

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

ESSAYS

Book 1 · Chapter 40

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That the Relish for Goods, and Evils, does in great measure depend upon the opinion we have of them

MEN (says an ancient Greek Sentence) are tormented with the Opinions they have of things and not by the things themselves. It were a great Victory obtain'd for the relief of our miserable Human Condition, could this proposition be establish'd for certain, and true throughout. For if evils have no admission into us; but by the judgment we our selves make of them, it should seem that it is then in our own power to despise them, or to turn them to good. If things surrender themselves to our mercy, why do we not convert, and accommodate them to our advantage? If what we call Evil, and Torment, is neither Evil, nor Torment of it self, but only that our Fancy gives it that Quality, and makes it so, it is in us to change, and alter it, and it being in our own choice, if there be no constraint upon us, we must certainly be very strange Fools, to take Arms for that side, which is most offensive to us, and to give Sickness, Want, and contempt, a nauseous taste, if it be in our power to give them a more graceful Relish, and if Fortune simply providing the matter, 'tis for us to give it the form. Now that what we call Evil, is not so of it self, or at least to that degree that we make it; and that it depends upon us, to give it another taste or complexion, (for all comes to one) let us examine how that can be maintain'd. If the original being of those things we fear, had power to lodge themselves in us, by their own authority, it would then lodge it self alike, and in like manner in all; for Men are all of the same kind, and saving in greater, and less proportions, are all provided with the same utensils and instruments to conceive and to judge; but the diversity of opinions we have of those things, does clearly evidence, that they only enter us by composition: One particular Person, peradventure admits them in their true being; but a thousand others give them a new, and contrary being in them. We hold Death, Poverty, and Grief, for our principal Enemies, but this Death which some repute, the most dreadful of all dreadful things, who does not know that others call it the only secure Harbour, from the Storms, and Tempests of Life? The Sovereign good of Nature? The sole Support of Liberty, and the Common, and sudden Remedy of all Evils? And as the one expect it with Fear, and Trembling, the other support it with greater Ease than Life. That Blade complains of its facility,

*Mors utinam pauidos uitæ subducere nolles.
Sed uirtus te sola daret!*

*O Death I would thou wouldst the Coward spare,
That but the daring none might thee conferr.*

But let us leave these Glorious Courages. *Theodorus* answer'd *Lysimachus*, who threatned to Kill him, thou wilt do a brave thing, said he, to arrive at the force of a *Cantharides*. The greatest part of Philosophers, are observ'd to have either purposely prevented, or hastned, and assisted their own Death. How many ordinary people do we see led to Execution, and that not to a simple Death, but mixt with Shame, and sometimes with grievous Torments, appear with such assurance, what through obstinacy, or natural simplicity, that a Man can discover no change from their ordinary condition? Setling their Domestick Affairs, recommending them to their Friends, Singing, Preaching, and Diverting the People so much, as sometimes to Sally into Jests, and to Drink to their Companions, as well as *Socrates*? One that they were leading to the Gallows, told them they must not carry him through such a Street, lest a Merchant who liv'd there, should Arrest him by the way, for an old Debt. Another told the Hangman, he must not touch his Neck, for fear of making him Laugh he was so Ticklish. Another answer'd his Confessor, who promised him he should that day Sup with our Lord. Do you go then, said he, in my Room; for I for my part keep fast to day. Another having call'd for Drink, and the Hangman having Drank first, said he would not Drink after him, for fear of catching the Pox. Every body has heard the Tale of the *Picard*, to whom being upon the Ladder they presented a Whore, telling him (as our Law does sometimes permit!) that if he would Marry her, they would save his Life, he having a while considered her, and perceiving that she Halted, Come, tye up, tye up, said he, she limps. And they tell another Story of the same kind, of a fellow in *Denmark*, who being condemn'd to lose his Head, and the like condition being propos'd to him upon the Scaffold, refus'd it, by reason the Maid they offer'd him, had hollow Cheeks, and too sharp a Nose. A Servant at *Toulouse* being accus'd of Heresie, for the summ of his Belief, referr'd himself to that of his Master, a young Student Prisoner with him, choosing rather to die, than suffer himself to be persuaded, that his Master could erre. We read that of the inhabitants of *Arras*, when *Lewis* the eleventh took that City, a great many let themselves be Hang'd, rather than they would say, *God save the King*. And amongst that mean-soul'd race of Men, the Buffoons, there having been some, who would not leave their Fooling at the very moment of Death. He that the Hangman turn'd off the Ladder cry'd, *Launch the Galley*, an ordinary foolish saying of his; and the other, whom at the point of Death his Friends having laid upon a Pallet before the Fire, the Physician asking him where his Pain lay, betwixt the Bench and the Fire, said he, and the Priest, to give him extream Unction, Groping for his Feet, which his Pain had made him pull up to him, you will find them, said he, at the end of my Legs. To one who being present exhorted him to recommend himself to God, why, who goes thither? said he, and the other replying, it will presently be your self, if it be His good pleasure; would I were sure to be there by to morrow Night, said he; do but recommend your self to him said the other, and you will soon be there; I were best then, said he, to carry my recommendations my self. In the

Kingdom of *Narsingua* to this day, the Wives of their Priests, are buried alive with the Bodies of their Husbands; all other Wives are burnt at their Husbands Funerals, which also they do not only constantly, but chearfully undergo: At the death of their King, his Wives, and Concubines, his Favourites, all his Officers, and Domestick servants, which make up a great number of people, present themselves so chearfully to the Fire, where his Body is burnt, that they seem to take it for a singular honour, to accompany their Master in death. During our late War of *Milan*, where there hapned so many takings, and retakings of Towns, the people impatient of so many various changes of Fortune, took such a resolution to die, that I have heard my Father say, he there saw a List taken of five and twenty Masters of Families, that made themselves away in one weeks time: An accident somewhat resembling that of the *Zanthians*, who being besieg'd by *Brutus*, precipitated themselves, Men, Women, and Children, into such a furious appetite of dying, that nothing can be done to evade death, they did not put in practice to avoid life; insomuch, that *Brutus* had much ado to save but a very small number. Every opinion is of force enough, to make it self to be espoused at the expence of life. The first Article of that valiant Oath that *Greece* took, and observ'd in the *Median* War, was that every one should sooner exchange life for death, than their own Laws for those of *Persia*. What a World of people do we see in the Wars betwixt the *Turks*, and the *Greeks*, rather embrace a cruel death, than uncircumcise themselves to admit of Baptism? An example of which no sort of Religion is incapable. The Kings of *Castile*, having Banish'd the *Jews* out of their Dominions, *John* King of *Portugal* in consideration of eight Crowns a Head, sold them a retirement into his, for a certain limited time; upon condition, that the time prefixt coming to expire, they should be gone; and he to furnish them with Shipping, to transport them into *Africk*. The limited day came, which once laps'd, they were given to understand, that such as were afterwards found in the Kingdom should remain Slaves: Vessels were very slenderly provided, and those who embark'd in them were rudely, and villainously used by the Seamen, who besides other indignities, kept them cruising upon the Sea, one while forwards and another backwards, till they had spent all their provisions, and were constrain'd to buy of them at so dear rates, and so long withal, that they set them not on Shoar, till they were all stript to the very Shirts. The news of this inhumane usage, being brought to those who remained behind, the greater part of them resolv'd upon Slavery, and some made a shew of changing Religion. *Emanuel*, the successor of *John*, being come to the Crown, first set them at liberty; and afterwards altering his mind, order'd them to depart his Country, assigning three Ports for their passage. Hoping (says the Bishop *Osorius*, no contemptible Latin Historian of these later times) that the favour of the liberty he had given them, having fail'd of converting them to Christianity, yet the difficulty of committing themselves to the mercy of the Mariners, and of abandoning a Country they were now habituated to, and were grown very rich in, to go, and expose themselves in strange and unknown Regions, would certainly do it: But finding himself deceiv'd in his expectation, and that they were all resolv'd upon the Voyage; he cut off two of the three Ports he had promised them, to the end, that the length and incommodity of the passage, might reduce some; or that he might have opportunity, by crouding them all into one place, the more conveniently to execute what

he had designed; which was to force all the Children under fourteen years of Age, from the Arms of their Fathers and Mothers, to transport them from their sight and conversation, into a place where they might be instructed, and brought up in our Religion. He says that this produc'd a most horrid Spectacle: The natural affection betwixt the Parents and their Children, and moreover their Zeal to their ancient Belief, contending against this violent Decree. Fathers and Mothers were commonly seen making themselves away, and by a yet much more Rigorous Example, precipitating out of Love and Compassion, their young Children into Wells and Pits, to avoid the Severity of this Law. As to the remainder of them, the time that had been prefix'd being expir'd, for want of means to transport them, they again return'd into Slavery. Some also turn'd Christians, upon whose Faith, as also that of their Posterity even to this Day, which is a Hundred Years since, few *Portuguese* can yet relie or believe them to be real Converts; though Custom, and length of time, are much more powerful Counsellors in such Changes, than all other Constraints whatever. In the Town of *Castelnau-Darry*, Fifty Hereticks, *Albegeois*, at one time suffer'd themselves to be Burnt alive in one Fire, rather than they would renounce their Opinions. *Quoties non modo ductores nostri, dicit Cicero, sed uniuersi etiam exercitus, ad non dubiam mortem concurrerunt?* How oft, have not only our Leaders, but whole Armies, run to a certain and apparent Death. I have seen an intimate Friend of mine, run headlong upon Death with a real affection, and that was rooted in his heart by divers plausible Arguments, which he would never permit me to dispossess him of, upon the first Honourable occasion that offer'd it self to him, precipitate himself into it, without any manner of visible reason, with an obstinate and ardent desire of Dying. We have several Examples of our own times of those, even so much as to little Children, who for fear of a Whipping, or some such little thing, have dispatch'd themselves. And, what shall we not fear (says one of the Ancients to this purpose,) if we dread that, which Cowardice it self has chosen for its refuge? Should I here produce a long Catalogue of those of all Sexes and Conditions, and of all sorts, even in the most happy Ages, who have either with great Constancy look'd Death in the Face, or voluntarily sought it; and sought it not only to avoid the Evils of this Life but some, purely to avoid the Satiety of Living; and others, for the hope of a better Condition elsewhere, I should never have done. Nay, the number is so infinite, that in truth, I should have a better Bargain on't, to reckon up those who have fear'd it. This one therefore shall serve for all; *Pyrrho* the Philosopher, being one Day in a Boat, in a very great Tempest, shew'd to those he saw the most affrighted about him, and encourag'd them by the Example of a Hog, that was there, nothing at all concern'd at the Storm. Shall we then dare to say, that this advantage of Reason, of which we so much Boast, and upon the account of which, we think our selves Masters and Emperours, over the rest of the Creatures, was given us for a Torment? To what end serves the Knowledge of things, if it renders us more Unmanly? if we lose the Tranquillity and Repose we should enjoy without it? And if it put us into a worse Condition than *Pyrrho's* Hog? Shall we employ the Understanding, that was conferr'd upon us for our greatest Good, to our own Ruine? Setting our selves against the design of Nature, and the universal Order of things, which intend, that every one should make use of the Faculties, Members, and Means, he has, to his own best Advantage? But it may

peradventure be Objected against me; Your Rule is true enough, as to what concerns Death: But what will you say of Necessity? What will you moreover say of Pain, that *Aristippus*, *Hieronimus*, and almost all the Wise Men, have reputed the worst of Evils? And those who have deny'd it by word of Mouth, did however confess it in Effects? *Possidonius* being extremely Tormented with a Sharp and painful Disease, *Pompeius* came to Visit him, excusing himself, that he had taken so unseasonable a time to come to hear him discourse of Philosophy; God forbid! said *Possidonius* to him again, that Pain should ever have the power to hinder me from talking, and thereupon fell immediately upon a discourse of the Contempt of Pain: But in the mean time, his own Infirmary was playing its part, and plagu'd him to the purpose; to which he Cry'd out, thou may'st work thy Will Pain, and Torment me with all the power thou hast, but thou shalt never make me say, that thou art an Evil. This Story that they make such a Clutter withal, what is there in it, I fain would know, to the Contempt of Pain? It only Fights it with Words, and in the mean time, if the Shootings and Dolours he felt, did not move him, why did he interrupt his Discourse? Why did he fancy, he did so great a thing, in forbearing to confess it an Evil? All does not here consist in the Imagination, our Fancies may work upon other things: But this here is a certain Science that is playing its part, of which our Senses themselves are judge.

Qui nisi sunt ueri, ratio quoque falsa sit omnis.

*Which if it be not here most true;
Reason it self must be false too.*

Shall we persuade our Skins, that the Jerks of a Whip tickle us? Or our Taste, that a Potion of Aloes is *Graves Wine*. *Pyrrho's Hog* is here in the same Predicament with us; he is not afraid of Death, 'tis true, but if you Beat him, he will Cry out to some purpose: Shall we force the general Law of Nature, which in every Living Creature under Heaven, is seen to Tremble under Pain? The very Trees seem to Groan under the Blows they receive. Death is only felt by Discourse, forasmuch as it is the motion of an instant.

*Aut fuit, aut ueniet, nihil est præsentis in illa,
Morsque minus pœnæ, quam mora mortis habet.*

*Death's always past, or coming on, in this
There never any thing of present is:
And the delays of Death more painfull are,
Than Death it self, and Dying is by far.*

A Thousand Beasts, a Thousand Men, are sooner Dead than Threatned. That also which we principally pretend to Fear in Death is Pain, the ordinary fore-runner of it: Yet, if we may believe a Holy Father, *malam mortem non facit, nisi quod sequitur mortem*. Nothing makes Death Evil, but what follows it. And I should yet say more probably, that neither that which goes before, nor that which follows after, are at all the appendants of Death: We excuse our selves falsely. And I find by experience, that it is rather the impatience of the imagination of Death, that makes us impatient of Pain; and that we find it doubly grievous, as it Threatens us

with Death. But Reason accusing our Cowardice, for fearing a thing so sudden, so inevitable, and so insensible, we take the other as the more excusable pretence. All ills that carry no other danger along with them, but simply the Evils themselves, we despise as things of no danger. The Tooth-Ache or the Gout, as painful as they are, being yet not reputed Mortal, who reckons them in the Catalogue of Diseases? But let us presuppose, that in Death we principally regard the Pain, as also, there is nothing to be fear'd in Poverty, but the Miseries it brings along with it, of Thirst, Hunger, Cold, Heat, Watching, and the other Inconveniences it makes us suffer, still we have nothing to do with any thing but Pain. I will grant, and very willingly, that it is the worst Accident of our Being (for I am the Man upon Earth, that the most Hates, and avoids it, considering, that hitherto I thank God I have had so little Traffick with it,) but still it is in us, if not to annihilate, at least, to lessen it by Patience, and though the Body should Mutiny, to Maintain the Soul nevertheless in good Temper. And were it not so, who had ever given Reputation to Vertue, Valour, Force, Magnanimity, and Resolution? where were their parts to be plaid, if there were no Pain to be Defi'd? *Auida est periculi uirtus*. Vertue is greedy of danger. Were there no lying upon the hard ground, no enduring, arm'd at all pieces, the Meridional Heats, no feeding upon the flesh of Horses, and Asses, no seeing a Man's self hack'd and hew'd to pieces, no suffering a Bullet to be pull'd out from amongst the shatter'd Bones, the sticking up, cauterising, and searching of Wounds, by what means were the advantage we covet to have over the Vulgar to be acquir'd? 'Tis far from flying Evil and Pain, what the Sages say, that of Actions equally good, a Man should most covet to perform that wherein there is greater Labour and Pain. *Non est enim hilaritate, nec lascivia, nec risu, aut joco comitte leuitatis, sed sæpe etiam tristes firmitate, & constantia sunt beati*. For Men are not only happy by Mirth and Wantonness, neither by Laughter and Jestings, the Companion of Levity: But oft-times, the Graver and more Melancholick sort of Men, reap Felicity from their Steadiness and Constancy. And for this reason, it has ever been impossible to perswade our Fore-fathers, but that the Victories obtain'd by dint of Force, and the hazard of War, were still more Honourable, than those perform'd in great Security, by Stratagem or Practice.

Lætius est, quoties magno sibi constat honestum.

*A handsome Act more handsome does appear.
By how much more it cost the does dear.*

Besides, this ought to be our comfort, that naturally, if the Pain be violent, 'tis but short, and if long, nothing violent. *Si grauis, breuis: si longus, leuis*. Thou wilt not feel it long, if thou feel'st it too much, it will either put an end to it self, or to thee; if thou canst not support it, it will export thee: *Memineris maximos morte finire; paruos multa habere interualla requietis: mediocrium nos esse dominos: ut si tolerabiles sint, feramus; sin minus, e uita, quum ea non placeat tanquam e theatro exeamus*. Remember, that great ones are terminated by Death, that small, have long Intermissions of Repose, and that we are Masters of the moderate sort: so that, if tolerable, we may bear them, if not, we can go out of Life, as from a Theatre, where the Entertainment does not please us; that which makes us suffer Pain with so much Impatience is the not being accustomed to repose our chiefest

Contentment in the Soul, that we do not enough rely upon her who is the sole and sovereign Mistress of our Condition. The Body, saving in the greater or less proportion, has but one and the same Bent and Bias; whereas the Soul is variable into all sorts of forms; and subject to her self, and to her own Empire, all things whatsoever; both the Senses of the Body, and all other Accidents: and therefore it is, that we ought to study her, to enquire into her, and to rowse up all her powerful Faculties. There is neither Reason, Form, nor Prescription, that can any thing prevail against her Inclination and Choice; of so many Thousands of Biasses that she has at her disposal, let us give her one proper to our repose and conversation, and then we shall not only be shelter'd and secur'd from all manner of Injury and Offence, but moreover gratified and oblig'd, if we will, with Evils and Offences. She makes her profit indifferently of all things. Error and Dreams serve her to good use, as a Loyal matter to Lodge us in Safety and Contentment. 'Tis plain enough to be seen, that 'tis the sharpness of our Conceit, that gives the Edge to our Pains and Pleasures. Beasts that have no such thing, leave to their Bodies their own free and natural Sentiments, and consequently, in every kind very near the same, as appears by the resembling Application of their Motions. If we would not disturb, in our Members, the Jurisdiction that appertains to them in this, 'tis to be believed, it would be the better for us, and that Nature has given them a just and moderate Temper, both to Pleasure and Pain; neither can it fail of being Just, being Equal, and Common. But seeing we have Enfranchis'd our selves from these Rules, to give our selves up to the rambling Liberty of our own Fancies, let us at least help to encline them to the most agreeable side. *Plato* fears our too vehemently engaging our selves with Grief and Pleasure, forasmuch as these too much Knit and Ally the Soul to the Body: whereas I rather, quite contrary, by reason it too much separates and disunites them. As an Enemy is made more Fierce by our Flight, so Pain grows Proud to see us Truckle under her. She will surrender upon much better Terms to them who make Head against her: A Man must oppose, and stoutly set himself against it. In retiring and giving ground, we invite, and pull upon our selves the Ruine that Threatens us. As the Body is more firm in an Encounter, the more stiffly and obstinately it applies it self to it; so is it with the Soul. But let us come to Examples, which are the proper Commodity for Fellows of such feeble Reins as my self; where we shall find, that it is with Pain, as with Stones, that receive a more spritely, or a more languishing Lustre, according to the Foil they are set upon, and that it has no more room in us, than we are pleas'd to allow it. *Tantum doluerunt, quantum doloribus se inseruerunt.* They Griev'd so much the more, by how much they set themselves to Grieve. We are more sensible of one little touch of a Chirurgeon's Lancet, than of Twenty Wounds with a Sword in the heat of Fight. The Pains of Child-bearing, said by the Physician, and by God himself, to be very great, and which our Women keep so great a Clutter about, there are whole Nations that make nothing of it. To say nothing of the *Lacedæmonian* Women, what alteration can you see in our *Switzers* Wives of the Guard, saving, as they trot after their Husbands, you see them to Day with the Child hanging at their Backs, that they carried yesterday in their Bellies? And the counterfeit Gipsies we have amongst us, go themselves to Wash their's so soon as they come into the World, in the first River they meet. Besides so many Whores as Daily steal their Children out of their Womb, as before they stole them

in; that fair and noble Wife of *Sabinus*, a Patrician of *Rome*, for another's interest, alone, without help, without crying out, or so much as a Groan, endur'd the Bearing of Two Twins. A poor simple Boy of *Lacedæmon* having stole a Fox, (for they more fear the Shame of their Knavery in stealing, than we do the Punishment of our Knavery), and having got him under his Coat, did rather endure the tearing out of his Bowels, than he would discover his Theft. And another Cursing at a Sacrifice, suffer'd himself to be Burnt to the Bone, by a Coal that fell into his Sleeve, rather than disturb the Ceremony. And there have been a great Number, for a sole Trial of Vertue, following their instructions, who have at Seven Years old endur'd to be Whipt to Death, without changing their Countenance. And *Cicero* has seen them Fight in Parties, with Fists, Feet and Teeth, till they have fainted and sunk down, rather than confess themselves overcome. Custom would never Conquer Nature, for she is ever Invincible, but we have infected the Mind with Shadows, Delights, Wantonness, Negligence and Sloath; and with vain Opinions, and corrupt Manners, render'd it Effeminate and Mean.¹ Every one knows the Story of *Scævola*, that being slipt into the Enemies Camp to Kill their General, and having miss'd his Blow, to repair his fault, by a more strange Invention, and to deliver his Country, he boldly confess'd to *Porsenna*, (who was the King he had a purpose to Kill,) not only his design, but moreover added, That there were then in his Camp a great Number of *Romans*, his Complices in the Enterprize, as good Men as he, and to shew what a one he himself was, having caus'd a Pan of Burning Coals to be brought, he saw, and endur'd his Arm to Broil and Roast, till the King himself, conceiving Horrour at the sight, commanded the Pan to be taken away. What would you say of him, that would not vouchsafe to respite his Reading in a Book, whilst he was under Incision? And of the other that persisted to Mock and Laugh, in Contempt of the Pains Inflicted upon him; so that the provok'd Cruelty of the Executioners that had him in handling, and all the Inventions of Tortures redoubled upon him one after another, spent in vain, gave him the Bucklers? But he was a Philosopher. What! a Fencer of *Cæsar*'s, Endur'd and Laughing all the while, his Wounds to be search'd, Lanc'd and laid open. *Quis mediocris gladiator ingemuit? Quis uultum mutauit unquam? Quis non modo stetit, uerum etiam decubuit turpiter? Quis cum decubisset, ferrum recipere iussus, collum contraxit?* What mean Fencer ever so much as gave a Groan? Which of them ever so much as chang'd his Countenance? Which of them standing or falling did either with Shame? Which of them, when he was down, and commanded to receive the Blow of the Sword, ever shrunk in his Neck? Let us bring in the Women too. Who has not heard at *Paris* of her that caus'd her Face to be flea'd, only for the fresher Complexion of a new Skin? There are who have drawn good and sound Teeth, to make their Voices more soft and sweet, or to place them in better Order. How many Examples of the contempt of Pain have we in that Sex? What can they not do? what do they fear to do, for never so little hopes of an Addition to their Beauty?

*Vellere quis cura est albos à stirpe capillos,
Et faciem, dempta pelle referre nouam.*

*Who pluck their Gray Hairs by the Roots, and try,
And old Head, Face, with young Skin to supply.*

I have seen some of them swallow Sand, Ashes, and do their utmost to destroy their Stomachs, to get Pale Complexions. To make a fine *Spanish* Body, what Racks will they not endure of Tweaking and Braceing, till they have Notches in their sides, cut into the very quick Flesh, and sometimes to Death? It is an ordinary thing with several Nations at this Day, to hurt themselves in good earnest, to gain credit to what they profess; of which, our King relates notable Examples of what he has seen in *Poland*, and done towards himself. But besides this, which I know to have been imitated by some in *France*, when I came from that famous Assembly of the Estates at *Blois*, I had a little before seen a Maid in *Picardy*, who to manifest the Ardour of her Promises, as also her Constancy, give her self, with a Bodkin she wore in her Hair, Four or Five good lusty Stabs into the Arm, till the Bloud gush'd out to some purpose. The *Turks* make themselves great Skars in Honour of their Mistresses, and to the end they may the longer remain, they presently clap Fire to the Wound, where they hold it an incredible time to stop the Bloud and, form the Cicatrice; People that have been Eye-witness of it, have both Writ and Sworn it to me. But for Ten Aspers, there are there every day Fellows to be found, that will give themselves a good deep slash in the Arms or Thighs. I am willing, though to have the Testimonies nearest to us, when we have most need of them; for Christendom does furnishes us with enow. And after the Example of our Blessed Guide, there have been many who would bear the Cross. We Learn by Testimony, very worthy of belief, that the King St. *Lewis* wore a Hair-shirt, till in his old Age his Confessor gave him a Dispensation to leave it off; and that every *Friday* he caus'd his Shoulders to be drubb'd by his Priest with Six small Chains of Iron, which were always carried about amongst his Night Accoutrements for that purpose. *William* our last Duke of *Guienne*, the Father of this *Eleanor* who has Transmitted that Dutchy to the Houses of *France* and *England*, continually for Ten or Twelve Years before he Died, wore a Suit of Arms under a Religious Habit, by way of Penance. *Fulkee* Count of *Anjou*, went as far as *Jerusalem*, there to cause himself to be Whipt by Two of his Servants, with a Rope about his Neck, before the Sepulchre of our Lord: But do we not moreover every *Good Friday*, in several places, see great numbers of Men and Women, Beat and Whip themselves till they Lacerate and Cut the Flesh to the very Bones; I have often seen this, and without Enchantment, when it was said, there were some amongst them, (for they go disguis'd,) who for Money undertook by this means to save harmless the Religion of others, by a contempt of Pain, so much the greater, as the Incentives of Devotion are more effectual, than those of Avarice. *Q. Maximus* Buried his Son, when he was a Consul, and *M. Cato* his, when Prætor Elect; and *L. Paulus* both his, within a few Days one after another, with such a Countenance as express'd no manner of Grief. I said once Merrily of a certain Person, that he had disappointed the Divine Justice: for the Violent Death of Three grown up Children of his, being one Day sent him, for a severe Scourge, as it is to be suppos'd, he was so far from being Afflicted at the Accident, that he rather took it for a particular Grace and Favour of Heaven. I do not follow these Monstrous Humours, though I lost Two or Three at Nurse, if not without Grief, at least, without Repining, and yet there is hardly any Accident, that pierces nearer to the quick. I see a great many other occasions of Sorrow, that should they happen to me, I should hardly feel; and have despis'd some when they have befallen me, to which the World has given so Terrible a

Figure, that I should Blush to Boast of my Constancy. *Ex quo intelligitur, non in Natura, sed in opinione esse ægritudinem*. By which it is understood, that the Grief is not in Nature, but Opinion. Opinion is a Powerful Party, Bold, and without Measure, who ever so greedily hunted after Security and Repose, as *Alexander* and *Cæsar* did after Disturbances and Difficulties? *Terez* the Father of *Sitalces*, was wont to say, that when he had no Wars, he fancied there was no difference betwixt him and his Groom. *Cato* the Consul, to secure some Cities of *Spain* from Revolt, only interdicting the Inhabitants from wearing Arms, a great many Kill'd themselves: *Ferox gens, nullam uitam rati sine Armis esse*. A Fierce People, who thought there was no Life without Arms. How many do we know, who have forsaken the Calms and Sweetness of a Quiet Life, at Home amongst their Acquaintance, to seek out the Horrour of unhabitable Desarts; and having precipitated themselves into so Abject a Condition, as to become the Scorn and Contempt of the World, have hugg'd themselves with the Conceit, even to Affectation. Cardinal *Barromeus*, who Died lately at *Milan*, in the midst all the Jollity that the Air of *Italy*, his Youth, Birth and great Riches invited him to, kept himself in so Austere a way of Living, that the same Robe he wore in Summer, serv'd him for Winter too: Had only Straw for his Bed, and his Hours of vacancy from the Affairs of his Employment, he continually spent in Study, upon his Knees, having a little Bread and a Glass of Water set by his Book, which was all the Provision of his Repast, and all the time he spent in Eating. I know some who consentingly have Acquir'd both Profit and Advancement from Cuckoldry, of which the bare Name only affrights so many People. If the Sight be not the most necessary of all our Senses, 'tis at least the most pleasant: But the most pleasant and most useful of all our Members, seem to be those of Generation, and yet a great many have conceiv'd a Mortal Hatred against them, only for this, that they were too Amiable; and have depriv'd themselves of them, only for their value. As much thought he of his Eyes, that put them out. The generality, and more solid sort of Men, look upon abundance of Children as a great Blessing; I, and some others, think it as great a Benefit to be without them. And when you ask *Thales*, why he does not Marry, he tells you, because he has no mind to leave any Posterity behind him. That our Opinion gives the value to things, is very manifest in the great number of these which we do not so much regard to prize them, but our selves; and never consider, either their Vertues, or their Use; but only how dear they cost us: As though that were a part of their substance: And we only repute for value in them, not what they bring to us, but what we add to them. By which I understand, that we are great managers of our Expence. As it weighs, it serves for so much as it weighs; Our opinion will never suffer it to want of its value. The Price gives value to the Diamond, Difficulty to Vertue, Suffering to Devotion, and Gripping to Physick. A certain Person, to be Poor, threw his Crowns into the same Sea, to which so many come from all parts of the World to Fish for Riches. *Epicurus* says, That to be Rich, is no Advantage, but only an alteration of Affairs. In plain truth, it is not Want, but rather Abundance, that Creates Avarice. Neither will I stick to deliver my own Experience concerning this Affair.

I have since my Child-hood Liv'd in Three sorts of Conditions; the First, which continued for some Twenty Years, I past over without any other means, but what were Accidental, and depending upon the allowance and

assistance of others, without Stint, or certain Revenue. I then spent my Money so much the more chearfully, and with so much the less care how it went, as it wholly depended upon my over-confidence of Fortune; and never Liv'd more at my ease, I never had the repulse of finding the Purse of any of my Friends shut against me, having enjoin'd my self this Necessity above all other Necessities whatever, by no means to fail of Payment at the appointed time, which also they have a Thousand times respited, seeing how careful I was to satisfie them; so that I practis'd at once a Thrifty, and withal, a kind of alluring Honesty. I naturally feel a kind of pleasure in Paying, as if I eas'd my Shoulders of a troublesome Weight, and in freeing my self from that Image of Slavery; as also, that I had a ravishing kind of satisfaction, in pleasing another and doing a Just Action. Those kind of payments excepted, where the trouble of reckoning and dodging are requir'd, and in such cases, where I can meet with no Body to ease me of that hateful Torment, I avoid them, how scandalously and injuriously soever, all I possibly can, for fear of those little wrangling Disputes, for which, both my humour, and way of speaking, are so totally improper and unfit. There is nothing I hate so much, as driving a Bargain; 'tis a meer Traffick of Couzenage and Impudence; where after an Hours cheapning and dogging, both Parties abandon their Word and Oath for Five Sols profit, or abatement. And yet, I always borrow'd at great disadvantage, for wanting the confidence to speak to the person my self, I committed my Request to the perswasion of a Ticket, which usually is no very successful Advocate, and is of very great advantage to him who has a mind to deny. I in those Days more jocundly and freely referr'd the Conduct of my Affairs to the Stars, than I have since done to my own Providence and Judgment. Most good Husbands look upon it as a horrible thing to Live always thus in uncertainty, and are not angry in the first place, that the greatest part of the World Live so. How many Worthy Men have wholly slighted and abandon'd the certainty of their own Esstates, and yet Daily do it, to trust to the inconstant Favour of Princes, and fickle fortune? *Cæsar* ran above a Million of Gold, more than he was worth, in Debt, to become *Cæsar*. And how many Merchants have begun their Traffick by the Sale of their Farms, which they sent into the *Indies*.

Tot per impotentia freta?

In so great a Siccity of Devotion, as we see in these Days, we have a Thousand and a Thousand Colleges, that pass it over commodiously enough, expecting every Day their Dinner from the Liberality of Heaven. Secondly, They do not take notice, that this Certitude upon which they so much relie, is not much less uncertain and hazardous, than Hazard it self. I see Misery as near beyond Two Thousand Crowns a Year, as if it stood close by me; for besides, that it is in the power of Chance to make a Hundred Breaches to Poverty, through the greatest strength of our Riches (there being very often no Mean, betwixt the highest and the lowest Fortune.)

Fortuna uitrea est: tum, quum splendet, frangitur.

*Fortune is Glass, the brighter it doth shine
More frail, and soonest broken when most fine.*

And to turn all our Barricado's and Bulworks Topsy Turvey; I find that by divers Causes, Indigence is as frequently seen to Inhabit with those who have Estates, as with those that have none; and peradventure, it is then far less Grievous, when alone, than when accompanied with Riches; which flow more from good Managery, than Income. *Faber est suæ quisque Fortunæ*. Every one is the Hammerer of his own Fortune, and an uneasie, necessitous, busie Man, seems to me more Miserable, than he that is simply Poor. *In diuitiis inopes, quod genus egestatis grauissimum est*. Poor in the midst of Riches, which is the most insupportable kind of Poverty. The greatest and most wealthy Princes, are by Poverty and Want driven to the most extream Necessity: for can there be any more Extream, than to become Tyrants, and unjust Usurpers, of their Subjects Goods and Estates?

My Second Condition of Life was, to have Money of my own; wherein I so order'd the matter, that I had soon laid up a very notable Summ out of a mean a Fortune; considering with my self, that that only was to be reputed having, which a Man reserv'd from his ordinary Expence, and that a Man could not absolutely relie upon Revenue to receive, how clear soever his Estate might be. For what, said I, if I should be surpriz'd by such or such an Accident? And after such like vain and vicious Imaginations, would very Learnedly, by this hoarding of Money, provide against all Inconveniences; and could moreover answer, such as objected to me, that the number of them was too infinite, that I could not lay up for all, I could however do it at least for some, and for many. Yet was not this done without a great deal of Solitude and Anxiety of Mind. I kept it very close, and though I dare talk so boldly of my self, never spoke of my Money, but falsely, as others do, who being Rich, pretend to be Poor, and being Poor, pretend to be Rich, dispensing with their Consciences for ever telling sincerely what they have. A ridiculous and shameful Prudence. Was I to go a Journey? methought I was never enough provided: and the more I loaded my self with Money, the more also was I loaded with Fear, one while of the danger of the Roads, another of the Fidelity of him who had the charge of my Sumpters, of whom, as some others that I know, I was never sufficiently Secure, if I had him not always in my Eye. If I chanc'd to leave the Key of my Cabinet behind me, what strange Jealousies, and Anxiety of Mind did I enter into? And which was worse, without daring to acquaint any Body with it. My Mind was eternally taken up with such things as these, so that all things consider'd, there is more trouble in keeping Money, than in getting it. And if I did not altogether so much as I say, or was not effectually so scandalously solicitous of my Money, as I have made my self; yet it cost me something at least to govern my self from being so. I reapt little or no advantage by what I had, and my Expences seem'd nothing less to me, for having the more to spend: For, as *Bion* said, The Hairy Men are as angry as the Bald to be pull'd; and after you are once accustomed to it, and have once set your heart upon your heap, it is no more at your Service, you cannot find in your heart to break it: 'Tis a Building that you will fancie, must of necessity all tumble down to Ruin, if you stir but the least Pibble, Necessity must first take you by the Throat, before you can prevail upon your self to touch it: And I would sooner have pawn'd any thing I had, or sold a House, and with much less constraint upon my self, than have made the least breach in that beloved Purse, I had so cunningly laid by. But the danger was, that a Man cannot easily prescribe certain limits to this

desire, (they are hard to find in things that a Man conceives to be good,) and to stint this good Husbandry so, that it may not degenerate into Avarice: Men still are intent upon adding to the heap, and encreasing the stock, from Summ to Summ, till at last they vilely deprive themselves of the enjoyment of their own proper Goods, and throw all into reserve, without making any use of them at all. According to this Rule, they are the Richest People in the World, who are set to guard the Gaols, and to defend the Walls of a Wealthy City. All Mony'd Men I conclude to be Covetous. *Plato* places Corporal or Humane Riches in this Order; Health, Beauty, Strength and Riches; and Riches, says he, is not blind, but very clear sighted, when illuminated by Prudence. *Dionysius* the Son, did a very handsome Act upon this subject. He was inform'd, that one of the *Syracusans* had hid a Treasure in the Earth, and thereupon sent to the Man to bring it to him, which he accordingly did, privately reserving a small part of it only to himself, with which he went to another City, where being cur'd of his Appetite of Hoarding, he began to Live at a more liberal Rate. Which *Dionysius* hearing, caus'd the rest of his Treasure to be restored to him, saying, that since he had learnt how to use it, he very willingly returned it back to him.

I continued some Years in this hoarding Humour, when I know not what good *Dæmon* fortunately put me out of it, as he did the *Syracusan*, and made me throw abroad all my reserve at random; the pleasure of a certain Voyage I took of very great Expence, having made me spurn this fond Love of Money under foot, by which means I am now fallen into a third way of living, (I speak what I think of it) doubtless much more pleasant and moderate, which is, that I live at the height of my Revenue, sometimes the one, sometimes the other may perhaps exceed, but 'tis very little, and but rarely that they differ at all; I live from Hand to Mouth, and content myself in having sufficient for my present, and ordinary Expence; for as to extraordinary occasions, all the laying up in the World would never suffice; and 'tis the greatest folly imaginable to expect, that Fortune should ever sufficiently arm us against her self. 'Tis with our own Arms that we are to fight her, accidental ones will betray us in the pinch of the business. If I lay up, 'tis for some near and designed Expence, and not to purchase Lands, of which I have no need, but to purchase pleasure. *Non esse cupidum, pecunia est: non esse emacem, uectigal est.* Not to be Covetous, is Money, not to be a Purchaser, is a Tribute. I neither am in any great apprehension of wanting, nor in desire of any more; *Divitiarum fructus est in copia; copiam declarat satietas.* The fruitss of Riches lie in abundance, satiety declares abundance. And I am very well pleased with my self, that this Reformation in me, has fallen out in an Age naturally inclined to Avarice, and that I see my self clear'd of a Folly so common to Old Men, and the most ridiculous of all humane Follies. *Feraulez* a Man that had run through both Fortunes, and found that the encrease of substance, was no encrease of appetite, either to Eating, or Drinking, Sleeping, or the enjoyment of his Wife, and who on the other side, felt the care of his Oeconomy lie heavy upon his Shoulders, as it does on mine; was resolved to please a poor Young Man his faithful Friend, who panted after Riches, by making him a gift of all his, which were excessively great, and moreover of all he was in the daily way of getting by the liberality of *Cyrus*, his good Master, and by the War; conditionally that he should take care handsomly to maintain, and

plentifully to entertain him, as his Host, and his Friend; which being accordingly embrac'd, and performed, they afterwards liv'd very happily together, both of them equally content with the change of their condition. An example that I could imitate with all my heart. And very much approve the Fortune of an Ancient *Prelate*, whom I see to have so absolutely stript himself of his Purse, his Revenue, and Care of his Expense; committing them one while to one trusty Servant, and another while to another, that he has spun out a long succession of Years, as ignorant by this means of his Domestick Affairs, as a meer stranger. The confidence of another Mans vertue, is no light evidence of a Mans own; besides, God is pleased to favour such a confidence, as to what concerns him of whom I am speaking, I see nowhere a better govern'd Family, nor a House more nobly, and constantly maintained than his, happy in this to have staid his affairs to so just a proportion, that his Estate is sufficient to do it without his care, or trouble, and without any hinderance, either in the spending, or laying it up; to his other more decent, and quiet employments, and that are more suitable both to his place, and liking. Plenty then and indigence depend upon the opinion every one has of them; and Riches no more than Glory, or Health, no more either Beauty, or Pleasure, than he is pleas'd to lend them, by whom they are possess. Every one is well, or ill at ease, according as he finds himself: Not he whom the World believes, but he who believes himself to be so, is content; and in him alone belief gives it self being, and reality. Fortune does us neither good, nor hurt; she only presents us the matter, and the seed, which our Soul, more powerfully than she, turns and applies as she best pleases; being the sole cause, and Sovereign Mistress of her own happy, or unhappy condition. All external accessions receive taste and Colour, from the internal constitution, as Cloaths warm us, not with their Heat, but our own, which they are fit to cover and keep in; and who would cover a cold body, would do the same service for the Cold, for so Snow and Ice are preserved. And after the same manner that Study is a torment to a Truant, abstinence from Wine to a good Fellow, frugality to the Spendthrift, and exercise to a Lazy tender bred Fellow; so it is of all the rest. The things are not so painful, and difficult of themselves, but our weakness or cowardice makes them so. To judge of great, and high matters, requires a suitable Soul, otherwise we attribute the Vice to them, which is really our own. A straight Oar seems crooked in the Water: It does not only import that we see the thing, but how, and after what manner we see it. But after all this, why amongst so many discourses, that by so many arguments perswade Men to despise Death, and to endure pain, can we not find out one that makes for us? And of so many sorts of imaginations as have so prevailed upon others, as to perswade them to do so, why does not every one apply some one to himself, the most suitable to his own humour? If he cannot away with a strong working Apozem to eradicate the Evil, let him at least take a Lenitive to ease it. *Opinio est quædam effeminata, ac levis: nec in dolore magis, quam eadem in uoluptate: qua quum liquessimus fluimusque mollitia, apud aculeum sine clamore ferre non possumus. Totum in eo est, ut tibi imperes.* There is a certain light, and effeminate opinion, and that not more in pain, than it is even in pleasure it self; by which, whilst we rest and Wallow in ease, and wantonness, we cannot endure so much as the stinging of a Bee, without roaring. All that lies in it is only this, to command thy self. As to the rest, a Man does not transgress Philosophy, by permitting the acrimony of pains, and humane frailty to prevail so much

above measure; for they will at last be reduc'd to these invincible replies. If it be ill to live in necessity, at least there is no necessity upon a Man to live in necessity. No Man continues ill long but by his own fault. And who has neither the Courage to Die; nor the Heart to Live: who will neither resist nor fly, what should a Man do to him?

NOTES

- 1 This is not Montaigne's sentence but Cotton's translation of Montaigne's quote from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*: *Numquam naturam mos uinceret: est enim ea semper inuicta; sed nos umbris, deliciis, otio, languore, desidia animum infecimus; opinionibus maloque more delinitum molliuimus.*