at table, and there makes the model of a ship sailing in all security; but put him to the work itself, he knows not at which end to begin. They make such a description of our maladies as a town crier does of a lost horse or dog—such a color, such a height, such an ear—but bring it to him and he knows it not, for all that. If physic should one day give me some good and visible relief, then truly I will cry out in good earnest:

"Tandem effcaci do manus scientiae."

["Show me and efficacious science, and I will take it by the hand."

—Horace, xvii. I.]

The arts that promise to keep our bodies and souls in health promise a great deal; but, withal, there are none that less keep their promise. And, in our time, those who make profession of these arts amongst us, less manifest the effects than any other sort of men; one may say of them, at the most, that they sell medicinal drugs; but that they are physicians, a man cannot say.

[The edition of 1588 adds: "Judging by themselves, and those

who are ruled by them."]

I have lived long enough to be able to give an account of the custom that has carried me so far; for him who has a mind to try it, as his taster, I have made the experiment. Here are some of

the articles, as my memory shall supply me with them; I have no custom that has not varied according to circumstances; but I only record those that I have been best acquainted with, and that hitherto have had the greatest possession of me.

My form of life is the same in sickness as in health; the same bed, the same hours, the same meat, and even the same drink, serve me in both conditions alike; I add nothing to them but the moderation of more or less, according to my strength and appetite. My health is to maintain my wonted state without disturbance. I see that sickness puts me off it on one side, and if I will be ruled by the physicians, they will put me off on the other; so that by fortune and by art I am out of my way. I believe nothing more certainly than this, that I cannot be hurt by the use of things to which I have been so long accustomed. 'Tis for custom to give a form to a man's life, such as it pleases him; she is all in all in that: 'tis the potion of Circe, that varies our nature as she best pleases. How many nations, and but three steps from us, think the fear of the night-dew, that so manifestly is hurtful to us, a ridiculous fancy; and our own watermen and peasants laugh at it. You make a German sick if you lay him upon a mattress, as you do an Italian if you lay him on a feather-bed, and a Frenchman, if without curtains or fire. A Spanish stomach cannot hold out to eat as we can, nor ours to drink like the Swiss. A German made me very merry at Augsburg, by finding fault with our hearths, by the same arguments which we commonly make use of in decrying their stoves: for, to say the truth, the smothered heat, and then the smell of that heated matter of which the fire is composed, very much offend such as are not used to them; not me; and, indeed, the heat being always equal, constant, and universal, without flame, without smoke, and without the wind that comes down our chimneys, they may many ways sustain comparison with ours. Why do we not imitate the Roman architecture? for they say that anciently fires were not made in the houses, but on the outside, and at the foot of them, whence the heat was conveyed to the whole fabric by pipes contrived in the wall, which were drawn twining about the rooms that were to be warmed: which I have seen plainly described somewhere in Seneca. This German hearing me commend the conveniences and beauties of his city, which truly deserves it, began to compassionate me that I had to leave it; and the first inconvenience he alleged to me was, the heaviness of head that the chimneys elsewhere would bring upon me. He had heard some one make this complaint, and fixed it upon us, being by custom deprived of the means of perceiving it at home. All heat that comes from the fire weakens and dulls me. Evenus said that fire was the best condiment of life: I rather choose any other way of making myself warm.

We are afraid to drink our wines, when toward the bottom of the cask; in Portugal those fumes are reputed delicious, and it is the beverage of princes. In short, every nation has many customs and usages that are not only unknown to other nations, but savage and miraculous in their sight. What should we do with those people who admit of no evidence that is not in print, who believe not men if they are not in a book, nor truth if it be not of competent age? we dignify our fopperies when we commit them to the press: 'tis of a great deal more weight to say, "I have read such a thing," than if you only say, "I have heard such a thing." But I, who no more disbelieve a man's mouth than his pen, and who know that men write as indiscreetly as they speak, and who look upon this age as one that is past, as soon quote a friend as Aulus Gelliusor Macrobius; and what I have seen, as what they have written. And, as 'tis held of virtue, that it is

not greater for having continued longer, so do I hold of truth, that for being older it is none the wiser. I often say, that it is mere folly that makes us run after foreign and scholastic examples; their fertility is the same now that it was in the time of Homer and Plato. But is it not that we seek more honour from the quotation, than from the truth of the matter in hand? As if it were more to the purpose to borrow our proofs from the shops of Vascosan or Plantin, than from what is to be seen in our own village; or else, indeed, that we have not the wit to cull out and make useful what we see before us, and to judge of it clearly enough to draw it into example: for if we say that we want authority to give faith to our testimony, we speak from the purpose; forasmuch as, in my opinion, of the most ordinary, common, and known things, could we but find out their light, the greatest miracles of nature might be formed, and the most wonderful examples, especially upon the subject of human actions.

Now, upon this subject, setting aside the examples I have gathered from books, and what Aristotle says of Andron the Argian, that he travelled over the arid sands of Lybia without drinking: a gentleman, who has very well behaved himself in several employments, said, in a place where I was, that he had ridden from Madrid to Lisbon, in the heat of summer, without any drink at all. He is very healthful and vigorous for his age, and has nothing extraordinary in the use of his life, but this, to live sometimes two or three months, nay, a whole year, as he has told me, without drinking. He is sometimes thirsty, but he lets it pass over, and he holds that it is an appetite which easily goes off of itself; and he drinks more out of caprice than either for need or pleasure.

Here is another example: 'tis not long ago that I found one of the learnedest men in France, among those of not inconsiderable fortune, studying in a corner of a hall that they had separated for him with tapestry, and about him a rabble of his servants full of licence. He told me, and Seneca almost says the same of himself, he made an advantage of this hubbub; that, beaten with this noise, he so much the more collected and retired himself into himself for contemplation, and that this tempest of voices drove back his thoughts within himself. Being a student at Padua, he had his study so long situated amid the rattle of coaches and the tumult of the square, that he not only formed himself to the contempt, but even to the use of noise, for the service of his studies. Socrates answered Alcibiades, who was astonished how he could endure the perpetual scolding of his wife, "Why," said he, "as those do who are accustomed to the ordinary noise of wheels drawing water." I am quite otherwise; I have a tender head and easily discomposed; when 'tis bent upon anything, the least buzzing of a fly murders it.

Seneca in his youth having warmly espoused the example of Sextius, of eating nothing that had died, for a whole year dispensed with such food, and, as he said, with pleasure, and discontinued it that he might not be suspected of taking up this rule from some new religion by which it was prescribed: he adopted, in like manner, from the precepts of Attalus a custom not to lie upon any sort of bedding that gave way under his weight, and, even to his old age, made use of such as would not yield to any pressure. What the usage of his time made him account roughness, that of ours makes us look upon as effeminacy.

Do but observe the difference betwixt the way of living of my labourers and my own; the Scythians and Indians have nothing more remote both from my capacity and my form. I have picked up charity boys to serve me: who soon after have quitted both my kitchen and livery, only that they might return to their former course of life; and I found one afterwards, picking mussels out of the sewer for his dinner, whom I could neither by entreaties nor threats reclaim from the sweetness he found in indigence. Beggars have their magnificences and delights, as well as the rich, and, 'tis said, their dignities and polities. These are the effects of custom; she can mould us, not only into what form she pleases (the sages say we ought to apply ourselves to the best, which she will soon make easy to us), but also to change and variation, which is the most noble and most useful instruction of all she teaches us. The best of my bodily conditions is that I am flexible and not very obstinate: I have inclinations more my own and ordinary, and more agreeable than others; but I am diverted from them with very little ado, and easily slip into a contrary course. A young man ought to cross his own rules, to awaken his vigour and to keep it from growing faint and rusty; and there is no course of life so weak and sottish as that which is carried on by rule and discipline;

"Ad primum lapidem vectari quum placet, hora

Sumitur ex libro; si prurit frictus ocelli

Angulus, inspecta genesi, collyria quaerit;"

["When he is pleased to have himself carried to the first milestone,

the hour is chosen from the almanac; if he but rub the corner of his

eye, his horoscope having been examined, he seeks the aid of

salves."—-Juvenal, vi. 576.]

he shall often throw himself even into excesses, if he will take my advice; otherwise the least debauch will destroy him, and render him troublesome and disagreeable in company. The worst quality in a well-bred man is over-fastidiousness, and an obligation to a certain particular way; and it is particular, if not pliable and supple. It is a kind of reproach, not to be able, or not to dare, to do what we see those about us do; let such as these stop at home. It is in every man unbecoming, but in a soldier vicious and intolerable: who, as Philopcemen said, ought to accustom himself to every variety and inequality of life.

Though I have been brought up, as much as was possible, to liberty and independence, yet so it is that, growing old, and having by indifference more settled upon certain forms (my age is now past instruction, and has henceforward nothing to do but to keep itself up as well as it can), custom has already, ere I was aware, so imprinted its character in me in certain things, that I look upon it as a kind of excess to leave them off; and, without a force upon myself, cannot sleep in the daytime, nor eat between meals, nor breakfast, nor go to bed, without a great

interval betwixt eating and sleeping,—[Gastroesophogeal Reflux. D.W.]—as of three hours after supper; nor get children but before I sleep, nor get them standing; nor endure my own sweat; nor quench my thirst either with pure water or pure wine; nor keep my head long bare, nor cut my hair after dinner; and I should be as uneasy without my gloves as without my shirt, or without washing when I rise from table or out of my bed; and I could not lie without a canopy and curtains, as if they were essential things. I could dine without a tablecloth, but without a clean napkin, after the German fashion, very incommodiously; I foul them more than the Germans or Italians do, and make but little use either of spoon or fork. I complain that they did not keep up the fashion, begun after the example of kings, to change our napkin at every service, as they do our plate. We are told of that laborious soldier Marius that, growing old, he became nice in his drink, and never drank but out of a particular cup of his own I, in like manner, have suffered myself to fancy a certain form of glasses, and not willingly to drink in common glasses, no more than from a strange common hand: all metal offends me in comparison of a clear and transparent matter: let my eyes taste, too, according to their capacity. I owe several other such niceties to custom. Nature has also, on the other side, helped me to some of hers: as not to be able to endure more than two full meals in one day, without overcharging my stomach, nor a total abstinence from one of those meals without filling myself with wind, drying up my mouth, and dulling my appetite; the finding great inconvenience from overmuch evening air; for of late years, in night marches, which often happen to be all night long, after five or six hours my stomach begins to be queasy, with a violent pain in my head, so that I always vomit before the day can break. When the others go to breakfast, I go to sleep; and when I rise, I am as brisk and gay as before. I had always been told that the night dew never rises but in the beginning of the night; but for some years past, long and familiar intercourse with a lord, possessed with the opinion that the night dew is more sharp and dangerous about the declining of the sun, an hour or two before it sets, which he carefully avoids, and despises that of the night, he almost impressed upon me, not so much his reasoning as his experiences. What, shall mere doubt and inquiry strike our imagination, so as to change us? Such as absolutely and on a sudden give way to these propensions, draw total destruction upon themselves. I am sorry for several gentlemen who, through the folly of their physicians, have in their youth and health wholly shut themselves up: it were better to endure a cough, than, by disuse, for ever to lose the commerce of common life in things of so great utility. Malignant science, to interdict us the most pleasant hours of the day! Let us keep our possession to the last; for the most part, a man hardens himself by being obstinate, and corrects his constitution, as Caesar did the falling sickness, by dint of contempt. A man should addict himself to the best rules, but not enslave himself to them, except to such, if there be any such, where obligation and servitude are of profit.

Both kings and philosophers go to stool, and ladies too; public lives are bound to ceremony; mine, that is obscure and private, enjoys all natural dispensation; soldier and Gascon are also qualities a little subject to indiscretion; wherefore I shall say of this act of relieving nature, that it is desirable to refer it to certain prescribed and nocturnal hours, and compel one's self to this by custom, as I have done; but not to subject one's self, as I have done in my declining years, to a particular convenience of place and seat for that purpose, and make it troublesome by long

sitting; and yet, in the fouler offices, is it not in some measure excusable to require more care and cleanliness?

"Naturt homo mundum et elegans animal est."

["Man is by nature a clean and delicate creature."—Seneca, Ep., 92.]

Of all the actions of nature, I am the most impatient of being interrupted in that. I have seen many soldiers troubled with the unruliness of their bellies; whereas mine and I never fail of our punctual assignation, which is at leaping out of bed, if some indispensable business or sickness does not molest us.

I think then, as I said before, that sick men cannot better place themselves anywhere in more safety, than in sitting still in that course of life wherein they have been bred and trained up; change, be it what it will, distempers and puts one out. Do you believe that chestnuts can hurt a Perigordin or a Lucchese, or milk and cheese the mountain people? We enjoin them not only a new, but a contrary, method of life; a change that the healthful cannot endure. Prescribe water to a Breton of threescore and ten; shut a seaman up in a stove; forbid a Basque footman to walk: you will deprive them of motion, and in the end of air and light:

"An vivere tanti est?

Cogimur a suetis animum suspendere rebus,

Atque, ut vivamus, vivere desinimus. .

Hos superesse reor, quibus et spirabilis aer

Et lux, qua regimur, redditur ipsa gravis."

["Is life worth so much? We are compelled to withhold the mind

from things to which we are accustomed; and, that we may live, we

cease to live . . . . Do I conceive that they still live, to

whom the respirable air, and the light itself, by which we are

governed, is rendered oppressive?"

—Pseudo-Gallus, Eclog., i. 155, 247.]

If they do no other good, they do this at least, that they prepare patients betimes for death, by little and little undermining and cutting off the use of life.

Both well and sick, I have ever willingly suffered myself to obey the appetites that pressed upon me. I give great rein to my desires and propensities; I do not love to cure one disease by another; I hate remedies that are more troublesome than the disease itself. To be subject to the colic and subject to abstain from eating oysters are two evils instead of one; the disease torments us on the one side, and the remedy on the other. Since we are ever in danger of mistaking, let us rather run the hazard of a mistake, after we have had the pleasure. The world proceeds quite the other way, and thinks nothing profitable that is not painful; it has great suspicion of facility. My appetite, in various things, has of its own accord happily enough accommodated itself to the health of my stomach. Relish and pungency in sauces were pleasant to me when young; my stomach disliking them since, my taste incontinently followed. Wine is hurtful to sick people, and 'tis the first thing that my mouth then finds distasteful, and with an invincible dislike. Whatever I take against my liking does me harm; and nothing hurts me that I eat with appetite and delight. I never received harm by any action that was very pleasant to me; and accordingly have made all medicinal conclusions largely give way to my pleasure; and I have, when I was young,

"Quem circumcursans huc atque huc saepe Cupido

Fulgebat crocink splendidus in tunic."

["When Cupid, fluttering round me here and there, shone in his rich

purple mantle."—Catullus, lxvi. 133.]

given myself the rein as licentiously and inconsiderately to the desire that was predominant in me, as any other whomsoever:

"Et militavi non sine gloria;"

["And I have played the soldier not ingloriously."

—Horace, Od., iii. 26, 2.]

yet more in continuation and holding out, than in sally:

"Sex me vix memini sustinuisse vices."

["I can scarcely remember six bouts in one night"

—Ovid, Amor., iii. 7, 26.]

'Tis certainly a misfortune and a miracle at once to confess at what a tender age I first came under the subjection of love: it was, indeed, by chance; for it was long before the years of choice or knowledge; I do not remember myself so far back; and my fortune may well be coupled with that of Quartilla, who could not remember when she was a maid:

"Inde tragus, celeresque pili, mirandaque matri

Barba meae."

["Thence the odour of the arm-pits, the precocious hair, and the

beard which astonished my mother."—Martial, xi. 22, 7.]

Physicians modify their rules according to the violent longings that happen to sick persons, ordinarily with good success; this great desire cannot be imagined so strange and vicious, but that nature must have a hand in it. And then how easy a thing is it to satisfy the fancy? In my opinion; this part wholly carries it, at least, above all the rest. The most grievous and ordinary evils are those that fancy loads us with; this Spanish saying pleases me in several aspects:

"Defenda me Dios de me."

["God defend me from myself."]

I am sorry when I am sick, that I have not some longing that might give me the pleasure of satisfying it; all the rules of physic would hardly be able to divert me from it. I do the same when I am well; I can see very little more to be hoped or wished for. 'Twere pity a man should be so weak and languishing, as not to have even wishing left to him.

The art of physic is not so fixed, that we need be without authority for whatever we do; it changes according to climates and moons, according to Fernel and to Scaliger.—[Physicians to Henry II.]—If your physician does not think it good for you to sleep, to drink wine, or to eat such and such meats, never trouble yourself; I will find you another that shall not be of his opinion; the diversity of medical arguments and opinions embraces all sorts and forms. I saw a miserable sick person panting and burning for thirst, that he might be cured, who was afterwards laughed at for his pains by another physician, who condemned that advice as prejudicial to him: had he not tormented himself to good purpose? There lately died of the stone a man of that profession, who had made use of extreme abstinence to contend with his disease: his fellow-

physicians say that, on the contrary, this abstinence had dried him up and baked the gravel in his kidneys.

I have observed, that both in wounds and sicknesses, speaking discomposes and hurts me, as much as any irregularity I can commit. My voice pains and tires me, for 'tis loud and forced; so that when I have gone to a whisper some great persons about affairs of consequence, they have often desired me to moderate my voice.

This story is worth a diversion. Some one in a certain Greek school speaking loud as I do, the master of the ceremonies sent to him to speak softly: "Tell him, then, he must send me," replied the other, "the tone he would have me speak in." To which the other replied, "That he should take the tone from the ears of him to whom he spake." It was well said, if it is to be understood: "Speak according to the affair you are speaking about to your auditor," for if it mean, "'tis sufficient that he hear you, or govern yourself by him," I do not find it to be reason. The tone and motion of my voice carries with it a great deal of the expression and signification of my meaning, and 'tis I who am to govern it, to make myself understood: there is a voice to instruct, a voice to flatter, and a voice to reprehend. I will not only that my voice reach him, but, peradventure, that it strike and pierce him. When I rate my valet with sharp and bitter language, it would be very pretty for him to say; "Pray, master, speak lower; I hear you very well":

> "Est quaedam vox ad auditum accommodata,
>
> non magnitudine, sed proprietate."

["There is a certain voice accommodated to the hearing, not by its

loudness, but by its propriety."—Quintilian, xi. 3.]

Speaking is half his who speaks, and half his who hears; the latter ought to prepare himself to receive it, according to its bias; as with tennis-players, he who receives the ball, shifts and prepares, according as he sees him move who strikes the stroke, and according to the stroke itself.

Experience has, moreover, taught me this, that we ruin ourselves by impatience. Evils have their life and limits, their diseases and their recovery.

The constitution of maladies is formed by the pattern of the constitution of animals; they have their fortune and their days limited from their birth; he who attempts imperiously to cut them short by force in the middle of their course, lengthens and multiplies them, and incenses instead of appeasing them. I am of Crantor's opinion, that we are neither obstinately and deafly to oppose evils, nor succumb to them from want of courage; but that we are naturally to give way to them, according to their condition and our own. We ought to grant free passage to diseases; I find they stay less with me, who let them alone; and I have lost some, reputed the

most tenacious and obstinate, by their own decay, without help and without art, and contrary to its rules. Let us a little permit Nature to take her own way; she better understands her own affairs than we. But such an one died of it; and so shall you: if not of that disease, of another. And how many have not escaped dying, who have had three physicians at their tails? Example is a vague and universal mirror, and of various reflections. If it be a delicious medicine, take it: 'tis always so much present good. I will never stick at the name nor the colour, if it be pleasant and grateful to the palate: pleasure is one of the chiefest kinds of profit. I have suffered colds, gouty defluxions, relaxations, palpitations of the heart, megrims, and other accidents, to grow old and die in time a natural death. I have so lost them when I was half fit to keep them: they are sooner prevailed upon by courtesy than huffing. We must patiently suffer the laws of our condition; we are born to grow old, to grow weak, and to be sick, in despite of all medicine. 'Tis the first lesson the Mexicans teach their children; so soon as ever they are born they thus salute them: "Thou art come into the world, child, to endure: endure, suffer, and say nothing." 'Tis injustice to lament that which has befallen any one which may befall every one:

"Indignare, si quid in to inique proprio constitutum est."

["Then be angry, when there is anything unjustly decreed against

thee alone."—Seneca, Ep., 91.]

See an old man who begs of God that he will maintain his health vigorous and entire; that is to say, that he restore him to youth:

"Stulte, quid haec frustra votis puerilibus optas?"

["Fool! why do you vainly form these puerile wishes?"

—Ovid., Trist., 111. 8, II.]

is it not folly? his condition is not capable of it. The gout, the stone, and indigestion are symptoms of long years; as heat, rains, and winds are of long journeys. Plato does not believe that AEsculapius troubled himself to provide by regimen to prolong life in a weak and wasted body, useless to his country and to his profession, or to beget healthful and robust children; and does not think this care suitable to the Divine justice and prudence, which is to direct all things to utility. My good friend, your business is done; nobody can restore you; they can, at the most, but patch you up, and prop you a little, and by that means prolong your misery an hour or two:

"Non secus instantem cupiens fulcire ruinam,

Diversis contra nititur obiicibus;

Donec certa dies, omni compage soluta,

Ipsum cum rebus subruat auxilium."

["Like one who, desiring to stay an impending ruin, places various

props against it, till, in a short time, the house, the props, and

all, giving way, fall together."—Pseudo-Gallus, i. 171.]

We must learn to suffer what we cannot evade; our life, like the harmony of the world, is composed of contrary things—of diverse tones, sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, sprightly and solemn: the musician who should only affect some of these, what would he be able to do? he must know how to make use of them all, and to mix them; and so we should mingle the goods and evils which are consubstantial with our life; our being cannot subsist without this mixture, and the one part is no less necessary to it than the other. To attempt to combat natural necessity, is to represent the folly of Ctesiphon, who undertook to kick with his mule.—[Plutarch, How to restrain Anger, c. 8.]

I consult little about the alterations I feel: for these doctors take advantage; when they have you at their mercy, they surfeit your ears with their prognostics; and formerly surprising me, weakened with sickness, injuriously handled me with their dogmas and magisterial fopperies—one while menacing me with great pains, and another with approaching death. Hereby I was indeed moved and shaken, but not subdued nor jostled from my place; and though my judgment was neither altered nor distracted, yet it was at least disturbed: 'tis always agitation and combat.

Now, I use my imagination as gently as I can, and would discharge it, if I could, of all trouble and contest; a man must assist, flatter, and deceive it, if he can; my mind is fit for that office; it needs no appearances throughout: could it persuade as it preaches, it would successfully relieve me. Will you have an example? It tells me: "that 'tis for my good to have the stone: that the structure of my age must naturally suffer some decay, and it is now time it should begin to disjoin and to confess a breach; 'tis a common necessity, and there is nothing in it either miraculous or new; I therein pay what is due to old age, and I cannot expect a better bargain; that society ought to comfort me, being fallen into the most common infirmity of my age; I see everywhere men tormented with the same disease, and am honoured by the fellowship, forasmuch as men of the best quality are most frequently afflicted with it: 'tis a noble and dignified disease: that of such as are struck with it, few have it to a less degree of pain; that these are put to the trouble of a strict diet and the daily taking of nauseous potions, whereas I owe my better state purely to my good fortune; for some ordinary broths of eringo or burst-wort that I have twice or thrice taken to oblige the ladies, who, with greater kindness than my pain was sharp, would needs present me half of theirs, seemed to me equally easy to take and fruitless in operation, the others have to pay a thousand vows to AEsculapius, and as many

crowns to their physicians, for the voiding a little gravel, which I often do by the aid of nature: even the decorum of my countenance is not disturbed in company; and I can hold my water ten hours, and as long as any man in health. The fear of this disease," says my mind, "formerly affrighted thee, when it was unknown to thee; the cries and despairing groans of those who make it worse by their impatience, begot a horror in thee. 'Tis an infirmity that punishes the members by which thou hast most offended. Thou art a conscientious fellow;"

"Quae venit indigne poena, dolenda venit:"

["We are entitled to complain of a punishment that we have not

deserved."—Ovid, Heroid., v. 8.]

"consider this chastisement: 'tis very easy in comparison of others, and inflicted with a paternal tenderness: do but observe how late it comes; it only seizes on and incommodes that part of thy life which is, one way and another, sterile and lost; having, as it were by composition, given time for the licence and pleasures of thy youth. The fear and the compassion that the people have of this disease serve thee for matter of glory; a quality whereof if thou bast thy judgment purified, and that thy reason has somewhat cured it, thy friends notwithstanding, discern some tincture in thy complexion. 'Tis a pleasure to hear it said of oneself what strength of mind, what patience! Thou art seen to sweat with pain, to turn pale and red, to tremble, to vomit blood, to suffer strange contractions and convulsions, at times to let great tears drop from thine eyes, to urine thick, black, and dreadful water, or to have it suppressed by some sharp and craggy stone, that cruelly pricks and tears the neck of the bladder, whilst all the while thou entertainest the company with an ordinary countenance; droning by fits with thy people; making one in a continuous discourse, now and then making excuse for thy pain, and representing thy suffering less than it is. Dost thou call to mind the men of past times, who so greedily sought diseases to keep their virtue in breath and exercise? Put the case that nature sets thee on and impels thee to this glorious school, into which thou wouldst never have entered of thy own free will. If thou tellest me that it is a dangerous and mortal disease, what others are not so? for 'tis a physical cheat to expect any that they say do not go direct to death: what matters if they go thither by accident, or if they easily slide and slip into the path that leads us to it? But thou dost not die because thou art sick; thou diest because thou art living: death kills thee without the help of sickness: and sickness has deferred death in some, who have lived longer by reason that they thought themselves always dying; to which may be added, that as in wounds, so in diseases, some are medicinal and wholesome. The stone is often no less long-lived than you; we see men with whom it has continued from their infancy even to their extreme old age; and if they had not broken company, it would have been with them longer still; you more often kill it than it kills you. And though it should present to you the image of approaching death, were it not a good office to a man of such an age, to put him in mind of his end? And, which is worse, thou hast no longer anything that should make thee desire to be cured. Whether or no, common necessity will soon call thee away. Do but consider how skilfully and gently she puts thee out of concern with life, and weans thee from the world; not forcing thee with a tyrannical subjection,

like so many other infirmities which thou seest old men afflicted withal, that hold them in continual torment, and keep them in perpetual and unintermitted weakness and pains, but by warnings and instructions at intervals, intermixing long pauses of repose, as it were to give thee opportunity to meditate and ruminate upon thy lesson, at thy own ease and leisure. To give thee means to judge aright, and to assume the resolution of a man of courage, it presents to thee the state of thy entire condition, both in good and evil; and one while a very cheerful and another an insupportable life, in one and the same day. If thou embracest not death, at least thou shakest hands with it once a month; whence thou hast more cause to hope that it will one day surprise thee without menace; and that being so often conducted to the water-side, but still thinking thyself to be upon the accustomed terms, thou and thy confidence will at one time or another be unexpectedly wafted over. A man cannot reasonably complain of diseases that fairly divide the time with health."

I am obliged to Fortune for having so often assaulted me with the same sort of weapons: she forms and fashions me by use, hardens and habituates me, so that I can know within a little for how much I shall be quit. For want of natural memory, I make one of paper; and as any new symptom happens in my disease, I set it down, whence it falls out that, having now almost passed through all sorts of examples, if anything striking threatens me, turning over these little loose notes, as the Sybilline leaves, I never fail of finding matter of consolation from some favourable prognostic in my past experience. Custom also makes me hope better for the time to come; for, the conduct of this clearing out having so long continued, 'tis to be believed that nature will not alter her course, and that no other worse accident will happen than what I already feel. And besides, the condition of this disease is not unsuitable to my prompt and sudden complexion: when it assaults me gently, I am afraid, for 'tis then for a great while; but it has, naturally, brisk and vigorous excesses; it claws me to purpose for a day or two. My kidneys held out an age without alteration; and I have almost now lived another, since they changed their state; evils have their periods, as well as benefits: peradventure, the infirmity draws towards an end. Age weakens the heat of my stomach, and, its digestion being less perfect, sends this crude matter to my kidneys; why, at a certain revolution, may not the heat of my kidneys be also abated, so that they can no more petrify my phlegm, and nature find out some other way of purgation. Years have evidently helped me to drain certain rheums; and why not these excrements which furnish matter for gravel? But is there anything delightful in comparison of this sudden change, when from an excessive pain, I come, by the voiding of a stone, to recover, as by a flash of lightning, the beautiful light of health, so free and full, as it happens in our sudden and sharpest colics? Is there anything in the pain suffered, that one can counterpoise to the pleasure of so sudden an amendment? Oh, how much does health seem the more pleasant to me, after a sickness so near and so contiguous, that I can distinguish them in the presence of one another, in their greatest show; when they appear in emulation, as if to make head against and dispute it with one another! As the Stoics say that vices are profitably introduced to give value to and to set off virtue, we can, with better reason and less temerity of conjecture, say that nature has given us pain for the honour and service of pleasure and indolence. When Socrates, after his fetters were knocked off, felt the pleasure of that itching which the weight of them had caused in his legs, he rejoiced to consider the strict alliance betwixt pain and pleasure; how they are linked together by a necessary connection, so that by

turns they follow and mutually beget one another; and cried out to good AEsop, that he ought out of this consideration to have taken matter for a fine fable.

The worst that I see in other diseases is, that they are not so grievous in their effect as they are in their issue: a man is a whole year in recovering, and all the while full of weakness and fear. There is so much hazard, and so many steps to arrive at safety, that there is no end on't before they have unmuffled you of a kerchief, and then of a cap, before they allow you to walk abroad and take the air, to drink wine, to lie with your wife, to eat melons, 'tis odds you relapse into some new distemper. The stone has this privilege, that it carries itself clean off: whereas the other maladies always leave behind them some impression and alteration that render the body subject to a new disease, and lend a hand to one another. Those are excusable that content themselves with possessing us, without extending farther and introducing their followers; but courteous and kind are those whose passage brings us any profitable issue. Since I have been troubled with the stone, I find myself freed from all other accidents, much more, methinks, than I was before, and have never had any fever since; I argue that the extreme and frequent vomitings that I am subject to purge me: and, on the other hand, my distastes for this and that, and the strange fasts I am forced to keep, digest my peccant humours, and nature, with those stones, voids whatever there is in me superfluous and hurtful. Let them never tell me that it is a medicine too dear bought: for what avail so many stinking draughts, so many caustics, incisions, sweats, setons, diets, and so many other methods of cure, which often, by reason we are not able to undergo their violence and importunity, bring us to our graves? So that when I have the stone, I look upon it as physic; when free from it, as an absolute deliverance.

And here is another particular benefit of my disease; which is, that it almost plays its game by itself, and lets 'me play mine, if I have only courage to do it; for, in its greatest fury, I have endured it ten hours together on horseback. Do but endure only; you need no other regimen play, run, dine, do this and t'other, if you can; your debauch will do you more good than harm; say as much to one that has the pox, the gout, or hernia! The other diseases have more universal obligations; rack our actions after another kind of manner, disturb our whole order, and to their consideration engage the whole state of life: this only pinches the skin; it leaves the understanding and the will wholly at our own disposal, and the tongue, the hands, and the feet; it rather awakens than stupefies you. The soul is struck with the ardour of a fever, overwhelmed with an epilepsy, and displaced by a sharp megrim, and, in short, astounded by all the diseases that hurt the whole mass and the most noble parts; this never meddles with the soul; if anything goes amiss with her, 'tis her own fault; she betrays, dismounts, and abandons herself. There are none but fools who suffer themselves to be persuaded that this hard and massive body which is baked in our kidneys is to be dissolved by drinks; wherefore, when it is once stirred, there is nothing to be done but to give it passage; and, for that matter, it will itself make one.

I moreover observe this particular convenience in it, that it is a disease wherein we have little to guess at: we are dispensed from the trouble into which other diseases throw us by the uncertainty of their causes, conditions, and progress; a trouble that is infinitely painful: we have

no need of consultations and doctoral interpretations; the senses well enough inform us both what it is and where it is.

By suchlike arguments, weak and strong, as Cicero with the disease of his old age, I try to rock asleep and amuse my imagination, and to dress its wounds. If I find them worse tomorrow, I will provide new stratagems. That this is true: I am come to that pass of late, that the least motion forces pure blood out of my kidneys: what of that? I move about, nevertheless, as before, and ride after my hounds with a juvenile and insolent ardour; and hold that I have very good satisfaction for an accident of that importance, when it costs me no more but a dull heaviness and uneasiness in that part; 'tis some great stone that wastes and consumes the substance of my kidneys and my life, which I by little and little evacuate, not without some natural pleasure, as an excrement henceforward superfluous and troublesome. Now if I feel anything stirring, do not fancy that I trouble myself to consult my pulse or my urine, thereby to put myself upon some annoying prevention; I shall soon enough feel the pain, without making it more and longer by the disease of fear. He who fears he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears. To which may be added that the doubts and ignorance of those who take upon them to expound the designs of nature and her internal progressions, and the many false prognostics of their art, ought to give us to understand that her ways are inscrutable and utterly unknown; there is great uncertainty, variety, and obscurity in what she either promises or threatens. Old age excepted, which is an indubitable sign of the approach of death, in all other accidents I see few signs of the future, whereon we may ground our divination. I only judge of myself by actual sensation, not by reasoning: to what end, since I am resolved to bring nothing to it but expectation and patience? Will you know how much I get by this? observe those who do otherwise, and who rely upon so many diverse persuasions and counsels; how often the imagination presses upon them without any bodily pain. I have many times amused myself, being well and in safety, and quite free from these dangerous attacks in communicating them to the physicians as then beginning to discover themselves in me; I underwent the decree of their dreadful conclusions, being all the while quite at my ease, and so much the more obliged to the favour of God and better satisfied of the vanity of this art.

There is nothing that ought so much to be recommended to youth as activity and vigilance our life is nothing but movement. I bestir myself with great difficulty, and am slow in everything, whether in rising, going to bed, or eating: seven of the clock in the morning is early for me, and where I rule, I never dine before eleven, nor sup till after six. I formerly attributed the cause of the fevers and other diseases I fell into to the heaviness that long sleeping had brought upon me, and have ever repented going to sleep again in the morning. Plato is more angry at excess of sleeping than at excess of drinking. I love to lie hard and alone, even without my wife, as kings do; pretty well covered with clothes. They never warm my bed, but since I have grown old they give me at need cloths to lay to my feet and stomach. They found fault with the great Scipio that he was a great sleeper; not, in my opinion, for any other reason than that men were displeased that he alone should have nothing in him to be found fault with. If I am anything fastidious in my way of living 'tis rather in my lying than anything else; but generally I give way and accommodate myself as well as any one to necessity. Sleeping has taken up a great part of my life, and I yet continue, at the age I now am, to sleep eight or nine hours at one breath. I

wean myself with utility from this proneness to sloth, and am evidently the better for so doing. I find the change a little hard indeed, but in three days 'tis over; and I see but few who live with less sleep, when need requires, and who more constantly exercise themselves, or to whom long journeys are less troublesome. My body is capable of a firm, but not of a violent or sudden agitation. I escape of late from violent exercises, and such as make me sweat: my limbs grow weary before they are warm. I can stand a whole day together, and am never weary of walking; but from my youth I have ever preferred to ride upon paved roads; on foot, I get up to the haunches in dirt, and little fellows as I am are subject in the streets to be elbowed and jostled for want of presence; I have ever loved to repose myself, whether sitting or lying, with my heels as high or higher than my seat.

There is no profession as pleasant as the military, a profession both noble in its execution (for valour is the stoutest, proudest, and most generous of all virtues), and noble in its cause: there is no utility either more universal or more just than the protection of the peace and greatness of one's country. The company of so many noble, young, and active men delights you; the ordinary sight of so many tragic spectacles; the freedom of the conversation, without art; a masculine and unceremonious way of living, please you; the variety of a thousand several actions; the encouraging harmony of martial music that ravishes and inflames both your ears and souls; the honour of this occupation, nay, even its hardships and difficulties, which Plato holds so light that in his Republic he makes women and children share in them, are delightful to you. You put yourself voluntarily upon particular exploits and hazards, according as you judge of their lustre and importance; and, a volunteer, find even life itself excusably employed:

"Pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis."

["'Tis fine to die sword in hand." ("And he remembers that it

is honourable to die in arms.")—AEneid, ii. 317.]

To fear common dangers that concern so great a multitude of men; not to dare to do what so many sorts of souls, what a whole people dare, is for a heart that is poor and mean beyond all measure: company encourages even children. If others excel you in knowledge, in gracefulness, in strength, or fortune, you have alternative resources at your disposal; but to give place to them in stability of mind, you can blame no one for that but yourself. Death is more abject, more languishing and troublesome, in bed than in a fight: fevers and catarrhs as painful and mortal as a musket-shot. Whoever has fortified himself valiantly to bear the accidents of common life need not raise his courage to be a soldier:

"Vivere, mi Lucili, militare est."

["To live, my Lucilius, is (to make war) to be a soldier."

—Seneca, Ep., 96.]

I do not remember that I ever had the itch, and yet scratching is one of nature's sweetest gratifications, and so much at hand; but repentance follows too near. I use it most in my ears, which are at intervals apt to itch.

I came into the world with all my senses entire, even to perfection. My stomach is commodiously good, as also is my head and my breath; and, for the most part, uphold themselves so in the height of fevers. I have passed the age to which some nations, not without reason, have prescribed so just a term of life that they would not suffer men to exceed it; and yet I have some intermissions, though short and inconstant, so clean and sound as to be little inferior to the health and pleasantness of my youth. I do not speak of vigour and sprightliness; 'tis not reason they should follow me beyond their limits:

"Non hoc amplius est liminis, aut aquae

Coelestis, patiens latus."

["I am no longer able to stand waiting at a door in the rain."

—Horace, Od., iii. 10, 9.]

My face and eyes presently discover my condition; all my alterations begin there, and appear somewhat worse than they really are; my friends often pity me before I feel the cause in myself. My looking-glass does not frighten me; for even in my youth it has befallen me more than once to have a scurvy complexion and of ill augury, without any great consequence, so that the physicians, not finding any cause within answerable to that outward alteration, attributed it to the mind and to some secret passion that tormented me within; but they were deceived. If my body would govern itself as well, according to my rule, as my mind does, we should move a little more at our ease. My mind was then not only free from trouble, but, moreover, full of joy and satisfaction, as it commonly is, half by its complexion, half by its design:

"Nec vitiant artus aegrae contagia mentis."

["Nor do the troubles of the body ever affect my mind."

—Ovid, Trist., iii. 8, 25.]

I am of the opinion that this temperature of my soul has often raised my body from its lapses; this is often depressed; if the other be not brisk and gay, 'tis at least tranquil and at rest. I had a quartan ague four or five months, that made me look miserably ill; my mind was always, if not

calm, yet pleasant. If the pain be without me, the weakness and languor do not much afflict me; I see various corporal faintings, that beget a horror in me but to name, which yet I should less fear than a thousand passions and agitations of the mind that I see about me. I make up my mind no more to run; 'tis enough that I can crawl along; nor do I more complain of the natural decadence that I feel in myself:

"Quis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus?"

["Who is surprised to see a swollen goitre in the Alps?"

—Juvenal, xiii. 162.]

than I regret that my duration shall not be as long and entire as that of an oak.

I have no reason to complain of my imagination; I have had few thoughts in my life that have so much as broken my sleep, except those of desire, which have awakened without afflicting me. I dream but seldom, and then of chimaeras and fantastic things, commonly produced from pleasant thoughts, and rather ridiculous than sad; and I believe it to be true that dreams are faithful interpreters of our inclinations; but there is art required to sort and understand them

"Res, quae in vita usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, vident,

Quaeque agunt vigilantes, agitantque, ea si cui in somno accidunt,

Minus mirandum est."

["'Tis less wonder, what men practise, think, care for, see, and do

when waking, (should also run in their heads and disturb them when

they are asleep) and which affect their feelings, if they happen to

any in sleep."—Attius, cited in Cicero, De Divin., i. 22.]

Plato, moreover, says, that 'tis the office of prudence to draw instructions of divination of future things from dreams: I don't know about this, but there are wonderful instances of it that Socrates, Xenophon, and Aristotle, men of irreproachable authority, relate. Historians say that the Atlantes never dream; who also never eat any animal food, which I add, forasmuch as it is, peradventure, the reason why they never dream, for Pythagoras ordered a certain preparation of diet to beget appropriate dreams. Mine are very gentle, without any agitation of body or expression of voice. I have seen several of my time wonderfully disturbed by them. Theon the

philosopher walked in his sleep, and so did Pericles servant, and that upon the tiles and top of the house.

I hardly ever choose my dish at table, but take the next at hand, and unwillingly change it for another. A confusion of meats and a clatter of dishes displease me as much as any other confusion: I am easily satisfied with few dishes: and am an enemy to the opinion of Favorinus, that in a feast they should snatch from you the meat you like, and set a plate of another sort before you; and that 'tis a pitiful supper, if you do not sate your guests with the rumps of various fowls, the beccafico only deserving to be all eaten. I usually eat salt meats, yet I prefer bread that has no salt in it; and my baker never sends up other to my table, contrary to the custom of the country. In my infancy, what they had most to correct in me was the refusal of things that children commonly best love, as sugar, sweetmeats, and march-panes. My tutor contended with this aversion to delicate things, as a kind of over-nicety; and indeed 'tis nothing else but a difficulty of taste, in anything it applies itself to. Whoever cures a child of an obstinate liking for brown bread, bacon, or garlic, cures him also of pampering his palate. There are some who affect temperance and plainness by wishing for beef and ham amongst the partridges; 'tis all very fine; this is the delicacy of the delicate; 'tis the taste of an effeminate fortune that disrelishes ordinary and accustomed things.

"Per qux luxuria divitiarum taedio ludit."

["By which the luxury of wealth causes tedium."—Seneca, Ep., 18.]

Not to make good cheer with what another is enjoying, and to be curious in what a man eats, is the essence of this vice:

"Si modica coenare times olus omne patella."

["If you can't be content with herbs in a small dish for supper."

—Horace, Ep., i. 5, 2.]

There is indeed this difference, that 'tis better to oblige one's appetite to things that are most easy to be had; but 'tis always vice to oblige one's self. I formerly said a kinsman of mine was overnice, who, by being in our galleys, had unlearned the use of beds and to undress when he went to sleep.

If I had any sons, I should willingly wish them my fortune. The good father that God gave me (who has nothing of me but the acknowledgment of his goodness, but truly 'tis a very hearty one) sent me from my cradle to be brought up in a poor village of his, and there continued me all the while I was at nurse, and still longer, bringing me up to the meanest and most common way of living:

"Magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter."

["A well-governed stomach is a great part of liberty."

—Seneca,Ep., 123.]

Never take upon yourselves, and much less give up to your wives, the care of their nurture; leave the formation to fortune, under popular and natural laws; leave it to custom to train them up to frugality and hardship, that they may rather descend from rigour than mount up to it. This humour of his yet aimed at another end, to make me familiar with the people and the condition of men who most need our assistance; considering that I should rather regard them who extend their arms to me, than those who turn their backs upon me; and for this reason it was that he provided to hold me at the font persons of the meanest fortune, to oblige and attach me to them.

Nor has his design succeeded altogether ill; for, whether upon the account of the more honour in such a condescension, or out of a natural compassion that has a very great power over me, I have an inclination towards the meaner sort of people. The faction which I should condemn in our wars, I should more sharply condemn, flourishing and successful; it will somewhat reconcile me to it, when I shall see it miserable and overwhelmed. How willingly do I admire the fine humour of Cheilonis, daughter and wife to kings of Sparta. Whilst her husband Cleombrotus, in the commotion of her city, had the advantage over Leonidas her father, she, like a good daughter, stuck close to her father in all his misery and exile, in opposition to the conqueror. But so soon as the chance of war turned, she changed her will with the change of fortune, and bravely turned to her husband's side, whom she accompanied throughout, where his ruin carried him: admitting, as it appears to me, no other choice than to cleave to the side that stood most in need of her, and where she could best manifest her compassion. I am naturally more apt to follow the example of Flaminius, who rather gave his assistance to those who had most need of him than to those who had power to do him good, than I do to that of Pyrrhus, who was of an humour to truckle under the great and to domineer over the poor.

Long sittings at table both trouble me and do me harm; for, be it that I was so accustomed when a child, I eat all the while I sit. Therefore it is that at my own house, though the meals there are of the shortest, I usually sit down a little while after the rest, after the manner of Augustus, but I do not imitate him in rising also before the rest; on the contrary, I love to sit still a long time after, and to hear them talk, provided I am none of the talkers: for I tire and hurt myself with speaking upon a full stomach, as much as I find it very wholesome and pleasant to argue and to strain my voice before dinner.

The ancient Greeks and Romans had more reason than we in setting apart for eating, which is a principal action of life, if they were not prevented by other extraordinary business, many hours and the greatest part of the night; eating and drinking more deliberately than we do, who

perform all our actions post-haste; and in extending this natural pleasure to more leisure and better use, intermixing with profitable conversation.

They whose concern it is to have a care of me, may very easily hinder me from eating anything they think will do me harm; for in such matters I never covet nor miss anything I do not see; but withal, if it once comes in my sight, 'tis in vain to persuade me to forbear; so that when I design to fast I must be kept apart from the suppers, and must have only so much given me as is required for a prescribed collation; for if to table, I forget my resolution. When I order my cook to alter the manner of dressing any dish, all my family know what it means, that my stomach is out of order, and that I shall not touch it.

I love to have all meats, that will endure it, very little boiled or roasted, and prefer them very high, and even, as to several, quite gone. Nothing but hardness generally offends me (of any other quality I am as patient and indifferent as any man I have known); so that, contrary to the common humour, even in fish it often happens that I find them both too fresh and too firm; not for want of teeth, which I ever had good, even to excellence, and which age does not now begin to threaten; I have always been used every morning to rub them with a napkin, and before and after dinner. God is favourable to those whom He makes to die by degrees; 'tis the only benefit of old age; the last death will be so much the less painful; it will kill but a half or a quarter of a man. There is one tooth lately fallen out without drawing and without pain; it was the natural term of its duration; in that part of my being and several others, are already dead, others half dead, of those that were most active and in the first rank during my vigorous years; 'tis so I melt and steal away from myself. What a folly it would be in my understanding to apprehend the height of this fall, already so much advanced, as if it were from the very top! I hope I shall not. I, in truth, receive a principal consolation in meditating my death, that it will be just and natural, and that henceforward I cannot herein either require or hope from Destiny any other but unlawful favour. Men make themselves believe that we formerly had longer lives as well as greater stature. But they deceive themselves; and Solon, who was of those elder times, limits the duration of life to threescore and ten years. I, who have so much and so universally adored that "The mean is best," of the passed time, and who have concluded the most moderate measures to be the most perfect, shall I pretend to an immeasurable and prodigious old age? Whatever happens contrary to the course of nature may be troublesome; but what comes according to her should always be pleasant:

"Omnia, quae secundum naturam fiunt, sunt habenda in bonis."

["All things that are done according to nature

are to be accounted good."—Cicero, De Senect., c. 19.]

And so, says Plato, the death which is occasioned by wounds and diseases is violent; but that which comes upon us, old age conducting us to it, is of all others the most easy, and in some sort delicious:

"Vitam adolescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas."

["Young men are taken away by violence, old men by maturity."

—Cicero, ubi sup.]

Death mixes and confounds itself throughout with life; decay anticipates its hour, and shoulders itself even into the course of our advance. I have portraits of myself taken at five-and-twenty and five-and-thirty years of age. I compare them with that lately drawn: how many times is it no longer me; how much more is my present image unlike the former, than unlike my dying one? It is too much to abuse nature, to make her trot so far that she must be forced to leave us, and abandon our conduct, our eyes, teeth, legs, and all the rest to the mercy of a foreign and haggard countenance, and to resign us into the hands of art, being weary of following us herself.

I am not excessively fond either of salads or fruits, except melons. My father hated all sorts of sauces; I love them all. Eating too much hurts me; but, as to the quality of what I eat, I do not yet certainly know that any sort of meat disagrees with me; neither have I observed that either full moon or decrease, autumn or spring, have any influence upon me. We have in us motions that are inconstant and unknown; for example, I found radishes first grateful to my stomach, since that nauseous, and now again grateful. In several other things, I find my stomach and appetite vary after the same manner; I have changed again and again from white wine to claret, from claret to white wine.

I am a great lover of fish, and consequently make my fasts feasts and feasts fasts; and I believe what some people say, that it is more easy of digestion than flesh. As I make a conscience of eating flesh upon fish-days, so does my taste make a conscience of mixing fish and flesh; the difference betwixt them seems to me too remote.

From my youth, I have sometimes kept out of the way at meals; either to sharpen my appetite against the next morning (for, as Epicurus fasted and made lean meals to accustom his pleasure to make shift without abundance, I, on the contrary, do it to prepare my pleasure to make better and more cheerful use of abundance); or else I fasted to preserve my vigour for the service of some action of body or mind: for both the one and the other of these is cruelly dulled in me by repletion; and, above all things, I hate that foolish coupling of so healthful and sprightly a goddess with that little belching god, bloated with the fumes of his liquor—[Montaigne did not approve of coupling Bacchus with Venus.]— or to cure my sick stomach, or for want of fit company; for I say, as the same Epicurus did, that one is not so much to regard what he eats, as with whom; and I commend Chilo, that he would not engage himself to be at Periander's feast till he was first informed who were to be the other guests; no dish is so acceptable to me, nor no sauce so appetising, as that which is extracted from society. I think it more wholesome to eat more leisurely and less, and to eat oftener; but I would have appetite and hunger attended to; I should take no pleasure to be fed with three or four pitiful and

stinted repasts a day, after a medicinal manner: who will assure me that, if I have a good appetite in the morning, I shall have the same at supper? But we old fellows especially, let us take the first opportune time of eating, and leave to almanac-makers hopes and prognostics. The utmost fruit of my health is pleasure; let us take hold of the present and known. I avoid the invariable in these laws of fasting; he who would have one form serve him, let him avoid the continuing it; we harden ourselves in it; our strength is there stupefied and laid asleep; six months after, you shall find your stomach so inured to it, that all you have got is the loss of your liberty of doing otherwise but to your prejudice.

I never keep my legs and thighs warmer in winter than in summer; one simple pair of silk stockings is all. I have suffered myself, for the relief of my colds, to keep my head warmer, and my belly upon the account of my colic: my diseases in a few days habituate themselves thereto, and disdained my ordinary provisions: we soon get from a coif to a kerchief over it, from a simple cap to a quilted hat; the trimmings of the doublet must not merely serve for ornament: there must be added a hare's skin or a vulture's skin, and a cap under the hat: follow this gradation, and you will go a very fine way to work. I will do nothing of the sort, and would willingly leave off what I have begun. If you fall into any new inconvenience, all this is labour lost; you are accustomed to it; seek out some other. Thus do they destroy themselves who submit to be pestered with these enforced and superstitious rules; they must add something more, and something more after that; there is no end on't.

For what concerns our affairs and pleasures, it is much more commodious, as the ancients did, to lose one's dinner, and defer making good cheer till the hour of retirement and repose, without breaking up a day; and so was I formerly used to do. As to health, I since by experience find, on the contrary, that it is better to dine, and that the digestion is better while awake. I am not very used to be thirsty, either well or sick; my mouth is, indeed, apt to be dry, but without thirst; and commonly I never drink but with thirst that is created by eating, and far on in the meal; I drink pretty well for a man of my pitch: in summer, and at a relishing meal, I do not only exceed the limits of Augustus, who drank but thrice precisely; but not to offend Democritus rule, who forbade that men should stop at four times as an unlucky number, I proceed at need to the fifth glass, about three half-pints; for the little glasses are my favourites, and I like to drink them off, which other people avoid as an unbecoming thing. I mix my wine sometimes with half, sometimes with the third part water; and when I am at home, by an ancient custom that my father's physician prescribed both to him and himself, they mix that which is designed for me in the buttery, two or three hours before 'tis brought in. 'Tis said that Cranabs, king of Attica, was the inventor of this custom of diluting wine; whether useful or no, I have heard disputed. I think it more decent and wholesome for children to drink no wine till after sixteen or eighteen years of age. The most usual and common method of living is the most becoming; all particularity, in my opinion, is to be avoided; and I should as much hate a German who mixed water with his wine, as I should a Frenchman who drank it pure. Public usage gives the law in these things.

I fear a mist, and fly from smoke as from the plague: the first repairs I fell upon in my own house were the chimneys and houses of office, the common and insupportable defects of all

old buildings; and amongst the difficulties of war I reckon the choking dust they made us ride in a whole day together. I have a free and easy respiration, and my colds for the most part go off without offence to the lungs and without a cough.

The heat of summer is more an enemy to me than the cold of winter; for, besides the incommodity of heat, less remediable than cold, and besides the force of the sunbeams that strike upon the head, all glittering light offends my eyes, so that I could not now sit at dinner over against a flaming fire.

To dull the whiteness of paper, in those times when I was more wont to read, I laid a piece of glass upon my book, and found my eyes much relieved by it. I am to this hour—to the age of fifty-four—Ignorant of the use of spectacles; and I can see as far as ever I did, or any other. 'Tis true that in the evening I begin to find a little disturbance and weakness in my sight if I read, an exercise I have always found troublesome, especially by night. Here is one step back, and a very manifest one; I shall retire another: from the second to the third, and so to the fourth, so gently, that I shall be stark blind before I shall be sensible of the age and decay of my sight: so artificially do the Fatal Sisters untwist our lives. And so I doubt whether my hearing begins to grow thick; and you will see I shall have half lost it, when I shall still lay the fault on the voices of those who speak to me. A man must screw up his soul to a high pitch to make it sensible how it ebbs away.

My walking is quick and firm; and I know not which of the two, my mind or my body, I have most to do to keep in the same state. That preacher is very much my friend who can fix my attention a whole sermon through: in places of ceremony, where every one's countenance is so starched, where I have seen the ladies keep even their eyes so fixed, I could never order it so, that some part or other of me did not lash out; so that though I was seated, I was never settled; and as to gesticulation, I am never without a switch in my hand, walking or riding. As the philosopher Chrysippus' maid said of her master, that he was only drunk in his legs, for it was his custom to be always kicking them about in what place soever he sat; and she said it when, the wine having made all his companions drunk, he found no alteration in himself at all; it may have been said of me from my infancy, that I had either folly or quicksilver in my feet, so much stirring and unsettledness there is in them, wherever they are placed.

'Tis indecent, besides the hurt it does to one's health, and even to the pleasure of eating, to eat greedily as I do; I often bite my tongue, and sometimes my fingers, in my haste. Diogenes, meeting a boy eating after that manner, gave his tutor a box on the ear! There were men at Rome that taught people to chew, as well as to walk, with a good grace. I lose thereby the leisure of speaking, which gives great relish to the table, provided the discourse be suitable, that is, pleasant and short.

There is jealousy and envy amongst our pleasures; they cross and hinder one another. Alcibiades, a man who well understood how to make good cheer, banished even music from the table, that it might not disturb the entertainment of discourse, for the reason, as Plato tells us, "that it is the custom of ordinary people to call fiddlers and singing men to feasts, for want of good discourse and pleasant talk, with which men of understanding know how to entertain

one another." Varro requires all this in entertainments: "Persons of graceful presence and agreeable conversation, who are neither silent nor garrulous; neatness and delicacy, both of meat and place; and fair weather." The art of dining well is no slight art, the pleasure not a slight pleasure; neither the greatest captains nor the greatest philosophers have disdained the use or science of eating well. My imagination has delivered three repasts to the custody of my memory, which fortune rendered sovereignly sweet to me, upon several occasions in my more flourishing age; my present state excludes me; for every one, according to the good temper of body and mind wherein he then finds himself, furnishes for his own share a particular grace and savour. I, who but crawl upon the earth, hate this inhuman wisdom, that will have us despise and hate all culture of the body; I look upon it as an equal injustice to loath natural pleasures as to be too much in love with them. Xerxes was a blockhead, who, environed with all human delights, proposed a reward to him who could find out others; but he is not much less so who cuts off any of those pleasures that nature has provided for him. A man should neither pursue nor avoid them, but receive them. I receive them, I confess, a little too warmly and kindly, and easily suffer myself to follow my natural propensions. We have no need to exaggerate their inanity; they themselves will make us sufficiently sensible of it, thanks to our sick wet-blanket mind, that puts us out of taste with them as with itself; it treats both itself and all it receives, one while better, and another worse, according to its insatiable, vagabond, and versatile essence:

"Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis, acescit."

["Unless the vessel be clean, it will sour whatever

you put into it."—Horace, Ep., i. 2, 54.]

I, who boast that I so curiously and particularly embrace the conveniences of life, find them, when I most nearly consider them, very little more than wind. But what? We are all wind throughout; and, moreover, the wind itself, more discreet than we, loves to bluster and shift from corner to corner, and contents itself with its proper offices without desiring stability and solidity-qualities not its own.

The pure pleasures, as well as the pure displeasures, of the imagination, say some, are the greatest, as was expressed by the balance of Critolaiis. 'Tis no wonder; it makes them to its own liking, and cuts them out of the whole cloth; of this I every day see notable examples, and, peradventure, to be desired. But I, who am of a mixed and heavy condition, cannot snap so soon at this one simple object, but that I negligently suffer myself to be carried away with the present pleasures of the, general human law, intellectually sensible, and sensibly intellectual. The Cyrenaic philosophers will have it that as corporal pains, so corporal pleasures are more powerful, both as double and as more just. There are some, as Aristotle says, who out of a savage kind of stupidity dislike them; and I know others who out of ambition do the same. Why do they not, moreover, forswear breathing? why do they not live of their own? why not refuse light, because it is gratuitous, and costs them neither invention nor exertion? Let Mars, Pallas,

or Mercury afford them their light by which to see, instead of Venus, Ceres, and Bacchus. These boastful humours may counterfeit some content, for what will not fancy do? But as to wisdom, there is no touch of it. Will they not seek the quadrature of the circle, even when on their wives? I hate that we should be enjoined to have our minds in the clouds, when our bodies are at table; I would not have the mind nailed there, nor wallow there; I would have it take place there and sit, but not lie down. Aristippus maintained nothing but the body, as if we had no soul; Zeno comprehended only the soul, as if we had no body: both of them faultily. Pythagoras, they say, followed a philosophy that was all contemplation, Socrates one that was all conduct and action; Plato found a mean betwixt the two; but they only say this for the sake of talking. The true temperament is found in Socrates; and, Plato is much more Socratic than Pythagoric, and it becomes him better. When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep. Nay, when I walk alone in a beautiful orchard, if my thoughts are some part of the time taken up with external occurrences, I some part of the time call them back again to my walk, to the orchard, to the sweetness of that solitude, and to myself.

Nature has mother-like observed this, that the actions she has enjoined us for our necessity should be also pleasurable to us; and she invites us to them, not only by reason, but also by appetite, and 'tis injustice to infringe her laws. When I see alike Caesar and Alexander, in the midst of his greatest business, so fully enjoy human and corporal pleasures, I do not say that he relaxed his mind: I say that he strengthened it, by vigour of courage subjecting those violent employments and laborious thoughts to the ordinary usage of life: wise, had he believed the last was his ordinary, the first his extraordinary, vocation. We are great fools. "He has passed his life in idleness," say we: "I have done nothing to-day." What? have you not lived? that is not only the fundamental, but the most illustrious, of your occupations. "Had I been put to the management of great affairs, I should have made it seen what I could do." "Have you known how to meditate and manage your life? you have performed the greatest work of all." In order to shew and develop herself, nature needs only fortune; she equally manifests herself in all stages, and behind a curtain as well as without one. Have you known how to regulate your conduct, you have done a great deal more than he who has composed books. Have you known how to take repose, you have done more than he who has taken empires and cities.

The glorious masterpiece of man is to live to purpose; all other things: to reign, to lay up treasure, to build, are but little appendices and props. I take pleasure in seeing a general of an army, at the foot of a breach he is presently to assault, give himself up entire and free at dinner, to talk and be merry with his friends. And Brutus, when heaven and earth were conspired against him and the Roman liberty, stealing some hour of the night from his rounds to read and scan Polybius in all security. 'Tis for little souls, buried under the weight of affairs, not from them to know how clearly to disengage themselves, not to know how to lay them aside and take them up again:

"O fortes, pejoraque passi

Mecum saepe viri! nunc vino pellite curas

Cras ingens iterabimus aequor."

["O brave spirits, who have often suffered sorrow with me, drink

cares away; tomorrow we will embark once more on the vast sea."

—Horace, Od., i. 7, 30.]

Whether it be in jest or earnest, that the theological and Sorbonnical wine, and their feasts, are turned into a proverb, I find it reasonable they should dine so much more commodiously and pleasantly, as they have profitably and seriously employed the morning in the exercise of their schools. The conscience of having well spent the other hours, is the just and savoury sauce of the dinner-table. The sages lived after that manner; and that inimitable emulation to virtue, which astonishes us both in the one and the other Cato, that humour of theirs, so severe as even to be importunate, gently submits itself and yields to the laws of the human condition, of Venus and Bacchus; according to the precepts of their sect, that require the perfect sage to be as expert and intelligent in the use of natural pleasures as in all other duties of life:

"Cui cor sapiat, ei et sapiat palatus."

Relaxation and facility, methinks, wonderfully honour and best become a strong and generous soul. Epaminondas did not think that to take part, and that heartily, in songs and sports and dances with the young men of his city, were things that in any way derogated from the honour of his glorious victories and the perfect purity of manners that was in him. And amongst so many admirable actions of Scipio the grandfather, a person worthy to be reputed of a heavenly extraction, there is nothing that gives him a greater grace than to see him carelessly and childishly trifling at gathering and selecting cockle shells, and playing at quoits,

[This game, as the "Dictionnaire de Trevoux" describes it, is one

wherein two persons contend which of them shall soonest pick up some

object.]

amusing and tickling himself in representing by writing in comedies the meanest and most popular actions of men. And his head full of that wonderful enterprise of Hannibal and Africa, visiting the schools in Sicily, and attending philosophical lectures, to the extent of arming the blind envy of his enemies at Rome. Nor is there anything more remarkable in Socrates than that, old as he was, he found time to make himself taught dancing and playing upon instruments, and thought it time well spent. This same man was seen in an ecstasy, standing upon his feet a whole day and a night together, in the presence of all the Grecian army, surprised and absorbed by some profound thought. He was the first, amongst so many valiant men of the army, to run to the relief of Alcibiades, oppressed with the enemy, to shield him with his own body, and disengage him from the crowd by absolute force of arms. It was he who, in the Delian battle, raised and saved Xenophon when fallen from his horse; and who, amongst all the people of Athens, enraged as he was at so unworthy a spectacle, first presented

himself to rescue Theramenes, whom the thirty tyrants were leading to execution by their satellites, and desisted not from his bold enterprise but at the remonstrance of Theramenes himself, though he was only followed by two more in all. He was seen, when courted by a beauty with whom he was in love, to maintain at need a severe abstinence. He was seen ever to go to the wars, and walk upon ice, with bare feet; to wear the same robe, winter and summer; to surpass all his companions in patience of bearing hardships, and to eat no more at a feast than at his own private dinner. He was seen, for seven-and-twenty years together, to endure hunger, poverty, the indocility of his children, and the nails of his wife, with the same countenance. And, in the end, calumny, tyranny, imprisonment, fetters, and poison. But was this man obliged to drink full bumpers by any rule of civility? he was also the man of the whole army with whom the advantage in drinking, remained. And he never refused to play at noisettes, nor to ride the hobby-horse with children, and it became him well; for all actions, says philosophy, equally become and equally honour a wise man. We have enough wherewithal to do it, and we ought never to be weary of presenting the image of this great man in all the patterns and forms of perfection. There are very few examples of life, full and pure; and we wrong our teaching every day, to propose to ourselves those that are weak and imperfect, scarce good for any one service, and rather pull us back; corrupters rather than correctors of manners. The people deceive themselves; a man goes much more easily indeed by the ends, where the extremity serves for a bound, a stop, and guide, than by the middle way, large and open; and according to art, more than according to nature: but withal much less nobly and commendably.

Greatness of soul consists not so much in mounting and in pressing forward, as in knowing how to govern and circumscribe itself; it takes everything for great, that is enough, and demonstrates itself in preferring moderate to eminent things. There is nothing so fine and legitimate as well and duly to play the man; nor science so arduous as well and naturally to know how to live this life; and of all the infirmities we have, 'tis the most barbarous to despise our being.

Whoever has a mind to isolate his spirit, when the body is ill at ease, to preserve it from the contagion, let him by all means do it if he can: but otherwise let him on the contrary favour and assist it, and not refuse to participate of its natural pleasures with a conjugal complacency, bringing to it, if it be the wiser, moderation, lest by indiscretion they should get confounded with displeasure. Intemperance is the pest of pleasure; and temperance is not its scourge, but rather its seasoning. Euxodus, who therein established the sovereign good, and his companions, who set so high a value upon it, tasted it in its most charming sweetness, by the means of temperance, which in them was singular and exemplary.

I enjoin my soul to look upon pain and pleasure with an eye equally regulated:

> "Eodem enim vitio est effusio animi in laetitia
>
> quo in dolore contractio,"

["For from the same imperfection arises the expansion of the

mind in pleasure and its contraction in sorrow."

—Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., iv. 31.]

and equally firm; but the one gaily and the other severely, and so far as it is able, to be careful to extinguish the one as to extend the other. The judging rightly of good brings along with it the judging soundly of evil: pain has something of the inevitable in its tender beginnings, and pleasure something of the evitable in its excessive end. Plato couples them together, and wills that it should be equally the office of fortitude to fight against pain, and against the immoderate and charming blandishments of pleasure: they are two fountains, from which whoever draws, when and as much as he needs, whether city, man, or beast, is very fortunate. The first is to be taken medicinally and upon necessity, and more scantily; the other for thirst, but not to, drunkenness. Pain, pleasure, love and hatred are the first things that a child is sensible of: if, when reason comes, they apply it to themselves, that is virtue.

I have a special vocabulary of my own; I "pass away time," when it is ill and uneasy, but when 'tis good I do not pass it away: "I taste it over again and adhere to it"; one must run over the ill and settle upon the good. This ordinary phrase of pastime, and passing away the time, represents the usage of those wise sort of people who think they cannot do better with their lives than to let them run out and slide away, pass them over, and baulk them, and, as much as they can, ignore them and shun them as a thing of troublesome and contemptible quality: but I know it to be another kind of thing, and find it both valuable and commodious, even in its latest decay, wherein I now enjoy it; and nature has delivered it into our hands in such and so favourable circumstances that we have only ourselves to blame if it be troublesome to us, or escapes us unprofitably:

"Stulti vita ingrata est, trepida est, tota in futurum fertur."

["The life of a fool is thankless, timorous, and wholly bent upon

the future."—Seneca, Ep:, 15.]

Nevertheless I compose myself to lose mine without regret; but withal as a thing that is perishable by its condition, not that it molests or annoys me. Nor does it properly well become any not to be displeased when they die, excepting such as are pleased to live. There is good husbandry in enjoying it: I enjoy it double to what others do; for the measure of its fruition depends upon our more or less application to it. Chiefly that I perceive mine to be so short in time, I desire to extend it in weight; I will stop the promptitude of its flight by the promptitude of my grasp; and by the vigour of using it compensate the speed of its running away. In proportion as the possession of life is more short, I must make it so much deeper and fuller.

Others feel the pleasure of content and prosperity; I feel it too, as well as they, but not as it passes and slips by; one should study, taste, and ruminate upon it to render condign thanks to Him who grants it to us. They enjoy the other pleasures as they do that of sleep, without knowing it. To the end that even sleep itself should not so stupidly escape from me, I have formerly caused myself to be disturbed in my sleep, so that I might the better and more sensibly relish and taste it. I ponder with myself of content; I do not skim over, but sound it; and I bend my reason, now grown perverse and peevish, to entertain it. Do I find myself in any calm composedness? is there any pleasure that tickles me? I do not suffer it to dally with my senses only; I associate my soul to it too: not there to engage itself, but therein to take delight; not there to lose itself, but to be present there; and I employ it, on its part, to view itself in this prosperous state, to weigh and appreciate its happiness and to amplify it. It reckons how much it stands indebted to God that its conscience and the intestine passions are in repose; that it has the body in its natural disposition, orderly and competently enjoying the soft and soothing functions by which He, of His grace is pleased to compensate the sufferings wherewith His justice at His good pleasure chastises us. It reflects how great a benefit it is to be so protected, that which way soever it turns its eye the heavens are calm around it. No desire, no fear, no doubt, troubles the air; no difficulty, past, present, or to, come, that its imagination may not pass over without offence. This consideration takes great lustre from the comparison of different conditions. So it is that I present to my thought, in a thousand aspects, those whom fortune or their own error carries away and torments. And, again, those who, more like to me, so negligently and incuriously receive their good fortune. Those are folks who spend their time indeed; they pass over the present and that which they possess, to wait on hope, and for shadows and vain images which fancy puts before them:

"Morte obita quales fama est volitare figuras,

Aut quae sopitos deludunt somnia sensus:"

["Such forms as those which after death are reputed to hover about,

or dreams which delude the senses in sleep."—AEneid, x. 641.]

which hasten and prolong their flight, according as they are pursued. The fruit and end of their pursuit is to pursue; as Alexander said, that the end of his labour was to labour:

"Nil actum credens, cum quid superesset agendum."

["Thinking nothing done, if anything remained to be done.

—"Lucan, ii. 657.]

For my part then, I love life and cultivate it, such as it has pleased God to bestow it upon us. I do not desire it should be without the necessity of eating and drinking; and I should think it a not less excusable failing to wish it had been twice as long;

"Sapiens divitiarum naturalium quaesitor acerrimus:"

["A wise man is the keenest seeker for natural riches."

—Seneca, Ep., 119.]

nor that we should support ourselves by putting only a little of that drug into our mouths, by which Epimenides took away his appetite and kept himself alive; nor that we should stupidly beget children with our fingers or heels, but rather; with reverence be it spoken, that we might voluptuously beget them with our fingers and heels; nor that the body should be without desire and without titillation. These are ungrateful and wicked complaints. I accept kindly, and with gratitude, what nature has done for me; am well pleased with it, and proud of it. A man does wrong to that great and omnipotent giver to refuse, annul, or disfigure his gift: all goodness himself, he has made everything good:

"Omnia quae secundum naturam sunt, aestimatione digna sunt."

["All things that are according to nature are worthy of esteem."

—Cicero, De Fin., iii. 6.]

Of philosophical opinions, I preferably embrace those that are most solid, that is to say, the most human and most our own: my discourse is, suitable to my manners, low and humble: philosophy plays the child, to my thinking, when it puts itself upon its Ergos to preach to us that 'tis a barbarous alliance to marry the divine with the earthly, the reasonable with the unreasonable, the severe with the indulgent, the honest with the dishonest. That pleasure is a brutish quality, unworthy to be tasted by a wise man; that the sole pleasure he extracts from the enjoyment of a fair young wife is a pleasure of his conscience to perform an action according to order, as to put on his boots for a profitable journey. Oh, that its followers had no more right, nor nerves, nor vigour in getting their wives' maidenheads than in its lesson.

This is not what Socrates says, who is its master and ours: he values, as he ought, bodily pleasure; but he prefers that of the mind as having more force, constancy, facility, variety, and dignity. This, according to him, goes by no means alone—he is not so fantastic—but only it goes first; temperance with him is the moderatrix, not the adversary of pleasure. Nature is a gentle guide, but not more sweet and gentle than prudent and just.

"Intrandum est in rerum naturam, et penitus,

quid ea postulet, pervidendum."

["A man must search into the nature of things, and fully examine

what she requires."—Cicero, De Fin., V. 16.]

I hunt after her foot throughout: we have confounded it with artificial traces; and that academic and peripatetic good, which is "to live according to it," becomes on this account hard to limit and explain; and that of the Stoics, neighbour to it, which is "to consent to nature." Is it not an error to esteem any actions less worthy, because they are necessary? And yet they will not take it out of my head, that it is not a very convenient marriage of pleasure with necessity, with which, says an ancient, the gods always conspire. To what end do we dismember by divorce a building united by so close and brotherly a correspondence? Let us, on the contrary, confirm it by mutual offices; let the mind rouse and quicken the heaviness of the body, and the body stay and fix the levity of the soul:

"Qui, velut summum bonum, laudat animac naturam, et, tanquam malum,

naturam carnis accusat, profectd et animam carnatiter appetit, et

carnem carnaliter fugit; quoniam id vanitate sentit humans, non

veritate divina."

["He who commends the nature of the soul as the supreme good, and

condemns the nature of the flesh as evil, at once both carnally

desires the soul, and carnally flies the flesh, because he feels

thus from human vanity, not from divine truth."

—St. Augustin, De Civit. Dei, xiv. 5.]

In this present that God has made us, there is nothing unworthy our care; we stand accountable for it even to a hair; and is it not a commission to man, to conduct man according to his condition; 'tis express, plain, and the very principal one, and the Creator has seriously and strictly prescribed it to us. Authority has power only to work in regard to matters of common judgment, and is of more weight in a foreign language; therefore let us again charge at it in this place:

"Stultitiae proprium quis non dixerit, ignave et contumaciter

facere, quae facienda sunt; et alio corpus impellere, alio animum;

distrahique inter diversissimos motus?"

["Who will not say, that it is the property of folly, slothfully and

contumaciously to perform what is to be done, and to bend the body

one way and the mind another, and to be distracted betwixt wholly

different motions?"—Seneca, Ep., 74.]

To make this apparent, ask any one, some day, to tell you what whimsies and imaginations he put into his pate, upon the account of which he diverted his thoughts from a good meal, and regrets the time he spends in eating; you will find there is nothing so insipid in all the dishes at your table as this wise meditation of his (for the most part we had better sleep than wake to the purpose we wake); and that his discourses and notions are not worth the worst mess there. Though they were the ecstasies of Archimedes himself, what then? I do not here speak of, nor mix with the rabble of us ordinary men, and the vanity of the thoughts and desires that divert us, those venerable souls, elevated by the ardour of devotion and religion, to a constant and conscientious meditation of divine things, who, by the energy of vivid and vehement hope, prepossessing the use of the eternal nourishment, the final aim and last step of Christian desires, the sole constant, and incorruptible pleasure, disdain to apply themselves to our necessitous, fluid, and ambiguous conveniences, and easily resign to the body the care and use of sensual and temporal pasture; 'tis a privileged study. Between ourselves, I have ever observed supercelestial opinions and subterranean manners to be of singular accord.

AEsop, that great man, saw his master piss as he walked: "What then," said he, "must we drop as we run?" Let us manage our time; there yet remains a great deal idle and ill employed. The mind has not willingly other hours enough wherein to do its business, without disassociating itself from the body, in that little space it must have for its necessity. They would put themselves out of themselves, and escape from being men. It is folly; instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts; instead of elevating, they lay themselves lower. These transcendental humours affright me, like high and inaccessible places; and nothing is hard for me to digest in the life of Socrates but his ecstasies and communication with demons; nothing so human in Plato as that for which they say he was called divine; and of our sciences, those seem to be the most terrestrial and low that are highest mounted; and I find nothing so humble and mortal in the life of Alexander as his fancies about his immortalisation. Philotas pleasantly quipped him in his answer; he congratulated him by letter concerning the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, which had placed him amongst the gods: "Upon thy account I am glad of it, but the men are to be pitied who are to live with a man, and to obey him, who exceeds and is not contented with the measure of a man:"

"Diis to minorem quod geris, imperas."

["Because thou carriest thyself lower than the gods, thou rulest."

—Horace, Od., iii. 6, 5.]

The pretty inscription wherewith the Athenians honoured the entry of Pompey into their city is conformable to my sense: "By so much thou art a god, as thou confessest thee a man." 'Tis an absolute and, as it were, a divine perfection, for a man to know how loyally to enjoy his being. We seek other conditions, by reason we do not understand the use of our own; and go out of ourselves, because we know not how there to reside. 'Tis to much purpose to go upon stilts, for, when upon stilts, we must yet walk with our legs; and when seated upon the most elevated throne in the world, we are but seated upon our breech. The fairest lives, in my opinion, are those which regularly accommodate themselves to the common and human model without miracle, without extravagance. Old age stands a little in need of a more gentle treatment. Let us recommend that to God, the protector of health and wisdom, but let it be gay and sociable:

"Frui paratis et valido mihi

Latoe, dones, et precor, integra

Cum mente; nec turpem senectam

Degere, nec Cithara carentem."

["Grant it to me, Apollo, that I may enjoy my possessions in good

health; let me be sound in mind; let me not lead a dishonourable

old age, nor want the cittern."—Horace, Od., i. 31, 17.]

Or:

["Grant it to me, Apollo, that I may enjoy what I have in good

health; let me be sound in body and mind; let me live in honour when

old, nor let music be wanting."]

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