

# LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS

VARIOUS\*

HARVARD CLASSICS V32

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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Michel Eyquem De Montaigne, the founder of the modern Essay, was born February 28, 1533, at the chateau of Montaigne in Pirigord. He came of a family of wealthy merchants of Bordeaux, and was educated at the College de Guyenne, where he had among his teachers the great Scottish Latinist, George Buchanan. Later he studied law, and held various public offices; but at the age of thirty-eight he retired to his estates, where he lived apart from the civil wars of the time, and devoted himself to study and thought. While he was traveling in Germany and Italy, in 1580-81, he was elected mayor of Bordeaux, and this office he filled for four years. He married in 1565, and had six daughters, only one of whom grew up. The first two books of his "Essays" appeared in 1580; the third in 1588; and four years later he died.

These are the main external facts of Montaigne's life: of the man himself the portrait is to be found in his book. "It is myself I portray," he declares; and there is nowhere in literature a volume of self-revelation surpassing his in charm and candor. He is frankly egotistical, yet modest and unpretentious; profoundly wise, yet constantly protesting his ignorance; learned, yet careless, forgetful, and inconsistent. His themes are as wide and varied as his observation of human life, and he has written the finest eulogy of friendship the world has known. Bacon, who knew his book and borrowed from it, wrote on the same subject; and the contrast of the essays is the true reflection of the contrast between the personalities of their authors.

Shortly after Montaigne's death the "Essays" were translated into English by John Florio, with less than exact accuracy, but in a style so full of the flavor of the age that we still read Montaigne in the version which Shakespeare knew. The group of examples here

printed exhibits the author in a variety of moods, easy, serious, and, in the essay on "Friendship," as nearly impassioned as his philosophy ever allowed him to become.

Reader, be here a well-meaning Booke. It doth at the firth entrance forewarne thee, that in contriving the same I have proposed unto my selfe no other than a familiar and private end: I have no respect or consideration at all, either to thy service, or to my glory: my forces are not capable of any such desseigne. I have vowed the same to the particular commodity of my kinsfolks and friends: to the end, that losing me (which they are likely to doe ere long), they may therein find some lineaments of my conditions and humours, and by that meanes reserve more whole, and more lively foster the knowledge and acquaintance they have had of me. Had my intention beene to forestal and purchase the world's opinion and favour, I would surely have adorned my selfe more quaintly, or kept a more grave and solemne march. I desire therein to be delineated in mine owne genuine, simple and ordinarie fashion, without contention, art or study; for it is myselfe I pourtray. My imperfections shall therein be read to

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the life, and my naturall forme discerned, so farre-forth as publike reverence hath permitted me. For if my fortune had beene to have lived among those nations which yet are said to live under the sweet liberty of Nature's first and uncorrupted lawes, I assure thee, I would most willingly have pourtrayed my selfe fully and naked. Thus, gentle Reader, myselfe I am the groundworke of my booke: it is then no reason thou shouldest employ thy time about so frivolous and vaine a sub ject.

Therefore farewell.

From MONTAIGNE,

The First of March, 1580.

THAT WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE OF OUR HAPPINESSE UNTILL AFTER OUR DEATH

scilicet ultima semper

Expectanda dies homini est, dicitur beatus

Ante obitum nemo, supremaque funera debat.

[Footnote: Ovid. Met. 1, iii. 135.]

We must expect of man the latest day,

Nor ere he die, he's happie, can we say.

The very children are acquainted with the storie of Croesus to this purpose: who being taken by Cyrus, and by him condemned to die, upon the point of his execution, cried out aloud: "Oh Solon, Solon!"

which words of his, being reported to Cyrus, who inquiring what he meant by them, told him, hee now at his owne cost verified the advertisement Solon had before times given him; which was, that no man, what cheerefull and blandishing countenance soever fortune shewed them, may rightly deeme himselfe happie, till such time as he have passed the last day of his life, by reason of the uncertaintie and vicissitude of humane things, which by a very light motive, and slight occasion, are often changed from one to another cleane contrary state and degree. And therefore Agesilaus answered one that counted the King of Persia happy, because being very young, he had gotten the garland of so mightie and great a dominion: "yea but said he, Priam at the same age was not unhappy." Of the Kings of Macedon that succeeded Alexander the Great, some were afterward seene to become Joyners and Scriveners at Rome: and of Tyrants of Sicilie, Schoolemasters at Corinth. One that had conquered halfe the world,

and been Emperour over so many, Armies, became an humble and miserable suter to the raskally officers of a king of AEgypte: At so high a rate did that great Pompey purchase the irkesome prolonging of his life but for five or six moneths. And in our fathers daies, Lodowicke Sforze, tenth Duke of Millane, under whom the State of Italic had so long beene turmoiled and shaken, was seene to die a wretched prisoner at Loches in France, but not till he had lived and

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lingered ten yeares in thraldom, which was the worst of his bargaine. The fairest Queene, wife to the greatest King of Christendome, was she not lately scene to die by the hands of an executioner? Oh unworthie and barbarous cruelties And a thousand such examples. For, it seemeth that as the sea-billowes and surging waves, rage and storne against the surly pride and stubborne height of our buildings, so are there above, certaine spirits that envie the rising prosperities and greatnesse heere below.

Vsque adeb res humanas vis abdita quadam

Obterit, et pulchros fasces sav&sque secures

Proculcare, ac ludibrio sibi habere videtur.

[Footnote: LUCRET. I. v. 1243.]

A hidden power so mens states hath out-worne  
Faire swords, fierce scepters, signes of honours borne,  
It seemes to trample and deride in scorne.

And it seemeth Fortune doth sometimes narrowly watch the last day of our life, thereby to shew her power, and in one moment to overthrow what for many yeares together she had been erecting, and makes us cry after Laberius, Nimirum hoc die una plus vixi, mihi quam vivendum fuit. [Footnote: MACHOB, 1, ii. 7.] Thus it is, "I have lived longer by this one day than I should." So may that good advice of Solon be taken with reason. But forsomuch as he is a Philosopher, with whom the favours or disfavours of fortune, and good or ill lucke have no place, and are not regarded by him; and puissances and greatneses, and accidents of qualitie, are well-nigh indifferent: I deeme it very likely he had a further reach, and meant that the same good fortune of our life, which dependeth of the tranquillitie and contentment of a welborne minde, and of the resolution and assurance of a well ordered soule, should never be ascribed unto man, untill he have beene scene play the last act of his comedie, and without doubt the hardest. In all the rest there may be some maske: either these sophisticall discourses of Philosophie are not in us but by countenance, or accidents that never touch us to the quick, give us alwaies leasure to keep our countenance settled. But when that last part of death, and of our selves comes to be acted, then no dissembling will availe, then is it high time to speake plaine English, and put off all vizards: then whatsoever the pot containeth must be shewne, be it good or bad, foule or cleane, wine or water.

Nam vera voces tum demum pectore ab imo

Ejiciuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.

[Footnote: LUCEET. 1. iii. 57.]

For then are sent true speeches from the heart,  
We are ourselves, we leave to play a part.  
Loe heere, why at this last cast, all our lives other actions must

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be tride and touched. It is the master-day, the day that judgeth all others: it is the day, saith an auncient Writer, that must judge of all my forepassed yeares. To death doe I referre the essay

[Footnote: Assay, exact weighing.] of my studies fruit. There shall we see whether my discourse proceed from my heart, or from my mouth. I have scene divers, by their death, either in good or evill, give reputation to all their forepassed life. Scipio, father-in-law to Pompey, in well dying, repaired the ill opinion which untill that houre men had ever held of him. Epaminondas being demanded which of the three he esteemed most, either Chabrias, or Iphicrates, or himselfe: "It is necessary," said he, "that we be scene to die, before your question may well be resolved." [Footnote: Answered.] Verily, we should steale much from him, if he should be weighed without the honour and greatnesse of his end. God hath willed it, as he pleased: but in my time three of the most execrable persons that ever I knew in all abomination of life, and the most infamous, have beene seen to die very orderly and quietly, and in every circumstance composed even unto perfection. There are some brave and fortunate deaths. I have seene her cut the twine of some man's life, with a progresse of wonderful advancement, and with so worthie an end, even in the flowre of his growth and spring of his youth, that in mine opinion, his ambitious and haughtie couragious signes, thought nothing so high as might interrupt them who without going to the place where he pretended, arived there more gloriously and worthily than either his desire or hope aimed at, and by his fall fore-went the power and name, whither by his course he aspired. When I judge of other men's lives, I ever respect how they have behaved themselves in their end; and my chiefest study is, I may well demeane my selfe at my last gaspe, that is to say, quietly and constantly.

#### THAT TO PHILOSOPHISE IS TO LEARNE HOW TO DIE

Cicero saith, that to Philosophise is no other thing than for a man to prepare himselfe to death: which is the reason that studie and contemplation doth in some sort withdraw our soule from us, and severally employ it from the body, which is a kind of apprenticeship and resemblance of death; or else it is, that all the wisdome and discourse of the world, doth in the end resolve upon this point, to teach us not to feare to die. Truly either reason mockes us, or it only aimeth at our contentment, and in fine, bends all her travell to make us live well, and as the holy Scripture saith, "at our ease." All the opinions of the world conclude, that pleasure is our end, howbeit they take divers meanes unto and for it, else would men reject them at their first comming. For, who would give eare unto him, that for it's end would establish our paine and disturbance?

The dissensions of philosophical sects in this case are verbal:

Transcurramus solertissimas Hugos [Footnote: Travails, labours.]

"Let us run over such over-fine fooleries and subtill trifles."

There is more wilfulnesse and wrangling among them, than pertains to

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a sacred profession. But what person a man undertakes to act, he doth ever therewithal! personate his owne. Allthough they say, that in vertue it selfe, the last scope of our aime is voluptuousnes. It pleaseth me to importune their eares still with this word, which so much offends their hearing. And if it imply any chief pleasure or exceeding contentments, it is rather due to the assistance of vertue, than to any other supply, voluptuousnes being more strong, sinnowie, sturdie, and manly, is but more seriously voluptuous. And we should give it the name of pleasure, more favorable, sweeter, and more naturall; and not terme it vigor, from which it hath his

denomination. Should this baser sensuality deserve this faire name, it should be by competencie, and not by privilege. I finde it lesse void of incommodities and crosses than vertue. And besides that, her taste is more fleeting, momentarie, and fading, she hath her fasts, her eyes, and her travels, and both sweat and blood. Furthermore she hath particularly so many wounding passions, and of so severall sorts, and so filthie and loathsome a societie waiting upon her, that shee is equivalent to penitencie. Wee are in the wrong, to thinke her incommodities serve her as a provocation and seasoning to her sweetnes, as in nature one contrarie is vivified by another contrarie: and to say, when we come to vertue, that like successes and difficulties overwhelme it, and yeeld it austere and inaccessible. Whereas much more properly then unto voluptuousnes, they ennobled, sharpen, animate, and raise that divine and perfect pleasure, which it meditates and procureth us. Truly he is verie unworthie her acquaintance, that counter-ballanceth her cost to his fruit, and knowes neither the graces nor use of it. Those who go about to instruct us, how her pursuit is very hard and laborious, and her jovisance [Footnote: Enjoyment] well-pleasing and delightful: what else tell they us, but that shee is ever unpleasant and irksome? For what humane meane [Footnote: Human meane. man's life is sub ject, it is not with an equall care: as well because accidents are not of such a necessitie, for most men passe their whole life without feeling any want or povertie, and othersome without feeling any grieffe or sicknes, as Xenophilus the Musitian, who lived an hundred and six yeares in perfect and continuall health: as also if the worst happen, death may at all times, and whensoever it shall please us, cut off all other inconveniences and crosses. But as for death, it is inevitable.] did ever attaine unto an absolute enjoying of it? The perfectest have beene content but to aspire and approach her, without ever possessing her. But they are deceived; seeing that of all the pleasures we know, the pursute of them is pleasant. The enterprise is perceived by the qualitie of the thing, which it hath regard unto: for it is a good portion of the effect, and consubstantiall. That happines and felicitie, which shineth in vertue, replenisheth her approaches and appurtenances, even unto, the first entrance and utmost barre. Now of all the benefits of vertue, the contempt of death is the chiefest, a meane that furnisheth our life with an ease-full tranquillitie, and gives us a pure and amiable taste of it: without which every other

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voluptuousnes is extinguished. Loe, here the reasons why all rules encounter and agree with this article. And albeit they all leade us with a common accord to despise povertie, and other accidental crosses, to which

Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium

Versatur urna, serius, ocius

Sors exitura, et nos in aeternum

Exilium impositura cymbae,

[Footnote: Hor. l. iii. Od. iii. 25.]

All to one place are driv'n, of all

Shak't is the lot-pot, where-hence shall

Sooner or later drawne lots fall,

And to deaths boat for aye enthrall.

And by consequence, if she makes us affeard, it is a continual

sub ject of torment, and which can no way be eased. There is no

starting-hole will hide us from her, she will finde us wheresoever we are, we may as in a suspected countrie start and turne here and there: quae quasi saxum Tantalos semper impendit.[Footnote: Cic. De Fin. I. i.] "Which evermore hangs like the stone over the head of Tantalus:" Our lawes doe often condemne and send malefactors to be executed in the same place where the crime was committed: to which whilest they are going, leade them along the fairest houses, or entertaine them with the best cheere you can,  
non Siculae dapes Dulcem elaborabunt saporem:  
Non avium, citharaeque cantus  
Somnum reducent.

[Footnote: Hor. I. iii. Od. i, 12.]

Not all King Denys daintie fare,  
Can pleasing taste for them prepare:  
No song of birds, no musikes sound  
Can lullabie to sleepe profound.

Doe you thinke they can take any pleasure in it? or be any thing delighted? and that the finall intent of their voiage being still before their eies, hath not altered and altogether distracted their taste from all these commodities and allurements?

Audit iter, numeratque dies, spatioque viarum  
Metitur vitam, torquetur peste futura.

[Footnote: Claud, in Ruff. 1. ii. 137]

He heares his journey, counts his daies, so measures he  
His life by his waies length, vext with the ill shall be.  
The end of our carriere is death, it is the necessarie ob ject of our  
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me: if it affright us, how is it possible we should step one foot further without an ague? The remedie of the vulgar sort is, not to think on it. But from what brutall stupiditie may so grosse a blindnesse come upon him? he must be made to bridle his Asse by the taile,

Qiti capite ipse suo instituit vestigia retro.

[Footnote: Lucret. 1. iv. 474]

Who doth a course contrarie runne  
With his head to his course begunne.

It is no marvell if he be so often taken tripping; some doe no sooner heare the name of death spoken of, but they are afraid, yea the most part will crosse themselves, as if they heard the Devill named. And because mention is made of it in mens wils and testaments, I warrant you there is none will set his hand to them, til the physitian hath given his last doome, and utterly forsaken him. And God knowes, being then betweene such paine and feare, with what sound judgment they endure him. For so much as this syllable sounded so unpleasantly in their eares, and this voice seemed so ill boding and unluckie, the Romans had learned to allay and dilate the same by a Periphrasis. In lieu of saying, he is dead, or he hath ended his daies, they would say, he hath lived. So it be life, be it past or no, they are comforted: from whom we have borrowed our phrases quondam, alias, or late such a one. It may haply be, as the common saying is, the time we live is worth the mony we pay for it. I was borne betweene eleven of the clocke and noone, the last of Februarie 1533, according to our computation, the yeare beginning the first of Januarie. It is but a fortnight since I was 39 yeares old. I want at least as much more. If in the meane time I should trouble my thoughts with a matter so farre from me, it were but

folly. But what? we see both young and old to leave their life after one selfe-same condition. No man departs otherwise from it, than if he but now came to it, seeing there is no man so crazed,[Footnote: Infirm] bedrell, [Footnote: Bedridden.] or decrepit, so long as he remembers Methusalem, but thinkes he may yet live twentie yeares. Moreover, seely [Footnote: Simple, weak.] creature as thou art, who hath limited the end of thy daies? Happily thou presumest upon physitions reports. Rather consider the effect and experience. By the common course of things long since thou livest by extraordinarie favour. Thou hast already over-past the ordinarie tearmes of common life: And to prove it, remember but thy acquaintances, and tell me how many more of them have died before they came to thy age, than have either attained or outgone the same: yea, and of those that through renoune have ennobled their life, if thou but register them, I will lay a wager, I will finde more that have died before they came to five and thirty years, than after. It is consonant with reason and pietie, to take example by the humanity of Jesus Christ, who ended his humane life at three and thirtie yeares. The greatest

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man that ever was, being no more than a man, I meane Alexander the Great, ended his dayes, and died also of that age. How many severall meanes and waies hath death to surprise us!

Quid quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis

Cautum est in horas

[Footnote: Hor. 1. ii. Od. xiii. 13.]

A man can never take good heed,

Hourly what he may shun and speed.

I omit to speak of agues and pleurisies; who would ever have imagined that a Duke of Brittainie should have beene stifled to death in a throng of people, as whilome was a neighbour of mine at Lyons, when Pope Clement made his entrance there? Hast thou not seene one of our late Kings slaine in the midst of his sports? and one of his ancestors die miserably by the chocke [Footnote: Shock.] of an hog? Eschilus fore threatned by the fall of an house, when he stood most upon his guard, stricken dead by the fall of a tortoise shell, which fell out of the tallants of an eagle flying in the air? and another choaked with the kernell of a grape? And an Emperour die by the scratch of a combe, whilest he was combing his head? And Aemylius Lepidus with hitting his foot against a doore-seele? And Aufidius with stumbling against the Consull-chamber doore as he was going in thereat? And Comelius Gallus, the Praetor, Tigillinus, Captaine of the Romane watch, Lodowike, sonne of Guido Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, end their daies betweene womens thighs? And of a farre worse example Speusippus, the Platonian philosopher, and one of our Popes? Poore Bebius a Judge, whilest he demurreth the sute of a plaintife but for eight daies, be hold, his last expired: And Caius Iulius a Physitian, whilest he was annointing the eies of one of his patients, to have his owne sight closed for ever by death. And if amongst these examples, I may adde one of a brother of mine, called Captain Saint Martin, a man of three and twentie yeares of age, who had already given good testimonie of his worth and forward valour, playing at tennis, received a blow with a ball, that hit him a little above the right eare, without apparance of any contusion, bruse, or hurt, and never sitting or resting upon it, died within six houres after of an apoplexie, which the blow of the ball caused in him. These so frequent and ordinary examples, hapning, and being

still before our eyes, how is it possible for man to forgo or for get the remembrance of death? and why should it not continually seeme unto us, that shee is still ready at hand to take us by the throat? What matter is it, will you say unto me, how and in what manner it is, so long as a man doe not trouble and vex himselfe therewith? I am of this opinion, that howsoever a man may shrowd or hide himselfe from her dart, yea, were it under an ox-hide, I am not the man would shrinke backe: it sufficeth me to live at my ease; and the best recreation I can have, that doe I ever take; in other matters, as little vain glorious, and exemplare as you list.

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—praetulerim delirus inersque videri,  
Dum mea delectent mala me, vel denique fallant,  
Quam sapere et ringi

[Footnote: Hor. 1. ii. Episi. ii 126]

A dotard I had rather seeme, and dull,  
Sooner my faults may please make me a gull,  
Than to be wise, and beat my vexed scull.

But it is folly to thinke that way to come unto it. They come, they goe, they trot, they daunce: but no speech of death. All that is good sport. But if she be once come, and on a sudden and openly surprise, either them, their wives, their children, or their friends, what torments, what out cries, what rage, and what despaire doth then overwhelme them? saw you ever anything so drooping, so changed, and so distracted? A man must looke to it, and in better times fore-see it. And might that brutish carelesnesse lodge in the minde of a man of understanding (which I find altogether impossible) she sels us her ware at an overdeere rate: were she an enemie by mans wit to be avoided, I would advise men to borrow the weapons of cowardlinesse: but since it may not be, and that be you either a coward or a runaway, an honest or valiant man, she overtakes you,

Nempe et fugacem persequitur virum,  
Nec parcit imbellis iuventae  
Poplitibus, timidoque tergo.

[Footnote: Hor. 1. iii. Od. ii. 14.]

Shee persecutes the man that flies,  
Shee spares not weake youth to surprise,  
But on their hammers and backe turn'd plies.  
And that no temper of cuirace [Footnote: Cuirass.] may shield or defend you,

Ille licet ferro cauius se condat et aere,  
Mors tamen inclusum protrahet inde caput.

[Footnote: Propert. 1. iii. et xvii. 5]

Though he with yron and brasse his head empale,  
Yet death his head enclosed thence will hale.

Let us learne to stand, and combat her with a resolute minde. And being to take the greatest advantage she hath upon us from her, let us take a cleane contrary way from the common, let us remove her strangenesse from her, let us converse, frequent, and acquaint our selves with her, let us have nothing so much in minde as death, let us at all times and seasons, and in the ugliest manner that may be,

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yea with all faces shapen and represent the same unto our imagination. At the stumbling of a horse, at the fall of a stone, at the least prick with a pinne, let us presently ruminare and say with



our selves, what if it were death it selfe? and thereupon let us take heart of grace, and call our wits together to confront her. Amiddest our bankets, feasts, and pleasures, let us ever have this restraint or object before us, that is, the remembrance of our condition, and let not pleasure so much mislead or transport us, that we altogether neglect or forget, how many waies, our joyes, or our feasting, be subject unto death, and by how many hold-fasts shee threatens us and them. So did the AEgyptians, who in the midst of their banquetings, and in the full of their greatest cheere, caused the anatomie [Footnote: Skeleton] of a dead man to be brought before them, as a memorandum and warning to their guests.

Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum,  
Grata superveniet; quae non sperabitur, hora?

[Footnote: Hor. 1. i. Epist. iv. 13.]

Thinke every day shines on thee as thy last,  
Welcome it will come, whereof hope was past.

It is uncertaine where death looks for us; let us expect her everie where: the premeditation of death, is a forethinking of libertie. He who hath learned to die, hath unlearned to serve. There is no evill in life, for him that hath well conceived, how the privation of life is no evill. To know how to die, doth free us from all subjection and constraint. Paulus AEmilius answered one, whom that miserable king of Macedon his prisoner sent to entreat him he would not lead him in triumph, "Let him make that request unto himselfe." Verily, if Nature afford not some helpe in all things, it is very hard that art and industrie should goe farre before. Of my selfe, I am not much given to melancholy, but rather to dreaming and sluggishness. There is nothing wherewith I have ever more entertained my selfe, than with the imaginations of death, yea in the most licentious times of my age.

lucundum, cum atas florida ver ageret

[Footnote: Catul. Eleg. iv. 16.]

When my age flourishing  
Did spend its pleasant spring.

Being amongst faire Ladies, and in earnest play, some have thought me busied, or musing with my selfe, how to digest some jealousy, or meditating on the uncertaintie of some conceived hope, when God he knowes, I was entertaining my selfe with the remembrance of some one or other, that but few daies before was taken with a burning fever, and of his sodaine end, comming from such a feast or meeting where I was my selfe, and with his head full of idle conceits, of lore, and

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merry glee; supposing the same, either sickness or end, to be as neere me as him.

iam fuerit, nec post, unquam revocare licebit.

[Footnote: Lucr. l. iii. 947.]

Now time would be, no more You can this time restore.

I did no more trouble my selfe or frowne at such conceit, [Idea.] than at any other. It is impossible we should not apprehend or feele some motions or startings at such imaginations at the first, and comming sodainely upon us; but doubtlesse, he that shall manage and meditate upon them with an impartiall eye, they will assuredly, in tract [Course.] of time, become familiar to him: Otherwise, for my part, I should be in continuall feare and agonie; for no man did ever more distrust his life, nor make lesse account of his continuance: Neither can health, which hitherto I have so long

enjoyed, and which so seldome hath beene crazed, [Enfeebled.]  
lengthen my hopes, nor any sicknesse shorten them of it. At every  
minute me thinkes I make an escape. And I uncessantly record unto my  
selfe, that whatsoever may be done another day, may be effected this  
day. Truly hazards and dangers doe little or nothing approach us at  
our end: And if we consider, how many more there remaine, besides  
this accident, which in number more than millions seeme to threaten  
us, and hang over us; we shall find, that be we sound or sicke,  
lustie or weake, at sea or at land, abroad or at home, fighting or  
at rest, in the midst of a battell or, in our beds, she is ever  
alike neere unto us. *Nemo altero fragilior est, nemo in crastinum  
sui certior:* "No man is weaker then other; none surer of himselfe  
(to live) till to morrow." Whatsoever I have to doe before death,  
all leasure to end the same seemeth short unto me, yea were it but  
of one houre. Some body, not long since turning over my writing  
tables, found by chance a memoriall of something I would have done  
after my death: I told him (as indeed it was true), that being but a  
mile from my house, and in perfect health and lustie, I had made  
haste to write it, because I could not assure my self I should ever  
come home in safety: As one that am ever hatching of mine owne  
thoughts, and place them in my selfe: I am ever prepared about that  
which I may be: nor can death (come when she please) put me in mind  
of any new thing. A man should ever, as much as in him lieth, be  
ready booted to take his journey, and above all things, looke he  
have then nothing to doe but with himselfe.

*Quid brevi fortes jaculamur aevo*

*Multa:*

[Footnote: Hor. 1. ii. Od. Xiv]

To aime why are we ever bold,  
At many things in so short hold?

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For then we shall have worke sufficient, without any more accrease.  
Some man complaineth more that death doth hinder him from the  
assured course of an hoped for victorie, than of death it selfe;  
another cries out, he should give place to her, before he have  
married his daughter, or directed the course of his childrens  
bringing up; another bewaileth he must forgoe his wives company;  
another moaneth the losse of his children, the chiefest commodities  
of his being. I am now by meanes of the mercy of God in such a  
taking, that without regret or grieving at any worldly matter, I am  
prepared to dislodge, whensoever he shall please to call me: I am  
every where free: my farewell is soone taken of all my friends,  
except of my selfe. No man did ever pre pare himselfe to quit the  
world more simply and fully, or more generally spake of all thoughts  
of it, than I am assured I shall doe. The deadeest deaths are the  
best.

–Miser, de miser (aiunt) omnia ademit.

*Vna dies infesta mihi tot praemia vitae:*

[Footnote: Luce. 1. iii. 941.]

O wretch, O wretch (friends cry), one day,  
All joyes of life hath tane away:

And the builder,

–manent (saith he) opera interrupta,  
minaeque Murorum ingentes.

[Footnote: Virg. Aen. 1. iv. 88.]

The workes unfinisht lie,

And walls that threatned hie.

A man should designe nothing so long afore-hand, or at least with such an intent, as to passionate[Footnote: Long passionately.] himselfe to see the end of it; we are all borne to be doing.

Cum moriar, medium solvar et inter opus

[Footnote: Ovid. Am. 1. ii. El. x. 36]

When dying I my selfe shall spend,  
Ere halfe my businesse come to end.

I would have a man to be doing, and to prolong his lives ofttes as much as lieth in him, and let death seize upon me whilest I am setting my cabiges, carelesse of her dart, but more of my unperfect garden. I saw one die, who being at his last gaspe, uncessantly complained against his destinie, and that death should so unkindly cut him off in the middest of an historie which he had in hand, and was now come to the fifteenth or sixteenth of our Kings.

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Illud in his rebus non addunt, nec tibi earum,  
Iam desiderium rerum super insidet uno.

[Footnote: Luce. 1. iii. 44.]

Friends adde not that in this case, now no more  
Shalt thou desire, or want things wisht before.

A man should rid himselfe of these vulgar and hurtful humours. Even as Churchyards were first place adjoining unto churches, and in the most frequented places of the City, to enure (as Lyncurgus said) the common people, women and children, not to be skared at the sight of a dead man, and to the end that continuall spectacle of bones, sculs, tombes, graves and burials, should forewarne us of our condition, and fatall end.

Quin etiam exhilarare viris convivia caede  
Mos olim, et miscere epulis spectacula dira  
Certantum ferro, saepe et super ipsa cadentum  
Pocula, respersis non parco sanguine mensis.

[Footnote: Syl. 1. xi. 51]

Nay more, the manner was to welcome guests,  
And with dire shewes of slaughter to mix feasts.  
Of them that fought at sharpe, and with bords tainted  
Of them with much bloud, who o'er full cups fainted.

And even as the Aegyptians after their feasting and carousings caused a great image of death to be brought in and shewed to the guests and bytanders, by one that cried aloud, "Drinke and be merry, for such shalt thou be when thou art dead: "So have I learned this custome or lesson, to have alwaies death, not only in my imagination, but continually in my mouth. And there is nothing I desire more to be informed of than of the death of men; that is to say, what words, what countenance, and what face they shew at their death; and in reading of histories, which I so attentively observe. It appeareth by the shuffling and hudling up[Footnote: Collecting] of my examples, I affect[Footnote: Like] no subject so particularly as this. Were I a composer of books, I would keepe a register, commented of the divers deaths, which in teaching men to die, should after teach them to live. Dicearcus made one of that title, but of another and lesse profitable end. Some man will say to mee, the effect exceeds the thought so farre, that there is no fence so sure, or cunning so certaine, but a man shall either lose or forget if he come once to that point; let them say what they list: to premeditate

on it, giveth no doubt a great advantage: and it is nothing, at the least, to goe so farre without dismay or alteration, or without an ague? There belongs more to it: Nature her selfe lends her hand, and gives us courage. If it be a short and violent death, wee have no leisure to feare it; if otherwise, I perceive that according as I engage my selfe in sicknesse, I doe naturally fall into some

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disdaine and contempt of life. I finde that I have more adoe to digest this resolution, that I shall die when I am in health, than I have when I am troubled with a fever: forsomuch as I have no more such fast hold on the commodities of life, whereof I begin to lose the use and pleasure, and view death in the face with a lesse undanted looke, which makes me hope, that the further I goe from that, and the nearer I approach to this, so much more easily doe I enter in composition for their exchange. Even as I have tried in many other occurrences, which Caesar affirmed, that often some things seeme greater, being farre from us, than if they bee neere at hand: I have found that being in perfect health, I have much more beene frighted with sicknesse, than when I have felt it. The jollitie wherein I live, the pleasure and the strength make the other seeme so disproportionable from that, that by imagination I amplifie these commodities by one moitie, and apprehended them much more heavie and burthensome, than I feele them when I have them upon my shoulders. The same I hope will happen to me of death. Consider we by the ordinary mutations, and daily declinations which we suffer, how Nature deprives us of the sight of our losse and empairing; what hath an aged man left him of his youths vigor, and of his forepast life?

Heu senibus vita portio quanta manet

[Footnote: Com. Gal. 1. i. 16.]

Alas to men in yeares how small

A part of life is left in all?

Caesar, to a tired and crazed [Footnote: diseased] Souldier of his guard, who in the open street came to him, to beg leave he might cause himselfe to be put to death; viewing his decrepit behaviour, answered pleasantly: "Doest thou thinke to be alive then?" Were man all at once to fall into it, I doe not thinke we should be able to beare such a change, but being faire and gently led on by her hand, in a slow, and as it were unperceived descent, by little and little, and step by step, she roules us into that miserable state, and day by day seekes to acquaint us with it. So that when youth failes in us, we feele, nay we perceive no shaking or transchange at all in our selves: which in essence and veritie is a harder death, than that of a languishing and irkesome life, or that of age. Forsomuch as the leape from an ill being unto a not being, is not so dangerous or steepie; as it is from a delightfull and flourishing being unto a painfull and sorrowfull condition. A weake bending, and faint stopping bodie hath lesse strength to beare and under goe a heavie burden: So hath our soule. She must bee rouzed and raised against the violence and force of this adversarie. For as it is impossible she should take any rest whilest she feareth: whereof if she be assured (which is a thing exceeding humane [Footnote: human] condition) she may boast that it is impossible unquietnesse, torment, and feare, much lesse the least displeasure should lodge in

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her.

Non vultus instantis tyranni  
Mente quatit solida, neque Auster,  
Dux inquieti turbidus Adria,  
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.

[Footnote: Hor. l. iii. Od. iii.]

No urging tyrants threatening face,  
Where minde is found can it displace,  
No troublous wind the rough seas Master,  
Nor Joves great hand, the thunder-caster.  
She is made Mistris of her passions and concupiscence, Lady of  
indulgence, of shame, of povertie, and of all for tunes injuries.  
Let him that can, attaine to this advantage: Herein consists the  
true and soveraigne liberty, that affords us meanes wherewith to  
jeast and make a scome of force and injustice, and to deride  
imprisonment, gives [Footnote: Gyves, shackles] or fetters.  
—in manicis, et

Compedibus, savo te sub custode tenebo.

Ipse Deus simui atque volam, me solvet: opinor  
Hoc sentit, moriar. Mors ultima linea rerum est.

[Footnote: Hor. l. i. Ep. xvi. 76.]

In gyves and fetters I will hamper thee,  
Under a Jayler that shall cruell be:  
Yet, when I will, God me deliver shall,  
He thinks, I shall die: death is end of all.

Our religion hath had no surer humane foundation than the contempt  
of life. Discourse of reason doth not only call and summon us unto  
it. For why should we feare to lose a thing, which being lost,  
cannot be moaned? but also, since we are threatened by so many kinds  
of death, there is no more inconvenience to feare them all, than to  
endure one: what matter is it when it commeth, since it is  
unavoidable? Socrates answered one that told him, "The thirty  
tyrants have condemned thee to death." "And Nature them," said he.  
What fondnesse is it to carke and care so much, at that instant and  
passage from all exemption of paine and care? As our birth brought  
us the birth of all things, so shall our death the end of all  
things. Therefore is it as great follie to weepe, we shall not live  
a hundred yeeres hence, as to waile we lived not a hundred yeeres  
agoe. "Death is the beginning of another life." So wept we, and so  
much did it cost us to enter into this life; and so did we spoile us  
of our ancient vaile in entring into it. Nothing can be grievous  
that is but once. Is it reason so long to feare a thing of so short  
time? Long life or short life is made all one by death. For long or  
short is not in things that are no more. Aristotle saith, there are

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certaine little beasts amongst the river Hyspanis, that live but one  
day; she which dies at 8 o'clocke in the morning, dies in her youth,  
and she that dies at 5 in the afternoon, dies in her decrepitude,  
who of us doth not laugh, when we shall see this short moment of  
continuance to be had in consideration of good or ill fortune? The  
most and the least is ours, if we compare it with eternitie, or  
equall it to the lasting of mountains, rivers, stars, and trees, or  
any other living creature, is not lesse ridiculous. But nature  
compels us to it. Depart (saith she) out of this world, even as you  
came into it. The same way you came from death to life, returne  
without passion or amazement, from life to death: your death is but  
a peece of the worlds order, and but a parcell of the worlds life.

–inter se mortales mutua vivunt,  
Et quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt.

[Footnote: Lucret. ii. 74. 77.]

Mortall men live by mutuall entercourse:  
And yeeld their life-torch, as men in a course.

Shal I not change this goodly contexture of things for you? It is  
the condition of your creation: death is a part of yourselves: you  
flie from yourselves. The being you enjoy is equally shared betweene  
life and death. The first day of your birth doth as wel addresse you  
to die, as to live.

Prima quae vitam dedit, hora, carpsit.

[Footnote: Sen. Her. Sw. ckor. lii.]

The first houre, that to men  
Gave life, strait, cropt it then.

Nascentes morimur, finisque ab origine pendet:

[Footnote: Manil. At. I. iv]

As we are borne we die; the end  
Doth of th' originall depend.

All the time you live, you steale it from death: it is at her  
charge. The continuall worke of your life, is to contrive death: you  
are in death, during the time you continue in life: for, you are  
after death, when you are no longer living. Or if you had rather  
have it so, you are dead after life: but during life, you are still  
dying: and death doth more rudely touch the dying than the dead, and  
more lively and essentially. If you have profited by life, you have  
also beene fed thereby, depart then satisfied.

Cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis?

[Footnote: Lucret. 1. iii. 982.]

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Why like a full-fed guest,  
Depart you not to rest?

If you have not knowne how to make use of it: if it were  
unprofitable to you, what need you care to have lost it to what end  
would you enjoy it longer?

–cur amplius addere quaeris

Rursum quod pereat male,  
et ingratum occidat omne?

[Footnote: Lucret. 1. iii. 989.]

Why seeke you more to gaine, what must againe  
All perish ill, and passe with griefe or paine?

Life in itselpe is neither good nor evill: it is the place of good  
or evill, according as you prepare it for them. And if you have  
lived one day, you have seene all: one day is equal to all other  
daies. There is no other light, there is no other night. This Sunne,  
this Moone, these Starres, and this disposition, is the very same  
which your forefathers enjoyed, and which shall also entertaine your  
posteritie.

Non alium videre patres, aliumve nepotes  
Aspicient.

[Footnote: Manil. i. 523.]

No other saw our Sires of old,  
No other shall their sonnes behold.

And if the worst happen, the distribution and varietie of all the  
acts of my comedie, is performed in one yeare. If you have observed  
the course of my foure seasons; they containe the infancie, the  
youth, the viriltie, and the old age of the world. He hath plaied

his part: he knowes no other wilnesse belonging to it, but to begin againe, it will ever be the same, and no other.

Versamur ibidem, atque insumus usque,

[Footnote: Lucret. 1. iii. 123.]

We still in one place turne about,

Still there we are, now in, now out.

Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

[Footnote: Virg. Georg. 1. ii. 403.]

The yeare into it selfe is cast

By those same steps, that it hath past.

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I am not purposed to devise you other new sports.

Nam tibi praterea quod machiner, inveniamque

Quod placeat nihil est; eadem suni omnia semper.

[Footnote: Lucret. 1. ii. 978.]

Else nothing, that I can devise or frame,

Can please thee, for all things are still the same.

Make roome for others, as others have done for you. Equalitie is the chiefe ground-wocke of equitie, who can complaine to be comprehended where all are contained? So may you live long enough, you shall never diminish anything from the time you have to die: it is bootlesse; so long shall you continue in that state which you feare, as if you had died, being in your swathing-clothes, and when you were sucking.

—licet, quot vis, vivendo vincere secla.

Mors sterna tamen, nihilominus ilia manebit.

[Footnote: Ib. 1126.]

Though yeares you live, as many as you will,

Death is eternall, death remaineth still.

And I will so please you, that you shall have no discontent.

In vera nescis nullum fore morte alium te,

Qui possit vivus tibi te lugere peremptum,

Stansque jacentem.

[Footnote: Ild. 1. lii. 9.]

Thou know'st not there shall be not other thou,

When thou art dead indeed, that can tell how

Alive to waile thee dying, Standing to waile thee lying.

Nor shall you wish for life, which you so much desire

Nec sibi enim quisquam tum se vitamque requirit,

[Footnote: ib. 963.]

Nec desiderium nostri nos afficit ullum.

[Footnote: Ib. 966.]

For then none for himselfe or life requires:

Nor are we of our selves affected with desires.

Death is lesse to be feared than nothing, if there were anything lesse than nothing.

—multo mortem minus ad nos esse putandum,

Si minus esse potest quam quod nihil esse videmus.

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[Footnote: Ib. 970.]

Death is much less to us, we ought esteeme,

If lesse may be, than what doth nothing seeme.

Nor alive, nor dead, it doth concern you nothing. Alive because you are: Dead, because you are no more. Moreover, no man dies before his houre. The time you leave behinde was no more yours than that which was before your birth, and concerneth you no more.

Respite enim quam nil ad nos anteacta vetustas  
Temporis aeterni fuerit.

[Footnote: lb. 1016.]

For marke, how all antiquitie foregone  
Of all time ere we were, to us was none.

Wheresoever your life ended, there is it all. The profit of life  
consists not in the space, but rather in the use. Some man hath  
lived long, that hath a short life, Follow it whilst you have time.  
It consists not in number of yeeres, but in your will, that you have  
lived long enough. Did you thinke you should never come to the  
place, where you were still going? There is no way but hath an end.  
And if company may solace you, doth not the whole world walke the  
same path?

—Omnia te, vita perfuncta, sequentur.

[Footnote: lb. 1012.]

Life past, all things at last  
Shall follow thee as thou hast past.

Doe not all things move as you doe, or keepe your course? Is there  
any thing grows not old together with yourselfe? A thousand men, a  
thousand beasts, and a thousand other creatures die in the very  
instant that you die.

Nam nox nulla diem, neque noctem aurora sequuta est,  
Que non audierit mistus vagitibus aegris  
Ploratus, mortis comites et funeris atri.

[Footnote: Id. i. ii. 587.]

No night ensued day light; no morning followed night,  
Which heard not moaning mixt with sick-mens groaning,  
With deaths and funerals joyned was that moaning.  
To what end recoile you from it, if you cannot goe backe. You have  
seene many who have found good in death, ending thereby many many  
miseries. But have you seene any that hath received hurt thereby?  
Therefore it is meere simplicitie to condemne a thing you never  
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approve, neither by yourselfe nor any other. Why doest thou  
complaine of me and of destinie? Doe we offer thee any wrong? is it  
for thee to direct us, or for us to governe thee? Although thy age  
be not come to her period, thy life is. A little man is a whole man  
as well as a great man. Neither men nor their lives are measured by  
the Ell. Chiron refused immortalitie, being informed of the  
conditions thereof, even by the God of time and of continuance,  
Saturne his father. Imagine truly how much an ever-during life would  
be lesse tolerable and more painfull to a man, than is the life  
which I have given him. Had you not death you would then uncessantly  
curse, and cry out against me, that I had deprived you of it. I have  
of purpose and unwittingly blended some bitternesse amongst it, that  
so seeing the commoditie of its use, I might hinder you from over-  
greedily embracing, or indiscreetly calling for it. To continue in  
this moderation that is, neither to fly from life nor to run to  
death (which I require of you) I have tempered both the one and  
other betweene sweetnes and sowrenes. I first taught Thales, the  
chiefest of your Sages and Wisemen, that to live and die were  
indifferent, which made him answer one very wisely, who asked him  
wherefore he died not: "Because," said he, "it is indifferent. The  
water, the earth, the aire, the fire, and other members of this my  
universe, are no more the instruments of thy life than of thy death.  
Why fearest thou thy last day? He is no more guiltie, and conferreth



no more to thy death, than any of the others. It is not the last step that causeth weariness: it only declares it. All daies march towards death, only the last comes to it." Behold heere the good precepts of our universall mother Nature. I have oftentimes bethought my self whence it proceedeth, that in times of warre, the visage of death (whether wee see it in us or in others) seemeth without all comparison much lesse dreadful and terrible unto us, than in our houses, or in our beds, otherwise it should be an armie of Physitians and whiners, and she ever being one, there must needs bee much more assurance amongst countrie-people and of base condition, than in others. I verily believe, these fearefull looks, and astonishing countenances wherewith we encompass it, are those that more amaze and terrifie us than death: a new forme of life; the out cries of mothers; the wailing of women and children; the visitation of dismaid and swouning friends; the assistance of a number of pale-looking, distracted, and whining servants; a darke chamber; tapers burning round about; our couch beset round with Physitians and Preachers; and to conclude, nothing but horror and astonishment on every side of us: are wee not already dead and buried? The very children are afraid of their friends, when they see them masked; and so are we. The maske must as well be taken from things as from men, which being removed, we shall find nothing hid under it, but the very same death, that a seely[Footnote: weak, simple] varlet, or a simple maid-servant, did latterly suffer without amazement or feare. Happie is that death which takes all leasure from the preparations of such an equipage.

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OF THE INSTITUTION AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN; TO THE  
LADIE DIANA OF  
FOIX, COUNTESSE OF GURSON

I never knew father, how crooked and deformed soever his sonne were, that would either altogether cast him off, or not acknowledge him for his owne: and yet (unlesse he be meerely besotted or blinded in his affection) it may not be said, but he plainly perceiveth his defects, and hath a feeling of his imperfections. But so it is, he is his owne. So it is in my selfe. I see better than any man else, that what I have set downe is nought but the fond imaginations of him who in his youth hath tasted nothing but the paring, and seen but the superficies of true learning: whereof he hath retained but a generall and shapelesse forme: a smacke of every thing in generall, but nothing to the purpose in particular: After the French manner. To be short, I know there is an art of Phisicke; a course of lawes; foure parts of the Mathematikes; and I am not altogether ignorant what they tend unto. And perhaps I also know the scope and drift of Sciences in generall to be for the service of our life. But to wade further, or that ever I tired my selfe with plodding upon Aristotle (the Monarch of our moderne doctrine 1) or obstinately continued in search of any one science: I confesse I never did it. Nor is there any one art whereof I am able so much as to draw the first lineaments. And there is no scholler (be he of the lowest forme) that may not repute himselfe wiser than I, who am not able to oppose him in his first lesson: and if I be forced to it, I am constrained verie impertinently to draw in matter from some generall discourse, whereby I examine, and give a guesse at his naturall judgement: a lesson as much unknowne to them as theirs is to me. I have not dealt or had commerce with any excellent booke, except Plutarke or Seneca,

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