

Foundations of Western Culture II: Renaissance to Modernity

III. MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAYS* :

a. Text: Original translation in the public domain.

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

Lecture #4 – OF Experience

THERE is no desire more natural than that of knowledge. We try all ways that can lead us to it; where reason fails, we use experience,

Experience, by example led
By varied trials art has bred Manilius

which is a weaker and less dignified means. But truth is so great thing that we ought not to scorn any medium that will guide us to it. Reason has so many forms, that we know not to which to take; experience has no fewer; the consequence we would draw from the likeness of events is unsure, because they are always also unlike. There is no quality so universal in the aspect of things as diversity and variety. Both the Greeks and the Latins, and we usually refer to eggs for a model of likeness: and yet there have been men, particularly one at Delphos, who could distinguish marks of difference among eggs so well that he never mistook one for another; and could tell which among his many hens had laid it. Dissimilitude intrudes itself of itself in our works; no art can arrive at perfect similitude: neither Perrozet, nor any other card-maker, can so carefully polish and blanch the backs of his cards that some gamesters will not distinguish them by seeing them even as they are shuffled by another. Resemblance does not so much make things one as difference makes them two. Nature has obliged herself to make nothing separate that was not different.

And so I am not much pleased with the opinion of the man who thought by the multitude of laws to curb the authority of judges, in cutting up their meat for them; he was not aware that there is as much liberty and latitude in the interpretation of laws as in their form; and they but fool themselves who think to lessen and stop our disputes by recalling us to the express words of the Bible: for our mind finds the field no less spacious for converting the sense of another=s words than to produce our own. As if there were less controversy and bitterness in commenting than in inventing! We see how much he was mistaken; for we have more laws in France than all the rest of the world put together, and more than would be necessary for the government of all the worlds of Epicurus: *As we used to suffer from crimes, now we suffer from laws* [Tacitus]. And yet we have left so much to the opinions and decisions of our judges, that there never was so much liberty or icense. What have our legislators gained by selecting a hundred thousand particular cases and applying to them a hundred thousand laws? This number bears no proportion to the infinite diversity of human actions; the multiplication of our inventions will never arrive at the variety of examples; add to our inventions a hundred times as many more, it will still not happen, that of events to come, there shall one be found that, in this vast number of millions of events so chosen and recorded, shall so tally with any other one, and be so exactly coupled and matched with it that there

will not remain some difference that will require separate consideration and judgment. There is little relation between our actions, which are in perpetual mutation, and fixed and immutable laws. The most desirable laws are those that are the most rare, most simple and general: and I am even of opinion, that we had better have none at all than to have them in such numbers as we have.

Nature always gives us better and happier than those we make ourselves. Witness the picture of the Golden Age of the poets and the state in we see nations live who have no other laws. Some peoples there are who take for their only judge the first passer-by that travels along their mountains to settle their quarrels: and others who on their market day choose some one among them to decide their controversies on the spot. What would be the danger in having the wisest among us to determine ours according to occurrences and at sight without worrying about precedents, past and future? For every foot, its own shoe. King Ferdinand, sending colonies to the Indies, wisely provided that they should not carry along with them any students of the law for fear lest lawsuits should get footing in that new world, the science of law being naturally the mother of altercation and division: judging with Plato, That lawyers and physicians are the pests of a country. @

Why does our common language, so easy for all other uses, become obscure, and unintelligible in wills and contracts? and why is a man who clearly expresses himself in whatever else he speaks or writes unable to find any way of declaring himself in such things that does not fall into doubt and contradiction? if it be not that the princes of that art, applying themselves with a peculiar attention to select portentous words and to contrive artificial sentences, have so weighed every syllable, and so thoroughly sifted every sort of quirking connection, that they are now confounded and intangled in an infinity of figures and minute divisions, and can no more fall within any rule or prescription, nor any certain interpretation: *What is pulverized to dust becomes confusion* [Seneca]. As you see children trying to divide a mass of quicksilver to stable of parts; the more they press and work it, and try to constrain it to their will, the more they provoke the liberty of this spirited metal; it evades their efforts and sprinkles itself into so many separate bodies as frustrate all reckoning. The law is the same; for in subdividing these subtleties, we teach men to increase their doubts; they put us into a way of extending and diversifying difficulties and lengthen and disperse them. In sowing and harvesting questions, they make the world fruitful and increase in uncertainties and disputes, as soil is made fertile by being crumbled and dug deep: *Learning makes difficulties* [Quintillian] We were puzzled by Ulpian and are now more baffled by Bartolus and Baldus. We should efface the traces of this innumerable diversity of opinions; not adorn ourselves with them and cram them into the heads of posterity.

I know not what to say about it; but experience makes it manifest that so many interpretations disperse truth and break it. Aristotle wrote to be understood; if he could not do this, much less will someone less able and not expressing his own ideas. We open the matter and spill it in pouring out: of one subject we make a thousand and in multiplying and subdividing them, fall into the infinity of atoms of Epicurus. Never did two men make the same judgment of the same thing; and it is impossible to find two opinions exactly alike, not only in several men, but in the same man at different hours. I often find matter of doubt in things of which the commentary has disdained to take notice; I am most apt to trip on a flat surface, like some horses that I have known that stumble most often on a smooth road.

Who would not say that commentary augments doubts and ignorance? since there=s no book to be found, either human or divine, which the world busies itself with, whose difficulties are cleared by interpretation. The hundredth commentator passes it on to the next, still more knotty and perplexing than he found it. When were we ever agreed among ourselves: Athis book has enough; there is now no more to be said about it?@ This is most apparent in the law; we give the authority of law to infinite commentary, infinite decisions, and as many interpretations: yet do we find any end of the need of interpreting? Is there, for all that, any progress or advancement toward peace, or do we stand in need of any fewer lawyers and judges than when this great mass of law was still in its first infancy? On the contrary, we

darken and bury meaning; we can no longer discover it, but at the mercy of so many fences and barriers. Men do not know the natural disease of the mind; it does nothing but ferret and inquire, and is eternally wheeling, juggling, and perplexing itself like silkworms, and then suffocates itself in its work, *like a mouse in a tar-barrel* [Erasmus]. It thinks it sees some glimpse light at a great distance, but encounters so many difficulties, obstacles and new questions while running towards it that it loses its way, bewildered: not much unlike Aesop's dogs, that seeing something like a dead body floating in the sea and not being able to approach it, set to work to drink the water and lay the passage dry, and so choked themselves. To which, what one Crates said of the writings of Heraclitus, falls pat enough, that they required a reader who could swim well, so that the depth and weight of his doctrine might not overwhelm and drown him.

It is just particular weakness that makes us content with what others or ourselves have found out in this chase after knowledge. One of better understanding will not rest so content. There is always room for another to follow, nay, even for ourselves; and another road: there is no end of our researches; our end is in the other world. It is a sign either that the mind has grown short-sighted when it is satisfied or that it has got weary. No spirited mind can stop by itself; it will always pushing further on, and beyond its strength; it sallies beyond its powers; if it does not advance and press forward, and then retreat, and rush and wheel about, it is but half alive: its pursuits are without bound or method; its food is wonder, the chase, ambiguity. Apollo revealed this clearly in always speaking to us in a double, obscure, and oblique sense; not satisfying us but keeping us teased and puzzled. It is an irregular and perpetual motion, without model and without aim; its inventions excite, pursue, and produce one another. There is more fuss in interpreting interpretations than interpreting things, and more books upon books than upon any other subject. We do nothing but comment upon one another. Every place swarms with commentaries; of authors there is great scarcity. Is it not the principal and most reputed learning of our times to learn to understand the learned? Is it not the common and final end of all studies? Our opinions are grafted upon one another; the first serves as a stock to the second, the second to the third, and so forth; thus step by step we climb the ladder. And so it comes to pass that he who is mounted highest, has often more honor than merit, for he is got up but an inch upon the shoulders of the last but one.

How often, and perhaps how stupidly have I extended my book to make it speak of itself! stupidly, if only for this reason, that it should remind me of what I say of others who do the same; that the frequent amorous glances they cast upon their work show that their hearts pant with self-love; and that even the disdainful roughness with which they beat it are just the love-taps and caresses of maternal affection; as Aristotle, whose valuing and undervaluing himself often springs from the same sort of arrogance. My own excuse is, that I ought in this to have more liberty than others, that since I write specifically of myself and my actions, I must write of my writings; that my theme turns upon itself; but I know not whether others will accept this excuse.

I have observed that in Germany has raised in others as many and even more doubts, divisions and disputes about his opinions than he himself raised about the Holy Scriptures. Our contest is verbal: I ask what Nature is, what Pleasure, Circle and Substitution? the question is about words, and is answered in words. A stone is a body. But if a man should further ask: And what is a body? Substance. And what is substance? and so on, he would drive the respondent to the end of his dictionary. We exchange one word for another, and often for one less understood. I better know what man is, than I know what is animal, mortal, and rational; to satisfy one doubt, they pop me in the ear with three. It is the Hydra's head. Socrates asked Menon, What virtue was. There is, says Menon, the virtue of a man and of a woman, of a magistrate and of a private person, of an old man and of a child. Very fine, cried Socrates, we were looking for one virtue, and you find a whole swarm. We put one question, and they return us a hive of them. As no event, no face, entirely resembles another, so do they not entirely differ: an ingenious mixture on the part of nature. If our faces were not alike, we couldn't tell humans from animals; if they were not unlike, we could tell one person from another. Any two things can be united by some similarity; every example limps and the relation which is drawn from experience is always faulty and imperfect. We can nonetheless always find a corner to staple a comparison of two

things together. So do the laws serve, and are fitted to every one of our affairs, by some wrested, biased, and forced interpretation.

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

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

All which makes me remember the ancient opinions. That it is of necessity a man must do wrong by retail, who will do right in gross; and injustice in little things, who would come to do justice in great: that human justice is formed after the model of physic, according to which, all that is useful is also just and honest; and of what is held by the Stoics, that Nature herself proceeds contrary to justice in most of her works: and of what is received by the Cyrenaics, that there is nothing just of itself, but that customs and laws make justice: and what the Theodorians held, that theft, sacrilege, and all sorts of uncleanness, are just in a sage, if he knows them to be profitable to him. There is no remedy: I am in the same case that Alcibiades was, that I will never, if I can help it, put myself into the hands of a man who may determine as to my head; where my life and honor shall more depend upon the skill and diligence of my attorney than on my own innocence. I would venture myself with such justice as would take notice of my good deeds, as well as my ill; where I had as much to hope as to fear: indemnity is not sufficient pay to a man who does better than not to do amiss. Our justice presents to us but one hand, and that the left hand, too; let him be who be may, he may, be shall be sure to come off with loss.

In China, of which kingdom the government and arts, without commerce with, or knowledge of ours, surpass our examples in several excellent features, and of which the history teaches me how much greater and more various the world is than either the ancients or we have been able to penetrate, the offices deputed by the prince to visit the state, of his provinces, as they punish those who behave

themselves ill in their charge, so do they liberally reward those who have conducted themselves better than the common sort, and beyond the necessity of their duty; these there present themselves, not only to be approved but to get; not simply to be paid, but to have a present made to them.

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

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

I study myself more than any other subject; it is my metaphysics, it is my physics.

By what art God controls our home, the world
Where the moon rises, where she sets, how shrinks
Her horns together monthly, and again grows full
From what quarter come the winds that rule the sea,
Where Eurus's blast holds sway; wht the source of rain
That ever fills the clouds; whether some day
The citadels of the world will pass away

Propertius

Inquire, you who the laboring world survey

Lucan

In this universe of things I suffer myself to be ignorantly and negligently led by the general law of the world; I shall know it well enough when I feel it; my learning cannot make it alter its course; it will not change itself for me; it is folly to hope it, and a greater folly to worry about it, seeing it is necessarily uniform, public and common. The goodness and capacity of the governor ought absolutely to discharge us of all care of the government.

Philosophical inquiries and contemplations serve only to increase our curiosity. The philosophers, with great reason, allude to the rules of nature; but they have nothing to do with so sublime a knowledge; they falsify them, and present us her face painted with too high and too adulterated a complexion, whence spring so many different pictures of so uniform a subject. As she has given us feet to walk with, she given us wisdom to guide us through life; not so ingenious, robust, and pompous a wisdom as that of their

invention; but yet one that is easy, quiet, and salutary, performing very well performs the other only promises, in anyone with the good luck to know how to live sincerely and regularly, that is to say, according to nature. The more simply we trust in nature, the more wisely. Oh, what a soft, easy, and healthy a pillow is ignorance and incuriosity, to rest a well-made head!

I had rather understand myself well in studying myself than in studying Cicero. Of the experience I have of myself, I find enough to make me wise, if I were but a good scholar. Whoever calls to mind the excess of his past anger and how far that fever transported him will see the ugliness of this passion better than in Aristotle and will hate it more justly. Whoever remembers the evils he has suffered, those that have threatened him, and the slight events that have changed him from one state to another prepares himself for future changes and for the knowledge of his condition. The life of Caesar offers no better example to us than our own: whether ordinary or an Emperor=s, it is still a life subject to all human accidents. Let us but listen to it; we will tell ourselves all we really need. Whoever recalls how many, many times he has been mistaken in his own judgment is a great fool if he does not distrust it ever after. When I find myself convicted of a false opinion by another man=s argument, I do not so much learn what is new, and my ignorance on that pointBthis would be no great acquisitionBas I learn my weakness in general and the treachery of my understanding, whence I derive reformation of the whole mass. In all my other errors, I do the same, and find from this rule great utility to life: I regard not the species and individual as a stone I have tripped over, but I learn to suspect my walking throughout and am careful to regulate it. To learn that we have said or done something foolish is nothing; we must learn that we are nothing but fools, a much more ample and important instruction. The false steps that my memory has so often made, even when it was most secure and confident of itself, are not idly thrown away; memory may now swear to me and assure me as much as it will, I shake my ears, and dare not trust it; the first opposition to its testimony makes me pause and I dare not rely upon it in anything important nor trust it in another person's affairs. And were it not that what I do for lapse of memory, others do still more often for lapse of good faith, I should always choose to take the truth from another's mouth, than from my own. If every one would pry into the effects and circumstances of the passions that sway him as I have done into those which I am most subject to, he would see them coming and would a little break their impetuosity and career. They do not always suddenly seize us by the throat; there is threatening and degrees:

As when a rising wind makes white waves fly,
The se heavens slowly, raising billows high,
And surges from the depths to meet the sky.
Virgil

Judgment holds in me a magisterial seat; at least it carefully tries to. It lets my feelings take their own course, hatred and friendship, even the friendship that I have with myself, without being changed or corrupted by them. If it cannot reform the other parts according to its own model, at least it does not deform itself according to theirs, it plays its game apart.

That advice to every one, Ato know themselves,@ should have an important effect, since the god of wisdom and light caused it to be written on the front of his temple, as comprehending all he had to advise us. Plato says also, that wisdom is nothing but the execution of this command; and Socrates minutely verifies it in Xenophon. The difficulties and obscurity in any science are seen only by those who are go into it; for a certain degree of intelligence is required to enable a man to know that he does not know: we must push against a door to know that it is bolted against us. Whence this Platonic subtlety springs, that Athose who know do not have to ask, because they know already, and those who do not know cannot ask, because they do not know what to ask for.@ So in this matter of knowing oneself, the fact that everyone is self-assured and self-satisfied that he understands himself signifies that everyone knows nothing about the matter; as Socrates teaches Euthydemus in Xenophon.

I, who profess nothing else, find so infinite a depth and variety in me that all the fruit I have reaped from what I have learned serves only to make me sensible how much more I have to learn. To my weakness, so often admitted, I owe my inclination to be modest, to obey the belief prescribed me, to be moderate and cool in my opinions, and to hate that troublesome and quarreling arrogance that wholly believes and trusts in itself, the capital enemy of discipline and truth. Hear them laying down the law; the first stupid things they utter it is in the style of prophets and legislators. *Nothing is more shameful than to assert and acquiesce before understanding* [Cicero] Aristarchus said, that anciently there were scarce seven sages to be found in the world; and in his time scarce so many fools; have not we more reason to say so in this age of ours? Affirmation and obstinacy are express signs of stupidity. A fellow has stumbled and knocked his nose against the ground a hundred times in a day, and yet he stands on his feet as resolute and sturdy as before; so that one would conclude that someone had since infused with soul and intellectual vigor, and that he was like that ancient son of the earth, who took fresh courage and strength by his fall:

Whose limbs, however tired,
By touching Mother Earth, with energy were fired.
Lucan

Does this incorrigible coxcomb think that he picks up a new mind when he picks up a new argument? It is by my own experience that I accuse human ignorance, which is the surest part of the world's school, in my opinion. Such as will not conclude their ignorance by so vain an example as mine or theirs, let them believe it from Socrates, the master of masters; for the philosopher Antisthenes, said to his disciples, *Let us go and hear Socrates: I will be a pupil with you;* and, maintaining this doctrine of the Stoic sect, that virtue was sufficient to make a life completely happy, having no need of any other thing whatever, he would add *except of the strength of Socrates.*

The long attention that I employ in considering myself also fits me to judge tolerably of others; and there are few things whereof I speak better and with better excuse. I happen very often more exactly to see and distinguish the qualities of my friends than they do themselves; I have astonished some with the pertinence of my description, and have informed them about themselves. By having from my youth up trained myself to see my own life mirrored in the lives of others, I have acquired a bent to study those around me in that way; and when I am once intent upon it, I let few things escape me, whether countenances, humors, or discourses, that serve to that purpose. I study all, both what I am to flee and what I am to follow. So from the outward manifestations of my friends I discover their inward natures.

But I do not try to arrange this infinite variety of so diverse and unconnected actions into species and categories, distributing my parcels and divisions under known heads and classes. The scholars divide and mark off their ideas more specifically and in detail; I, who see no further into things than as use informs me, present mine without system, in a general way and tentatively. As in this: I pronounce my opinion by disjointed articles, as a thing that cannot be spoken at once in a lump: low, commonplace minds like ours cannot connect and relate. Wisdom is a solid and entire building, of which every piece keeps its place and bears its mark; *Wisdom alone is wholly directed towards itself* [Cicero]. I leave it to artists, and I know not whether they will bring it about, in so perplexed, minute, and fortuitous a thing, to marshal into bands this infinite diversity of faces, to settle our inconstancy, and set it in order. I do not only find it hard to piece our actions to one another, but I, moreover, find it hard properly to designate each itself by any principal quality, so ambiguous and variform they are, when seen in different light.

What is remarked as rare in Perseus, king of Macedon, that his mind fixing itself to no one condition, wandered into all sorts of living and represented so wild and vagabond a character that neither he nor anyone else knew what kind of man he was, seems to fit nearly everybody, in my opinion; and, especially, I have seen another king since, to whom I think this conclusion might more properly be

applied; no moderate in-between, still running headlong from one extreme to another at moments not to be guessed at; no line of path without turning and shifting direction; no one quality simple and unmixed; so that the best portrait of him will ultimately be that he affected and studied to make himself known by being unknowable. A man has need of sound ears to hear himself frankly criticized; and as there are few who can to hear it without being stung, those who venture to criticize us show a singular act of friendship; for it is to love sincerely indeed to try to wound and offend us for our own good. I think it a harsh business to judge a man whose ill qualities are more than his good ones: Plato requires three things in him who will examine the soul of another: knowledge, benevolence, boldness.

I was once asked what I should have thought myself fit for, had any one designed to make use of me in my younger years;

While better blood gave strength, before the snows
Of envious age were sprinkled on my brows.

Virgil

For nothing, as I said; and I am very willing to excuse myself by professing that I do not know how to do anything that would enslave me to another. But I had told the truth to that master of mine, and had watched over his conduct if he had so pleased; not in general, by scholarly lessons, which I understand not, and from which I see no true reformation spring in those that do; but by observing it on occasion, at all opportunities, and simply and naturally judging them as an eyewitness, distinctly one by one; giving him to how he stood in everyday opinion and not in the words of flatterers. There is none of us who would not be worse than kings, if so continually corrupted as they are by those rascals; and we see that Alexander, that great king and philosopher, could not defend himself from them. I should have had fidelity, judgment, and freedom enough for that purpose. It would be a nameless office, otherwise it would lose its grace and its effect; and it is not a suitable role for all men: for truth itself does not have the privilege to be spoken at all times and indiscriminately: its use, noble as it is, has its circumscriptions and limits. It often falls out, as the world goes, that a man lets truth slip into the ear of a prince not only to no purpose, but moreover injuriously and unjustly; and no man shall make me believe that a virtuous remonstrance may not be viciously applied, and that the interest of the substance must not often give way to the interest of the form.

For such a purpose, I would have a man who is content with his own fortune, *Who would be what he is, and nothing else prefers* [Martial], and of moderate status; because, on the one hand, he would not be afraid to touch his master's heart to the quick, for fear of losing his preferment and, on the other hand, being of middle station, he would have easy communication with all sorts of people. I would have this office limited to only one person; for to allow the privilege of this liberty and privacy to many, would beget an inconvenient irreverence; and of that one, I would above all things require the fidelity of silence.

A king is not to be believed, when he brags of his constancy in standing the shock of the enemy for his glory, if, for his profit and amendment, he cannot stand the liberty of a friend's advice, which has no other power but to pinch his ear, the remainder of its effect being still in his own hands. Now, there is no condition of men whatever who stand in so great need of true and free advice and warning as kings; they sustain a public life, and have to satisfy the opinion of so many spectators that, as those about them conceal from them whatever should hinder their own plans, they insensibly find themselves involved in the hatred and detestation of their people, often upon occasions which they might have avoided without any loss to themselves, had they been advised and set right in time. Their favorites commonly have more regard to themselves than to their master; and indeed this serves them well, since most offices of real friendship are hard and dangerous when applied to the sovereign, so that they require not only much affection and freedom but also great courage.

At the end of the day, all this hodge-podge I scribble here is nothing but a record of the essays of my life, which, for the internal soundness, is instructive enough, if you take its example in reverse; but as to bodily health, no man can offer more profitable experience than I, who present it pure, and no way corrupted and changed by art or opinion. Experience is properly upon its own shit-heap in the subject of medicine, where reason wholly gives way to it. Tiberius said that whoever had lived twenty years ought to be responsible to himself for all things that were hurtful or beneficial and know how to order himself without medical advice; and he might have learned this from Socrates, who, advising his disciples to be solicitous of their health as a chief study, added that it was hard for a man of sense, having a care to his exercise and diet, not to know better than a doctor what was good or ill for him. And medicine itself professes always to take experience as the test of its operations; so Plato was right to say that to become a good physician, one should first have experienced all the diseases one pretends to cure, and through all the accidents and circumstances he is to diagnose. It is but reason they should get the pox, if they would treat it. For my part, I should put myself into such hands; the others but guide us, like him who paints seas and rocks and ports sitting at table, and there makes the model of a ship sailing in all security; but put him to the real thing, he knows not at which end to begin. Doctors make such a description of our diseases as a town-crier does of a lost horse or dogBsuch a color, such a height, such an earBbut bring it to him, and he knows it not, for all that. If medicine should one day give me some good and visible relief, then, truly, I will cry out in good earnest: *At last I yield to an efficient science* [Horace].

The arts that promise to keep our bodies and souls in health promise a great deal; but, withal, there are none that keep their promise less. And, in our time, those who profess medicine less manifest the results than any other sort of men; one may say of them, at the most, that they sell medicinal drugs but not that they are physicians. I have lived long enough to be able to give an account of the custom that has carried me so far; for him who has a mind to try it, I have made the experiment as his taster. Here are some of the items, as my memory shall supply me with them; I have no habit that has not varied according to circumstances; but I only record those that I have been best acquainted with, and that hitherto have had the greatest possession of me.

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

some one make this complaint, and fixed it upon us, being by custom deprived of the means of perceiving it at home. All heat that comes from the fire weakens and dulls me; and yet Evenus said, that fire was the best condiment of life: I rather choose any other way of making myself warm.

We are afraid to drink our wines, when toward the bottom of the cask; in Portugal those fumes are reputed delicious, and it is the beverage of princes. In short, every nation has many customs and usages that are not only unknown to other nations, but savage and miraculous in their sight. What should we do with those people who admit of no evidence that is not in print, who believe not men if they are not in a book, nor truth, if it be not of competent age? we dignify our fopperies, when we commit them to the press: it is of a great deal more weight to say, *I have read such a thing,* than if you only say, *I have heard such a thing.* But I, who no more disbelieve a man's mouth than his pen, and who know that men write as indiscreetly as they speak, and who look upon this age as one that is past, as soon quote a friend as Aulus Gellius or Macrobius; and what I have seen, as what they have written. And, as it is held of virtue, that it is not greater for having continued longer, so do I hold of the truth, that for being older it is none the wiser. I often say that it is mere folly that makes us run after foreign and scholastic examples; their fertility is the same now that it was in the time of Homer and Plato. But is it not that we seek more honor from the quotation, than from the truth of the matter in hand? As if it were more to the purpose, to borrow our proofs from the shops of Vascosan or Plantin, than from what is to be seen in our own village; or else, indeed, that we have not the wit to cull out and make useful what we see before us, and to judge of it clearly enough to draw it into example; for if we say that we want authority to give faith to our testimony, we speak from the purpose; forasmuch as, in my opinion, of the most ordinary, common, and known things, could we but find out their light, the greatest miracles of nature might be formed, and the most wonderful example, especially upon the subject of human actions.

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

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

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

effeminacy.

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

AAad primum lapidem vectari quum placet, hora Sumitur ex libro; si prurit frictus ocelli
Angulus, inspecta genesi, collyria quaerit;@

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

Though I have been brought up, as much as was possible, to liberty and independence, yet so it is that, growing old, and having by indifference more settled upon certain forms (my age is now past instruction, and has henceforward nothing to do but to keep itself up as well as it can), custom has already, ere I was aware, so imprinted its character in me, in certain things, that I look upon it as a kind of excess to leave them off; and, without a force upon myself, cannot sleep in the day-time, nor eat between meals, nor breakfast, nor go to bed, without a great interval between eating and sleeping, as of three hours after supper; nor get children but before I sleep, nor standing upon my feet; nor endure my own sweat; nor quench my thirst either with pure water or pure wine; nor keep my head long bare, nor cut my hair after dinner; and I should be as uneasy without my gloves as without my shirt, or without washing when I rise from table or out of my bed; and I could not lie without a canopy and curtains, as if they were essential things. I could dine without a tablecloth, but without a clean napkin, after the German fashion, very incommodiously; I foul them more than the Germans or Italians do, and make but little use either of spoon or fork. I am sorry they did not keep up the fashion, begun after the example of kings, to change our napkins at every service, as they do our plates. We are told of that laborious soldier Marius, that growing old, he became nice in his drink, and never drank but out of a particular cup of his own: I, in like manner, have suffered myself to fancy a certain form of glasses, and not willingly to drink in common glasses, nor more than from a strange common hand: all metal offends me in comparison of a clear and transparent matter: let my eyes taste too, according to their capacity. I owe several other such niceties to custom. Nature has also, on the other side, helped me to some of hers; as not to be able to endure more than two full meals in one day, without overcharging my stomach, nor a total abstinence from one of those meals without filling myself with wind, drying up my mouth, and dulling my appetite; the finding great inconvenience from overmuch evening air; for of late years in night marches, which often happen to be all night long, after five or six hours my stomach begins to be queasy, with a violent pain in my head, so that I always vomit before the day can break. When the others go to breakfast, I go to sleep; and when I

rise, I am as brisk and gay as before. I had always been told that the night dew never rises but in the beginning of the night; but for some years past, long and familiar intercourse with a lord, possessed with the opinion that the night dew is more sharp and dangerous about the declining of the sun, an hour or two before it sets, which he carefully avoids, and despises that of the night, he almost impressed upon me, not so much his reasoning as his experiences. What, shall mere doubt and inquiry strike our imagination, so as to change us? Such as absolutely and on a sudden give way to these propensions, draw total destruction upon themselves. I am sorry for several gentlemen who, through the folly of their physicians have in their youth and health wholly shut themselves up; it were better to endure a cough, than, by disuse, forever to lose the commerce of common life in things of so great utility. Malignant science to interdict us the most pleasant hours of the day! Let us keep our possession to the last; for the most part, a man hardens himself by being obstinate and corrects his constitution, as Caesar did the falling-sickness, by dint of contempt. A man should addict himself to the best rules, but not enslave himself to them, except to such, if there be any such, where obligation and servitude are of profit.

Both kings and philosophers go to stool, and ladies too; public lives are bound to ceremony; mine, that is obscure and private, enjoys all natural dispensation; soldier and Gascon are also qualities a little subject to indiscretion; wherefore I shall say of this act of relieving nature, that it is desirable to refer it to certain prescribed and nocturnal hours, and compel one's self to this by custom, as I have done; but not to subject one's self, as I have done in my declining years, to a particular convenience of place and seat for that purpose, and make it troublesome by long sitting; and yet, in the fouler offices, is it not in some measure excusable to require more care and cleanliness? ANatura homo mundum et elegans animal est.@ Of all the actions of nature, I am the most impatient of being interrupted in that. I have seen many soldiers troubled with the unruliness of their bellies; whereas mine and I never fail of our punctual assignation, which is at leaping out of bed, if some indispensable business or sickness does not molest us.

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

AAAn vivere tanti est? Cogimur a suetis animum suspendere rebus, Atque, ut vivamus, vivere desinimus... Hos superesse reor, quibus et spirabilis aer Et lux, qua regimur, redditur ipsa gravis.@"

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

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

AQuem circumcursans huc atque huc saepe Cupido Fulgebat crocina splendidus in tunica,@

given myself the rein as licentiously and inconsiderately to the desire that was predominant in me, AEt militavi non sine gloria,@ as any other whomsoever; yet more in continuation and holding out, than in sally:

ASex me vix memini sustinuisse vices.@

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

AInde tragus, celeresque pili, mirandaque matri Barba meae.@

Physicians modify their rules according to the violent longings that happen to sick persons, ordinarily with good success; this great desire cannot be imagined so strange and vicious, but that nature must have a hand in it. And then how easy a thing is it to satisfy the fancy? In my opinion, this part wholly carries it, at least, above all the rest. The most grievous and ordinary evils are those that fancy loads us with; this Spanish saying mightily pleases in several senses; ADefienda me Dios de my.@ I am sorry when I am sick, that I have not some longing that might give me the pleasure of satisfying it; all the rules of physic would hardly be able to divert me from it. I do the same when I am well; I can see very little more to be hoped or wished for. 'Twere pity a man should be so weak and languishing, as not to have even wishing left to him.

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

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

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

AEst quaedam vox ad auditum accommodata, non magnitudine, sed proprietate.@ Speaking is half his who speaks, and half his who hears; the latter ought to prepare himself to receive it, according to its bias; as with tennis players, he who receives the ball, shifts and prepares, according as he sees him move who strikes the stroke, and according to the stroke itself.

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

The constitution of maladies is formed by the pattern of the constitution of animals; they have their fortune and their days limited from their birth; he who attempts imperiously to cut them short by force in the middle of their course, lengthens and multiplies them, and incenses instead of appeasing them. I am of Brantor's opinion, that Awe are neither obstinately and willfully to oppose evils, nor truckle under them for want of courage; but that we are naturally to give way to them, according to their condition and our own.@ We ought to grant free passage to diseases; I find they stay less with me, who let them alone; and I have lost some, reputed the most tenacious and obstinate, by their own decay, without help and without art, and contrary to its rules. Let us a little permit Nature to take her own way; she better understands her own affairs than we. ABut such an one died;@ and so shall you: if not of that disease, of another. And how many have not escaped dying, who have had three physicians always at their tails? Example is a vague and universal mirror, and of various reflections. If it be a delicious medicine, take it: it is always so much present good. I will never stick at the name nor the color, if it be pleasant and grateful to the palate: pleasure is one of the chiefest kinds of profit. I have suffered colds, gouty defluxions, relaxations, palpitations of the heart, meagrim, and other accidents, to grow old and die in time a natural death; I have so lost them when I was half fit to keep them: they are sooner prevailed upon by courtesy than huffing. We must patiently suffer the laws of our condition; we are born to grow old, to grow weak, and to be sick, in despite of all medicine. it is the first lesson the Mexicans teach their children; so soon as ever they are born they thus salute them: AThou art come into the world, child, to endure: endure, suffer and say nothing.@ it is injustice to lament that which has befallen any one, which may befall every one: AIndignare, si quid in te inique proprie constitutum est.@

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

AStulte, quid haec frustra votis puerilibus optas?@

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

Non secus instantem cupiens fulcire ruinam, Diversis contra nititur obiicibus; Donec certa dies, omni campage soluta, Ipsum cum rebus subruat auxilium.@

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

undertook to kick with his mule.

I consult little about the alterations I feel; for these doctors take advantage; when they have you at their mercy, they cudgel your ears with their prognostics; and having once surprised me, weakened with sickness, injuriously handled me with their dogmas and magisterial fopperies- one while menacing me with great pains, and another with approaching death- by which threats I was indeed moved and shaken, but not subdued nor jostled from my place; and though my judgement was neither altered nor distracted, yet it was at least disturbed; it is always agitation and combat.

Now, I use my imagination as gently as I can, and would discharge it, if I could, of all trouble and contest; a man must assist, flatter, and deceive it, if he can; my mind is fit for that office; it needs no appearances throughout; could it persuade as it preaches, it would successfully relieve me. Will you have an example? It tells me: That it is for my good to have the stone; that the structure of my age must naturally suffer some decay, and it is now time it should begin to disjoin and to confess a breach; it is a common necessity, and there is nothing in it either miraculous or new; I therein pay what is due to old age, and I cannot expect a better bargain; that society ought to comfort me, being fallen into the most common infirmity of my age; I see everywhere men tormented with the same disease, and am honored by the fellowship, forasmuch as men of the best quality are most frequently afflicted with it; it is a noble and dignified disease; that of such as are struck with it, few have it to a less degree of pain; that these are put to the trouble of a strict diet and the daily taking of nauseous potions, whereas I owe my better state purely to my good fortune; for some ordinary broths of Eringo or burst-wort that I have twice or thrice taken to oblige the ladies who, with greater kindness than my pain was sharp, would needs present me half of theirs, seemed to me equally easy to take and fruitless in operation, the others have to pay a thousand vows to Aesculapius, and as many crowns to their physicians, for the voiding a little gravel, which I often do by the aid of nature; even the decorum of my countenance is not disturbed in company; and I can hold my water ten hours, and as long as any man that is in perfect health. The fear of this disease, says mind, formerly affrighted thee, when it was unknown to thee; the cries and despairing groans of those who make it worse by their impatience, begot a horror in thee. it is an infirmity that punishes the members by which thou hast most offended. Thou art a conscientious fellow:~

Que venit indigne poena, dolenda venit.~

Consider this chastisement; it is very easy in comparison of others, and inflicted with a paternal tenderness; do but observe how late it comes; it only seizes on and incommodes that part of thy life, which is, one way and another sterile and lost; having, as it were by composition, given time for the license and pleasures of thy youth. The fear and the compassion that the people have of this disease serve thee for matter of glory; a quality, whereof if thou hast thy judgment purified, and that thy reason has somewhat cured it, thy friends, notwithstanding, discern some tincture in thy complexion. it is a pleasure to hear it said of one's self: what strength of mind, what patience! Thou art seen to sweat with pain, to turn pale and red, to tremble, to vomit blood, to suffer strange contractions and convulsions, at times to let great tears drop from thine eyes, to urine thick, black, and dreadful water, or to have it suppressed by some sharp and craggy stone, that cruelly pricks and tears the neck of the bladder, while all the while thou entertainest the company with an ordinary countenance; drolling by fits with thy people; making one in a continuous discourse, now and then making excuse for thy pain, and representing thy suffering less than it is. Dost thou call to mind the men of past time, who so greedily sought diseases to keep their virtue in breath and exercise? Put the case that nature sets thee on and impels thee to this glorious school, into which thou wouldst never have entered of thy own free will. If thou tellest me that it is a dangerous and mortal disease, what others are not so? for it is a physical cheat to except any that they say do not go direct to death; what matters if they go thither by accident, or if they easily slide and slip into the path that leads us to it? But thou dost not die because thou art sick; thou diest because thou art living; death kills thee without the help of sickness; and sickness has deferred death in some, who have lived longer by

reason that they thought themselves always dying; to which may be added, that as in wounds, so in diseases, some are medicinal and wholesome. The stone is often no less long-lived than you; we see men with whom it has continued from their infancy even to their extreme old age; and if they had not broken company, it would have been with them longer still; you more often kill it than it kills you. And though it should present to you the image of approaching death, were it not a good office to a man of such an age, to put him in mind of his end? And, which is worse, thou hast no longer anything that should make thee desire to be cured. Whether or no, common necessity will soon call thee away. Do but consider how skillfully and gently she puts thee out of concern with life, and weans thee from the world; not forcing thee with a tyrannical subjection, like so many other infirmities which thou seest old men afflicted withal, that hold them in continual torment, and keep them in perpetual and unintermitted weakness and pains, but by warnings and instructions at intervals, intermixing long pauses of repose, as it were to give thee opportunity to meditate and ruminare upon thy lesson, at thy own ease and leisure. To give thee means to judge aright, and to assume the resolution of a man of courage, it presents to thee the state of thy entire condition, both in good and evil; and one while a very cheerful and another an insupportable life, in one and the same day. If thou embracest not death, at least thou shakest hands with it once a month; whence thou hast more cause to hope that it will one day surprise thee without menace; and that being so often conducted to the water side, but still thinking thyself to be upon the accustomed terms, thou and thy confidence will at one time or another be unexpectedly wafted over. A man cannot reasonably complain of diseases that fairly divide the time with health. @

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

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

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

I moreover observe this particular convenience in it, that it is a disease wherein we have little to guess at: we are dispensed from the trouble into which other diseases throw us by the uncertainty of their causes, conditions, and progress; a trouble that is infinitely painful: we have no need of consultations and doctoral interpretations; the senses well enough inform us both what it is and where it is.

By such like arguments, weak and strong, as Cicero with the disease of his old age, I try to rock asleep and amuse my imagination, and to dress its wounds. If I find them worse to-morrow, I will provide new stratagems. That this is true: I am come to that pass of late, that the least motion forces pure blood out of my kidneys: what of that? I move about, nevertheless, as before, and ride after my hounds with a juvenile and insolent ardor; and hold that I have very good satisfaction for an accident of that importance, when it costs me no more but a dull heaviness and uneasiness in that part; it is some great stone that wastes and consumes the substance of my kidneys and my life, which I by little and little evacuate, not without some natural pleasure, as an excrement henceforward superfluous and troublesome. Now if I feel anything stirring, do not fancy that I trouble myself to consult my pulse or my urine, thereby to put myself upon some annoying prevention; I shall soon enough feel the pain, without making it more and longer, by the disease of fear. He who fears he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears. To which may be added, that the doubts and ignorance of those who take upon them to expound the designs of nature and her

internal progressions, and the many false prognostics of their art, ought to give us to understand that her ways are inscrutable and utterly unknown; there is great uncertainty, variety, and obscurity in what she either promises or threatens. Old age excepted, which is an indubitable sign of the approach of death, in all other accidents I see few signs of the future, whereon we may ground our divination. I only judge of myself by actual sensation, not by reasoning: to what end, since I am resolved to bring nothing to it but expectation and patience? Will you know how much I get by this? observe those who do otherwise, and who rely upon so many diverse persuasions and counsels; how often the imagination presses upon them, without any bodily pain. I have many times amused myself, being well and in safety, and quite free from these dangerous attacks, in communicating them to the physicians as then beginning to discover themselves in me; I underwent the decree of their dreadful conclusions, being, all the while quite at my ease, and so much the more obliged to the favor of God, and better satisfied of the vanity of this art.

There is nothing that ought so much to be recommended to youth as activity and vigilance: our life is nothing but movement. I bestir myself with great difficulty, and am slow in everything, whether in rising, going to bed, or eating: seven of the clock in the morning is early for me; and where I rule, I never dine before eleven, nor sup till after six. I formerly attributed the cause of the fevers and other diseases I fell into, to the heaviness that long sleeping had brought upon me; and have ever repented going to sleep again in the morning. Plato is more angry at excess of sleeping, than at excess of drinking. I love to lie hard and alone, even without my wife, as kings do; and well covered with clothes. They never warm my bed, but since I have grown old, they give me at need warm cloths to lay at my feet and stomach. They found fault with the great Scipio, that he was a great sleeper; not, in my opinion, for any other reason, than that men were displeased, that he alone should have nothing in him to be found fault with. If I am anything fastidious in my way of living, it is rather in my lying than anything else; but, generally, I give way and accommodate myself, as well as any one, to necessity. Sleeping has taken up a great part of my life, and I yet continue, at the age I now am, to sleep eight or nine hours together. I wean myself to my advantage, from this propension to sloth, and am evidently the better for so doing. I find the change a little hard indeed, but in three days it is over; and I see but few who live with less sleep, when need requires, and who more constantly exercise themselves, or to whom long journeys are less troublesome. My body is capable of a firm, but not of a violent or sudden agitation. I evade of late violent exercises, and such as make me sweat, wherein my limbs grow weary before they are hot. I can stand a whole day together, and am never weary of walking: but from my youth, I have ever preferred to ride upon paved roads; on foot, I get up to the breech in dirt; and little fellows as I am are subject in the streets to be elbowed and jostled, for want of presence; I have ever loved to repose myself, whether sitting or lying, with my heels as high or higher than my seat.

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

APulchrumque mori succurrit in armis.@

To fear common dangers that concern so great a multitude of men; not to dare to do what so many sorts of souls, what a whole people dare, is for a heart that is poor and mean beyond all measure: company encourages even children. If others excel you in knowledge, in gracefulness, in strength, or

fortune, you have third causes to blame for that; but to give place to them in stability of mind, you can blame no one for that but yourself. Death is more abject, more languishing and troublesome in bed than in battle; fevers and catarrhs as painful and mortal as a musket-shot. Whoever has fortified himself valiantly to bear the accidents of common life, need not raise his courage to be a soldier. AVivere, mi Lucili, militare est.@

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

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

ANon hoc amplius est liminis, aut aquae, Coelestis, patiens latus.@

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

ANec vitiant artus aegrae contagia mentis.@

I am of the opinion that this temperature of my soul has often raised my body from its lapses; this is often depressed; if the other be not brisk and gay, it is at least tranquil and at rest. I had a quartan ague four or five months, that made me look miserably ill; my mind was always, if not calm, yet pleasant. If the pain be without me, the weakness and languor do not much afflict me; I see various corporal faintings, that beget a horror in me but to name, which yet I should less fear than a thousand passions and agitations of the mind that I see about me. I make up my mind no more to run; it is enough that I can crawl along; nor do I more complain of the natural decadence that I feel in myself:

AQuis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus?@

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

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

ARes, quae in vita usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, vident, Quaeque agunt vigilantes, agitantque, ea si cui in somno accidunt, Minus mirandum est.@

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

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

ASi modica coenare times olus omne patella.

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

If I had any sons I should willingly wish them my fortune: the good father that God gave me, who has nothing of me but the acknowledgment of his goodness, but truly it is a very hearty one, sent me from my cradle to be brought up in a poor village of his, and there continued me all the while I was at nurse, and still longer, bringing me up to the meanest and the most common way of living: *Magna pars libertatis est bene moratus venter.* Never take upon yourselves, and much less give up to your wives, the care of their nourishment; leave this to fortune, under popular and natural laws; leave it to custom to train them up to frugality and hardship, that they may rather descend from rigors than mount up to them. This humor of his yet aimed at another end to make me familiar with the people and the condition of men who most need our assistance; considering that I should rather regard them who extend their arms to me, than those who turn their backs upon me; and for this reason it was, that he provided me godfathers of the meanest fortune, to oblige and attach me to them.

Nor has his design succeeded altogether ill: for, whether upon the account of the more honor in such a condescension, or out of a natural compassion that has a very great power over me, I have an inclination toward the meaner sort of people. The faction which I should condemn in our civil wars, I should more sharply condemn, flourishing and successful; it would half reconcile me to it, should I see it miserable and overwhelmed. How much do I admire the generous humor of Chelonis, daughter and wife to kings of Sparta! while her husband, Cleombrotus, in the commotion of her city, had the advantage over Leonidas, her father, she, like a good daughter, stuck close to her father in all his misery and exile, in opposition to the conqueror. But so soon as the chance of war turned, she changed her will with the

change of fortune, and bravely turned to her husband's side, whom she accompanied throughout where his ruin carried him; admitting, as it appears to me, no other choice than to cleave to the side that stood most in need of her, and where she could best manifest her compassion. I am naturally more apt to follow the example of Flaminius, who rather gave his assistance to those who had most need of him than to those who had power to do him good, than I do to that of Pyrrhus, who was of an humor to truckle under the great, and to domineer over the poor.

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

The ancient Greeks and Romans had more reason than we in sitting apart for eating, which is a principal action of life, if they were not prevented by other extraordinary business, many hours and the greatest part of the night; eating and drinking more deliberately than we do, who perform all our actions post-haste; and in extending this natural pleasure to more leisure and better use, intermixing with their meals pleasant and profitable conversation.

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

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

some sort delicious. *Vitam adolescentibus vis aufert, senibus maturitas.* Death mixes and confounds itself throughout with life; decay anticipates its hour, and shoulders itself even into the course of our advance. I have portraits of myself taken at five and twenty, and five and thirty years of age; I compare them with that lately drawn; how variously is it no longer me; how much more is my present image unlike the former, than unlike that I shall go out of the world with? It is too much to abuse nature, to make her trot so far that she must be forced to leave us, and abandon our conduct, our eyes, teeth, legs, and all the rest, to the mercy of a foreign and begged assistance, and to resign us into the hands of art, being weary of following us herself.

I am not very fond either of salads or fruits, except melons. My father hated all sorts of sauces; I love them all. Eating too much hurts me; but, as to the quality of what I eat, I do not yet certainly know that any sort of meat disagrees with my stomach; neither have I observed that either full moon or decrease, spring or autumn, have any influence upon me. We have in us notions that are inconstant and for which no reason can be given: for example, I found radishes first grateful to my stomach, since that nauseous, and now again grateful. In several other things, I find my stomach and appetite vary after the same manner; I have changed again and again from white wine to claret, from claret to white.

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

From my youth, I have sometimes kept out of the way at meals; either to sharpen my appetite against the next morning (for, as Epicurus fasted and made lean meals to accustom his pleasure to make shift without abundance, I, on the contrary, do it to prepare my pleasure to make better and more cheerful use of abundance); or else I fasted to preserve my vigor for the service of some action of body or mind; for both the one and the other of these is cruelly dulled in me by repletion; and, above all things, I hate that foolish coupling of so healthful and sprightly a goddess with that little belching god, bloated with the fumes of his liquor;- or to cure my sick stomach, or for want of fit company; for I say, as the same Epicurus did, that one is not so much to regard what he eats, as with whom; and I commend Chilo, that he would not engage himself to be at Periander's feast till he first was informed who were to be the other guests; no dish is so acceptable to me, nor no sauce so appetizing, as that which is extracted from society. I think it more wholesome to eat more leisurely and less, and to eat oftener; but I would have appetite and hunger attended to; I should take no pleasure to be fed with three or four pitiful and stinted repasts a day, after a medicinal manner; who will assure me, that, if I have a good appetite in the morning, I shall have the same at supper? But, we old fellows especially, let us take the first opportune time of eating, and leave to almanac makers hopes and prognostics. The utmost fruit of my health is pleasure; let us take hold of the present and known. I avoid the invariable in these laws of fasting; he who would have one form serve him, let him avoid the continuing it; we harden ourselves in it, our strength is there stupefied and laid asleep; six months after, you shall find your stomach so inured to it, that all you have got is the loss of your liberty of doing otherwise but to your prejudice.

I never keep my legs and thighs warmer in winter than in summer; one simple pair of silk stockings is all. I have suffered myself, for the relief of my colds, to keep my head warmer; and my belly on the account of my colic; my diseases in a few days habituated themselves thereto, and disdained my ordinary provisions; we soon get from a coif to a kerchief over it, from a simple cap to a quilted hat; the trimmings of the doublet must not merely serve for ornament; there must be added a hare's skin or a vulture's skin, and a cap under the hat; follow this gradation, and you will go a very fine way to work. I will do nothing of the sort, and would willingly leave off what I have begun. If you fall into any new inconvenience, all this is labor lost, you are accustomed to it; seek out some other. Thus do they destroy themselves, who submit to be pestered with these enforced and superstitious rules; they must add

something more, and something more after that; there is no end on't.

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

I fear a fog, and fly from smoke as from the plague; the first repairs I fell upon in my own house, were the chimneys and houses of office, the common and insupportable defects of all old buildings; and among the difficulties of war, I reckon the choking dust they make us ride in a whole day together. I have a free and easy respiration; and my colds for the most part go off without offense to the lungs, and without a cough.

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

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

My walking is quick and firm; and I know not which of the two, my mind or my body, I have most to do to keep in the same state. That preacher is very much my friend who can oblige my attention a whole sermon through; in places of ceremony, where every one's countenance is so starched, where I have seen the ladies keep even their eyes so fixed, I could never order it so, that some part or other of me did not lash out; so that though I was seated, I was never settled. As the philosopher Chrysippus' maid said of her master, that he was only drunk in his legs, for it was his custom to be always kicking them about in what place soever he sat; and she said it, when the wine having made all his companions drunk, he found no alteration in himself at all; it may have been said of me from my infancy that I had either

folly or quicksilver in my feet, so much stirring and unsettledness there is in them, wherever they are placed.

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

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

Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis, acescit.

I, who boast that I so curiously and particularly embrace the conveniences of life, find them, when I most nearly consider them, very little more than wind. But what? We are all wind throughout; and, moreover, the wind itself, more discreet than we, loves to bluster and shift from corner to corner; and contents itself with its proper offices, without desiring stability and solidity- qualities that nothing belong to it.

The pure pleasures, as well as the pure displeasures, of the imagination, say some, are the greatest, as was expressed by the balance of Critolaus. it is no wonder; it makes them to its own liking, and cuts them out of the whole cloth; of this I every day see notable examples, and, peradventure, to be desired. But I, who am of a mixed and heavy condition, cannot snap so soon at this one simple object, but that I negligently suffer myself to be carried away with the present pleasures of the general human law, intellectually sensible, and sensibly intellectual. The Cyrenaic philosophers will have it that as corporal pains, so corporal pleasures are more powerful, both as double and as more just. There are some, as Aristotle says, who out of a savage kind of stupidity dislike them; and I know others who out of ambition do the same. Why do they not, moreover, forswear breathing? why do they not live of their own? why not refuse light, because it shines gratis, and costs them neither pains nor invention? Let Mars, Pallas, or Mercury afford them their light by which to see, instead of Venus, Ceres, and Bacchus. Will they not seek the quadrature of the circle, even when on their wives? I hate that we should be enjoined to have our minds in the clouds, when our bodies are at table; I would not have the mind nailed there, nor wallow

there; I would have it take place there and sit, but not lie down. Aristippus maintained nothing but the body, as if he had no soul; Zeno stickled only for the soul, as if he had no body; both of them faultily. Pythagoras, they say, followed a philosophy that was all contemplation; Socrates one that was all conduct and action; Plato found a mean between the two; but they only say this for the sake of talking. The true point is found in Socrates; and Plato is much more Socratic than Pythagoric, and it becomes him better. When I dance, I dance; when I sleep, I sleep. Nay, when I walk alone in a beautiful orchard, if my thoughts are some part of the time taken up with foreign occurrences, I some part of the time call them back again to my walk, to the orchard, to the sweetness of the solitude, and to myself.

Nature has with a motherly tenderness observed this, that the actions she has enjoined us for our necessity should be also pleasant to us; and she invites us to them, not only by reason, but also by appetite, and it is injustice to infringe her laws. When I see both Caesar and Alexander in the thickest of their greatest business, so fully enjoy human and corporal pleasures, I do not hold that they slackened their souls, but wound them up higher, by vigor of courage, subjecting these violent employments and laborious thoughts to the ordinary usage of life; wise, had they believed the last was their ordinary, the first their extraordinary vocation. We are great fools. AHe has passed over his life in idleness,@ say we: AI have done nothing to-day.@ What? have you not lived? that is not only the fundamental, but the most illustrious of all your occupations. AHad I been put to the management of great affairs, I should have made it seen what I could do.@ Have you known how to meditate and manage your life, you have performed the greatest work of all. For a man to show and set out himself, nature has no need of fortune; she equally manifests herself in all stages, and behind a curtain as well as without one. Have you known how to regulate your conduct, you have done a great deal more than he who has composed books. Have you known how to take repose, you have done more than he who has taken cities and empires.

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

AO fortes, pejoraque passi Mecum saepe viri! nunc vino pellite curas: Cras ingens iterabimus
aequor.@

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

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

playing at quoits upon the seashore with Laelius; and, if it was foul weather, amusing and pleasing himself in representing by writing in comedies the meanest and most popular actions of men; or having his head full of that wonderful enterprise of Hannibal and Africa, visiting the schools in Sicily, and attending philosophical lectures, improving himself, to the blind envy of his enemies at Rome. Nor is there anything more remarkable in Socrates than that, old as he was, he found time to make himself taught dancing and playing upon instruments, and thought it time well spent; but this same man was seen in an ecstasy, standing upon his feet a whole day and a night together, in the presence of all the Grecian army, surprised and ravished with some profound thought. He was the first who, among so many valiant men of the army, ran to the relief of Alcibiades, oppressed with the enemy; shielded him with his own body, and disengaged him from the crowd, by absolute force of arms. It was he who, in the Delian battle, raised and saved Xenophon when fallen from his horse; and who, among all the people of Athens, enraged as he was at so unworthy a spectacle, first presented himself to rescue Theramenes, whom the thirty tyrants were hauling to execution by their satellites, and desisted not from his bold enterprise but at the remonstrance of Theramenes himself, though he was only followed by two more in all. He was seen, when courted by a beauty with whom he was in love, to maintain at need a severe abstinence. He was seen ever to go to the wars, and walk upon ice, with bare feet; to wear the same robe winter and summer; to surpass all his companions in patience of bearing hardships, and to eat no more at a feast than at his own private dinner. He was seen, for seven and twenty years together, to endure hunger, poverty, the indocility of his children, and the claws of his wife, with the same countenance; and, in the end, calumny, tyranny, imprisonment, fetters, and poison. But was this man obliged to drink full bumpers by any rule of civility? he was also the man of the whole army, with whom the advantage in drinking remained. And he never refused to play at cob-nut, nor to ride the hobby-horse with children, and it became him well; for all actions, says philosophy, equally become and equally honor a wise man. We have enough wherewithal to do it, and we ought never to be weary of presenting the image of this great man in all the patterns and forms of perfections. There are very few examples of life, full and pure; and we wrong our teaching every day, to propose to ourselves those that are weak and imperfect, scarce good for any one service, and rather pull us back; corrupters rather than correctors of manners. The people deceive themselves; a man goes much more easily indeed by the ends, where the extremity serves for a bound, a stop, and guide, than by the middle way, large and open; and according to art, more than according to nature: but withal much less nobly and commendably.

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

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

I enjoin my soul to look upon pain and pleasure with an eye equally regular, *AEodem enim vitio est effusio animi in laetitia, quo in dolore contractio.* and equally firm; but the one gayly and the other severely, and, so far as it is able, to be as careful to extinguish the one, as to extend the other. The judging rightly of good brings along with it the judging soundly of evil; pain has something of the inevitable in its tender beginnings, and pleasure something of the evitable in its excessive end. Plato couples them together, and wills that it should be equally the office of fortitude to fight against pain, and against the

immoderate and charming blandishments of pleasure; they are two fountains, from which whoever draws, when and as much as he needs, whether city, man, or beast, is very fortunate. The first is to be taken medicinally and upon necessity, and more scantily; the other for thirst, but not to drunkenness. Pain, pleasure, love, and hatred are the first things that a child is sensible of; if, when reason comes, they apply it to themselves, that is virtue.

I have a special nomenclature of my own; I pass away time, when it is ill and uneasy, but when it is good I do not pass it away; I taste it over again and stick to it; one must run over the ill, and settle upon the good. This ordinary phrase of pastime, and passing away the time, represents the usage of those wise sort of people who think they cannot do better with their lives than to let them run out and slide away, pass them over, and balk them, and, as much as they can, ignore them, and shun them as a thing of troublesome and contemptible quality; but I know it to be another kind of thing, and find it both valuable and commodious, even in its latest decay, wherein I now enjoy it; and nature has delivered it into our hands in such and so favorable circumstances, that we have only ourselves to blame if it be troublesome to us, or slide unprofitably away: *Stulti vita ingrata est, trepida est, tota in futurum fertur.* Nevertheless, I compose myself to lose mine without regret; but withal as a thing that is perishable by its condition, not that it troubles or annoys me. Nor does it properly well become any not to be displeased when they die, excepting such as are pleased to live. There is good husbandry in enjoying it; I enjoy it double to what others do; for the measure of its fruition depends upon the more or less of our application to it. Now especially that I perceive mine to be so short in time, I will extend it in weight; I will stop the promptitude of its flight by the promptitude of my grasp; and by the vigor of using it compensate the speed of its running away; by how much the possession of living is more short, I must make it so much deeper and more full.

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

Morte obita quales fama est volitare figuras, Aut quae sopitos deludunt somnia sensus:

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

ANil actum credens, cum quid superesset agendum;@

For my part then, I love life, and cultivate it, such as it has pleased God to bestow it upon us. I do not desire it should be without the necessity of eating and drinking; and I should think myself inexcusable to wish it had been twice as long: ASapiens divitiarum naturalium quaesitor accerimus:@ nor that we should support ourselves by putting only a little of that drug into our mouths, by which Epimenides took away his appetite, and kept himself alive; nor that we should stupidly beget children with our fingers or heels, but, rather, with reverence be it spoken, that we might voluptuously beget them with our fingers and heels; nor that the body should be without desire, and without titillation. These are ungrateful and wicked complaints. I accept kindly, and with gratitude, what nature has done for me; am well pleased with it, and proud of it. A man does wrong to the great omnipotent Giver of all things, to refuse, annul, or disfigure his gift; all goodness Himself, He has made everything good: AOmnia quoe secundum naturam sunt, oestimatione digna sunt.@

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

That is not what Socrates says, who is its master and ours: he values, as he ought, bodily pleasure; but he prefers that of the mind, as having more force, constancy, facility, variety, and dignity. This, according to him, goes by no means alone- he is not so fantastic- but only it goes first; temperance, with him, is the moderatrix, not the adversary of pleasure. Nature is a gentle guide, but not more sweet and gentle, than prudent and just: AIntrandum est in rerum naturam, et penitus, quid ea postulet, pervidendum.@ I hunt after her foot throughout; we have confounded it with artificial traces; and that academic and peripatetic good, which is, Ato live according to it,@ becomes, by this means, hard to limit and explain; and that of the Stoics, cousin-german to it, which is Ato consent to nature.@ Is it not an error to esteem any actions less worthy, because they are necessary? And yet they will not beat it out of my head, that it is not a very convenient marriage of pleasure with necessity, with which, says an ancient, the gods always conspire. To what end do we dismember by divorce a building united by so close and brotherly a correspondence? Let us, on the contrary, confirm it by mutual offices; let the mind rouse and quicken the heaviness of the body, and the body stay and fix the levity of the soul. AQui, velut summum bonum, laudat animoe naturam, et, tanquam malum, naturam carnis accusat, profecto et animam carnaliter appetit, et carnem carnaliter fugit; quoniam id vanitate sentit humana, non veritate divina.@ In this present that God has made us, there is nothing unworthy our care; we stand accountable, even to a hair and it is no slight commission to man, to conduct man according to his condition; it is express, plain, and the principal injunction of all, and the Creator has seriously and strictly enjoined it. Authority has alone power to work upon common understandings, and is of more weight in a foreign language; therefore let us again charge with it in this place: AStultitiae proprium quis non dixerit, ignave et contumaciter facere, quae facienda sunt; et alio corpus impellere, alio animum; distrahique inter diversissimos motus?@ To make this apparent, ask any one, some day, to tell you what whimsies and imaginations he put into his pate, upon the account of which he diverted his thoughts from a good meal, and regrets the time he spends in eating: you will find there is nothing so insipid in all the dishes at your table, as this wise meditation of his (for the most part we had better sleep than wake to the purpose we wake); and that his discourses and notions are not worth the worst mess there. Though they were the ecstasies of Archimedes himself, what then? I do not here speak of, nor mix with the rabble of us ordinary men, and the vanity of the thoughts and desires that divert us, those venerable souls, elevated by the ardor of devotion and religion, to a

constant and conscientious meditation of divine things, who, by the energy of vivid and vehement hope, prepossessing the use of the eternal nourishment, the final aim and last step of Christian desires, the sole, constant, and incorruptible pleasure, disdain to apply themselves to our necessitous, fluid and ambiguous conveniences, and easily resign to the body the care and use of sensual and temporal pasture: it is a privileged study. Between ourselves, I have ever observed supercelestial opinions and subterranean manners to be of singular accord.

Aesop, that great man, saw his master make water as he walked: AWhat, then,@ said he, Amust we dung as we run?@ Let us manage our time as well as we can, there will yet remain a great deal that will be idle and ill employed. The mind has not other hours enough wherein to do its business, without disassociating itself from the body, in that little space it must have for its necessity. They would put themselves out of themselves, and escape from being men; it is folly; instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts; instead of elevating, they lay themselves lower. These transcendental humors affright me, like high and inaccessible cliffs and precipices; and nothing is hard for me to digest in the life of Socrates but his ecstasies and communication with demons; nothing so human in Plato as that for which they say he was called divine; and of our sciences, those seem to be the most terrestrial and low that are highest mounted; and I find nothing so humble and mortal in the life of Alexander, as his fancies about his immortalization. Philotas pleasantly quipped him in his answer: he congratulated him by letter concerning the oracle of Jupiter Hammon, which had placed him among the gods: AUpon thy account, I am glad of it, but the men are to be pitied who are to live with a man, and to obey him, who exceeds and is not contented with the measure of a man.@ ADiis te minorem quod geris, imperas.@ The pretty inscription wherewith the Athenians honored the entry of Pompey into their city, is conformable to my sense: ABy so much thou art a god, as thou confessest thee a man.@ it is an absolute and, as it were, a divine perfection, for a man to know how loyally to enjoy his being. We seek other conditions, by reason we do not understand the use of our own; and go out of ourselves, because we know not how there to reside. it is to much purpose to go upon stilts, for, when upon stilts, we must yet walk with our legs; and when seated upon the most elevated throne in the world, we are but seated upon our buttocks. The fairest lives, in my opinion, are those which regularly accommodate themselves to the common and human model; without miracle, without extravagance. Old age stands a little in need of a more gentle treatment. Let us recommend it to God, the protector of health and wisdom, but withal, let it be gay and sociable.

AFrui paratis et valido mihi Latoe, dones, et, precor, integra Cum mente; nec turpem senectam Degere, nec Cithara carentem.@