

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

ESSAYS



Book 3 · Chapter 12

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Of Phisiognomy

ALMOST ALL the opinions we have, are taken by authoritie, and upon credite: There is no hurt. We cannot chuse worse, then by our selves, inso weake an age. This image of *Socrates* his discourse, which his friends have left us, we only approve it, by the reverence of publike approbation. It is not of our owne knowledge: they are not according to our use. Might such a man be borne now adayes, there are but few would now esteeme him. Wee discern not graces inlie or aright; We onely perceive them by a false light set out and pufft up with arte: Such as passe under their naturall puritie and simplicitie, doe easily escape so weake and dimme a sight as ours is. They have a secret, unperceived and dellicate beautie: he had neede of a cleere, farre-seeing and true-discerning sight, that should rightly discover this secret light. Is not in genuitie (according to us) cosin-germaine unto sottishnesse, and a qualitie of reproach? *Socrates* maketh his soule to moove, with a natural and common motion. Thus saith a plaine Country-man, and thus a seely Woman: Hee never hath other people in his mouth, than Coach-makers, Joyners, Coblers and Masons. They are inductions and similitudes, drawne from the most vulgar and knowne actions of men: every one understands him. Under so base a forme, wee should never have chosen the noble worthinesse and brightnesse of his admirable conceptions: Wee that esteeme all those but meane and vile, that learning doth not raise: and who have no perceiving of riches, except set out in shew and pompe. Our World is framed but unto ostentation. Men are puffed up with winde, and moved or handled by bounds, as Balloones. This man proposeth no vaine fantasies unto himselfe. His end was, to store us with things and furnish us with precepts, which really more substantially and joyntly serve our life:

*seruare modum, finémque tenere,
Naturámque sequi.*

*To keepe a meane, to hold the end,
And natures conduct to attend.*

So was he ever all one alike: And raised himselfe to the highest pitch of vigor, not by fits, but by complexion. Or to say better; he raised nothing, but rather brought downe and reduced all difficulties, or sharpenesse, to their originall and naturall state, and thereunto subdued vigor. For, in Cato, it is manifestly seene, to be an out-right proceeding, farre-above and beyond the common: By the brave exploits of his life, and in his death, he is ever perceived to be mounted upon his great horses. Whereas this man keepes on the ground, and with a gentle and ordinary pace, treateth of the most profitable discourses, and adresseseth himselfe both unto death and to the most thornie and crabbed crosses, that may happen unto the course of humane life. It hath indeede fortun'd, that the worthiest man to be known, and for a patterne to be presented to the world, he is the man of whom we have most certaine knowledge. He hath beene declared and enlightned by the most cleare-seeing men, that ever were. The testimonies we have of him, are in faithfulness and sufficiencie most admirable. It is a great matter, that ever he was able to give such order unto the pure imaginations of a childe, that without altring or wresting them, he hath thence produced the fairest effects of our minde. He neither represents it rich nor high-raised; but sound and pure: and ever with a blithe and undefiled health. By these vulgar springs and naturall wardes: by these ordinary and common fantasies, sans mooving or without urging himselfe, hee erected not onely the most regular, but the highest and most vigorous opinions, actions and customes, that ever were. Hee it is, that brought humane wisdom from heaven againe, where for a long time it had beene lost, to restore it unto man: where her most just and laborious worke is. See or heare him pleade before his judges; marke with what reasons hee rouzeth his courage to the hazards of warre, what arguments fortifie his patience, against detraction, calumniation, tyranny, death, and against his wives peevish head: therein is nothing borrowed from arte, or from learning. The simplest may there know their meanes and might: it is impossible to goe further backe or lower. He hath done humane nature a great kindnesse, to shew what and how much she can doe of her selfe. We are every one richer then we imagine, but we are taught to borrow, and instructed to shift; and rather to make use of others goods and meanes, then of our owne. There is nothing whereon man can stay or fix himselfe in time of his neede. Of voluptuousnesse, of riches, of pleasure, of power, he ever embraceth more, then he can graspe or hold. His greedinesse is incapable of moderation. The very same I finde to be in the curiositie of learning and knowledge: he cuts out more worke then he can well make an end of: and much more then he neede. Extending the profit of learning, as farre as his matter. *Ut omnium rerum, sic literarum quoque intemperantia laboramus. We are sicke of a surfet, as of all things, so of learning also.* And Tacitus hath reason to commend *Agricolaes* mother, to have brided in her sonne an over-burning and earnest desire of learning. It is a good, being neerely looked unto, that containeth as other humane goods, much peculiar vanitie and naturall weaknesse: and is very chargeable. The acquisition and purchase whereof is much more hazardous, then of all other viandes and beverage. For, whatsoever else we have bought, we carry home in some vessell or other, where we have law to examine it's worth: how much, and at what time we are to take-it. But Sciences, we cannot sodainely put them into any other vessell, then our minde: we swallow them in buying them, and goe from the marketh either already infected or amended.

There are some, which instead of nourishing, do but hinder and surcharge us; and other some, which under colour of curing, empoison us. I have taken pleasure in some place, to see men, who for devotions sake have made a vow of ignorance, as of chastitie, povertie and penitence. It is also a kind of guelding of our inordinate appetites, to muzzle this greedinesse, which provoketh us to the studie of bookes, and deprive the mind of that voluptuous delight, which by the opinion of learning doth so tickle us. And it is richly to accomplish the vow of povertie, to joine that of the minde unto it. *We neede not much learning for to live at ease.* And *Socrates* teacheth us, that we have both it, and the way to finde and make use of it, within us. All our sufficiencie, that is beyond the naturall, is wellnigh vaine and superfluous. It is much, if it charge and trouble us no more, then it steads us. *Paucis opus est literis ad mentem bonam.* *We have neede of little learning to have a good minde.* They are febricitant excesses of our spirit: a turbulent and unquiet instrument. Rowze up your selfe, and you shall finde forcible arguments against death to be in your selfe; most true and very proper to serve and steade you in time of necessitie. Tis they which induce a peasant swaine, yea and whole nations to die as constantly as any Philosopher. Should I have dide lesse merrily before I read the *Thusculanes*? I thinke not. And when I finde my selfe in my best wits, I perceive, that I have somewhat enriched my tongue; my courage but little. It is even as nature framed the same at first. And against any conflict, it shields itselfe, but with a naturall and common march. Bookes have not so much served me for instruction, as exercitation. What if learning, assaying to arme us with new wardes and fences, against naturall inconveniences, hath more imprinted their greatnesse and weight, in our fantasie, then her reasons, quiddities and subtilities, therewith to cover us? They are subtilities indeed; by which she often awaketh us very vainely. Observe how many slight and idle arguments the wisest and closest authours frame and scatter about one good sound: which if you consider neerely, are but vaine and incorporall. They are but verball wyles, which beguile us. But forsomuch as it may be profitable, I will not otherwise blanch them. Many of that condition are scattred here and there, in diverse places of this volume; either borrowed or imitated. Yet should a man somewhat heede, he call not that force, which is but quaintnes; or terme that which is but quipping-sharpe, solide; or name that good, which is but faire: *quæ magis gustata quàm potata delectant*, which more delight us being but tasted, then swild and swallowed downe. All that which pleaseth, feedeth not; *ubi non ingenii sed animi negotium agitur*. Where it is no matter of wit, but of courage. To see the struggling endeavours which *Seneca* giveth himselfe, to prepare himselfe against death; to see him sweate with panting; to see him bathe so long upon this pearch, thereby to strengthen and assure himselfe: I should have made question of his reputation, had he not most undantedly maintained the same in his death. His so violent and frequent agitation, sheweth that himselfe was fervent and impetuous. *Magnus animus remissius loquitur, & securius: Non est alius ingenio, alius animo color.* A great courage speakes softly but securely. Wit hath not one colour, and courage another. He must be convicted at his owne charges. And sheweth in some sorte, that hee was pressed by his adversary. *Plutarkes* maner by how much more disdaineful and farre-extending it is (in my opinion) so much more manlike and perswasive is it: I should easily believe, that his soule had her motions more assured and more regular. The one more sharpe, pricketh and sodainely starts us:

toucheth the spirit more. The other more solide, doeth constantly informe, establish and comfort us: toucheth more the understanding. That ravisheth our judgement; this doth gaine it. I have likewise seene other compositions and more revered, which in purtraying the combate, they endure against the provocations of the flesh, represent them so violent, so powerfull and so invincible, that our selves, who are cast in the common mould of other men, have as much to admire the unknowne strangenesse and unfelt vigor of their temptation, as their constant resistance. To what purpose doe we so arme and steele our selves with these labouring-efforts of learning? Let us diligently survey the surface of the earth, and there consider so many seely-poor people as wee see toying, sweltring and drooping about their businesse, which never heard of *Aristotle*, not of *Plato*, nor ever knew what examples or precepts are. From those doth nature dayly draw and afford us effects of constancie and patternes of patience, more pure and forcible, then are those, we so curiously studie-for in schooles. How many do I ordinarily see, that misacknowledge povertie; how many that wish for death, or that passe-it without any alaram or affliction? A fellow that dungeth my gardine, hath happily this morning buried his father or his childe. The very names whereby they call diseases, doe somewhat mylden and diminish the sharpenes of them. With them a *Phthisique* or consumption of the lungs, is but an ordinary cough: A *dissenterie* or bloody flix, but a distemper of the stomake: A pleurisie, but a cold or murre: and as they gently name them, so they easily endure them. Grievous are they indeede, when they hinder their ordinary labour or breake their usuall rest: They feede but to die.¹ *Simplex illa & aperta uirtus in obscuram & solertem Scientiam uersa est. That plaine and cleare vertue is turned into obscure and cunning knowledge.* I was writing this about a time that a boistrous storme of our tumultuous broiles and bloody troubles, did for many months space, with all it's might and horror, hang full over my head. On the one side, I had the enemies at my gates; on the other, the *Picoreurs* or free-booters, farre worse foes. *Non armis sed uitiis certatur. Wee contend not with armour, but with vices.* And at one time felt and endured all manner of harme-bringing military injuries:

*Hostis adest dextra læuâque à parte timendus,
Uicinôque malo terret utrûmque latus.*

*A fearefull foe on left hand and on right,
Doth with his neighbour harmes both sides afright.*

Oh monstrous Warre: Others worke without; this inwardly and against hir selfe: And with her owne venome gnaweth and consumes her selfe. It is of so ruinous and maligne a Nature; that together with all things els, she ruineth her selfe: and with spitefull rage, doeth rent, deface and massacre it selfe. Wee doe more often see it, by and through hir selfe, to waste, to desolate and dissolve hir selfe, then by or through want of any necessarie thing, or by enemies force. All manner of discipline doth shunne and flie it. She commeth to cure sedition, and hir selfe is throughly therewith infected: She goeth about to chastize disobedience, and sheweth the example of it: and being employed for the defence of Lawes, entreth into actuall rebellion against hir owne ordinances. Aye me, where are we? Our phisike bringeth infection.

*Nostre mal s'empoysonne
Du secours qu'on luy donne.*

*Our evill is empoysond more
By plaister they would lay to th'sore.*

exuperat magis ægrescitque medendo.

*It rises higher, quicker,
And growes by curing sicker,*

*Omnia fanda nefanda malo permista furore,
Iustificam nobis mentem avertere Deorum.*

*Lawfull unlawfull deedes with furie blended,
Have turn'd from us the Gods just minde offended.*

In these popular diseases, one may in the beginning distinguish the sound from the sicke: but if they chance to continue any time, as ours hath done and doth still, all the body, yea head and heeles feele themselves the worse: no parte is exempted from corruption. For, *there is no aire a man drawes so greedily, or sucks so gluttonously; and that more spreads it selfe, or penetrates more deeply, then doth licentiousnesse.* Our Armies have no other bond to tie them, or other ciment to fasten them, then what commeth from strangers: It is now a hard matter to frame a bodie of a compleate, constant, well-ordred and coherent Armie of French men: Oh what shame is it? We have no other discipline, then what borrowed or auxiliar Souldiers shew us. As for us, we are led-on by our owne discretion and not by the commaunders; each man followeth his owne humour: and hath more to doe within, then without. It is the commaundement should follow, court and yeeld unto: he onely ought to obey: all the rest is free and loose. I am pleased to see, what remisnesse and pusilanimitie is in ambition, and by what steps of abjection and servitude, it must arrive unto it's end. But I am displeased to see some debonaire and well-meaning mindes, yea such as are capable of justice, dayly corrupted, about the managing and commanding of this many-headed confusion. *Long suffrance begets custome; custome, consent and imitation.* Wee had too-too many infected and ill-borne mindes, without corrupting the good, the sound and the generous. So that, if we continue any time, it will prove a difficult matter to finde out a man unto whose skill and sufficiencie, the health or recovery of this state may be committed in trust, if fortune shall happily be pleased to restore it us againe.

*Hunc saltem euerso iuuenem succurrere seclo,
Ne prohibete.*

*Forbid not yet this youth at least,
To aide this age more then opprest.*

What is become of that antient precept; *That Souldiers ought more to feare their Generall than their enemy?* And of that wonderfull examplelesse example: That the Romane army having upon occasion enclosed within her trenches, and round-beset an apple-orchard; so obedient was shee to her

Captaines, that the next morning, it rose and marched away without entering the same or touching one apple, although they were full-ripe and very delicious: So that when the owner came, he found the full number of his apples? I should be glad, that our Youths, in steade of the time they employ about lesse profitable peregrinations, and lesse honourable apprentishippes, would bestow one moytie, in seeing and observing the warres that happen on the sea, under some good Captaine or excellent Commaunder of *Malta*; the other moytie in learning and surveying the discipline of the Turkish armies. For, it hath many differences and advantages over ours. This ensueth, that here our Souldiers become more licentious in expeditions, there they proove more circumspect and fearefully wary. For, small offences and petty larcenies, which in times of peace, are in the common people punished with whipping or bastonadoes, in times of warre are capitall crimes. For an egge taken by a Turke without paying, hee is by their law to have the full number of fiftie stripes with a cudgell. For every other thing, how sleight soever, not necessary for mans feeding, even for very trifles, they are either thrust through with a sharpe stake, which they call Empaling, or presently beheaded. I have beene amazed, reading the storie of *Selim*, the cruellest Conqueror that ever was, to see, at what time hee subdued the Country of *Ægypt*, the beauteous-goodly gardines round about the Cittie of *Damasco*, all open and in a conquered Country; his maine armie lying encamped round about, those gardines were left untouched and unspoyled by the handes of his Souldiers, onely because they were commaunded to spoyle nothing, and had not the watch-word of pillage. But is there any maladie in a Common-weale, that deserveth to bee combated by so mortall drugge? No saide *Favonius*, not so much as the usurpation of the tyrannicall possession of a Common-wealth. *Plato* likewise is not willing one should offer violence to the quiet repose of his Country, no not to reforme or cure the same; and alloweth not that reformation, which disturbeth or hazardeth the whole estate; and which is purchased with the blood and ruine of the Cittizens. Establishing the office of an honest man, in these cases, to leave all there: But onely to pray God, to lend his extraordinary assisting hand unto it. And seemeth to be offended with *Dyon* his great friend, to have therein proceeded somewhat otherwise. I was a Platonist on that side before ever I knew there had beene a *Plato* in the world. And if such a man ought absolutely be banished our commerce, and refused our societie: (hee who for the sinceritie of his conscience, deserved by meane of divine favour, athwart the publique darkenesse, and through the generall ignorance of the world wherein he lived, so farre to enter and so deeply to penetrate into christian light) I doe not thinke, that it befitteth us, to be instructed by a Pagan. Oh what impietie is it, to expect from God no succour simply his, and without our co-operation. I often doubt, whether amongst so many men, that meddle with such a matter, any hath beene found of so weake an understanding, that hath earnestly beene perswaded, he proceeded toward reformation, by the utmost of deformations; that he drew toward his salvation, by the most expresse causes, that wee have of undoubted damnation: that overthrowing policie, disgracing magistrates, abusing lawes, under whose tuition God hath placed him; filling brotherly mindes and loving hearts, with malice, hatred and murther; calling the Divels and furies to his helpe; he may bring assistance to the most sacred mildnesse and justice of divine Law. Ambition, avarice, crueltie and revenge, have not

sufficient proper and naturall impetuositie; let us allure and stirre them uppe by the glorious title of justice and devotion. *There can no worse estate of things bee imagined, than where wickednesse commeth to be lawfull:* And with the Magistrates leave, to take the cloake of vertue: *Nihil in speciem fallacius, quàm praua religio, ubi deorum numen prætenditur sceleribus.* There is nothing more deceitfull to shew, than corrupt religion, when the power of Heaven is made a pretence and cloake for wickednesse. The extreame kinde of injustice (according to Plato) is, that that which is unjust, should be held for just. The common people suffered therein greatly then; not only present losses,

*undique totis
Usque adeo turbatur agris.*

*Such revell and tumultuous rout
In all the country round about.*

But also succeeding dommagés. The living were faine to suffer, so did such as then were scarce borne. They were robbed and pilled, and by consequence so was I, even of hope: spoiling and depriving them of al they had to provide their living for many yeares to come.

*Quæ nequeunt secum ferre aut abducere, perdunt,
Et cremat insontes turba scelestas casas:
Muris nulla fides, squallent popularibus agri.*

*They wretch-lesse spoyle and spill what draw or drive they may not;
Guiltie rogues to set fire on guilt-lesse houses stay not.
In wals no trust, the field
By spoyle growes waste and wilde.*

Besides these mischiefes, I endured some others. I incurred the inconveniences, that moderation bringeth in such diseases. I was shaven on all handes: To the Ghibelin I was a Guelf, to Guelf a Ghibelin. Some one of my Poets expresseth as much, but I wot not where it is. The scituation of my house, and the acquaintance of such as dwelt round about me, presented me with one visage; my life and actions with another. No formall accusations were made of it; for there was nothing to take hold of. I never proposed my selfe against the lawes; and who had called me in question, should have lost by the bargaine. They were mute suspicions, that ranne under hand, which never want apparance in so confused a hurly-burly, no more than lacke of envious or foolish wittes. I commonly afford ayde unto injurious presumptions, that fortune scattereth against me; by a fashion I never had, to avoide justifying, excusing or interpreting my selfe; deeming it to be a putting of my conscience to compromise, to pleade for hir. *Perspicuitas enim, argumentatione eleuatur: For the cleering of a cause, is lessoned by the arguing.* And as if everie man saw into mee as cleare as I doe my selfe, in lieu of withdrawing, I advance my selfe to the accusation and rather endeare it; by an erronious and scoffing confession: except I flatly hold my peace, as of a thing unworthie any answer. But such as take it for an over-proud confidence, do not much lesse disesteeme and hate me for it, than such as take it for weakenesse of an indefensible cause. Namely the great, with whom want of submission, is the extreame

fault. Rude to all justice, that is knowne or felt: not demisse, humble or suppliant. I have often stumbled against that pillar. So it is, that by the harmes which befell mee, an ambitious man would have hanged himselfe; and so would a covetous churle. I have no care at all to acquire or get.

*Sit mihi quod nunc est, etiam minus, ut mihi uiuam
Quod superest æui, si quid superesse uolent dii.*

*Let me have that I have, or lesse, so I may live
Unto my selfe the rest, if any rest God give.*

But losses that come unto me by others-injurie, be in larcenie or violence, pinch mee, in a manner as one sicke and tortured with avarice. *An offence causeth undoubtedly more griefe and sharpenesse, than a losse.* A thousand severall kindes of mischiefes fell upon mee one in the necke of another; I should more stowtly have endured them, had they come all at once. I bethought my selfe, amongst my friendes, to whome I might commit a needie, a defective and unfortunate olde-age: But after I had surveid them all, and cast mine eyes every where, I found my selfe bare and far to seeke. For one to sowse himselfe downe headlong, and from so great a height, hee should heedily forecast that it may be in the armes of a solide, stedfast, vigorous and fortunate affection. They are rare, if there be any. In the end I perceived the best and safest way, was to trust both my selfe and my necessitie, unto my selfe. And if it should happen to be but meanly and faintly in Fortunes grace, I might more effectually recommend my selfe unto mine owne favour, more closely fasten and more nearely looke unto my selfe. In all things men relie upon strange props, to spare their owne: onely certaine and onely powerfull, knowe they but how to arme themselves with them. Every man runneth out and unto what is to come, because no man is yet come unto himselfe. And I resolved, that they were profitable inconveniences: forsomuch as when reason will not serve, we must first warne untoward Schollers with the rodde; as with fire and violence of wedges, we bring a crooked peece of wood to be straight. It is long since I call, to keepe my selfe unto my selfe, and live sequestred from aliene and strange things; notwithstanding I daily start out and cast mine eies aside. Inclination, a great mans favourable word, a kind looke doth tempt me. God he knowes whether there be penurie of them now-adayes, and what sense they beare. I likewise, without frowning, listen to the subornings, framed to drawe mee to some towne of merchandise or citty of traffike; and so coldely defend my selfe, that it seemes I should rather endure to be overcome, than not. Now to a spirite so indocile, blowes are required: and this vessell, that of it selfe is so ready to warpe, to unhoope, to escape and fall in peeces, must be closed, hooped and strongly knockt with an adze. Secondly, that this accident served me as an exercitation to prepare my selfe for worse, if worse might happen: if I, who both by the benefite of fortune and condition of my maners, hoped to be of the last, should by this tempest be one of the first surprised. Instructing my selfe betimes, to force my life and frame it for a new state. True-perfect libertie, is, for one to be able to do and work all things upon himselfe. *Potentissimus est qui se habet in potestate.* Hee is of most power, that keepes himselfe in his owne power. In ordinary and peacefull times, a man prepares himselfe for common and moderate accidents: but in this confusion, wherein wee have

beene these thirtie yeeres, every French man, be it in generall or in particular, doth hourly see himselfe upon the point of his fortunes overthrow and downfall. By so much more ought each one have his courage stored and his minde fraughted, with more strong and vigorous provisions: Let us thanke Fortune, that hath not made us live in an effeminate, idle and languishing age: Some, whom other meanes could never bring unto it, shall make themselves famous by their misfortunes. As I reade not much in Histories, these confusions of other states, without regret, that I could not better them present; So doth my curiositie make me somewhat please my selfe, with mine eies to see this notable spectacle of our publike death; her symptomes and formes. And since I could not hinder the same, I am content to be appoynted as an assistant unto it, and thereby instruct my selfe. Yet seeke we evidently to know in shadowes, and understand by fabulous representations upon Theaters, to shew of the tragicke revolutions of humane fortune. It is not without compassion of that wee heare, but we please our selves to rowze up our displeasure, by the rarenesse of these pitifull events. *Nothing tickles, that pincheth not.* And good Historians avoide calme narrations, as a dead water or mort-mere; to retreewe seditions and finde out warres, whereto they know we call them. I doubt whether I may lawfully avow, at how base a rate of my lifes-rest and tranquillitie, I have passt it more than halfe in the ruine of my Country. In accidents that touch mee not in my freehold, I purchase patience very cheape; and to complaine to my selfe, I respect not so much what is taken from me, as what is left me both within and without. There is comfort, in sometimes eschewing one, and sometimes another of the evells, that one in the necke of another surprise us, and elsewhere strike us round about. As in matters of publike interrests, according as my affection is more universally scattred, she is thereby more enfeobled. Since it is halfe true: *Tantum ex publicis malis sentimus, quantum ad priuatas res pertinet.* We feele so much of common harmes as appertaine to our private estate. And that the health whence we fell was such, that her selfe solaceth the regret, we should have for her. It was health, marie but in comparison of the contagion, which hath followed the same. Wee are not falne very high. The corruption and the brigandage, which now is in office and dignitie, seemes to me the least tolerable. We are lesse injuriously robbed in the midst of a wood, then a place of securitie. It was an universall coherencie of members spoiled avie one another; and most of them, with old-rankled ulcers, which neither admitted nor demaunded recoverie. Truely this shaking-fit did therefore more animate then deterre me, onely by the aide of my conscience, which not onely quietly, but fiercely carried it selfe; and I found no cause to complaine, of my selfe. Likewise, as God never sends men either evils or goods absolutely pure; my health held out well for that time, yea against her ordinary: And as without it I can do nothing, so with it, there are few things I cannot doe. She gave me meanes to summon and rouze up all my provisions, and to beare my hand before my hurt, which happily would have gone further: And proved in my patience, that yet I had some hold against fortune; and that to thrust me out of my saddle, there was required a stronger counterbuffe. This I speake not, to provoke her to give me a more vigorous charge. I am her servant, and yeeld my selfe unto her: For Gods sake let her be pleased. Demaund you whether I feele her assaults? I doe indeede. As those whom sorrow possesseth and overwhelmeth, doe notwithstanding at one time or other suffer themselves by intermissions

to be touched by some pleasure, and now and then smile. I have sufficient power over my selfe, to make mine ordinary state quiet and free from all tedious and yrkesome imaginations; but yet I sometimes suffer my selfe by starts to be surprised with the pinchings of these unpleasant conceits, which whilst I arme my selfe to expell or wrestle against them, assaile and beate me. Loe here another huddle or tide of mischief; that on the necke of the former came rushing upon me. Both within and round about my house, I was overtaken, in respect of all other, with a most contagious pestilence. For, as soundest bodies are subject to grievous diseases, because they onely can force them: so the aire about me being very healthy, wherein no mans memory, infection (although very neere) could ever take footing: comming now to be poisoned brought forth strange effects.

*Mista senum & iuuenum densantur funera nullum
Sæva caput Proserpina fugit.*

*Of old and yong thicke funeralls are shared;
By cruell Proserpine no head is spared.*

I was faine to endure this strange condition, that the sight of my house was yrksome unto me. Whatever was therein, lay all at randon, no man looked thereunto; and was free for any that had a minde unto it. I who have so long beene a good housekeeper, and used to hospitalitie, was much troubled and put to my shifts, how to finde out some retreate for my familie. A dismaide and scattered family, making both her selfe and her friends afraide, and breeding horreur where it sought to retire for shelter; being now to shift and change her dwelling, so soone as any of the company beganne to feele his finger ake, all the rest were dismaide. Every sicknesse is then taken for the plague: none hath leasure to consider them. And the mischief is, that according to rules of arte, what danger soever approcheth, a man must continue fortie dayes in anxietie or feare of that evell; in which time your owne imagination doth perplex you as she list and infect your health. All which had much lesse toucht mee, had I not beene forced to beare other mens burthens and partake all their grievances, and for six months space, in miserable maner, to be a woefull guide to so great-confused a *Caravane*. For I ever carry my preservatives about me, which are resolution and sufferance. Apprehension doth not greatly presse me; which is particularly feared in this sicknesse. And if being alone, I should have taken it, it had beene a stronger and further flight: It is a death in mine opinion, not of the worst: It is commonly short and speeding voide of lingring giddinesse, without paine, comforted by the publike condition; without ceremonie, without mourning, and without thronging. But for the people about us, the hundreth part of soules cannot be saved.

*uideas desertâque regna
Pastorum, & longè saltus latêque uacantes.*

*Kingdomes of Shepheards desolate forlorne,
Parkes farre and neere lie waste, a state all torne.*

In that place, my best revenue is manuall: what a hundred men laboured for me, lay fallow for a long time. What examples of resolution saw we not then

in all this peoples simplicitie? Each one generally renounced all care of life. The grapes (which are the countries chiefe commoditie) hung still and rotted upon the vines untouch't: all indifferently preparing themselves and expecting death, either that night or the next morrow: with countenance and voice so little daunted, that they seemed to have compromitted to this necessitie, and that it was an universall and inevitable condemnation. It is ever such. But what slender hold hath the resolution of dying? The difference and distance of some few houres: the onely consideration of the company yeelds the apprehension diverse unto us. Behold these: because they die in one same month, children, yong, old, they are no more astonied, they are no longer wept-for. I saw some that feared to stay behinde, as if they had beene in some horride solitude: And commonly I knew no other care amongst them, but for graves: it much grieved them, to see the dead carcasses scattered over the fields, at the mercie of wilde beasts; which presently beganne to flocke thither. Oh how humane fantasies differ and are easily disjoyned! The Neorites, a nation whilome subdued by *Alexander* the Great, cast out their dead mens bodies into the thickest of their woods, there to be devoured: the grave onely esteemed happy among them. Some in good health digged already their graves, othersome yet living did goe into them. And a day-labourer of mine, as he was dying, with his owne hands and feete pulled earth upon him, and so covered himselfe. Was not this a lying downe in the shade to sleepe at ease? An enterprise in some sort as highly noble, as that of some Romane Souldiers, who after the battell of *Canna*, were found with their heads in certaine holes or pits, which themselves had made, and filled up with their hands, wherein they were smothered. To conclude, a whole nation was presently by use brought to a march, that in undantednesse yeelds not to any consulted and fore-meditated resolution. The greatest number of learnings instructions, to encourage us have more shew then force, and more ornament then fruite. Wee have forsaken nature, and yet wee will teach her her lesson: Shee, that lead us so happily, and directed us so safely: And in the meane while, the traces of her instructions and that little, which by the benefite of ignorance, remaineth of her image, imprinted in the life of this rusticall troupe of unpollished men; learning is compelled to goe dayly a borrowing, thereby to make her disciples a patterne of constancie, of innocencie and of tranquillitie. It is a goodly matter to see how these men full of so great knowledge, must imitate this foolish simplicitie; yea in the first and chiefe actions of vertue. And that our wisdom should learne of beasts, the most profitable documents, belonging to the chieftest and most necessary parts of our life. How we should live and die, husband our goods, love and bring up our children, and entertaine justice. A singular testimonie of mans infirmitie: and that this reason we so manage at our pleasure, ever finding some diversitie and noveltie, leaveth unto us no maner of apparant trake of nature. Wherewith men have done, as perfumers doe with oile: they have adulterated her, with so many argumentations, and sofisticated her with so diverse farre-fetcht discourses, that she is become variable and peculiar to every man, and hath lost her proper, constant and universall visage: whereof we must seeke for a testimonie of beasts, not subject to favor or corruption, nor to diversitie of opinions. For it is most true, that themselves march not alwayes exactly in natures path, but if they chance to stray, it is so little, that you may ever perceive the tracke. Even as horses led by hand doe sometimes bound and start out of the way, but no further then their halters

length, and neverthelesse follow ever his steps that leadeth them: And as a Hawke takes his flight but under the limites of hir cranes or twyne. *Exilia, tormenta, bella, morbos, naufragia meditare, ut nullo sis malo tyro.* Banishments, torments, warres, sicknesses, shipwracks, all these forecast and premeditate, that thou maist seeme no novice, no freshwater Souldier to any misadventure. What availeth this curiositie unto us, to preoccupate all humane natures inconveniences, and with so much labour and toying against them, to prepare our selves, which peradventure shall nothing concerne us? (*Parem passis tristitiam facit, pati posse.* It makes men as sad that they may suffer some mischiefe, as if they had suffred it. Not onely the blow, but the winde and cracke strikes us) Or as the most febricitant, for surely it is a kinde of fever, now to cause your selfe to be whipped, because fortune may one day chance to make you endure it: and at Mid-Sommer to put-on your furr'd Gowne, because you shall neede it at Christmas? Cast your selves into the experience of all the mischiefes, that may befall you, namely of the extreamest: there try your selfe (say they) there assure your selfe. Contrarie-wise, the easiest and most naturall, were even to discharge his thought of them. They will not come soone enough, their true being doth not last us long enough, our spirite must extend and lengthen them, and before hand incorporate them into himselfe, and therewith entertaine himselfe, as if they lay not sufficiently heavy on our senses. They will weigh heavy enough, when they shall be there (saith one of the Maisters, not of a tender, but of the hardest Sect) meanwhile favour thy selfe: Beleeve what thou lovest best: What availes it thee to collect and prevent thy ill fortune: and for feare of the future, loose the present; and now to be miserable, because in time thou maiest be so? They are his owne wordes. Learning doth us willingly one good office, exactly to instruct us in the demensions of evils.

Curis acuens mortalia corda.

*Mens cogitationes whetting,
With sharpe cares inly fretting.*

It were pittie, any part of their greatnesse should escape our feeling and understanding. It is certaine, that preparation unto death, hath caused more torment unto most, than the verie sufferance. It was whilome truely saide, of and by a most judicious Authour: *Minus afficit sensus fatigatio, quàm cogitatio.* Wearinesse lesse troubleth our senses, then pensivenesse doth. The apprehension of present death, doeth sometimes of it selfe annimate us, with a ready resolution, no longer to avoyde a thing altogether in-evitable. Many Gladiators have in former ages beene seene, having at first fought very cowardly, most couragiously to embrace death; offering their throate to the enemies sword, yea and bidde them make haste. The sight distant from future death, hath neede of a slowe constancie, and by consequence hard to bee found. If you know not how to die, take no care for it; Nature her selfe will fully and sufficiently teach you in the nicke, she will exactly discharge that worke for you; trouble not your selfe with it.

*Incertam frustra mortales funeris horam
Quæritis, & qua sit mors aditur a uia:
Pana minor certam subito perferre ruinam,
Quod timeas, grauius sustinuisse div.*

*Of death th'uncertaine houre you men in vaine
 Enquire, and what way leath shall you distraine:
 A certaine sodaine ruine is lesse paine,
 More grievous long what you feare to sustaine.*

We trouble death with the care of life, and life with the care of death. The one anyeth, the other affrights us. It is not against death, we prepare our selves; it is a thing to momentarie. A quarter of an houre of passion without consequence and without annoyance, deserves not particular precepts. To say truth, we prepare our selves against the preparations of death. *Philosophy teacheth us, ever to have death before our eyes, to fore-see and consider it before it come.* Then giveth us rules and precautions so to provide, that such foresight and thought hurt us not. So doe Phisicians, who cast us into diseases, that they may employ their drugges and skill about them. If we have not knowne how to live, it is injustice to teach us how to dye, and deforme the end from all the rest. Have wee knowne how to live constantly and quietly, we shall know how to die resolutely and reposedly. They may bragge as much as they please. *Tota Philosophorum uita commentatio mortis est. The whole life of a Philosopher is the meditation of his death.* But me thinks, it is indeede the end, yet not the scope of life. It is her last, it is her extremitie; yet not her object. Hir selfe must be unto hirselfe, hir ayme, hir drift and her designe. Hir direct studie is, to order, to direct and to suffer hir selfe. In the number of many other offices, which the generall and principall Chapter, to know how to live containeth, is this speciall Article, *To know how to dy.* And of the easiest, did not our owne feare weigh it downe. To judge them by their profit and by the naked truth, the lessons of simplicitie, yeeld not much to those, which Doctrine preacheth to the contrarie unto us. Men are different in feeling, and diverse in force: they must be directed to their good, according to themselves and by divers waies:

Quò me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.

*Where I am whirld by winde and wether,
 I guest-like straight am carried thether.*

I never saw meane paisant of my neighbours, enter into cogitation or care, with what assurance or countenance, hee should passe this last houre. Nature teacheth him never to muze on death, but when he dieth. And then hath he a better grace in it, than *Aristotle*; whom death perplexed doubly, both by her selfe and by so long a premeditation. Therefore was it *Cæsars* opinion, that *The least premeditated death, was the happiest and the easiest. Plus dolet, quàm necesse est, qui ante dolet, quàm necesse est. He grieves more than he neede, That grieves before he neede.* The sharpenesse of this imagination, proceedes from our curiositie. Thus we ever hinder our selves; desiring to fore-runne and sway naturall prescriptions: It is but for Doctors, being in health, to fare the worse by it, and to frowne and startle at the image of death. The vulgare sort, have neither neede of remedie nor comfort, but when the shocke or stroke commeth. And justly considers no more of it, than hee seeleth. And is it not as we say, that the vulgares stupiditie and want of apprehension, affoorde them this patience in present evils, and this deepe carelesnes of sinister future accidents? That their mind being more grose, dull and blockish, is lesse penetrable and agitable? In Gods

name, if it be so, let us henceforth keepe a schoole of brutalitie. It is the utmost fruit that Sciences promise unto us, to which she so gently bringeth her disciples. We shall not want good teachers, interpreters of naturall simplicities. Socrates shall be one. For, as neare as I remember, he speaketh in this sence unto the Judges, that determine of his life: *I feare me my Maisters (saith hee) that if I intreate you not to make me die, I shall confirme the evidence of my accusers; which is, That I professe to have more understanding than others; as having some knowledge more secret and hidde of things both above and beneath us. I know I have neither frequented nor knowne death, nor have I seene any body, that hath either felt or tried her qualities, to instruct me in them. Those who feare her, presuppose to know her: As for me, I neither know who or what she is, nor what they doe in the other world. Death may peradventure be a thing indifferent, happily a thing desirable. Yet is it to be beleaved, that if it be a transmigration from one place to another, there is some amendement in going to live with so many worthie famous persons, that are deceased; and be exempted from having any more to doe with wicked and corrupted Judges. If it be a consummation of ones being, it is also an amendement and entrance into a long and quiet night. Wee finde nothing so sweete in life, as a quiet rest and gentle sleepe, and without dreames. The things I know to be wicked, as to wrong or offend ones neighbour; and to disobey his superiour, be he God or man, I carefully shunne them: Such as I knowe not whether they be good or bad, I can not feare them. If I goe to my death, and leave you alive; the Gods onely see, whether you or I shall prosper best. And therefore, for my regarde, you shall dispose of it, as it best shall please you. But according to my fashion, which is to counsell good and profitable things, this I say, that for your owne conscience you shall doe best to free and discharge me: except you see further into mine owne cause than my selfe. And judging according to my former actions, both publike and private, according to my intentions, and to the profite, that so many of our Cittizens, both yong and olde, drawe daily from my conversation, and the fruit, all you reape by me, you cannot more justly or duely discharge your selves toward my desertes, than by appointing (my povertie considered) that I may live, and at the common charge be kept, in the Brytaneo: which for much lesse reasons, I have often seene you freely graunt to others. Impute it not to obstinacie or disdain in me, nor take it in ill parte, that I, according to custome proceede not by way of intreatie, and moove you to commiseration. I have both friends and kinsfolkes, being not (as Homer saith) begotten of a blocke or stone, no more than other men: capable to present themselves, humbly suing with teares and mourning: and I have three desolate wailing children to moove you to pittie. But I should make your Cittie ashamed, of the age I am in, and in that reputation of wisdom, as now I stand in prevention to yeelde unto so base and abject countenances. What would the world say of other Athenians? I have ever admonished such as have heard me speake, never to purchase or redeeme their lives, by any dishonest or unlawfull act. And in my Countries warres, both at Amphipolis, at Potidea, at Delia, and others, in which I have beene, I have shewen by effectes, how farre I was from warranting my safetie by my shame. Moreover, I should interest your dutie, and prejudice your calling, and perswade you to foule unlawfull things; for, not my prayers, but the pure and solide reasons of justice should perswade you. You have sworne to the Gods, so to maintaine your selves. Not to beleieve there were any, might seeme I would suspect, recriminate or retorte the fault upon you. And my selfe should witnesse against my selfe, not to beleieve in them as I ought: distructing their conduct, and not meereley remitting my affaires into their handes. I wholly trust and rely on them; and certainly holde, that in this, they will dispose as it shal bee meetest for you, and fittest for me. Honest men, that neither live, nor are dead, have no cause at all to*

feare the Gods. Is not this a childish pleading, of an inimaginable courage; and in what necessitie employed? Verely it was reason, hee should preferre it before that, which the great Orator *Lysias* had set downe in writing for him; excellency fashioned in a judiciarie Stile; but unworthie of so noble a criminall. Should a man have heard an humbly-suing voice out of *Socrates* his mouth? Would that prowde vertue have failed in the best of her shew? And would his rich and powerfull nature, have committed her defence unto arte, and in her highest Essay, renounced unto trueth and sinceritie, true ornaments of his speach, to adorne and decke himselfe with the embellishment of the figures and fictions of a fore-learn't Oration? Hee did most wisely, and according to himselfe, not to corrupt the tenure of an incorruptible life, and so sacred an image of humane forme, to prolong his decrepitude for one yeere; and wrong the immortall memorie of so glorious an end. He ought his life, not to himselfe, but to the worlds example. Had it not beene a publike losse, if he had finished the same in some idle, base and obscure manner? Truely, so carelesse and effeminate a consideration of his death, deserved, posteritie should so much more consider the same for him: which it did. And nothing is so just in justice, as that, which fortune ordained for his commendation. For the Athenians did afterward so detest and abhorre those, which had furthered and caused his death, that of all they were loathed and shunned as cursed and excommunicated men: whatsoever they had but touched was held to be polluted: No man would so much as wash with them in bathes or hot-houses: no man affoord them a salutation, much lesse accost or have to doe with them: so that being in the end no longer able to endure this publike hatred and generall contempt, they all hanged themselves. If any man thinks, that amongst so many examples, I might have chosen for the service of my purpose, in *Socrates* his sayings, I have chosen or handled this but ill: and deemeth this discourse, to be raised above common opinions: I have done it wittingly: for I judge otherwise. And hold it to be a discourse, in rancke and sincerity, much shorter and lower, then vulgare opinions. It representeth in an un-artificiall boldnesse, and infantine securitie, the pure impression and first ignorance of nature. Because it is credible, that we naturally feare paine, but not death, by reason of her. It is a part of our being, no lesse essentiall than life. To what end would Nature have else engendred the hate and horror of it, seeing it holdes therein, and with it a ranke of most great profit, to foster the succession, and norish the vicissitude of her works? And that in this universall Common-weale, it steadeth and serveth more for birth and augmentation, then for losse, decay or ruine.

Sic rerum summa nouatur.

*So doth the summe of all,
By courses rise and fall.*

Mille animas una necata dedit.

*We thousand soules shall pay,
For one soule made away.*

The decay of one life, is the passage to a thousand other lives. Nature hath imprinted in beasts, the care of themselves and of their preservation. They proceede even to the feare of their empairing; to shooke or hurt themselves: and that wee should not shackle or beate them, accidents subject to their sence and experience: But that we should kill them, they cannot feare it, nor have they the faculty to imagine or conclude their death. Yet is it reported, that they are not onely seene to embrace and endure the same joyfully (most Horses neigh in dying, and Swannes sing when it seisseth them.) But moreover, they seeke it when they neede it; as by divers examples may be prooved in the Elephants. Besides, the manner of arguing, which *Socrates* useth here, is it not equally admirable, both in simplicitie and in vehemencie? Verely *It is much easier, to speake as Aristotle, and live as Cæsar, than speake and live as Socrates.* Therein consists the extreame degree of difficultie and perfection; arte cannot attaine unto it. Our faculties are not now so addressed. We neither assay, nor know them; we invest our selves with others, and suffer our owne to be idle. As by some might be said of me: that here I have but gathered a nosegay of strange floures, and have put nothing of mine unto it, but the thred to binde them. Certes, I have given unto publike opinion, that these borrowed ornaments accompany me; but I meane not they should cover or hide me: it is contrary to mine intention, who would make shew of nothing that is not mine owne, yea and mine owne by nature: And had I believed my selfe, at all adventure I had spoken alone. I dayly charge my selfe the more beyond my proposition and first forme, upon the fantasie of time, and through idlenesse. If it mis-seeme me, as I thinke it doth, it is no great matter; it may be profitable for some other. *Some aleadge Plato, and some mention Homer, that never saw them, or as they say in English, many a man speakes of Robin Hood, that never shot in his bow:* And I have taken diverse passages from others then in their spring. Without paine or sufficiencie; having a thousand volumes of bookes about me, where now I write, if I please, I may presently borrow from a number of such botcherly-patchcotes (men that I plod not much upon) wherewith to enamell this treatie of *Physiognomie*. I neede but the liminarie epistle of a Germane to store me with allegations: and we goe questing that way for a fading-greedy glorie, to cosin and delude the foolish world. These rapsodies of common places, wherewith so many stuffe their studie, serve not greatly but for vulgar subjects, and serve but to shew and not to direct us: A ridiculous-fond fruite of learning, that *Socrates* doth so pleasantly enveigh and exagitate against *Euthydemus*. I have seene bookes made of things neither studied nor ever understood: the authour committing to diverse of his learned and wise friends the search of this and that matter, that so he might compile them into a booke, contenting himselfe for his owne part, to have cast the plotte and projected the desseigne of it, and by his industrie to have bound up the fagot of unknowne provisions: at least is the inke and paper his owne. This may be saide to be a buying or borrowing, and not a making or compiling of a booke. It is to teach men, not that one can make a booke, but to put them out of doubt, that hee cannot make it. A President of the law, in a place where I was, vanted himselfe, to have hudled up together two hundred and od strange places in a presidentiall law-case of his: In publishing of which, he defaced the glory, which others gave him for it. A weake, childish and absurde boasting in my opinion, for such a subject and for such a man. I doe cleane contrarie; and amongst so many

borrowings, am indeede glad to filch some one; disguising and altering the same to some new service. On hazard, to let men say, that it is for lacke of understanding it's naturally use, I give it some particular adressing of mine owne hand, to the end it may be so much lesse meereley strange. Whereas these put their larcenies to publike view and garish shew. So have they more credite in the lawes, then I. We other naturalists suppose, that there is a great and incomparable preference, betweene the honour of invention and that of allegation. Would I have spoken according to learning, I had spoken sooner: I had writen at such times as I was neerer to my studies, when I had more wit and more memorie; and should more have trusted the vigor of that age, then the imperfection of this, had I beene willing to professe writing of bookes. And what if this gracious favour, which fortune hath not long since offered mee by the intermission of this worke, could have befallne me in such a season, in lieu of this, where it is equally desireable to possesse, and readie to loose?

Two of mine acquaintance (both notable men in this facultie) have, in my conceit, lost much, because they refused to publish themselves at fortie yeares of age, to stay untill they were three-score. *Maturitie hath hir defects, aswell as greenenesse, and worse.* And as in commodious or unfit is old age unto this kinde of worke, as to any other. Whosoever put's his decrepitude under the presse, committeth folly, if therby he hopes to wring out humors, that shall not taste of dottage, of sopperie, or of drowsinesse. Our spirit becommeth costive and thickens in growing old. Of ignorance I speake sumptuously and plentifully, and of learning meagerly and pittiously: This accessorially and accidentally; That expressely and principally. And purposely I treat of nothing, but of nothing; nor of any one science but of unscience. I have chosen the time, where the life I have to set forth, is all before mee, the rest holdes more of death. And of my death onely should I finde it babling, as others doe, I would willingly, in dislodging, give the World advise. *Socrates* hath beene a perfect patterne in al great qualities. I am vexed, that ever he met with so unhansome and crabbed a body, as they say he had, and so disonant from the beautie of his minde. Himselfe so amorous and so besotted on beautie. Nature did him wrong. There is nothing more truly-semblable, as the conformitie or relation betweene the body and the mind. *Ipsi animi, magni refert, quali in corpore locati sint: multa enim è corpore existunt, quæ acuant mentem: multa, quæ obtundant. It is of great import in what body the minde is bestowed: for many things arise of the bodie to sharpen the minde, and many things to dull and rebate it.* This man speakes of an unnaturall ill-favourdnesse, and membrall deformitie: but we call ill-favourdnesse a kinde of unseemelinesse at the first sight, which chiefly lodgeth in the face; and by the colour worketh a dislike in us; A freckle, a blemish, a rude countenance, a sower looke, proceeding often of some inexplicable cause, may be in well ordered, comely and compleate limmes. The foulennesse of face, which invested a beauteous minde in my deare friend *La Boétie*, was of this predicament. This superficial ill-favourdnesse, which is notwithstanding the most imperious, is of lesse prejudice unto the state of the minde: and hath small certaintie in mens opinion. The other, by a more proper name called a more substantiall deformitie, beareth commonly a deeper inward stroke. *Not every shooe of smooth-shining leather, but everie well-shapen and handsome-made shooe, sheweth the inward and right shape of the foot.* As *Socrates* said of

his, that it justly accused so much in his mind, had he not corrected the same by institution. But in so saying, I suppose, that according to his wonted use, he did but jest: and so excellent a mind, did never frame it selfe. I cannot often enough repeate, how much I esteeme beauty, so powerfull and advantagious a qualitie is she. He named it, *a short tyranny*: And *Plato* the *priviledge of Nature*. We have none that exceeds it in credit. She possesseth the chiefe ranke in the commerce of societie of men: She presents it selfe forward: she seduceth and preoccupates our judgement, with great authoritie and wonderfull impression. *Phryne* had lost her plea, though in the hands of an excellent lawyer, if with opening hir garments, by the sodaine flashing of hir beautie, she had not corrupted her judges. And I finde, that *Cyrus*, *Alexander* and *Cæsar* those three Maisters of the World, have not forgotten or neglected the same in atchieving their great affaires. So hath not the first *Scipio*. One same word in Greeke importeth faire and good. And even the Holy-Ghost calleth often those good, which he meaneth faire. I should willingly maintaine the ranke of the goods, as implied the song, which *Plato* saith to have beene triviall, taken from some auncient Poet; *Health, beautie and riches*. *Aristotle* saith, that the right of commaunding, doth of duty belong to such as are faire; and if haply any be found, whose beautie approacheth to that of the Gods images, that veneration is equally due unto them. To one that asked him, why the fairest were both longer time and oftner frequented? *This question* (quoth he) *ought not to bee mooved but by a blinde-man*. Most, and the greatest Philosophers, paide for their schooling and attained unto Wisedome, by the intermission of their beautie, and favour their comelines. Not onely in men that serve me, but in beastes also, I consider the same within two inches of goodnesse. Yet me thinks, that the same feature and manner of the face, and those lineaments, by which some argue certaine inward complexions, and our future fortunes, is a thing that doth not directly nor simply lodge under the Chapter of beauty and ill-favourdnesse; no more than all good favours, or clearenesse of ayre, doe not alwayes promise health; nor all fogges and stinks, infection, in times of the plague. Such as accuse Ladies to contradict the beautie, by their manners, guesse not alwayes at the truth. For, *In an ill favourd and ill composed face, may sometimes harbour some ayre of probitie, and trust*. As on the contrary, I have sometimes read betweene two faire eyes, the threats of a maligne and dangerous-ill-boding nature. There are some favourable Physiognomies; For in a throng of victorious enemies, you shall presently ammiddest a multitude of unknowne faces, make choise of one man more than of others, to yeeld yourselfe unto, and trust your life; and not properly by the consideration of beauty. A mans looke or ayre of his face, is but a weake warrant; notwithstanding it is of some consideration. And were I to whippe them, I would more rudely scourge such as maliciously belie and betray the promises, which Nature had charactred in their front. And more severely would I punish malicious craft in a debonaire apparance and in a milde-promising countenance. It seemeth there be some luckie and well boding faces, and other some unluckie and ill-presaging: And I thinke, there is some Arte to distinguish gently-milde faces, from nyaes and simple; the severe from the rude; the malicious from the froward; the disdainefull from the melancholike and other neighbouring qualities. There are some beauties, not onely fierce-looking, but also sharpe-working, some others pleasing-sweete, and yet wallowishly tastelesse. To prognosticate future

successes of them, be matters I leave undecided. I have (as elsewhere I noted) taken for my regard this auncient precept, verie rawly and simply: That *We cannot erre in following Nature*: and that the soveraigne document is, for a man to conforme himselfe to hir. I have not (as *Socrates*) by the power and vertue of reason, corrected my naturall complections, nor by Arte hindered mine inclination. Look how I came into the World, so I goe-on: I strive with nothing. My two Mistris partes, live of their owne kindenesse in peace and good agreement; but my nurses milke, hath (thanks be to God) beene indifferently wholesome and temperate. Shall I say thus much by the way? That I see a certaine image of bookish or scholasticall *preud'hommie*, only which is in a maner in use amongst us, held and reputed in greater esteeme than it deserveth, and which is but a servant unto precepts, brought under by hope, and constrained by feare? I love it such as lawes and religions make not, but over-make and authorize; that they may bee perceived to have wherewith to uphold her selfe without other aide: sprung up in us of hir owne proper rootes, by and from the seede of universall reason, imprinted in every man that is not unnaturall. The same reason, that reformeth *Socrates* from his vicious habite, yeelds him obedient both to Gods and men, that rule and commaund his Cittie: courageous in his death; not because his soule is immortal, but because hee is mortall. A ruinous instruction to all common-weales and much more harmefull, than ingenious and subtile, is that which perswadeth men, that onely religious beliefe, and without manners, sufficeth to content and satisfie divine justice. Custome makes us see an enormous distinction, betweene devotion and conscience. I have a favourable apparance, both in forme and in interpretation.

*Quid dixi habere me? Imò habui Chreme:
Heu tantùm attriti corporis ossa uides.*

*I have; what did I say?
I had what's now away.
Alas, you onely now behold,
Bones of a body worne and old.*

And which makes a contrary shew to that of *Socrates*. It hath often betided me, that by the simple credite of my presence and aspect, some that had no knowledge of me, have greatly trusted unto it, were it about their owne affaires or mine. And even in forraine countries, I have thereby reaped singular and rare favours. These two experiments, are happily worthy to be particularly related. A *quidam* gallant, determined upon a time to surprise both my house and my selfe. His plot was, to come riding alone to my gate, and instantly to urge entrance. I knew him by name, and had some reason to trust him, being my neighbour and somewhat alide unto me. I presently caused my gates to be opened, as I do to all men. He comes-in all afrighted, his horse out of breath; both much harassed. He entertaines me with this fable; that within halfe a league of my house he was sodainely set-upon by an enemie of his, whom I knew well and had heard of their quarrell: that his foe had wondrously put him to his spurres; that being surprised unarmed, and having fewer in his company then the other, he was glad to runne away, and for safty had made haste to come to my house, as to his sanctuary: That he was much perplexed for his men, all

which he supposed to be either taken or slaine. I endeoured friendly to comfort and sincerely to warrant and refresh him. Within a while came gallopping foure or five of his Souldiers, amazed, as if they had beene out of their wits, hasting to be let-in: Shortly after came others, and others, all proper men, well mounted, better armed, to the number of thirtie or thereabouts, all seeming distracted for feare, as if the enemie that pursude them had beene at their heeles. This mysterie beganne to summon my suspicion. I was not ignorant of the age wherein I lived, nor how much my house might be envied: and had sundry examples of others of my acquaintance, that had beene spoiled, beset and surprised thus and thus. So it is, that perceiving with my selfe, there was nothing to be gotten, though I had begunne to use them kindly, if I continued not, and being unable to rid my selfe of them and cleare my house without danger and spoiling all; as I ever doe, I tooke the plainest and naturall well-meaning way, and commaunded they should be let-in and bid welcome. And to say truth, I am by nature little suspicious or mistrustfull, I am easily drawn to admit excuses and encline to mild interpretations. I take men according to common order, and suppose every one to meane as I doe, and believe these perverse and tretcherous inclinations, except I be compelled by some autenticall testimonie, no more then monsters or miracles. Besides, I am a man, that willingly commit my selfe unto fortune, and carelesly cast my selfe into her armes: Whereof hetherto I have more just cause to commend my selfe, then to complaine. And have found her more circumspect and friendly-carefull of my affaires, then I am my selfe. There are certaine actions in my life, the conduct of which may justly be termed difficult, or if any be so disposed, prudent. And of those, suppose the third part of them to be mine owne; truly the other two are richly hers. We are to blame, and in my conceite we erre, that we doe not sufficiently and so much as we ought, trust the heavens with our selves. And pretend more in our owne conduct, then of right appertaines unto us. Therefore doe our desseignes so often miscarry, and our intents so seldome sorte to wished effect. The heavens are angry, and I may say envious of the extension and large priviledge, we ascribe unto the right of humane wisdom, to the prejudice of theirs: and abridge them so much the more unto us, by how much more wee endeavour to amplifie them. But to come to my former discourse. These gallants kept still on horsebacke in my court, and would not alight: their Captaine with me in my hall, who would never have his horse set-up, still saying that he would not stay, but must necessarily withdraw himselfe, so soone as he had newes of his followers. He saw himselfe maister of his enterprise, and nothing was wanting but the execution. Hee hath since reported very often, (for he was no whit scrupulous or afraide to tell this storie) that my undanted lookes, my undismaide countenance, and my liberty of speech, made him reject all manner of treasonable intents or trecherous desseignes. What shall I say more? He bids me farewell, calleth for his horse, gets up, and offreth to be gone, his people having continually their eies fixed upon him, to observe his lookes and see what signe he should make unto them: much amazed to see him be gone and wondring to see him omit and forsake such an advantage. An other time, trusting to a certaine truce or cessation of armes, that lately had beene published through our campes in *France*, as one suspecting no harme, I undertooke a journie from home, through a dangerous and very ticklish countrie; I had not rid far, but I was

discovered, and behold three or foure troupes of horsemen, all severall wayes, made after me, with purpose to entrappe me: One of which overtooke mee the third day; where I was round beset and charged by fifteene or twenty Gentlemen, who had all vizardes and cases, followed aloofe-off by a band of Argoletiers. I was charged, I yeelded, I was taken and immediately drawne into the bosome of a thick Wood, that was not farre off; there puld from my Horse, stripped with all speede, my truncks and cloke-bags rifled, my box taken; my Horses, my equipage and such things as I had, dispersed and shared amongst them. We continued a good while amongst those thornie bushes, contesting and striving about my ransome, which they racked so high, that it appeared well I was not much knowne of them. They had long contestation among themselves for my life. And to say truth: there were many circumstances, threatned me of the danger I was in.

Tunc animis opus, Ænea, tunc pectore firmo.

*Of courage then indeede,
Then of stout brest is neede.*

I ever stooode upon the title and priviledge of the truce and proclamations made in the Kings name, but that availed not: I was content to quit them whatever they had taken from me, which was not to be despised, without promising other ransome. After wee had debated the matter too and fro, the space of two or three houres, and that no excuses could serve, they set me upon a lame jade, which they knew could never escape them, and committed the particular keeping of my person to fifteene or twenty harque-busiers, and dispersed my people to others of their crew, commaunding we should all divers wayes be carried prisoners; and my selfe being gone two or three-score paces from them,

Iam prece Pollucis, iam Castoris implorata.

*Pollux and Castors aide,
When I had humblie praide.*

behold a sodain and unexpected alteration took them. I saw their Captaine comming towards me, with a cheerful countenance and much milder speeches then before: carefully trudging up and downe through al the troupes, to find out my goods againe, which as he found all scattred he forced every man to restore them unto me; and even my boxe came to my handes againe. To conclude, the most precious jewell they presented me, was my libertie; as for my other things, I cared not greatly at that time. What the true cause of so unlook't-for a change and so sodaine an alteration was, without any apparent impulsion, and of so wonderful repentance, at such a time, in such an opportunitie and such an enterprise, fore-meditated, consulted and effected without controlement, and which through custome and the impietie of times was now become lawfull, (for at the first brunt I planely confessed, and genuinely told them what side I was-of, where my way lay, and whither I was riding) I verely know not yet, nor can I give any reason for it. The chieftest amongst them unmasked himselfe, told me his name and repeated diverse times unto

me, that I should acknowledge my deliverance to my countenance, to my boldnesse and constancie of speech, and be beholding to them for it, insomuch as they made me unworthy of such a misfortune; and demanded assurance of me for the like curtesie. It may be, that the inscrutable goodnesse of God would use this vaine instrument for my preservation: For, the next morrow it also shielded mee from worse mischiefe or emboscadoes, whereof themselves gently forewarned me. The last is yet living, able to reporte the whole successe himselfe; the other was slaine not long since. If my countenance had not answered for me, if the ingenuitie of mine inward intent might not plainly have beene desciphered in mine eyes and voice, surely I could never have continued so long, without quarrells or offences: with this indiscreete libertie, to speake freely (be it right or wrong) what ever commeth to my minde, and rashly to judge of things. This fashion may in some sorte, (and that with reason) seeme uncivill and ill accomodated in our customarie maners: but outrageous or malicious, I could never meete with any, would so judge it, or that was ever distasted at my libertie if he received the same from my mouth. *Words reported againe have, as another sound, so another sense.* And to say true, I hate no body; And am so remisse to offend or slow to wrong any, that for the service of reason it selfe, I cannot doe it. And if occasions have at any time urged me in criminall condemnations to doe as others, I have rather beene content to be amearced then to appeare. *Ut magis peccari nolim, quàm satis animi, ad uindicanda peccata habeam.* So as I had rather men should not offend, then that I should have courage enough to punish their offences. Some reporte, that Aristotle being upbraided by some of his friends, that hee had beene over mercifull toward a wicked man: *I have indeede* (quoth he) *been mercifull toward the man, but not toward his wickednesse.* Ordinary judgements are exasperated unto punishment by the horror of the crime. And that enmyldens me. The horror of the first murther, makes me feare a second. And the uglinesse of one crueltie, induceth me to detest all maner of imitation of it. To me, that am but a plaine fellow and see no higher then a steeple, may that concerne, which was reported of Charillus King of Sparta: *He cannot be good, since he is not bad to the wicked.* Or thus; for Plutarke presents it two wayes, as he doth a thousand other things diversly and contrarie; *Hee must needes be good, since he is so to the wicked.* Even as in lawfull actions, it grieves me to take any paines about them, when it is with such as are therewith displeased. So, to say truth, in unlawfull, I make no great conscience, to employ my selfe or take paines about them, being with such as consent unto them.

NOTES

- ¹ *feede* is a mistake which Florio later corrected. He mistook Montaigne's *s'allitent* (from *s'aliter*, to take to one's bed) for *s'alimentent* (from *s'alimenter* to eat, to feed oneself). Florio's corrected translation reads *They will not take their beds but when they thinke they shall dy.*