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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. 3. The Custom of the Isle of Cea.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53407](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53407)



## C H A P. III.

## The Custom of the Isle of Cea.

IF, according to the common Definition, to Philosophize is to doubt, much more ought writing at random, and playing the Fool, as I do, to be reputed Doubting; for it is the Business of Novices and Freshmen to enquire and dispute, and that of the Chairman to moderate and determine. My Moderator is the Authority of the Divine Will, which governs us without Contradiction, and which is seated above these vain and human Contests. *Philip* being forcibly entered into *Peloponnesus*, and some one saying to *Damidas*, that the *Lacedæmonians* were likely to be very great Sufferers if they did not prevent the Storm by timely reconciling themselves to his Favour: *Why you pitiful Fellow*, replied he, *what can they suffer, that do not fear to Die?* It being also demanded of *Agis*, which way a Man might live Free? *Why*, said he, *by despising Death*. These and a Thousand other Sayings to the same purpose, do distinctly speak something more than a patient waiting the Stroke of Death when it shall come; for there are several Accidents in Life, far worse to suffer than Death itself. Witness the *Lacedæmonian* Boy, taken by *Antigonas*, and sold for a Slave, who being by his new Master commanded to some base Employment; *Thou shalt see*, says the Boy, *whom thou hast bought, it would be a Shame for me to serve, being so near the reach of Liberty*, and having so said, threw himself from the Top of the House. *Antipater* severely threatning the *Lacedæmonians*, that he might the better incline them to acquiesce in a certain Demand of his; *If thou threatneth us with more than Death*, reply'd they, *we shall the more willingly Die*: And to *Philip*, having writ them word that he would frustrate all their Enterprizes? *What, wilt thou also hinder us from Dying?* This is

To Philosophize what.

Several Accidents worse to suffer than Death.

the meaning of the Sentence, *That the Wise Man lives as long as he ought, not so long as he can*; and that the most obliging Present Nature has made us, and which takes from us all colour of Complaint of our Condition, is, to have delivered into our own Custody the Keys of Life. She has only ordered one Door into Life, but a hundred thousand out of it. We may be fraightned for Earth to Live upon, but Earth sufficient to Die upon can never be wanting; as *Boiocatus* answered the *Roman*, Why dost thou complain of this World; it detains thee not? Thy own Cowardice is the Cause if thou livest in Pain: There remains no more to Die, but to be willing to do it.

*Ubique mors est: Optime hoc cavet Deus,  
Eripere Vitam nemo non homini potest:  
At nemo Mortem: Mille ad hanc aditus patent \**,

To Death a Man can never want a Gate,  
Heav'n has provided very well for that,  
There's not so mean a Wretch on Earth but may  
Take the most Noble Hero's Life away;  
But to the Willing none can Death refuse,  
There are to that a thousand Avenues.

*Death depends upon the Will.*

Neither is it a *Recipe* for one Disease, Death is the infallible Cure of all, 'tis a most assured Port that is never to be feared, and very often to be fought: It comes all to one Point, whether a Man gives himself his End, or stays to receive it by some other means; Whether he pays before his Day, or stay till his Day of Payment comes: From whencesoever it comes, it is still his: In what part soever the Thread breaks, there's the End of the Clue; the most voluntary Death is the most brave. Life depends upon the Pleasure and Discretion of others, Death upon our own. We ought not to accommodate ourselves to our own Humour in any thing so much as in that. Reputation is not concerned in such an Enterprize: And it's a Folly to be diverted by any such Apprehension; Living is Slavery, if the Liberty of Dying be away. The ordinary Method of Cures is carried on at the Expence of Life; they torment us with Causticks,

\* *Seneca The. Act. 1. Sce. 2.*

Incisions, and Amputations of Limbs, at the same time interdicting Aliments, and exhausting our Blood; one Step further and we are cured indeed. Why are not the *Jugular* Veins as much at our Disposal, as the *Cephalick*, *Basilick*, or *Median* Vein? For a desperate Disease a desperate Cure. *Servius*, the Grammarian, being tormented with the Gout, could advise of no better Remedy, than to apply Poison to his Legs, to deprive them of their Sense; then let them be Gouty if they will, so if they are but insensible of Pain. God gives us leave enough, when he is pleased to reduce us to such a Condition, that to live is far worse than to die. 'Tis Weakness to truckle under Infirmities, but 'tis Madness to nourish them. The *Stoicks* say, that it is living according to Nature in a Wise Man to take his leave of Life even in the height of Prosperity, provided he does it opportunely; and in a Fool to prolong it tho' he be miserable, if he is indigent of those things, which are reputed the Necessaries of human Life. As I do not offend the Law provided against Thieves, when I embezel my own Money, and cut my own Purse, nor that against Incendiaries, when I burn my own Wood; so am I not under the Lash of those made against Murthers, for having deprived myself of my own Life. *Hegeffus* said, that as the Condition of Life did, so the Condition of Death ought to depend upon our own Choice: And *Dio-genes* meeting the Philosopher *Speusippus*, so blown up with an inveterate Dropsy, that he was fain to be carried in a Litter, and by him saluted with the Compliment of, I wish you good Health; *no Health to thee*, reply'd the other, *who art content to live in such a Condition*. And in truth, not long after *Speusippus*, weary of so Languishing an Estate of Life, found a means to die. But this does not pass without admitting a Dispute: For many are of Opinion that we cannot quit this Garrison of the World, without express Command of him who has placed us in it; and that it belongs to God alone who has placed us here, not for ourselves only, but for his Glory and the Service of others, to dismiss us when it shall best please him, and not for us to depart without his Licence: That we are not born for ourselves only, but for our Country also, the Laws of which require an Account from us, upon the Score of their own Interest, and have an Action of Manslaughter good against us. Or

if these fail to take cognizance of the Fact, we are punished in the other World, as Deserters of our Duty.

*Proxima deinde tenent mæsti Loca, qui sibi lethum  
Infantes peperere manu, lucemque perosi,  
Projecere animas ||.*

Next these, those Melancholick Souls remain,  
Who innocent by their own Hands were slain,  
And hating Light, to voluntary Death  
Eclips'd their Eye-Balls, and bequeath'd their Breath.

There is more Constancy in suffering the Chain we are tied in, than in breaking it, and more pregnant Evidence of Fortitude in *Regulus*, than in *Cato*. 'Tis Indiscretion and Impatience that pushes us on to these Precipices. No Accidents can make true Virtue turn her Back, she seeks and requires Evils, Pains, and Grief, as things by which she is nourish'd and supported. The Menaces of Tyrants, Racks and Tortures, serve only to animate and rouze her.

*Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus  
Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,  
Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso  
Ducit opes, animumque ferro \*.*

As in Mount *Algidus* the sturdy Oak,  
Ev'n from th' injurious Ax's wounding Stroak,  
Derives new Vigour and does further spread  
By Amputations a more graceful Head.

And as another says,

*Non est ut putas virtus, Pater,  
Timere vitam, sed malis ingentibus  
Obstare, nec se vertere ac retro dare †.*

They are mistaken, and do judge amiss,  
Who think to fear to live, a Virtue is;  
He's brave, the greatest Evils can withstand,  
And not retire, nor shift to either Hand.

Or as this,

*Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere mortem,  
Fortius ille facit, qui miser esse potest ‡.*

|| *Æneid.* l. 6.

\* *Hor. lib.* 4. Ode 4.

†. *Sen. Th. Act.* 1. Sc. 1.

‡ *Martial.* 11. *Epig.* 57.

The Wretched well may laugh at Death, but he  
Is braver far can live in Misery.

'Tis Cowardice not Virtue, to lie squat in a Furrow,  
under a Tomb to evade the Blows of Fortune. Virtue  
never stops, nor goes out of her Path for the greatest  
Storm that blows.

*Si fractus illabatur orbis,  
Impavidam ferient ruinæ ||.*

Should the World's Axis crack, and Sphere fall down,  
The Ruins would but crush a fearless Crown.

And for the most Part, the flying of other Inconveniences  
brings us to this, that, endeavouring to evade Death, we  
run into the Jaws of it.

*Hic, rogo, non furor est, ne moriari, mori \*?*

Can there be greater Madnes, pray reply,  
Than that one should for fear of dying die?

Like those who for fear of a Precipice throw themselves  
headlong into it.

*— Multos in summa pericula misit  
Venturi timor ipse mali: Fortissimus ille est,  
Qui promptus metuenda pati, si cominus instent,  
Et differre potest.*

The Fear of future Ills oft makes Men run  
Into far worse than those they strive to shun;  
But he deserves the noblest Character,  
Dare boldly stand the Mischiefs he does fear,  
When they confront him, and appear in view,  
And can defer at least, if not eschew.

*— usque adeo mortis formidine, vitæ  
Percipit humanos odium, lucisque videndæ  
Ut sibi consciscant mærenti pectore lethum,  
Obliti fontem curarum hunc esse timorem †.*

Death unto that degree does some Men fright,  
That causing them to hate both Life and Light,  
They kill themselves in Sorrow, not aware  
That this same Fear's the Fountain of that Care.

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|| Hor. lib. 3. Ode 3.

\* Mar. lib. 2. Epig. 80.

† Lucr. l. 3.

*Plato* in his *Laws* assigns an ignominious Sepulture to him who has deprived his nearest and best Friend (namely himself of Life and his destin'd Course of Years, being neither compell'd so to do by publick Judgment, by any sad and inevitable Accident of Fortune, nor by any insupportable Disgrace, but meerly push'd on by Cowardice and Imbecility of a timorous Soul. And the Opinion that makes so little of Life, is ridiculous; for it is our Being, 'tis all we have. Things of a nobler, and more elevated Being, may indeed accuse this of ours; but it is against Nature for us to condemn and make little Account of ourselves; 'tis a Disease particular to Man, and not discern'd in any other Creatures, to hate and despise itself. And it is a Vanity of the same Stamp, to desire to be something else than what we are. The Effects of such a Desire do not at all concern us, forasmuch as it is contradicted, and hindred in itself: And he that desires to be changed from Man into Angel, wishes nothing for himself; he would be never the better for it; for being no more, who should rejoice or be sensible of this Benefit for him?

*Debet enim misere cui forte ægreque futurum est,  
Ipse quoq; esse in eo tum tempore, cum male possit  
Accidere\*.*

For it is necessary sure that he,  
Who for the Future wretched is to be,  
Should then be by himself inhabited,  
Lest the Events of Fate be frustrated;  
So that the Ills he threatned is withal,  
Should rightly in their due Appointment fall.

Security, Indolence, Impossibility, and the Privation of the Evils of Life, which we pretend to purchase at the Price of Dying, are of no manner of Advantage to us. That Man evades War to very little Purpose, that can have no fruition of Peace. And as impertinently does he avoid Labour and Toil, who cannot enjoy Repose. Amongst those of the first of these two Opinions there has been great debate, what Occasions are sufficient to justify the

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\* *Lucr. l. 3.*

Meditation of Self-murder, which they call *εὐλοσὸν ἐξασωσίν*, a handsome Exit. For tho' they say, that Men are often to die for trivial Causes, seeing those that detain us in Life are of no very great weight; yet there is to be some measure. There are fantastick and senseless Humours, that have prompted not only particular Men, but whole Nations to destroy themselves, of which I have elsewhere given some Examples; and we further read of the *Milesian Virgins*, that by a furious Compact, they hang'd themselves one after another, 'till the Magistrate took order in it, enacting, that the Bodies of such as should be found so hang'd, should be drawn by the same Halter stark Naked through the City. When *Threicion* perswaded *Cleomenes* to dispatch himself by reason of the ill Posture of his Affairs, and having evaded a Death of the most Honour in the Battle he had lost, to accept of this the second in Honour to it, and not to give the Conquerors Leisure to make him undergo either an ignominious Death, or an infamous Life: *Cleomenes*, with a Courage truly Stoick and *Lacedæmonian*, rejected his Counsel as unmanly and poor: *That*, said, *he, is a Remedy that can never be wanting, and which a Man is never to make use of, whilst there is an Inch of Hope remaining*: Telling him, *that it was sometimes Constancy and Valour to live, that he would that even his Death should be of use to his Country, and would make of it an Act of Honour and Virtue*. *Threicion* notwithstanding thought himself in the right, and did his own Business; and *Cleomenes* after did the same; but not till he had first tried the utmost Malevolence of Fortune. All the Inconveniences in the World are not considerable enough that a Man should die to evade them; and besides there being so many, so sudden, and unexpected Changes in human Things, it is hard, rightly to judge when we are at the End of our Hope.

*Sperat & in seiva victus gladiator arena  
Sit licet infesto pollice turba minax* \*.

The Fencer conquer'd in the Lifts hopes on,  
Tho' the Spectators point that he is gone.

*All things* (says the old Adage) *are to be hop'd for by a Man*

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\* *Sulpitii Sev.*

*whilst*



*whilst he lives*: Ay, but replies *Seneca*, why should this rather be always running in a Man's Head, that Fortune can do all Things for the living Man, than this, that Fortune has no Power over him that knows how to die? *Josephus* \* when engaged in so near and apparent Danger, a whole People being violently bent against him, that there was no visible means of Escape; nevertheless, being, as himself says, in this Extremity counsell'd by *Simon*, one of his faithful Guards, to dispatch himself, it was well for him, that he yet maintain'd himself in some Hope, for Fortune diverted the Accident beyond all human Expectation: So that he saw himself delivered without any manner of Inconvenience. Whereas *Brutus and Cassius*, on the contrary, threw away the Remains of the Roman Liberty, of which they were the sole Protectors, by the Precipitation and Temerity wherewith they kill'd themselves before the due Time, and a just Occasion. *Monsieur d'Anguein*, at the Battle of *Cerisolles* †, twice attempted to run himself through, despairing of the Fortune of the Day which went indeed very untowardly on that side of the Field where he was engaged, and by that Precipitation was very near depriving himself of the Joy and Honour of so brave a Victory. I have seen an hundred Hares escape out of the very Teeth of the Grayhounds; *Aliquis carnifici suo superstes fuit*. Some have survived their intended Executioners.

*Multa dies, variusque labor mutabilis ævi  
Rutulit in melius multos alterna revisens  
Lusit & in solido rursus fortuna locavit ‡.*

Much Time and Labour often does translate  
Life's Mutability t'a better state,  
Now Fortune turning shews a reverse Face,  
And then again it solid Joys does place.

*Pliny* says, there are three sorts of Diseases, to escape any of which a Man has good Title to destroy himself; the worst of which is the Stone in the Bladder, when the

\* *Antiq. Jews.* p. 537.

† *Montluc Comment.*

‡ *Æneid.* lib. 11.

Urine is suppress'd. *Seneca* says, those only, which for a long Time discompose the Functions of the Soul: And some there have been, who, to avoid a worse, have chosen one of their own liking. *Democritus*, General of the *Ætoliens*, being brought Prisoner to *Rome*, found means to make his escape by Night; but close pursu'd by his Keepers, rather than suffer himself to be retaken, he fell upon his own Sword and died. *Antinous* and *Theodotus*, their City of *Epirus* being reduced by the *Romans* to the last extremity, gave the People Counsel generously to kill themselves; but the Advice of giving themselves up to the Arms of the Enemy prevailing, they went to seek the Death they desir'd, rushing furiously upon the Enemy, with an Intention to strike home, but not to defend a Blow. The Island of *Gosa* being forc'd some Years ago by the *Turks*, a *Sicilian*, who had two beautiful Daughters marriageable, kill'd them both with his own Hand, and their Mother (running in to save them) to boot; which having done, falling out of the House with a Cross-bow and a Harquebus, with those two Shots he kill'd two of the first *Turks* nearest to his Door, and drawing his Sword charg'd furiously in amongst the rest, where he was suddenly enclosed, and cut to pieces, by that means delivering his Family and himself from Slavery and Dishonour. The *Jewish* Women after having circumciz'd their Children, threw themselves down a Precipice to avoid the Cruelty of *Antigonus*. I have been told of a Gentleman in one of our Prisons, whose Friends being inform'd he would certainly be condemn'd, to avoid the Ignominy of such a Death, suborn'd a Priest to tell him, that the only means of Deliverance was, to recommend himself to such a Saint under such and such Vows, and fast Eight Days together without taking any manner of Nourishment, what Weakness or Faintness soever he might find in himself during the Time: He follow'd their Advice, and by that means destroy'd himself before he was aware, not dreaming of Death or any Danger in the Experiment. *Scribonia* advising her Nephew *Libo* to kill himself, rather than to attend the Stroke of Justice, told him *that it was properly to do other People's Business to preserve his Life, to put it after into the Hands of those who within three or four Days would come and fetch him to Execution; and that it was to serve his Enemies to keep his*  
Blood

*Blood to gratify their Malice.* We read in the Bible that \* *Nicanor*, the Persecutor of the Law of God, having sent his Soldiers to seize upon the good old Man *Razis*, firnam'd, in Honour of his Virtue the Father of the *Jews*; the good Man seeing no other Remedy, his Gates burnt down, and the Enemies ready to seize him, choosing rather to die generously than to fall into the Hands of his wicked Adversaries, and suffer himself to be cruelly butcher'd by them, contrary to the Honour of his Rank and Quality, he stabb'd himself with his own Sword; but the Blow for Haste not having been given home, he ran and threw himself from the Top of a Wall headlong among them, who separating themselves, and making room, he pitch'd directly upon his Head. Notwithstanding which, feeling yet in himself some Remains of Life, he renew'd his Courage, and starting up upon his Feet, all bloody and wounded as he was, and making his way thro' the Crowd, thro' one of his Wounds drew out his Bowels, which tearing and pulling to Pieces with both his Hands, he threw amongst his Pursuers, all the while attesting, and invoking the Divine Vengeance upon them for their Cruelty and Injustice.

Of Violences offer'd to the Conscience, that against the Chastity of Woman is in my Opinion most to be evaded, forasmuch as there is a certain Pleasure naturally mixt with it, and for that Reason the Dissent cannot therein be sufficiently perfect and entire, so that the Violence seems to be mix'd with a little Consent of the forc'd Party. The Ecclesiastical History has several Examples of devout Persons, who have embrac'd Death to secure them from the Outrages prepar'd by Tyrants against their Religion and Honour. *Pelagia* and *Sopronia* both canoniz'd; the first of these precipitated herself with her Mother and Sisters into the River, to avoid being forc'd by some Soldiers, and the last also killed herself to evade being ravish'd by the Emperor *Maxentius*. It may peradventure be an Honour to us in future Ages, that a learned Author of this present Time, and a *Parisian* too, takes a great deal of Pains to persuade the Ladies of our Age, rather to take any other

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\* *Macchab. 1. 2. cap. 14.*

Course, than to enter into the horrid Meditation of such a Despair \*. I am sorry he had never heard (that he might have inserted it amongst his other Stories) the Saying of a Woman, which was told me at *Thoulouse*, who had passed thro' the Handling of some Soldiers; *God be praised*, said she, *that once at least in my Life I have had my Fill without Sin*. I must confess these Cruelties are very unworthy the *French* Sweetness and Good-nature; and also, God be thanked, the Air is very well purged of it, since this good Advice: 'Tis enough that they say No in doing it, according to the Rule of the good *Morot*.

History is every where full of such, as after a thousand Ways have for Death exchange'd a painful and irksome Life. *Lucius Arrantius* killed himself, to fly, he said, both the future and the past. *Granius Silvanus* and *Statius Proximus*, after having been pardoned by *Nero*, killed themselves; either disdaining to live by the Favour of so wicked a Man, or that they might not be troubled at some other Time to obtain a second Pardon, considering the Inclination and Faculties of his Nature, to suspect and credit Accusations against worthy Men. *Spargapizes*, the Son of Queen *Thomyris*, being a Prisoner of War to *Cyrus*, made use of the first Favour *Cyrus* shewed him in commanding him to be unbound, to kill himself, having pretended to no other Benefit of Liberty, but only to be revenged of himself for the Disgrace of being taken. *Bogez*, Governor in *Eion* for King *Xerxes*, being besieged by the *Athenian* Arms under the Conduct of *Cimon*, refused the Conditions offered, that he might safe return into *Asia* with all his Wealth; impatient to survive the Loss of a Place his Master had given him to keep; wherefore having defended the City to the last Extremity, nothing being left to eat, he first threw all the Gold, and whatever else the Enemy could make Booty of, into the River *Strymon*, and after causing a great Pile to be set on fire, and the Throats of all his Wives, Children, Concubines and Servants to be cut, he threw their Bodies into the Fire, and at last leaped into it himself. *Ninachetuen*, an *Indian* Lord, so soon as he heard the first Whisper of the *Portugal* Vice-Roy's Determination to dispossess him without any apparent Cause, of the Command

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\* *Virg.* 6.

in *Malaca*, to transfer it to the King of *Campar*, he took this Resolution with himself; He caused a Scaffold, longer than broad, to be erected, supported by Columns, royally adorned with Tapestry, and strewed with Flowers and abundance of Perfumes; all which being thus prepared, in a Robe of Cloth of Gold, set full of Jewels of great Value, he came out into the Street, and mounted the Steps to the Scaffold, at one Corner of which he had a Pile lighted of Aromatick Wood. Every body ran to the Novelty, to see to what End these unusual Preparations were made. When *Ninachetuen*, with a manly but discontented Countenance, began to remonstrate how much he had obliged the *Portuguese* Nation, and with what unspotted Fidelity he had carry'd himself in his Charge; that having so often, with his Sword in his Hand, manifested in the Behalf of others, that Honour was much more dear to him than Life, he was not to abandon the Concern of it for himself: That Fortune denying him all the means of opposing the Affront designed to be put upon him, his Courage at least enjoined him to free himself from the Sense of it, and not to serve for a Table-talk to the People, nor for a Triumph to Men less deserving than himself; which having said, he leaped into the Fire. *Sextilia*, the Wife of *Scaurus*, and *Praxea*, the Wife of *Labeo*, to encourage their Husbands to evade the Dangers that pressed upon them, wherein they had no other Share than meer conjugal Affection, voluntarily exposed their own Lives to serve them in this extreme Necessity for Company and Example. What they did for their Husbands, *Cocceius Nerva* did for his Country, with less Utility, tho' with equal Affection. This great Lawyer, flourishing in Health, Riches, Reputation, and Favour with the Emperor, had no other Cause to kill himself, but the sole Compassion of the miserable Estate of the *Roman* Republick. Nothing can be added to the Nicety of the Death of the Wife of *Fulvius*, a familiar Favourite of *Augustus*. *Augustus* having discovered, that he had vented an important Secret he had intrusted him withal; one Morning that he came to make his Court, received him very coldly, and looked frowningly upon him. He returns home full of Despair, where he sorrowfully told his Wife, that being fallen into this Misfortune he was resolved to kill himself: To which she roundly reply'd, 'tis but Reason  
you

you should, seeing that having so often experimented the Incontinency of my Tongue, you could not learn nor take Warning : But let me kill myself first, and without any more Dispute, ran herself thro' the Body with a Sword. *Vibius Virius*, despairing of the Safety of his City, besieged by the *Romans*, and likewise of their Mercy, in the last Deliberation of his City's Senate, after many Remonstrances conducing to that End, concluded, that the most noble Means to escape Fortune was by their own Hands : Telling them, that the Enemy would have them in Honour, and *Hannibal* would be sensible how many faithful Friends he had abandoned, inviting those who approved of his Advice, to go take a good Supper he had ready at Home, where, after they had eaten well, they would drink together of what he had prepared ; a Beverage, said he, that will deliver our Bodies from Torments, our Souls from Injury, and our Eyes and Ears from the Sense of so many hateful Mischiefs as the Conquer'd are to suffer from cruel and implacable Conquerors. I have, said he, taken Order for fit Persons to throw our Bodies in a Funeral Pile before my Door so soon as we are dead. Enough approved this high Resolution, few imitated it : Seven and Twenty Senators followed him, who after having try'd to drown the Thought of this fatal Determination in Wine, ended the Feast with the mortal Mefs ; and embracing one another, after they had jointly deplored the Misfortune of their Country, some retired Home to their own Houses, others stay'd to be burn'd with *Vibius* in his Funeral Pile ; and were all of them so long a dying, the Vapour of the Wine having prepossess'd the Veins and by that Means deferring the Effect of the Poison, that some of them were within an Hour of seeing the Enemy within the Walls of *Capua*, which was taken the next Morning, and of undergoing the Miseries they had, at so dear a Rate, endeavoured to evade. *Taurea Jubellius*, another Citizen of the same Country, seeing the Consul *Fulvius*, returning from the shameful Butchery he had made of Two Hundred and Twenty Five Senators, called him back fiercely by his Name, and having made him stop, *Give the Word*, said he, *that somebody may dispatch me after the Massacre of so many others, that thou may'st boast, to have kill'd a much more valiant Man than thyself.* *Fulvius* disclaiming him, as a Man out of his Wits ; as also

having receiv'd Letters from *Rome*, contrary to the Inhumanity of this Execution, which ty'd his Hands; *Jubellius* proceeded, *Since that my Country being taken, my Friends dead, and having with my own Hands slain my Wife and Children to rescue them from Desolation and Ruin, I am deny'd to die the Death of my Fellow Citizens, let us borrow from Virtue the Vengeance of this hated Life*; and therewithal drawing a short Sword he carry'd conceal'd about him, he ran it threw his own Bosom, falling down backward, and expiring at the Consul's Feet. *Alexander* laying Siege to a City of the *Indies*, those within finding themselves very hardly set, put on a vigorous Resolution to deprive him of the Pleasure of his Victory, and accordingly burn'd themselves in general, together with their City, in Despite of his Humanity. A new kind of War, where the Enemies sought to save them, and they to lose themselves, doing, to make themselves sure of Death, all that Men do to secure their Lives. *Asipa*, a City of *Spain*, finding itself weak in Walls and Defence to withstand the *Romans*, the Inhabitants made a Heap of all their Riches and Furniture in the Publick Place, and having ranged upon this Heap all the Women and Children, and piled them round with Wood and other combustible Matter to take sudden Fire, and left fifty of their Young Men for the Execution of that whereon they had resolv'd; they made a desperate Sally, where for want of Power to overcome, they caus'd themselves to be every Man slain. The Fifty, after having massacred every living Soul throughout the whole City, and put Fire to this Pile, threw themselves lastly into it, finishing their generous Liberty, rather in an insensible, than after a sorrowful and disgraceful Manner; giving the Enemy to understand, that if Fortune had been so pleased, they had the Courage as well to snatch the Victory out of their Hands, as to frustrate and render it dreadful, and even mortal to those, who, allured by the Splendor of the Gold melting in this Flame, having approach'd it, a great Number were there suffocated and burn'd, being kept from retiring by the Crowd that followed them. The *Abideans*, being press'd by King *Philip*, put on the same Resolution, but being curb'd so short, they could not put it in Effect, the King, who abhorred to see the precipitate Rashness of this Execution, the Treasure and Moveables which they had

had

had variously condemned to Fire and Water being first seiz'd) drawing off his Soldiers, granted them three Days Time to kill themselves in, that they might do it with more Order, and at greater Ease: Which Space they fill'd with Blood and Slaughter, beyond the utmost Excess of all hostile Cruelty: So that not so much as any one Soul was left alive that had Power to destroy itself. There are infinite Examples of like popular Conclusions, which seem the more fierce and cruel, by how much the Effect is more universal, and yet are really less, than when singly executed. What Arguments and Persuasions cannot make upon every individual Man, they can do upon all, the Ardour of Society forcibly imposing upon particular Judgments. The Condemned, who would live to be executed, in the Reign of *Tiberius*, forfeited their Goods, and were denied the Rites of Sepulture; but those, who, by killing themselves, did anticipate it, were interred, and had Liberty to dispose of their Estates by Will.

But Men sometimes covet Death out of Hope of a greater Good. *I desire* (saith *St. Paul*) *to be with Christ, and who shall rid me of these Bands? Cleombrotus Ambraciota*, having read *Plato's Phædo*, entred into so great a Desire of the Life to come, that, without any other Occasion, he threw himself into the Sea. By which it appears how improperly we call this voluntary Dissolution Despair, to which the Eagerness of Hope does often incline us, and often a calm and temperate Desire proceeding from a mature and considerate Judgment. *Jacques du Castel*, Bishop of *Soissons*, in *St. Lewis's* foreign Expedition, seeing the King and the whole Army upon the Point of returning into *France*, leaving the Affairs of Religion imperfect, took a Resolution rather to go into Paradise; wherefore, having taken solemn Leave of his Friends, he charged alone, in the Sight of every one, into the Enemy's Army, where he was presently cut to Pieces. In a certain Kingdom of the new discovered World, upon a Day of solemn Procession, when the Idol they adore is drawn about in Publick upon a Waggon of wonderful Size; besides that several are then seen cutting off Pieces of their Flesh to offer to him, there are a Number of others who prostrate themselves upon the Place, causing themselves to be crush'd and broke to Pieces with the weighty Wheels, to obtain the Veneration of Sanctity after their

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Death,



Death, which is accordingly paid them. The Death of the forenamed Bishop, with his Sword in his Hand, has more of Generosity in it, and less of Feeling, the Ardour of Combat taking away Part of the latter. There are some Governments who have taken upon them to regulate the Justice and Opportunity of voluntary Death so much, as in former Times there was kept in our City of *Marseilles*, a Poison prepared out of *Hemlock* at the Publick Charge, for those who had a Mind to hasten their End, having first before the Six Hundred, which were their Senate, given an Account of the Reasons and Motives of their Design, and it was not otherwise Lawful, than by Leave from the Magistrate, and upon just Occasion, to do Violence to themselves. The same Law was also in Use in other Places. *Sextus Pompeius*, in his Expedition into *Asia*, touching at the Isle of *Cea*, in *Negropont*; it accidentally happen'd whilst he was there (as we have it from one that was with him) that a Woman of great Quality having given an Account to her Citizens why she was resolv'd to put an End to her Life, invited *Pompeius* to her Death, to render it the more honourable: An Invitation that he willingly accepted; but having long tried in vain, by the Power of his Eloquence (which was very great) to divert her from that Design, he acquiesc'd at last to grant her Request. She had pass'd the Age of Fourscore and Ten in a very happy State both of Body and Mind; but being then laid on her Bed, better dress'd than ordinary, and leaning upon her Elbow; *The Gods*, said she, *O Sextus Pompeius, and rather those I leave, than those I go to seek, reward thee; for that thou hast not disdain'd to be both the Counsellor of my Life and the Witness of my Death. For my Part, having always try'd the Smiles of Fortune, for fear lest the Desire of Living too long may make me see a contrary Fate, I am going by a happy End to dismiss the Remains of my Soul, leaving behind two Daughters of my Body, and a Legion of Nephews:* Which having said, with some Exhortations to her Family to live in Peace, she divided amongst them her Goods, and recommending her Domestick Gods to her Eldest Daughter, she boldly took the Bowl that contained the Poison, and having made her Vows and Prayers to *Mercury* to conduct her to some happy Abode in the other World, she roundly swallow'd the mortal Potion, which having done, she entertained the  
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Company with the Progress of its Operation, and how the Cold, by Degrees, seized the several Parts of her Body one after another, 'till having in the End told them, it began to seize upon her Heart and Bowels, she called her Daughters to do their last Office and close her Eyes. *Pliny* tells us of a certain *Hyperborean* Nation, where, by Reason of the sweet Temperature of the Air, Lives did rarely end but by the voluntary Surrender of the Inhabitants; but that being weary of, and sotted with Living, they had a Custom at a very old Age, after having made good Cheer, to precipitate themselves into the Sea from the Top of a certain Rock, destined from that Service. Pain and the Fear of a worse Death seem to me the most excusable Incitements.



C H A P. IV.

To-morrow's a New Day.

OF all our *French* Writers, I give, with Justice, I think, the Palm to *Jaques Amiot*; as well for the Propriety and Purity of his Language, in which he excels all others, as his Application and Patience in going thro' so long a Work, and the Depth of his Learning and Judgment, in having been able to unravel and explain so difficult an Author; for let People say what they please, I understand nothing of *Greek*, but I meet with Sense so well connected and maintained throughout his own Translation, that certainly he either knew the true Imagination of the Author, or having, by long Conversation with him, planted in his Soul a thorough and lively Idea of that of *Plutarch*, at least he has lent him nothing that either contradicts or dishonours him; but what I am most pleased with him for, is the discreet Choice he has made of so noble and useful a Book, to make a Present of to his Country. We Ignorants had been lost, had not this Book raised us out of the Mire; by this Favour of his we dare not speak and write, the Ladies are able to read to School-masters: 'Tis our Breviary.

*The Utility of the French Plutarch.*