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### Montaigne's Essays

In Three Books. With Notes and Quotations. And an Account of The Author's Life ; With a short Character of the Author and Translator, by the late Marquis of Halifax; With the Addition of A Complete Table to each Volume

**Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de**

**London, 1743**

Chap. 44. Of Sleep.

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## C H A P. XLIV.

*Of Sleep.*

**R**eason directs, that we should always go the same way ; but not always the same Pace. And consequently though a wise Man ought not so much to give the Reins to human Passions, as to let them deviate him from the right Path ; he may, notwithstanding, without Prejudice to his Duty, leave it to them to hasten, or to slacken his Speed, and not fix himself like a motionless, and insensible Colossus. Could Virtue itself put on Flesh and Blood, I believe the Pulse would beat faster going on to an Assault, than in going to Dinner : That is to say, there is a Necessity she should beat, and be mov'd upon this Account. I have taken Notice, as of an extraordinary Thing, of some great Men, who in the highest Enterprizes, and greatest Dangers, have detain'd themselves in so settled and serene a Calm, as not at all to hinder their usual Gaiety, or break their Sleep. *Alexander* the Great on the Day assigned for that furious Battle betwixt him and *Darius*, slept so profoundly, and so long in the Morning, that *Parmenio* was forc'd to enter his Chamber, and coming to his Bed-side to call him several Times by his Name, the Time to go to fight compelling him so to do. The Emperor *Otho*, having put on a Resolution to kill himself the same Night, after having settled his domestick Affairs, divided his Money amongst his Servants, and set a good Edge upon a Sword he had made Choice of for the Purpose, and now staying only to be satisfied whether all his Friends were retir'd in Safety, he fell into so sound a Sleep, that the Gentlemen of his Chamber heard him snore. The Death of this Emperor has in it Circumstances paralleling that of the great *Cato*, and particularly this before related : For *Cato* being ready to dispatch himself, whilst he only staid his Hand in Expectation of the Return of a Messenger he had sent, to bring him News whether the

*Senators*



enators he had sent away, were put out from the Port of *Utica*, he fell into so sound a Sleep, that they heard him into the next Room; and he whom he had sent to the Port, having awak'd him to let him know, that the tempestuous Weather had hindred the *Senators* from putting to Sea; he dispatch'd away another Messenger, and composing himself again in the Bed, settled again to Sleep, and did so, till by the Return of the last Messenger, he had certain Intelligence they were gone. We may here further compare him with *Alexander* too, in that great and dangerous Storm that threatned him by the Sedition of the Tribune *Metellus*, who attempting to publish a Decree for the calling in of *Pompey* with his Army into the City, at the Time of *Catiline's* Conspiracy, was only, and that stoutly oppos'd by *Cato*, so that very sharp Language and bitter Menaces pass'd betwixt them in the Senate about that Affair; but it was the next Day in the Fore-noon, that the Controversy was to be decided; where *Metellus*, besides the Favour of the People, and of *Cæsar*, (at that Time of *Pompey's* Faction) was to appear accompanied with a Rabble of Slaves and Fencers; and *Cato* only fortified with his own Courage and Constancy; so that his Relations, Domesticks, and several virtuous People of his Friends were in great Apprehensions for him. And to that Degree, that some there were, who pass'd over the whole Night without Sleep, Eating, or Drinking, for the manifest Danger they saw him running into; of which his Wife and Sisters did nothing but weep, and torment themselves in his House; whereas he, on the contrary, comforted every one, and after having supp'd after his usual Manner, went to Bed, and slept profoundly till Morning, that one of his Fellow-Tribunes rous'd him to go to the Encounter. The Knowledge we have of the Greatness of this Man's Courage, by the rest of his Life, may warrant us securely to judge, that his Indifference proceeded from a Soul so much elevated above such Accidents, that he disdain'd to let it take any more hold of his Fancy, than any other ordinary Adventure. In the Naval Engagement, which *Augustus* won against *Sextius Pompeius* in *Sicily*, just as they were to begin the Fight, he was so fast asleep, that his Friends were compell'd to wake him to give the Signal of Battle: And this



was it that gave *Mark Anthony* afterwards occasion to reproach him, that he had not the Courage so much as with open Eyes, to behold the Order of his own Squadrons, and not to have dar'd to present himself before the Soldiers, till first *Agrippa* had brought him News of the Victory obtain'd. But as to the Business of young *Marius*, who did much worse (for the Day of the last Battle, against *Sylla*, after he had order'd his Army, given the Word and Signal of Battel, he laid him down under the Shade of a Tree to repose himself, and fell so fast asleep, that the Rout, and Flight of his Men could hardly awake him, having seen nothing of the Fight) he is said to have been at that Time so extremely spent, and worn out with Labour and want of Sleep that Nature could hold out no longer. Now upon what has been said, the Physicians may determine, whether Sleep be so necessary that our Lives depend upon it: For we read that King *Perseus* of *Macedon* being Prisoner at *Rome*, was wak'd to Death: but *Pliny* instances such as have lived long without Sleep. *Herodotus* speaks of Nations, where the Men sleep and wake by half Years: And they who write the Life of the wise *Epimenides*, affirm, that he slept seven and fifty Years together.



## C H A P. XLV.

*Of the Battle of Dreux.*

OUR Battle of *Dreux*, is remarkable for several extraordinary Accidents: But such Men as have no great Kindness for the Duke of *Guise*, nor much favour his Reputation, are willing to have him thought to blame, and that his making a Halt, and delaying Time with the Forces he commanded, whilst the Constable who was General of the Army was raked through and through with the Enemies Artillery, his Battalion routed, and himself taken Prisoner; is not to be excus'd: And that he had much better have ran the Hazard of charging the Enemy in the Flank, than staying for the Advantage of falling in upon the