

Foundations of Western Culture II: Renaissance to Modernity

III. MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAYS* :

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THE ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE
Adapted from the Cotton translation by A.C. Kibel

Lecture #3 – Of Repentance

Others form man; I recount him and portray a particular one, very ill-formed, and whom I should certainly make very different from what he is if I had to model him anew: but that's past recalling. Now, though the features of my picture alter and change, it is not, however, unlike: the world eternally turns round; all things therein are incessantly moving, the earth, the rocks of Caucasus, and the pyramids of Egypt, both with the common motion and their own. Stability itself is no other but a slower and more languishing motion. I cannot fix my object; it is always tottering and reeling by a natural giddiness. I take it in this condition just as it is at the moment I am considering it. I do not paint its being, I paint its passage; not a passing from one age to another, or, as people say, from seven to seven years, but from day to day, from minute to minute. I must accommodate my history to the moment: I may presently change, not only by fortune, but also by intention. It is a record of various and changeable accidents, of irresolute imaginations, and sometimes contrary ideas: whether it be that I am then another self or that I grasp a subject in other circumstances and see it from a different viewpoint: so it may be that I contradict myself, but, as Demades said, I never contradict the truth. Could my mind take firm footing, I would not essay but decide: but it is always apprenticeship and on trial.

I set forth a life ordinary and without luster: it is all one. All moral philosophy may as well be applied to a common and private life, as to one of richer composition: every man carries the entire form of human condition. Authors communicate themselves to the people by some especial and extrinsic mark; I, the first of any, by my entire being; as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer. If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that it do not so much as think of itself. But is it reasonable, that being so retired in my private life, I should aspire to recommend myself to the knowledge of the public? And is it also reasonable that I should produce to the world, where artfulness and practices have so much credit and authority, some crude and simple products of nature and of a weak nature to boot? Is it not to build a wall without stone or brick, or some such thing, to write books without learning and without art? The *motifs* of music are conducted by art; mine by chance. I have this, at least, according to the rules, that never any man treated of a subject he better understood and knew, than I what I have undertaken, and that in this I am the most learned man alive: next, that never any man penetrated farther into his matter, nor better and more distinctly sifted the parts and sequences of it, nor ever more exactly and fully arrived at the end he proposed to himself. To perfect it, I need bring nothing but fidelity to the work; and that is there, and the most pure and sincere that is anywhere to be found. I speak truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more, as I grow older; for, methinks, custom allows to age more liberty of prating, and more indiscretion of talking of oneself. That cannot fall out here, which I often see elsewhere, that the work and the artificer contradict

one another: ACan a man of such interesting conversation have written such a stupid book?@ Or AHow have such learned writings proceeded from a man of such feeble conversation?@ He who talks at a very ordinary rate and writes rare matter, it is to say that his capacity is borrowed and not his own. A learned man is not learned in all things but an accomplished man is accomplished in general, and is accomplished in ignorance as well; here my book and I go hand in hand together. Elsewhere men may commend or censure the work, without reference to the workman; here they cannot: who touches the one, touches the other. He who shall judge of it without knowing it will more wrong himself than me; he who comes to know it gives me all the satisfaction I desire. I shall be happy beyond my desert, if I can obtain only thus much from the public approval, as to make men of understanding perceive that I was capable of profiting from learning, if I had had any; and that I deserved to have been assisted by a better memory.

Let me here excuse what I often repeat, that I very rarely repent, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not as the conscience of an angel, or that of a horse, but as the conscience of a man, always adding this clause, not in ceremony, but in true and real modesty, that I speak as an ignorant inquirer, purely and simply referring myself to the common and accepted beliefs for doctrine. I do not teach, I only relate.

There is no vice that is absolutely a vice which does not offend, and that a sound judgment does not accuse; for there is in it so manifest a deformity and inconvenience, that perhaps they are in the right who say that it is chiefly begotten by stupidity and ignorance, so hard is it to imagine that a man can know it without hating it. Malice sucks up the greatest part of its own venom, and poisons itself. Vice leaves repentance in the soul, like an ulcer in the flesh, which is always scratching and lacerating itself; for reason effaces all other grief and sorrows, but it begets that of repentance, which is so much the more grievous, because it springs within, as the cold and heat of fevers are more sharp than those that only strike upon the outward skin. I hold for vices (but each one according to its measure) not only those which reason and nature condemn but also those which the opinion of men, though false and erroneous, have made such, if authorized by law and custom.

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

To ground the recompense of virtuous actions upon the approbation of others is too uncertain and unsafe a foundation, especially in so corrupt and ignorant an age as this, wherein the good opinion of people is a bad sign. Upon whom can you rely to see what is worthy of praise? God defend me from being an honest man, according to the descriptions of honor I daily see every one make of himself. [AWhat were vices are now virtuous practices.@ -- Seneca] Some of my friends have at times schooled and scolded me with great sincerity and plainness, either of their own voluntary motion, or by me entreated to it as to an office, which to a well-composed soul surpasses not only in utility, but in kindness all other offices of friendship: I have always received them with the most open arms, both of courtesy and acknowledgment; but, to say the truth, I have often found so much false measure, both in their reproaches and praises, that I had not done much wrong to do wrong rather than to do good according to

their notions. We, who live private lives, not exposed to any other view than our own, ought chiefly to have a settled pattern within ourselves by which to test our actions; and according to that, sometimes to encourage and sometimes to correct ourselves. I have my laws and my court to judge of myself, and apply myself more to these than to anything else: I do, indeed, restrain my actions according to others; but extend them not by any other rule than my own. You yourself only know if you are cowardly and cruel, loyal and devout: others see you not, and only guess at you by uncertain conjectures, and do not so much see your nature as your art; rely not therefore upon their opinions, but stick to your own: [AYou must use your own judgment; your own conscience weighs heaviest in deciding your virtues. Take it away, and everything falls.--Cicero@]

But the saying that repentance immediately follows the sin seems not to consider sin in its robes of state, lodged in us as if it were master in its own habitation. One may disown and retract the vices that surprise us, and to which we are hurried by passions; but those which by long habit are rooted in a strong and vigorous will are not subject to contradiction. Repentance is nothing but a disavowal of our will and an opposition to our fancies, which leads us which way it pleases. It makes this person disown his former virtue and continency: [AWhy had I not in youth the mind I have today? Or why have desires now come when youth has flown away?@ -- Horace]

=Tis a rare life that maintains itself in due order in private. Every one may juggle his part, and represent an honest man upon the stage: but within, and in his own bosom, where all may do as they wish, where all is concealed, to be regularBthere=s the point. The next degree is to be so in his house, and in his ordinary actions, for which we are accountable to none, and where there is no study nor artifice. And therefore Bias, setting forth the excellent state of a private family, says: Ait is one whose master is the same within, by his own virtue and temper, as he is public, for fear of the laws and report of men.@ And it was a worthy saying of Julius Drusus, to the masons who offered him, for three thousand crowns, to put his house in such a posture that his neighbors should no longer be able to see into it as before; AI will give you,@ said he, Asix thousand to make it so that everybody may see into every room.@ it is honorably recorded of Agesilaus, that he used in his journeys always to take up his lodgings in temples, to the end that the people and the gods themselves might pry into his most private actions. Some have been a miracle to the world, whose wives and servants have never seen anything much remarkable; few men have been admired by their own households.

No one was ever a prophet, not merely in his own house, but in his own country, says the experience of histories: it is the same in things of no importance, and in this low example the image of a greater is to be seen. In my country of Gascony, they look upon it as a joke to see me in print; the further off I am read from my own home, the better I am esteemed. I am driven to purchase printers in Guienne; elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this sort of thing people who conceal themselves present and living rest their hopes of obtaining a name when they are absent and dead. I had rather have less of admiration, and do not expose myself to the world upon any other account than my present share; when I leave the world, I call it quits for the rest. See this functionary whom the people escort in state, with wonder and applause, to his very door; he puts off the pageant with his robe, and falls so much the lower by how much he was higher exalted: in himself within, all is tumult and degraded. And though all should be regular there, it will require a vivid and well-chosen judgment to perceive it in these low and private actions; to which may be added, that order is a dull, somber virtue. To brave enemy fire, conduct an embassy, govern a people, are actions of renown. To scold, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and gently and justly converse with a man=s own family, and with himself; not to indulge ourselves, not to be false to ourselvesBthese are more rare and hard, and less noticeable.

All of which means that retired lives, whatever, is said to the contrary, undergo duties of as great or greater difficulty than public lives do; and private men, says Aristotle, serve virtue more painfully and highly, than those in authority: we prepare ourselves for eminent occasions, more out of glory than

conscience. The shortest way to arrive at glory, would be to do that for conscience which we do for glory: and the virtue of Alexander appears to me of much less vigor in his great theater, than that of Socrates in his mean and obscure employment. I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander, but I cannot imagine Alexander in the place of Socrates. If you ask the one what he can do, he will answer, *Subdue the world*: if you ask the other, he will say, *Carry on human life conformably with its natural condition*: a much more general, weighty, and legitimate knowledge than the other.

The virtue of the soul does not consist in flying high, but in walking at an orderly pace; its greatness does not exercise itself in greatness but in mediocrity. As they who judge and try us within make no great account of the luster of our public actions and see they are only streaks and rays of clear water springing from a slimy and muddy bottom, so they who judge us by this gallant outward appearance draw inferences about our internal constitution and cannot associate ordinary faculties like their own with these outward faculties that astonish them and are so far beyond their scope. In like manner, we give savage forms to demons: and who does not give Tamerlane great eyebrows, wide nostrils, a dreadful visage, and a prodigious stature, according to the imagination he has conceived by the report of his name? Had any one formerly brought me to Erasmus, I should hardly have believed that he spoke anything but wisdom and wise sayings to his servant or his hostess. We much more aptly imagine a workman upon his toilet-seat or upon his wife than a great president, venerable by his bearing and authority. We fancy that such as he, from their high tribunals, will not lower themselves so much as to live.

As vicious souls are often incited by some foreign impulse to do well, so are virtuous souls to do ill; they are therefore to be judged by their settled state, when they are at home, whenever that may be; and, at all events, when they are nearer repose, and in their native station. Natural inclinations are much assisted and fortified by education: but they are seldom overcome or changed by it. A thousand natures of my time have escaped through the bars of training to their inherent virtue or vice. Such original qualities are not to be rooted out; they may be covered and concealed. The Latin tongue is as it were natural to me; I understand it better than French, although I have not been used to speak it, nor hardly to write it these forty years. Yet, upon extreme and sudden emotions which I have fallen into twice or thrice in my life, and once, seeing my father in perfect health fall upon me in a swoon, I have always uttered my first outcries and ejaculations in Latin; nature starting up, and forcibly expressing itself, in spite of so long a discontinuation; and this example is said of many others.

They who in my time have attempted to correct the manners of the world by new opinions, reform superficial vices but the essential vices they leave as they were, if indeed, they do not increase them; and increase is to be feared. We defer all other well-doing upon the account of these external reforms, of less cost and greater show, and thereby offer expiation on the cheap for the natural consubstantial and internal vices. Look a little into our experience: there is no man, if he listen to himself, who does not in himself discover a particular and governing pattern of his own, a ruling pattern that both struggles against his education and also wrestles with the tempest of passions that oppose it. For my part, I seldom find myself agitated with surprises; I always find myself in my place, as heavy and unwieldy bodies do. If I am not at home, I am always near at hand; my dissipations do not transport me very far. There is nothing very strange nor extreme about them; and I also have sound and vigorous recoveries.

The real condemnation that touches the common practice of men is that their everyday privacy itself is full of filth and corruption; the idea of their reformation blurred; their repentance almost as sick and faulty as their sin. Some, either from having been tied to vice by natural attachment or long practice, cannot see its deformity. Others (and I am one of their body) do indeed feel the weight of vice, but they counterbalance it with pleasure, or some other occasion, and suffer and lend themselves to it for a certain price, but viciously and basely. Yet there might, haply, be imagined so vast a disproportion of measure that the pleasure itself might justly excuse the sin, as we say that utility may, but in this case without

taking the utility of its gains into account B a case where the pleasure did not follow from sin, as money from theft, but lay in the very exercise of sin, as in the enjoyment of women, where the temptation is violent, and, as it is said, sometimes not to be overcome.

Being the other day at Armaignac, on the estate of a kinsman of mine, I there saw a country fellow who was by every one nicknamed the Thief. He thus related the story of his life; that being born a beggar, and finding that he should not be able, so as to be clear of poverty, to get his living by the sweat of his brow, he resolved to turn thief, and by means of his strength of body, had exercised this trade all the time of his youth in great security; for he ever made his harvest and vintage in other men's grounds, but a great way off, and in so great quantities, that it was not to be imagined one man could have carried away so much in one night upon his shoulders; and, moreover, was careful equally to divide and distribute the mischief he did, that the loss was of less importance to every particular man. He is now grown old, and rich for a man of his condition, thanks to his trade, which he openly confesses to every one. And to make his peace with God, he says, that he is daily ready by good offices to make satisfaction to the successors of those he has robbed, and if he do not finish (for to do it all at once he is not able) he will then leave it in charge to his heirs to perform the rest, proportionably to the wrong he himself only knows he has done to each. By this description, true or false, this man looks upon theft as a dishonest action, and hates it, but less than poverty; he repents of it by itself, but to the extent he has thus recompensed, he repents not. This is not that habit which incorporates us into vice, and conforms even our understanding itself to it; nor is it that impetuous whirlwind that by gusts troubles and blinds our souls and for the time precipitates us, judgment and all, into the power of vice.

I customarily do what I do thoroughly and in a single step; I have rarely any movement that hides itself from my reason and that does not proceed in the matter by the consent of all my faculties, without division or internal sedition. My judgment takes all the blame or all the praise for it; and the blame it once has, it has always; for almost from my infancy it has ever been one; the same inclination, the same turn, the same force; and as to universal opinions, I fixed myself from my childhood in the place where I resolved to stick. There are some sins that are impetuous, prompt, and sudden; let us set them aside; but as for these other sins so often repeated, deliberated, and contrived, whether sins of our make-up or sins of profession and vocation, I cannot conceive that they should have so long been settled in the same resolution, unless the reason and conscience of him who has them be constant to have them; and the repentance he boasts to be inspired with on a sudden, is very hard for me to imagine or form. I follow not the opinion of the Pythagorean sect, that men take up a new soul when they repair to the images of the gods to receive their oracles, unless he mean that it must indeed be extrinsic, new, and lent just for the moment, our own showing so little sign of purification and cleanness fit for the occasion. They act quite contrary to the Stoical precepts, which do indeed, command us to correct the imperfections and vices we know ourselves guilty of but forbid us therefore to grieve about them and disturb the repose of our souls; in contrast, some men make us believe that they have great grief and remorse within; but of amendment, correction, or interruption, they make nothing appear.

It cannot be a cure if the malady be not wholly discharged; if repentance were laid upon the scale of the balance, it would weigh down sin. I find no quality so easy to counterfeit as piety, if men do not conform their manners and life to it. Its essence is abstruse and occult; its appearances easy and showy. For my own part, I may desire in general to be other than I am; I may condemn and dislike my whole form, and beg of Almighty God for an entire reformation, and that He will please to pardon my natural infirmity: but I ought not to call this repentance, methinks, no more, than the being dissatisfied that I am not an angel or Cato. My actions are regular, and conformable with what I am, and to my condition. I can do no better; and repentance does not properly touch things that are not in our power; this is the domain of regret. I imagine an infinite number of natures more elevated and regular than mine; and yet I do not for all that improve my faculties, no more than my arm or mind grows more strong and vigorous for imagining another to be so. If just imagining and wishing a nobler way of acting than ours produced a

repentance of our own, we must then repent us of our most innocent actions, since as we may suppose that in a more excellent nature they would have been carried on with greater dignity and perfection; and we would that ours were so. When I compare the behavior of my youth with that of my old age, I find that I have commonly behaved myself with equal order in both, according to what I understand: and this is all that my resistance can ever do. I do not flatter myself; in the same circumstances I should again do what I did before. It is not a patch, but rather an universal tincture, with which I am stained. I know no repentance, superficial, half-way and ceremonious; it must sting me all over before I can call it so, and must prick my bowels as deeply and universally as God sees into me.

As to business, many excellent opportunities have escaped me for want of good management; and yet my deliberations were sound enough, according to the occurrences presented to me: it is their way to choose always the easiest and safest course. I find that, in my former resolves, I have proceeded with discretion, according to my own rule, and according to the state of the subject proposed, and should do the same a thousand years hence in similar situations. I do say this in respect of how these things appear to me now (in light of how they actually turned out) but in respect of how they appeared then, when I deliberated on them: the force of all counsel consists in the time; occasions and things eternally shift and change. I have in my life committed some important errors, not for want of good understanding, but for want of good luck. There are secret, and not to be foreseen, parts in matters we have in hand, especially in the nature of men; mute conditions, that make no show, unknown sometimes even to the possessors themselves, that spring and start up by incidental occasions; if my prudence could not penetrate into nor foresee them, I blame it not: it is commissioned no further than its own limits; if the outcome be too hard for me, and take the side I have refused, there is no remedy; I do not blame myself, I accuse my fortune, and not my work; this cannot be called repentance.

Phocion, having given the Athenians an advice that was not followed, and the affair nevertheless succeeding contrary to his opinion, some one said to him; AWell, Phocion, art thou content that matters go so well?@ AI am very well content,@ replied he, Athat this has happened so well, but I do not repent that I counseled the other.@ When any of my friends address themselves to me for advice, I give it candidly and clearly, without hesitating, as almost all other men do, at the chance that the things may fall out contrary to my opinion and that I may be reproached for my counsel; I am very indifferent as to that, for the fault will be theirs for having consulted me, and I could not refuse them that office.

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

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

As to the rest, I abominate that incidental repentance which old age brings along with it. He, who said of old, that he was obliged to his age for having weaned him from pleasure, was of another opinion than I am; I can never think myself beholden to impotency, for any good it can do to me; Nor will Providence be so hostile to her work that debility will be ranked with the best things@ [Quintillian] Our appetites are rare in old age; a profound satiety seizes us after the act; in this I see nothing of conscience; chagrin and weakness imprint in us a drowsy and rheumatic virtue. We must not suffer ourselves to be so wholly carried away by natural alterations as to let them warp our judgments. Youth and pleasure had not formerly prevailed so far with me that I did not well enough discern the face of vice in pleasure; neither does the distaste that years have brought me so far prevail with me that I cannot discern pleasure in vice. Now that I am no more in my flourishing age, I judge as well of these things as if I were. I, who narrowly and strictly examine it, find my reason the very same it was in my most licentious age, except, perhaps, that it is weaker and more decayed by being grown older; and I find that the pleasure it refuses me upon the account of my bodily health it would no more refuse now in consideration of my spiritual health than it would refuse them at any time before. I do not repute it the more valiant for being less able in combat; my temptations are so broken and mortified, that they are not worth its opposition; I can repel them bare-handed. If my reason should have to confront my former lust, I fear it would have less power to resist it than heretofore; I do not discern that in itself it judges anything otherwise now, than it formerly did, nor that it has acquired any new light: wherefore, if there be convalescence, it is an enchanted one.

Miserable kind of remedy, to owe one's health to one's disease! it is not our misfortune that should perform this office, but the good fortune of our judgment. I cannot be made to do anything by persecutions and afflictions but to curse them: I am not one of those who can be roused but by a whip. My reason is much more free in prosperity and much more distracted by digesting pains than pleasures: I see best in a clear sky; health admonishes me more cheerfully, and to better purpose, than sickness. I did all that in me lay to reform and regulate myself from pleasures, at a time when I had health and vigor to enjoy them; I should be ashamed and envious, that the misery and misfortune of my old age should have credit over my good, healthful, sprightly, and vigorous years; and that men should estimate me, not by what I have been, but by what I have ceased to be.

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

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

OF DIVERSION

I was once employed in consoling a lady truly afflicted (for most of women=s mournings are artificial and ceremonious): [AA woman has ever a fountain of tears ready to gush up whenever she requires to make use of them.--Juvenal, vi. 272.] A man goes the wrong way to work when he opposes this passion; for opposition does but irritate and make those who mourn more obstinate in sorrow; the evil is exasperated by discussion. We see this sort of effect in common discourse: what I have indifferently let fall from me, if any one takes it up to controvert it, I justify it with the best arguments I have, and much more a thing wherein I had a real interest. And besides, in so doing you enter roughly upon your operation, whereas the first addresses of a physician to his patient should be gracious, gay, and pleasing; for never did any ill-looking, morose physician do any good. On the contrary, then, a man should, at the first approaches, encourage their grief and express some approbation of their sorrow. By this intelligence you obtain credit to proceed further, and by a facile and insensible gradation fall into discourses more solid and proper for their cure.

Since my aim was principally to deceive the company who had their eyes fixed upon me, I took it into my head only to soothe the effects of the disease. And indeed I have found by experience that I have an unlucky hand in persuading. My arguments are either too sharp and dry, or pressed too roughly, or not home enough. After I had some time applied myself to her grief, I did not attempt to cure her by strong and lively reasons, either because I had them not at hand, or because I thought to do my business better another way; neither did I make choice of any of those methods of consolation which philosophy prescribes: that what we complain of is no evil, according to Cleanthes; that it is a light evil, according to the Peripatetics; that to bemoan one's self is an action neither commendable nor just, according to Chrysippus; nor this of Epicurus, more suitable to my way, of shifting the thoughts from afflicting things to those that are pleasing; nor making a bundle of all these together, to make use of upon occasion, according to Cicero; but, gently bending my discourse, and by little and little digressing, sometimes to subjects nearer, and sometimes more remote from the purpose, according as she was more intent on what I said, I imperceptibly led her from that sorrowful thought, and kept her calm and in good-humour whilst I

continued there. I herein made use of diversion. They who succeeded me in the same service did not, for all that, find any amendment in her, for I had not laid axe to the root.

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

This other story that follows is also of the same category. Atalanta, a virgin of excelling beauty and of wonderful disposition of body, to disengage herself from the crowd of a thousand suitors who sought her in marriage, made this proposition, that she would accept of him for her husband who should equal her in running, upon condition that they who failed should lose their lives. There were enough who thought the prize very well worth the hazard, and who suffered the cruel penalty of the contract. Hippomenes, about to make trial after the rest, made his address to the goddess of love, imploring her assistance; and she, granting his request, gave him three golden apples, and instructed him how to use them. The race beginning, as Hippomenes perceived his mistress to press hard up to him; he, as it were by chance, let fall one of these apples; the maid, taken with the beauty of it, failed not to step out of her way to pick it up: [AThe virgin, astonished and attracted by the glittering apple, stops her career, and seizes the rolling gold.@ --Ovid, *Metam.*, x. 666.]

He did the same, when he saw his time, by the second and the third, till by so diverting her, and making her lose so much ground, he won the race. When physicians cannot stop a catarrh, they divert and turn it into some other less dangerous part. And I find also that this is the most ordinary practice for the diseases of the mind: [AThe mind is sometimes to be diverted to other studies, thoughts, cares, business: in fine, we cure by change of place, as we do with sick persons when they do not become convalescent.@--Cicero, *Tusc. Quaes.*, iv. 35.] 'Tis to little effect to jostle a man's infirmities directly; we neither make him sustain nor repel the attack; we rather make him decline and evade it.

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

The poor wretches whom we see brought upon the scaffold, full of ardent devotion, and therein,

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

Subrius Flavius, being by Nero's command to be put to death, and by the hand of Niger, both of them great captains, when they lead him to the place appointed for his execution, seeing the grave that Niger had caused to be hollowed to put him into ill-made: ANeither is this,@ said he, turning to the soldiers who guarded him, Aaccording to military discipline.@ And to Niger, who exhorted him to keep his head firm: ADo but thou strike as firmly,@ said he. And he correctly guessed at Niger's failure of nerve; for Niger's arm so trembled that he had several blows at his head before he could cut it off. This man seems to have had his thoughts rightly fixed upon the subject.

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

We always think of something else; either the hope of a better life comforts and supports us, or the hope of our children's worth, or the future glory of our name, or the leaving behind the evils of this life, or the vengeance that threatens those who are the causes of our death, administers consolation to us: [AI hope, however, if the pious gods have any power, thou wilt feel thy punishment amid the rocks, and will call on the name of Dido; I shall hear, and this report will come to me below.--Aeneid, iv. 382, 387.]

Xenophon was sacrificing with a crown upon his head when one came to bring him news of the death of his son Gryllus, slain in the battle of Mantinea. At the first impact of the news, he threw his crown to the ground; but understanding by the sequel of the narrative how bravely his son had died, he took the crown up again and replaced it upon his head. Epicurus himself, at his death, consoles himself upon the utility and eternity of his writings: [AAll labors that are illustrious and famous become supportable.--Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 26.]

and the same wound, the same fatigue, is not, says Xenophon, so intolerable to a general of an army as to a common soldier. Epaminondas took his death much more cheerfully, having been informed that the victory remained to him: [AThese are sedatives and alleviations to the greatest pains.--Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., ii. 23.]

and such like circumstances amuse, divert, and turn our thoughts from the consideration of the thing in itself.

Even the arguments of philosophy are always edging and glancing on the matter, so as scarce to rub its

crust; the greatest man of the first philosophical school, and superintendent over all the rest, the great Zenon, forms this syllogism against death: A No evil is honorable; but death is honorable; therefore death is no evil; against drunkenness this: A No one commits his secrets to a drunkard; but every one commits his secrets to a wise man: therefore a wise man is no drunkard. Is this to hit the bull's-eye? I love to see that these great and leading souls cannot rid themselves of our human nature: perfect men as they are, they are yet simply men.

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

If your passion of love be too violent, disperse it, they say, and they say true; for I have often tried it with advantage: break it into several desires, of which let one be regent, if you will, over the rest; but, lest it should tyrannize and domineer over you, weaken and protract, by dividing and diverting it: and provide for it in time, lest it prove troublesome to deal with, when it has once seized you. I was once wounded with a vehement grief, and withal, more just than vehement; I might peradventure have lost myself in it, if I had merely trusted to my own strength. Having need of a powerful diversion to disengage me, by art and study I became amorous, wherein I was assisted by my youth: love relieved and rescued me from the evil wherein friendship had engaged me. 'Tis in everything else the same; a violent imagination hath seized me: I find it a nearer way to change than to subdue it: I depute, if not one contrary, yet another at least, in its place. Variation ever relieves, dissolves, and dissipates. If I am not able to contend with it, I escape from it; and in avoiding it, slip out of the way, and make, my doubles; shifting place, business, and company, I secure myself in the crowd of other thoughts and fancies, where it loses my trace, and I escape.

After the same manner nature proceeds by the benefit of inconstancy; for time, which she has given us for the sovereign physician of our passions, chiefly works by this, that supplying our imaginations with other and new affairs, it loosens and dissolves the first sensation, no matter how strong. A wise man sees his friend dying hardly less vividly at the end of five-and-twenty years than on the first year; and according to Epicurus, no less at all; for he did not attribute any alleviation of afflictions, either by reason of foreseeing them or by reason of their growing old, but so many other thoughts traverse this one over the course of time, that it languishes and tires at last.

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

A little thing will turn and divert us, because it is the little things that hold us. We do not much consider subjects in their entirety and by themselves; it is the little and superficial circumstances, or images that touch us, the outward useless rinds that peel off from the subjects themselves: [As husks we find grasshoppers leave behind them in summer. --Lucretius, v. 801.] Even Plutarch himself laments

his daughter for the little apish tricks of her infancy. The remembrance of a farewell, of the particular grace of an action, of a last recommendation, afflict us. The sight of Caesar's robe troubled all Rome, which was more than his death had done. Even the sound of names ringing in our ears, as Amy poor master, @--Amy faithful friend, @--Aalas, my dear father, @ or, Amy sweet daughter, @ afflict us. When these refrains pain me, and that I examine it a little nearer, I find 'tis no other but a grammatical and word complaint; I am only wounded with the word and tone, as the exclamations of preachers very often work more by affecting hearing than reason, and as the pitiful eyes of a beast killed for my eating; without my weighing or penetrating meanwhile into the true and solid essence of my subject: [AWith these incitements grief provokes itself. @ --Lucretius, ii. 42.] These are the foundations of our mourning.

The obstinacy of my kidney-stone to all remedies especially those in my bladder, has sometimes thrown me into so long suppressions of urine for three or four days together that it had been folly to have hoped or even to have wished to evade death, considering the miseries I endured in those cruel fits. Oh, that good emperor, who caused criminals to be tied that they might die for want of pissing, was a great master in the hangman's science! Finding myself in this condition, I considered by how trivial were the causes and objects imagination nourished in me to instill regret for losing life; of what atoms the weight and difficulty of dislodging life was composed in my soul; how many idle and frivolous thoughts we give way to in so great an affair; a dog, a horse, a book, a glass, and what not, were considered in my loss; to others their ambitious hopes, their money, their knowledge, not less foolish considerations in my opinion than mine. I looked upon death carelessly when I looked upon it universally as nothing more than the end of life. I insult over it when I see it as a whole, but in detail it domineers over me: the tears of a footman, the disposing of my clothes, the touch of a friendly hand, a common consolation, discourages me and makes me sorry for myself. So do the complaints in tragedies agitate our souls with grief; and the regrets of Dido and Ariadne in works of fiction impassionate those who do not believe in them. 'Tis a symptom of an obstinate and obdurate nature not to respond to them in this way, as 'tis reported for a miracle of Polemon; but then he did not so much as alter his countenance at the biting of a mad dog that tore away the calf of his leg. No wisdom proceeds so far as to conceive so vivid and entire a cause of sorrow simply by exercise of judgment; it has its increase by presence, when the eyes and ears have their share; organs that cannot be moved but by vain and incidental details.

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

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

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

Cambyses, from having dreamt that his brother should be one day king of Persia, put him to death: a beloved brother, and one in whom he had always confided. Aristodemus, king of the Messenians, killed himself out of a fancy of ill omen, from I know not what howling of his dogs; and King Midas did as much upon the account of some foolish dream he had dreamed. 'Tis to prize life at its just value to abandon it for a dream. And yet hear the soul triumph over the miseries and weakness of the body, which is exposed to all attacks and alterations; truly, it has a fine right to talk! *[O wretched clay, first formed by Prometheus. In his attempt, what little wisdom did he shew! In framing bodies, he did not apply his art to form the mind, which should have been his first concern.]* --Propertius, iii. 5, 7.]

OF CONSERVING YOUR WILL

Few things, in comparison of what commonly affect other men, move me, or, to say better, few things possess me: for 'tis right they should touch a man, provided they do not possess him. I am very solicitous, both by study and argument, to cultivate this privilege of insensibility, which is in me already raised to a pretty degree by nature, so that consequently I espouse and am very much moved with very few things. I have a clear sight enough, but I fix it upon very few objects; I have a sense delicate and tender enough; but an apprehension and application hard and negligent. I am very unwilling to engage myself; as much as in me lies, I employ myself wholly on myself, and even in that subject should rather choose to curb and restrain my affection from plunging itself over head and ears into it, it being a subject that I possess at the mercy of others, and over which fortune has more right than I; so that even as to health, which I so much value, 'tis all the more necessary for me not so passionately to covet and heed it, that I should find diseases insupportable. A man ought to moderate himself betwixt the hatred of pain and the love of pleasure: and Plato sets down a middle path of life betwixt the two. But against such affections as wholly carry me away from myself and fix me elsewhere, against those, I say, I oppose myself with my utmost power. 'Tis my opinion that a man should lend himself to others, and only give himself to himself. Should my will happen to lend itself out and to be swayed, I should not stick there; I am too tender both by nature and practice to engage in hot and obstinate disputes, wherein, if my adversary would at last have the better, the issue would vex me to the last degree. Should I set myself to it at the rate that others do, my soul would never have the force to bear the emotion and alarms of those who grasp at so much; it would immediately be disordered by the inward agitation that goes with such things.

If, sometimes, I have been put upon the management of other men's affairs, I have promised to take them in hand, but not into my lungs and liver; to take them upon me, but not to incorporate them; to take pains, yes, but to be impassioned about it, never; I have a care of them, but I will not sit upon them. I have enough to do to order and govern the domestic throng of those that I have in my own veins and bowels, without introducing a crowd of other outward pressures; and am sufficiently concerned about my own proper and natural business, without meddling with the concerns of others. Such as know how much they owe to themselves, and how many offices they are bound to of their own, find that nature has cut them out work enough of their own to keep them from being idle. You have enough business home: don't look away.

Men let themselves out to hire; their faculties are not for themselves, but for those to whom they have enslaved themselves; 'tis their tenants occupy them, not themselves. This common humor pleases not me. We must be thrifty of the liberty of our souls, and never lend it but upon just occasions, which are very few, if we judge aright. Do but observe such as have accustomed themselves to be at every one's call: they do it indiscriminately upon little as well as upon great, occasions; in that which does not concern them as much as in what imports them most. They thrust themselves in indifferently wherever there is work to do and obligation, and are without life when not in tumultuous bustle: [AThey are in business for business' sake.--Seneca, Ep., 22.]

It is not so much that they will go, as it is that they cannot stand still: like a rolling stone that cannot stop till it can go no further. Occupation, with a certain sort of men, is a mark of understanding and dignity: their souls seek repose in agitation, as children do by being rocked in a cradle; they may be pronounced as serviceable to their friends as they are troublesome to themselves. No one distributes his money to others, but every one distributes his time and his life: there is nothing of which we are so prodigal as of these two things, of which to be thrifty would be both commendable and useful. I am of a quite contrary humour; I look to myself, and commonly covet with no great ardor what I do desire, and desire little; and I employ myself and busy myself likewise, rarely and temperately. Whatever they take

in hand, they do it with their utmost will and vehemence. There are so many dangerous steps, that, for the more safety, we must a little lightly and superficially glide over the world, and not rush through it. Even sensual pleasure is painful in its depths: [AYou tread on fire, hidden under deceitful ashes.@ --Horace, Od., ii. i, 7.]

The Parliament of Bordeaux chose me mayor of their city at a time when I was at a distance from France, and still more remote from any such thought. I entreated to be excused, but I was told by my friends that I had committed an error in so doing, because the king had interposed his command in that affair. 'Tis an office that ought to be looked upon so much more honorable, as it has no other salary nor advantage than the bare honor of its execution. It continues two years, but may be extended by a second election, which very rarely happens; it was to me, and had never been so but twice before: some years ago to Monsieur de Lansac, and lately to Monsieur de Biron, Marshal of France, in whose place I succeeded; and, I left mine to Monsieur de Matignon, Marshal of France also: proud of such noble company. Fortune had a hand in my promotion, by this particular circumstance; for Alexander disdained the ambassadors of Corinth, who came to offer him a burgess-ship of their city; but when they proceeded to lay before him that Bacchus and Hercules were also in the register, he graciously thanked them.

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

He had heard it said that a man should forget himself for his neighbor and that the individual was of no manner of consideration in comparison with the general good. Most of the rules and precepts of the world run this way; to drive us out of ourselves into the street for the benefit of public society; they thought to do a great feat to divert and remove us from ourselves, assuming we were but too much attached to ourselves, and by a too natural inclination; and have said all they could to that purpose: for it is no new thing for the sages to preach things as they serve, not as they are. Truth has its disadvantages, inconveniences, and incompatibilities with us; we must often be deceived that we may not deceive ourselves; and shut our eyes and our understandings to redress and amend them: [AFor the ignorant judge, and therefore are often to be deceived, to prevent them from judging erroneously.@ --Quintil., Inst. Orat., xi. 17.] When they order us to love three, four, or fifty degrees of things above ourselves, they do like archers, who, to hit the bull=s-eye, take their aim a great deal higher than the target; to make a crooked stick straight, we bend it the contrary way.

I believe that in the Temple of Pallas, as we see in all other religions, there were apparent mysteries to be exposed to the people; and others, more secret and high, that were only to be shown to such as were initiated; 'tis likely that in these the true point of friendship that every one owes to himself is to be found; not a false friendship, that makes us embrace glory, knowledge, riches, and the like, with a principal and immoderate affection, as members of our being; nor a languid and indiscriminate friendship, whose effects we see in the case of ivy, which decays and ruins the walls it embraces; but a sound and

regular friendship, equally beneficial and pleasant. He who knows the duties of this friendship to oneself and practises them is truly of the cabinet of the Muses and has attained to the height of human wisdom and of our happiness; such a one, exactly knowing what he owes to himself, will on his part find that he ought to apply to himself his experience of the world and of other men; and in order to do this he will contribute to public society the duties and offices that fall to him. He who does not in some way live for others cannot live much for himself: [AHe who is his own friend, is a friend to everybody else.@ --Seneca, Ep., 6.]

The principal responsibility we each have is to rule ourselves; and 'tis for this only that we here are. As he who should forget to live a virtuous and holy life, and should think he acquitted himself of his duty in instructing and training others up to it, would be a fool; even so he who abandons his own particular healthful and pleasant living to serve others therewith, takes, in my opinion, a bad and unnatural course. I would not that men should refuse, in the employments they take upon them, their attention, pains, eloquence, sweat, and blood if need be: [AHimself not afraid to die for beloved friends, or for his country.@--Horace, Od., iv. 9, 51.] but this is only by way of loan and incidentally; his mind being always in repose and in health; not without action, but without vexation, without passion. To be simply acting costs the mind so little that it is active even sleeping; but it must be set on going with discretion, for the body receives the offices imposed upon it just according to what they are but the mind often extends and makes them heavier at its own expense, giving them what measure it pleases.

Different men perform like things with different degrees of exertion and different degrees of will and the exertion and the will each does well enough without the other; for how many people hazard themselves every day in war without any concern which way it goes; and thrust themselves into the dangers of battles, the loss of which will not break their next night's sleep? and such a man may be at home, out of a danger that he would not have had the courage to face, and he may be more passionately concerned for the issue of this war, and his soul more worked up about events than the soldier who stakes his blood and his life. I could have engaged myself in public employments without quitting my own matters a nail's breadth, and have given myself to others without robbing myself of myself. This sharpness and violence of desires more hinder than they advance the execution of what we undertake; fill us with impatience against slow or contrary events, and with heat and suspicion against those with whom we have to do. We never carry on that thing well which leads and possesses us: [AImpulse manages all things ill.@--Statius, Thebaid, x. 704.] He who therein employs only his judgment and skill proceeds more cheerfully: he counterfeits, he gives way, he defers quite at his ease, according to the necessities of occasions; he fails in his attempt without trouble and affliction, ready and entire for a new enterprise; he always walks with the bridle in his hand. In him who is intoxicated with a violent and tyrannical intention, we discover, of necessity, much imprudence and injustice; the impetuosity of his desire carries him away; these are rash motions, and, if fortune do not very much assist, of very little fruit.

Philosophy directs that, in the revenge of injuries received, we should strip ourselves of deep anger; not that the chastisement should be less, but, on the contrary, that the revenge may be the better and more heavily laid on, which, it conceives, will be by this impetuosity hindered. For anger not only disturbs, but, of itself, also wears the arms of those who chastise; this fire benumbs and wastes their force; as in precipitation, *Afestinatio tarda est,*@ (*More haste, less speed*)--haste trips up its own heels, fetters, and stops itself. For example, according to what I commonly see, avarice has no greater impediment than itself; the more bent and vigorous it is, the less it rakes together, and commonly sooner grows rich when disguised in a visor of liberality.

A very excellent gentleman, and a friend of mine, ran a risk of impairing his faculties by a too passionate attention and affection to the affairs of a certain prince his master; while that very master has thus portrayed himself to me; that he foresees the weight of accidents as well as another, but that in those for which there is no remedy, he presently resolves upon suffering; in others, having taken all the

necessary precautions which by the vivacity of his understanding he can presently do, he quietly awaits what may follow. And, in truth, I have accordingly seen this master maintain a great indifferency and liberty of actions and serenity of countenance in very great and difficult affairs: I find him much greater, and of greater capacity in adverse than in prosperous fortune; his defeats are to him more glorious than his victories, and his mourning than his triumph.

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

As to the rest, we hinder the mind's grasp and hold, in giving it so many things to seize upon; some things we should only offer to it; tie it to others, and with others incorporate it. It can feel and discern all things, but ought to feed upon nothing but itself; and should be instructed in what properly concerns itself what is properly of its own having and substance. The laws of nature teach us what justly we need. When the sages tell us that no one is poor according to nature, and that every one is so according to opinion, they very subtly distinguish between the desires that proceed from her, and those that proceed from the disorder of our own fancy: those of which we can see the end are hers; those that fly before us, and of which we can see no end, are our own. Poverty of goods is easily cured; poverty of the soul is irreparable: [AFor if what is for man enough, could be enough, it were enough; but since it is not so, how can I believe that any wealth can give my mind content?@--Lucilius apud Nonium Marcellinum, V. sec. 98.]

Socrates, seeing a great quantity of riches, jewels, and furniture carried in pomp through his city: AHow many things,@ said he, AI do not desire!@--[Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., V. 32.]--Metrodorus lived on twelve ounces a day, Epicurus upon less; Metrocles slept in winter abroad amongst sheep, in summer in the cloisters of churches: [ANature provides for all that nature Nature needs.@--Seneca, Ep., 90.] Cleanthes lived by the labor of his own hands, and boasted that Cleanthes, if he would, could yet maintain another Cleanthes.

If what nature directly and originally requires of us for the preservation of our being be too little (and in truth how little that is and how cheaply a good life may be maintained, cannot be better expressed than by this consideration, that it is so little that by its littleness it escapes the grip and shock of fortune), let us allow ourselves a little more; let us call every one of our habits and conditions ANature@; let us value and treat ourselves by this measure; let us stretch our appurtenances and accounts so far; for so far, I fancy, we have some excuse. Habit is a second nature, and no less powerful. What is wanting to my habit, I reckon is wanting to me; and I should be almost as well content that they took away my life as cut me short in the way wherein I have so long lived. I am no longer in condition for any great change, nor to put myself into a new and unwonted course, not even to augmentation. 'Tis past the time for me to become other than I am; and as I should complain of any great windfall that should now drop into my hands, that it came not in time to be enjoyed: [AWhat is the good fortune to me, if it is not granted to me to use it.@--Horace, Ep., i. 5, 12.] so should I complain of any inward acquisition.

It were almost better never, than so late, to become an honest man, and well fit to live, when one has no longer to live. I, who am about to make my exit out of the world, would easily resign to any newcomer, who should desire it, all the prudence I am now acquiring in the world's commerce; it is mustard after meat. I have no need of goods of which I can make no use; of what use is knowledge to him who has lost his head? 'Tis an injury and unkindness in fortune to tender us presents that will only inspire us with a just despite that we had them not in their due season. Guide me no more; I can no longer go. Of so many parts as make up a sufficiency, patience is the most sufficient. Give the capacity of an

excellent treble to the chorister who has rotten lungs, and eloquence to a hermit exiled into the deserts of Arabia. There needs no art to help a fall; the end finds itself by itself at the conclusion of every affair. My world is at an end, my form expired; I am totally of the past, and am bound to admit its authority and to conform my outgoing to it. I will here declare, by way of example, that the Pope's late ten days' diminution¹ has taken me so aback that I cannot well reconcile myself to it; I belong to the years wherein we counted differently. So ancient and so long a custom calls me back to it, so that I am constrained to be somewhat heretical on that point, and incapable of any innovation, however much it makes things better. My imagination, in spite of my teeth, always pushes me ten days forward or backward, and is ever murmuring in my ears: AThis rule concerns those who are just being born.@ If health itself, sweet as it is, returns to me by fits, 'tis rather to give me cause of regret than possession of it; I have no place left to keep it in. Time leaves me; without which nothing can be possessed. Oh, what little account should I make of those great elective dignities that I see in such esteem in the world, that are never conferred but upon men who are taking leave of it; wherein they do not so much regard how well the man will discharge his trust, as how short his administration will be: from the very entry they look at the exit. In short, I am about finishing this man, and not reconstructing another out of him. By long use, this form of mine is turned into substance, and chance into nature.

¹ Gregory XIII., in 1582, reformed the Calendar, and the French at once passed from the 9th to the 20th of December.

I say, therefore, that every one of us feeble creatures is excusable in thinking that to be his own which is comprised under the measure of habit. But withal, beyond these limits, 'tis nothing but confusion; this measure is the largest extent we can grant to our own claims. The more we amplify our need and our possession, so much the more do we expose ourselves to the blows of Fortune and adversities. The career of our desires ought to be circumscribed and restrained to a short limit of the nearest and most contiguous commodities; and their course ought, moreover, to be performed not in a right line, that ends somewhere else, but in a circle, of which the two points, by a short wheel, meet and terminate in ourselves.

Actions that are carried on without this reflection (a near and essential reflection, I mean), such as those of ambitious and avaricious men, who run in a straight line and whose career always carries them forward—such actions, I say, are erroneous and sickly. Most of our business is farce: *The whole world plays a part*. Petronius. We must play our part properly, but withal as a part of a borrowed personage; we must not make real essence of a mask and outward appearance; nor of a strange person, our own; we cannot distinguish the skin from the shirt: 'tis enough to put make-up on the face, without make-upping the heart. I see some who transform and transubstantiate themselves into as many new shapes and new beings as they undertake new employments; and who strut and fume even to the heart and liver, and carry their state along with them even to the shit-house: I cannot get them to distinguish the gestures of deference that are made to them from those that are made to their official rank, their subordinates, or their mule: [AThey so much give themselves up to fortune, as even to unlearn nature. @--Quintus Curtius, iii. 2.] They swell and puff up their souls, and their natural way of speaking, according to the height of their magisterial place.

The Mayor of Bordeaux and Michel de Montaigne have always been two by very manifest separation. Because we are lawyers or enterprise capitalists, we must not ignore the knavery there is in such callings; an honest man is not accountable for the vice or absurdity of his employment, and ought not on that account refuse to take the calling upon him: 'tis the usage of his country, and there is money to be got by it; a man must live by the world; and make his best of it, such as it is. But the judgment of an emperor ought to be above his empire, and should see and consider it as a foreign accident; and he ought to know how to enjoy himself apart from it, and to present himself like any Joe, at least when presenting himself to himself.

I cannot engage myself so deep and so entire; when my will puts me on one side, 'tis not with so violent an obligation that my judgment is infected with it. In the present broils of this kingdom, my own interest has not made me blind to the laudable qualities of our adversaries, nor to those that are reproachable in those men of our party. Others adore all of their own side; for my part, I do not so much as excuse most things in those of mine: a good work has never the worst grace with me for being made against me. The knot of the controversy excepted, I have always kept myself in equanimity and pure indifference: [ANor bear particular hatred beyond the necessities of war. @] for which I am pleased with myself; and the more because I see others commonly fail in the contrary direction. Such as extend their anger and hatred beyond the dispute in question, as most men do, show that they spring from some other occasion and private cause; like one who, being cured of an ulcer, has yet a fever remaining, by which it appears that the ulcer had another more concealed beginning. The reason is that the common cause has not engaged them because its adversary is wounding to the state and general interest; they are nettled only by reason of their particular concern. This is why they are so especially animated, and to a degree so far beyond justice and public reason: [AEvery one was not so much angry against things in general, as against those that particularly concern himself. @ --Livy, xxxiv. 36.]

I would have the advantage on our side; but if it be not, I shall not run mad. I am heartily for the right party; but I do not want to be taken notice of as an especial enemy to others, and beyond the general quarrel. I marvelously challenge such vicious forms of opinion as these: AHe must be of the League

because he admires the graciousness of Monsieur de Guise; he is astonished at the King of Navarre's energy, therefore he must be a Huguenot; he criticizes the king, therefore he is a rebel against France. And I did not grant to the Pope himself that he did well in condemning a book because it had placed a heretic amongst the best poets of the time. Shall we not dare to say of a thief that he has a handsome leg? If a woman be a strumpet, must it needs follow that she has a foul smell? Did they in the wisest ages revoke the proud title of Capitolinus they had before conferred on Marcus Manlius as conservator of religion and the public liberty, and stifle the memory of his liberality, his feats of arms, and military recompenses granted to his valor, because he, afterwards aspired to the sovereignty, to the prejudice of the laws of his country? If we take a hatred against a lawyer today, we will deny his eloquence tomorrow. I have elsewhere spoken of the zeal that pushed on worthy men to the like faults. For my part, I can say, ASuch an one does this thing ill, and another thing virtuously and well.@ So in foretelling good or bad outcomes to events, they would have every one blind or stupid in the party cause, and our persuasion and judgment serve not truth but the project of our desires. I should rather incline towards the other extreme; so much I fear being suborned by my desire; to which I may add that I am a little tenderly distrustful of things that I wish for.

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

Heaven never saw a greater animosity than that betwixt Caesar and Pompey, nor ever shall; and yet I observe, methinks, in those brave souls, a great moderation towards one another: it was a jealousy of honor and command, which did not transport them to a furious and indiscreet hatred, and was without malignity and detraction: in their hottest exploits upon one another, I discover some remains of respect and good-will: and am therefore of opinion that, had, it been possible, each of them would rather have done his business without the ruin of the other than with it. Take notice how much otherwise matters went with Marius and Sylla. We must not precipitate ourselves so headlong after our affections and interests. As, when I was young, I opposed myself to the progress of love which I perceived to advance too fast upon me, and had a care lest it should at last become so pleasing as to force, captivate, and wholly reduce me to its mercy: so I do the same upon all other occasions where my will is running on with too warm an appetite. I lean opposite to the side it inclines to, as I find it going to plunge and make itself drunk with its own wine; I evade nourishing its pleasure beyond the point at which I cannot recover myself without infinite loss.

Souls that, through their own stupidity, only discern things by halves, have this happiness, that hurtful things hurt them less: 'tis a spiritual leprosy that has some show of health, and such a health as philosophy does not altogether condemn; but yet we have no reason to call it wisdom, as we often do. And after this manner some one anciently mocked Diogenes, who, in the depth of winter and quite naked, went embracing a snowman for a trial of his endurance: the other seeing him in this position, AAre you now very cold?@ said he. ANot at all,@ replied Diogenes. AWhy, then,@ pursued the other, Awhy do you think it so difficult and exemplary to do what your are doing?@ To take a true measure of fortitude, one

must know what suffering is. But souls that are to meet with adverse events and the injuries of fortune, in their depth and sharpness, that are to weigh and taste them according to their natural weight and bitterness, let them show their skill in avoiding the causes and diverting the blow. What did King Cotys do? He paid liberally for the rich and beautiful vessel that had been presented to him, but, seeing it was exceedingly brittle, he immediately broke it, to prevent so easy a matter of displeasure against his servants. In like manner, I have willingly avoided all confusion in my affairs, and never coveted to have my estate contiguous to those of my relations, and such with whom I coveted a strict friendship; for thence matter of unkindness and falling out often proceeds. I formerly loved hazardous games of cards and dice; but have long since left them off, only for this reason that, with whatever good air I carried my losses, I could not help feeling vexed within. A man of honor, who ought to be sensible of the lie or of an insult, and who is not to take a scurvy excuse for satisfaction, should avoid occasions of dispute. I shun melancholy, crabbed men, as I would the plague; and in matters I cannot talk of without emotion and concern I never meddle, if not compelled by my duty: [AThey had better never to begin than to have to desist.@ --Seneca, Ep., 72.]

The surest way, therefore, is to prepare one's self beforehand for every occasion. I know very well that some wise men have taken another way, and have not feared to grapple and engage to the utmost upon several subjects. These are confident of their own strength, under which they protect themselves in all ill successes, making their patience wrestle and contend with disaster: [AAs a rock, which projects into the vast ocean, exposed to the furious winds and the raging sea, defies the force and menaces of sky and sea, itself unshaken.--Virgil, Aeneid, x. 693.]

Let us not attempt these examples; we shall never come up to them. Having screwed up their will to devote themselves entirely to their country, they set themselves resolutely, and without agitation, to behold its ruin. This is too much, and too hard a task for our commoner souls. Cato gave up the noblest life that ever was upon this account; we meaner spirits must fly from the storm as far as we can; we must try to avoid such devotions, and evade the blows we cannot meet, rather than train up patience in suffering. Zeno, seeing Chremonides, a young man whom he loved, draw near to sit down by him, suddenly started up; and Cleanthes demanding of him the reason why he did so, AI hear,@ said he, Athat physicians especially order repose, and forbid emotion in all kinds of swellings.@ Socrates does not say: ADo not surrender to the charms of beauty; stand your ground, and do your utmost to oppose it.@ AFly it,@ says he; Ashun the fight and encounter of it, as if it were a powerful poison that darts and wounds at a distance.@ And his good disciple, Xenophon, imagining or recounting, but, in my opinion, rather recounting than imagining, the rare perfections of the great Cyrus, makes Cyrus distrustful of his strength to resist the charms of the divine beauty of that illustrious Panthea, his captive, and committing the visiting and keeping her to another, who could not have so much liberty as himself. And the Holy Ghost in like manner: ALead us not into temptation.@ [St. Matthew, vi. 13.] We do not pray that our reason may overcome lust, but that it should not be so much as tried by it; that we should not be brought into a state wherein we are so much as to suffer the approaches, solicitations, and temptations of sin: and we beg of Almighty God to keep our consciences quiet, fully and perfectly delivered from all commerce of evil.

Such as say that they have conquered their passion for revenge, or any other sort of troublesome agitation of mind, often say true, as things now are, but not as they were: they speak to us now that the causes of their error have been modified by themselves; but look backward, recall these causes to their beginning, and there you will make them speechless. Will they have their faults less, for being in the past and that the sequel of an unjust beginning can be just? Whoever shall desire the good of his country, as I do, without fretting or pining himself, will be troubled, but will not swoon to see it threatening either its own ruin, or a no less ruinous continuance; poor vessel, that the waves, the winds, and the pilot toss about with such contray intentions! [*Dragged in different ways by master, waves and winds*BBuchanan]

He who does not gape after the favor of princes, as after a thing he cannot live without, does not much concern himself at the coldness of their reception and countenance, nor at the inconstancy of their

wills. He who does not brood over his children or his honors with a slavish fondness, manages to get by well enough after their loss. He who does good principally for his own satisfaction will not be much troubled to see men judge of his actions contrary to their merit. A quarter of an ounce of patience will provide sufficiently against such inconveniences. I find ease in this recipe, by myself off in the beginning as cheaply as I can; and find that by this means I have escaped much trouble and many difficulties. With very little fuss I stop the first sally of my emotions, and leave the subject that begins to be troublesome before it transports me. He who stops not their start will never be able to stop their course; he who cannot keep them out will never, get them out when they are once got in; and he who cannot get the better of them at the beginning will never do so at the end. Nor will he bear the fall who cannot sustain the push: [AFor they throw themselves headlong when once they lose their reason; and infirmity so far indulges itself, and from want of prudence is carried out into deep water, nor finds a place to shelter it.@--Cicero, Tusc. Quaes., iv. 18.]

From time to time, I become sensible of the little breezes that begin to sing and whistle within, forerunners of the storm: [AAs the breezes, pent in the woods, first send out dull murmurs, announcing the approach of winds to mariners.@--Aeneid, x. 97.] How often have I done myself a manifest injustice to avoid the hazard of having yet a worse done me by judges, after an age of vexations, dirty and vile practices, more enemies to my nature than fire or the rack? [AA man should abhor lawsuits as much as he may, and I know not whether not something more; for 'tis not only liberal, but sometimes also advantageous, too, a little to recede from one's right. --Cicero, De Offic., ii. 18.] Were we wise, we ought to rejoice and boast, as I one day heard a young gentleman of a good family do naively, that his mother had lost a lawsuit, as if it had been a cough, a fever, or something very troublesome to keep. Even the favors that fortune has given me through relationship or acquaintance with those who have sovereign authority, I have very conscientiously and very carefully avoided using to the prejudice of others or to advance my pretensions above their true right.

In short, I have so much succeeded in my labors (knock wood!) that I am to this day a virgin from all suits in law; though I have had very fair offers made me, and with very just title would I have hearkened to them, and a virgin from quarrels too. I shall soon have passed a long life without giving or receiving any serious offence, or without being called by a worse word than my own name: a rare favor of Heaven.

Our greatest agitations have ridiculous springs and causes: what ruin did our last Duke of Burgundy run into about a cartload of sheepskins²? And was not the graving of a seal the first and principal cause of the greatest commotion that this machine, the world, ever underwent? for Pompey and Caesar were but the offsets and continuation of the two others: and I have in my time seen the wisest heads in this kingdom assembled with great ceremony, and at the public expense, about treaties and agreements, of which the true decision, in the meantime, absolutely depended upon the ladies' cabinet council, and the inclination of some bit of a woman. The poets very well understood this when they put all Greece and Asia to fire and sword about an apple. Look why that man hazards his life and honor upon the fortune of his rapier and dagger; let him acquaint you with the occasion of the quarrel; he cannot do it without blushing, the occasion is so idle and frivolous.

A little thing will engage you in it; but being once embarked, all the ropes need pulling; great provisions are then required, more hard and more important. How much easier is it not to enter in than it is to get out? Rather, we should proceed contrary to the reed, which, at its first springing, produces a long

²A reference to the war between Charles the Bold and the Swiss in 1476. The next sentence refers to the civil war between Marius and Sylla, caused by a seal that Sulla had engraved to commemorate one of his victories. Plutarch regarded this as the start of the disastrous civil wars that followed.

and straight shoot, but afterwards, as if tired and out of breath, it runs into thick and frequent joints and knots, as so many pauses which demonstrate that it has no more its first vigor and firmness; 'twere better to begin gently and coldly, and to keep one's breath and vigorous efforts for the height and stress of the business. We guide affairs in their beginnings, and have them in our own power; but afterwards, when they are once at work, 'tis they that guide and govern us, and we must follow them.

Yet do I not mean to say that this counsel has discharged me of all difficulty, and that I have not often had enough to do to curb and restrain my passions. They are not always to be governed according to the measure of occasions, and even their beginnings are often very sharp and violent. But still good fruit and profit may be reaped by this plan; except for those who in well-doing are not satisfied with any benefit if reputation be wanting; for, in truth, such an effect is valued only by every one to himself. You are better contented, but not more esteemed if you reformed yourself before you got into the whirl of the dance and the provocative matter came in sight. Yet not in this only, but in all other duties of life also, the way of those who aim at honor is very different from the one followed by those who aim at order and reason. I find some who rashly and furiously rush into the lists and then slow down in the charge. Plutarch says that those are ready to grant whatever is desired of them out of weakness are afterwards as ready to break their word and to recant; just so, he who enters lightly into a quarrel is apt to go as lightly out of it. With me it is the opposite: the same difficulty that keeps me from entering into a quarrel would, once I am hot and engaged, incite me to maintain it with great obstinacy and resolution. 'Tis a bad habit; when a man is once engaged; he must go through with it, or die. AUndertake coolly,@ said Bias, Abut pursue with ardor.@ For want of prudence, men fall into want of courage, which is still more intolerable.

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

Passions are as easy for me to evade, as they are hard for me to moderate: [AThey are more easily to be eradicated than governed.@] He who cannot attain the noble Stoical imperturbability, let him secure himself in the bosom of this commonplace callousness of mine; what they performed by virtue, I train myself to do by temperament. The middle region harbors storms and tempests; the two extremes, of philosophers and peasants, concur in tranquillity and happiness: [AHappy is he who could discover the causes of things, and place under his feet all fears and inexorable fate, and the sound of rapacious Acheron: he is blessed who knows the country gods, and Pan, and old Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs.--Virgil, Georg., ii. 490.] The births of all things are weak and tender; and therefore we should have our eyes intent on beginnings; for as when, in its infancy, the danger is not perceived, so when it is grown up, the remedy is as little to be found. I might have encountered a million troubles every day, harder to digest in the course of ambition than it has been hard for me to curb the natural ambition that

inclined me to it: [AI ever justly feared to raise my head too high.@ --Horace, Od.,iii. 16, 18.]

All public actions are subject to uncertain and various interpretations; for too many heads judge of them. Some say of this civic employment of mine (and I am willing to say a word or two about it, not that it is worth so much, but to give an account of my manners in such things), that I have behaved myself in it as a man who is too supine and of a languid temperament; and they have some excuse for what they say. I endeavoured to keep my mind and my thoughts in repose; [AAs being always quiet by nature, so also now by age.@ --Cicero, De Petit. Consul., c. 2.] and if they sometimes lash out upon some rude and sensible impression, 'tis in truth without my prompting. Yet from this natural heaviness of mine, men ought not to conclude that I am incapable (for want of care and want of sense are two very different things), and much less that I am unmindful or ungratitude of my obligations to those citizens who employed the utmost means they had in their power to show me good will, both before they knew me and after; and who honored me more by re-electing me than they did in conferring the office of mayor upon me at first. I wish them all imaginable good; and assuredly had occasion been, there is nothing I would have spared for their service; I did for them as I would have done for myself. 'Tis a good, warlike, and generous people, capable of obedience and discipline, and of whom the best use may be made, if well guided.

They say also that my administration passed over without leaving any mark or trace. Good! They accuse me of doing too little in a time when almost everybody was convicted of doing too much. I am impatient to be doing where my will spurs me on; but this itself is an enemy to perseverance. Let him who will make use of me according to my own way, employ me in affairs where vigor and liberty are required, where a direct, short, and, moreover, a hazardous conduct are necessary; I may do something; but if it must be long, subtle, laborious, artificial and intricate, he had better call in somebody else. All important offices are not necessarily difficult: I came prepared to do somewhat rougher work, had there been great occasion; for it is in my power to do something more than I do, or than I love to do. I did not, to my knowledge, omit anything that my duty really required. I easily forgot those offices that ambition mixes with and disguises by the name of duty. These are things that, for the most part, fill the eyes and ears, and give men the most satisfaction; not reality but the appearance contents them; if they hear no noise, they think we are asleep. My humor is no friend to tumult; I could appease a commotion without commotion, and chastise a disorder without being myself disorderly; if I stand in need of anger and inflammation, I borrow it, and put it on. My manners are languid, rather faint than sharp. I do not condemn a magistrate who sleeps, provided the people under his charge sleep as well as he: the laws in that case sleep too. For my part, I commend a gliding, staid, and silent life: [ANeither subject and abject, nor obtrusive.@ --Cicero, De Offic., i. 34] My fortune will have it so. I am descended from a family that has lived quietly, without bluster or bustle, and always particularly ambitious of a character for probity.

Our people nowadays are so bred up to bustle and ostentation, that good nature, moderation, equability, constancy, and such like quiet and unapparent qualities, are no more thought on or regarded. Rough bodies make themselves felt; the smooth are imperceptibly handled: sickness is felt, health little or not at all; no more than the oils that soothe us, in comparison of the pains which call for their application. 'Tis acting for one's particular reputation and profit, not for the public good, to refer that to be done in the public squares which one may do in the council chamber; and to noon day what might have been done the night before; and to be jealous to do that himself which his colleague can do as well as he. So were some surgeons of Greece wont to perform their operations upon scaffolds in the sight of the people, to draw more practice and profit. They think that good rules cannot be understood but by the sound of trumpet. Ambition is not a vice of little people, nor of such modest means as ours. One said to Alexander: AYour father will leave you a great dominion, easy and pacific@, but the youth was envious of his father's victories and of the justice of his government; he would not have enjoyed the empire of the world in ease and peace. Alcibiades, in Plato, had rather die young, beautiful, rich, noble, and learned rather than live in a lesser condition; this disease may be excusable in so strong and so full a soul. When wretched and

dwarfish little souls cajole and deceive themselves, and try to spread their fame for having given right judgment in an affair, or maintained the discipline of the guard of a gate of their city, they think to exalt their heads but only show their buttocks. This petty well-doing has neither body nor life; it vanishes in the first mouth, and goes no further than from one street to another. Talk of it by all means to your son or your servant, like that old fellow who, having no other auditor of his praises nor witness of his valor, boasted to his chambermaid, crying, AO Perette, what a brave, clever man hast thou for thy master! AAt the worst, talk of it to yourself, like a councillor of my acquaintance, who, having disgorged a whole shipload of law jargon with great heat and as great folly, coming out of the council chamber to make water, was heard muttering devoutly betwixt his teeth: ANot unto us, O Lord, not to us: but unto Thy name be the glory.@ He who gets it of nobody else, let him pay himself out of his own purse.

Fame is not prostituted so cheaply. Rare and exemplary actions, to which it is due, would not endure the company of this prodigious crowd of petty daily performances. For having repaired a bit of public wall or cleaned a public gutter, marble may exalt your titles as much as you please but not men of sense. Renown does not follow all good deeds, if novelty and difficulty be not conjoined; nay, so much as mere esteem, according to the Stoics, is not due to every action that proceeds from virtue; nor will they allow him bare thanks who, out of self-control, abstains from an old belear-eyed crone. Those who have known the admirable qualities of Scipio Africanus, deny him the glory that Panaetius attributes to him, of refusing gifts, since it was a glory not so much his as of the times in which he lived. We have pleasures suitable to our lot; let us not usurp those of grandeur: our own are more natural, and by so much more solid and sure, as they are lower. If not for that of conscience, yet at least for ambition's sake, let us reject ambition; let us disdain that thirst of honor and renown, so low and begging that it makes us beg from all sorts of people by abject and degrading means. =Tis dishonor to be so honored. Let us learn to be no more hungry for glory than we are capable of it. To be puffed up with every action that is innocent or of use, is only for those with whom such things are extraordinary and rare: they will value it as it costs them. The more a good deed shines, the more do I abate of its goodness as I suspect that it was more performed for the shine than upon account of the goodness: put upon the shop-counter, 'tis half sold. Those actions have much more grace and luster, that slip from the hand of him that does them, negligently and without noise, and that some honest man thereafter picks up and raises from the shade, to produce it to the light upon its own account. *All things truly seem more laudable to me that are performed without ostentation, and without the testimony of the people,* says Cicero, the most ostentatious man that ever lived.

I had but to conserve and to continue, which are silent and insensible effects. Innovation is of great luster, but 'tis forbidden in this age, when we are pressed upon and have to defend ourselves mostly from novelties. To forbear doing is often as generous as to do; but 'tis less in the light, and the little good I have in me is of this kind. In short, opportunities in my terms of office fell in with my humor, and I heartily thank them for it. Is there any who desires to be sick, that he may see his physician at work? and would not the physician deserve to be whipped who should wish the plague amongst us, that he might put his art in practice? I have never been of that wicked humor, and common enough, to desire that troubles and disorders in this city should elevate and honor my government; I have ever heartily contributed all I could to their tranquillity and ease. He who will not thank me for the order, the sweet and silent calm that has accompanied my administration, cannot, however, deprive me of the share that belongs to me by title of my good fortune. And I am of such a composition, that I would as willingly be lucky as wise, and had rather owe my successes purely to the favor of Almighty God, than to any operation of my own.

I had sufficiently published to the world my unfitness for such public offices; but I have something in me yet worse than incapacity itself; which is, that I am not much displeas'd at it, and that I do not much go about to cure it, considering the course of life that I have propos'd to myself. Neither have I satisfi'd myself in this employment; but I have very near arriv'd at what I expected from my own performance, and have much surpass'd what I promis'd them with whom I had to do: for I am apt to promise something less than what I am able to do, and than what I hope to make good. I assure myself that I have left no offence or hatred behind me; to leave regret or desire for me amongst them, I at least know very well that I never much aim'd at it: [Should I place confidence in this monster? Should I be ignorant of the dangers of that seeming placid sea, those now quiet waves?@ --Virgil, Aeneid, V. 849.]