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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. II. Of Repentance.

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and that it is honest if it is useful, draw but a very false Conclusion.

Omnia non pariter rerum omnibus apta.*

All Things are not alike for all Men fit.

Let us chuse what is more necessary and profitable for human Society, it will be Marriage; and yet the Counsel of the Saints find the contrary much better, excluding the most honourable Vocation of Men; as we design those Horses for *Stallions*, of which we make the least Account.

* *Propert.*



CHAP. II.

Of Repentance.

Others form *Man*, I only report him, and represent a particular one, ill made enough; and whom, if I had him to model anew, I should certainly make something else of him than what he is: But that's past recalling. Now, though the Features of my Picture alter and change, 'tis not however unlike. The World eternally turns round, all Things therein are incessantly moving; the Earth, the Rocks of *Caucasus*, and the *Pyramids of Egypt*, both by the publick Motion, and their own. Even *Constancy* itself is no other but a slower and more languishing Motion. I cannot fix my Object, 'tis always tottering and reeling by a natural Drunkenness. I take it as it is at the Instant I consider it. I do not paint it's Being, I paint it's Passage, not a

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Passage

Passage from one Age to another, or, as the People say, from seven to seven Years; but from Day to Day, from Minute to Minute. I must accommodate my *History* to the Hour: I may presently change, not only by Fortune, but also by Intention. 'Tis a Counterpart of various and changeable Accidents, and irresolute Imaginations, and, as it falls out, sometimes contrary. Whether it be that I am then another myself, or that I take Subjects by other Circumstances and Considerations; so it is that I may perhaps contradict; but, as *Demades* said, I never contradict the Truth. Could my Soul once take footing, I would not essay, but resolve; but it is always learning and making trial. I propose a Life mean, and without Lustre. 'Tis all one. All moral *Philosophy* may as well be applied to a private Life, as to one of the greatest Employment. Every Man carries the entire Form of human Condition. *Authors* communicate themselves to the People by some particular and foreign Mark; I, the first of any, by my universal *Being*, as *Michael de Montaigne*, not as a *Grammarian*, a *Poet*, or a *Lawyer*. If the World find Fault that I *speake* of myself, I find Fault that they do not so much as *think* of themselves. But it is Reason, that being so particular in my Way and Manner of living, and of so little Use, I should pretend to recommend myself to the publick Knowledge? And it is also Reason, that I should introduce into the World, where *Art* and *Mode* have so much Credit and Authority, crude and simple Effects of *Nature*, and of a weak Nature to boot? Is it not to build a Wall without Stone or Brick, or some such thing, to write Books without Learning? The Fancies of *Musick* are carried on by *Art*, mine by *Chance*. I have this at least according to Discipline, that never any Man treated of a Subject he better understood and knew, than what I have undertaken, and that in this I am the most understanding Man alive. Secondly, that never any Man penetrated farther into his Matter, nor better and more distinctly sifted the Parts and Consequences of it, nor ever more exactly and fully arrived at the End he propos'd to himself. To finish it, I need bring nothing but Fidelity to the Work; and that is there, and the most pure and sincere that is any where
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to be found. I speak Truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare, and I dare a little the more as I grow older; for methinks Custom allows to Age more Liberty of prating, and more Indiscretion of talking of a Man's self. That cannot fall out here, which I often see elsewhere, that the Work and the Artificer contradict one another. Has a Man of so sober Conversation wrote so foolish a Treatise? Or do so learned Writings proceed from a Man of so weak Conversation? who talks at a very ordinary Rate, and writes in so uncommon a Way? that is to say, his Capacity is borrowed, and not his own. A learned Man is not learned in all Things; but a sufficient Man is sufficient throughout, even to Ignorance itself. Here my Book and I go Hand in Hand together. Elsewhere Men may recommend or accuse the Work upon the Workman's Account; here they cannot. Who touches the one, invades the other. He that shall censure it without knowing him, will no more wrong himself than me; who does understand it, gives me all the Satisfaction I desire. I shall be happy beyond my Desert, if I can obtain only thus much from the publick Approbation, as to make Men of Understanding perceive that I was capable of making my Advantage of Knowledge, had I had it, and that I deserved to be assisted by a better Memory.

Be pleased here to excuse, what I often repeat, that I very seldom repent, and that my Conscience is satisfied with itself, not like the Conscience of an *Angel*, or that of an *Horse*, but like the Conscience of a Man; always adding this Clause, Not one of Ceremony, but a true and real submissive one; that I speak enquiring and ignorant, purely and simply referring myself to the common and accepted Beliefs for the Resolution. I do not teach, I only repeat. There is no Vice, that is absolutely so, which does not offend, and which a sound Judgment does not accuse; for there is in it so manifest a Deformity and Inconvenience, that perhaps they are in the Right, who say, That it is chiefly begot by Ignorance. So hard it is to imagine that a Man can know without abhorring it. *Malice* sucks up the greatest Part of her own Venom, and poisons herself. *Vice* leaves Repentance in the Soul, like an *Ulcer* in the Flesh, which

is always scratching and lacerating itself; For *Reason* effaces all other Grievs and Sorrows, but it begets that of Repentance, which is so much the more grievous, by Reason it springs within, as the Cold and Heat of Fevers are more sharp than those that only strike upon the outward Skin. I hold for Vices, (but every one according to it's Proportion) not only those which *Reason* and *Nature* condemn; but those also, which the Opinion of Men, though false and erroneous, has made such, if authorized by Law and Custom. There is likewise no *Virtue* which does not rejoice a well-descended Nature. There is a kind of I know not what Congratulation in well-doing, that gives us an inward Satisfaction, and a certain generous Loftiness that accompanies a good Conscience. A Soul daringly vicious may perhaps arm itself with Security, but cannot supply itself with this Complacency and Satisfaction. It is no small Satisfaction to a Man to see himself preserved from the Contagion of so depraved an Age, and to say to himself, *Whoever could penetrate into my Soul, would not there find me guilty, either of the Affliction or the Ruin of any one; or of Revenge, or Envy, or any Offence against the publick Laws, or of Innovation, or Trouble, or Failure of my Word. And though the Libertinage of the Time permits, and teaches every one so to do, yet have I not plunder'd any French Man's Goods, or taken his Money: and have lived in War as well as in Peace, upon what is my own; neither have I set any Man to work without paying him his Hire.* These Testimonies of a good Conscience please, and this natural Rejoicing is very beneficial to us, and the only Reward that we can never fail of. To ground the Recompence of virtuous Actions upon the Approbation of others, is too uncertain and unsafe a Foundation; especially in so corrupt and ignorant an Age as this, the good Opinion of the Vulgar is injurious. Upon whom do you rely to shew you what is recommendable? God defend me from being an honest Man, according to the Description of Honour I daily see every one make of himself. *Quæ fuerant vitia mores sunt* *. *What before were Vices, are now re-*

* *Seneca Epist.*

puted Manners. Some of my Friends have sometimes school'd and tutor'd me with great Sincerity and Plainness, either of their own accord, or by my Entreaty, as an Office which a well disposed Soul surpasses all other Acts of Friendship, not only in Utility but Kindness. I have always receiv'd them with the most open Arms of Courtesy and Acknowledgment. But, to say the Truth, I have often found so much false Measure both in their Reproaches and Praises, that I had not done much amiss, rather to have err'd than to have done well, according to their Method. We chiefly, who live private Lives, not expos'd to any other View than our own, ought to have settled a Precedent within ourselves, by which to try our Actions. And according to that, sometimes to encourage, and sometimes to correct our selves. I have my *Laws* and my *Judicature* to judge of myself, and apply myself more to those than any other Rules. I do indeed restrain my Actions according to others, but extend them not by any other Rule than my own. You yourself only know if you are cowardly and cruel, loyal and devout. Others see you not, and only guess at you by uncertain Conjectures, and do not so much see your Nature as your Art. Rely not therefore upon their Opinions, but stick to your own. *Tuo tibi judicio est utendum. Virtutis, & vitiorum grave ipsius Conscientiæ pondus est: Qua sublata, jacent omnia* *. Thou must spend thy own Judgment upon thyself; great is the Weight of thy own Conscience, in the Discovery of thy own Virtues and Vices; which being taken away, all things are lost. But the saying that Repentance immediately follows the Sin, seems not to have respect to Sin in it's gayest Dress, which is lodg'd in us as in it's own proper Habitation. We may disown and retract the Vices that surprize us, and to which we are hurried by Passions; but those, which by a long Habit are rooted in a strong and rigorous Will, are not subject to Contradiction. Repentance is no other but a recanting of the Will, and an Opposition to our Fancies,

What Repentance is.

* Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. 1.

which leads us which Way they please. It makes this Person disown his former Virtue and Continency.

*Quæ mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit,
Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genæ *?*

Why is not my Mind, now alas!
The same that when a Boy it was?
Or why does not my rosy Hue
Return, my Beauty to renew?

'Tis an exact Life, that contains it self in due order in private; every one may juggle his part, and represent an honest Man upon the Stage; but within, and in his own Bosom, where all things are lawful, all things conceal'd to be regular, there's the point. The next Degree is to be so in his House, and in his ordinary Actions, of which he is accountable to none, and where there is no Study, nor Artifice. And therefore *Bias*, setting forth the excellent State of a private Family; of which, says he, the Master is the same within, by his own Virtue and Temper, that he is Abroad for fear of the Laws and report of Men. And it was a worthy saying of *Julius Drusus*, to the *Masons* who offered him for three thousand Crowns to put his House in such a Posture, that his Neighbours should no longer have the Opportunity of seeing into it as before; *I will give you*, said he, *six thousand, to make it so that every Body may see into every Room.* 'Tis honourably recorded of *Agefilaus*, that he used in his Journeys always to take up his Lodgings in Temples, to the End that the People, and the Gods themselves, might pry into his most private Actions. Such a one has been a Miracle to the World, in whom neither his Wife nor Servant have ever seen any thing so much as remarkable. Few Men have been admired by their own *Domesticks*. And no one has been a Prophet, not only in his own House, but in his own Country; says the Experience of Histories? 'Tis the same in things of no Consequence. In this low Example the Image of a greater is to be seen. In my

* *Hor. Lib. 4. Od. 10.*

Country of *Gascony*, they look upon it as a Drollery to see me in Print. The farther off I am read from my own Home, the better I am esteem'd. I am fain to purchase *Printers* in *Guienne*, elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this it is, that they lay their Foundation, who conceal themselves while present and living, to obtain a Name when they are absent and dead. I had rather have a great deal less in hand, and do not expose my self to the World upon any other account than my present Share; when I leave it, I quit the rest. The People reconduct Mr. such a one with publick Wonders and Applause to his very Door, he puts off his Pageantry with his Robe, and falls so much the lower by how much he was higher exalted. In himself within all is in Tumult and Disorder. And though all should be regular there, it requires a quick and well chosen Judgment to perceive it in these low and private Actions. To which may be added, that *Order* is an heavy melancholick Virtue; to enter a Breach, carry an Embassy, and govern a People, are Actions of Renown; to reprehend, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and genteelly and justly converse with a Man's own Family and with himself; not to relent, not to give a Man's self the Lye, is more rare and hard, and less remarkable. By which means retir'd Lives, whatever is said to the contrary, undergo Offices of as great, or greater Difficulty than others do. And private Men, says *Aristotle*, serve Virtue more painfully and assiduously, than those in Authority. We prepare ourselves for eminent Occasions, more out of Glory than Conscience. The shortest Way to arrive at Glory, should be to do that for Conscience which we do for Glory. And the Virtue of *Alexander* appears to me with much less Vigour in his *Theatre*, than that of *Socrates* in his mean and obscure Employment. I can easily conceive *Socrates* in the place of *Alexander*, but *Alexander* in that of *Socrates* I cannot. Who shall ask the one, what he can do, he will answer, *subdue the World*: And who shall put the same Question to the other, he will say, *carry on human Life conformable to it's natural Condition*; a much more general, weighty, and legitimate Knowledge than the other. The Virtue of the Soul does not consist in flying high, but walking orderly;

orderly; it's Grandeur does not exercise it self in Grandeur, but in Mediocrity. As they who judge and try us within, make no great account of the Lustre of publick Actions, and see they are only Streaks and Rays of clear Water springing from a slimy and muddy Bottom; so likewise they who judge of us by this gallant outward Appearance, in like manner conclude of our internal Constitution; and cannot couple common Faculties, and like their own with the other Faculties, that astonish them, and are so far out of their Sights. Therefore it is, that we give such savage Forms to *Dæmons*. And who does not give *Tamerlain* great Eye-brows, wide Nostrils, a dreadful Face, and a prodigious Stature, according to the Imagination he has conceiv'd by the report of his Name? Had any one formerly brought me to *Erasmus*, I should hardly have believ'd but that all was *Adage* and *Apophthegm* he spoke to his Man, or his Hostess. We much more aptly imagine an *Artizan* upon his Close-stool, or upon his Wife, than a great *President* venerable by his Port and Sufficiency. We fancy that they will not abase themselves so much from their high *Tribunals*, as to live. As vicious Souls are often incited by some strange Impulse to do well, so are virtuous Souls to do ill. They are therefore to be judg'd by their settled State when they are near repose, and in their native Station. Natural Inclinations are much assisted and fortified by Education, but they seldom alter and overcome their Institution. A thousand Natures of my time have escap'd towards Virtue or Vice through a quite contrary Discipline.

*Sic ubi desuetæ silvis in carcere clausæ
Mansuere fere & vultus posuere minaces
Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus
Venit in ora cruor; redeunt rabiesque furorque,
Admonitæque tument gustato sanguine fauces,
Fervet, & à trepido vix abstinet ira magistro*.*

So savage Beasts, when they are captive made,
Grow tame, and half forget their killing Trade;

* *Lucan. lib. 4.*

Demit their fierce Looks, and themselves inure
The Government of Mankind to endure :
But if again the Blood for which they burn
They taste, their Rage and Fury then return,
They thirst for more, grow fell, and wildly stare,
And scarce their trembling Masters do forbear.

These original Qualities are not to be rooted out, they may be cover'd and conceal'd. The *Latin Tongue* is as it were natural to me; I understand it better than *French*, but I have not us'd to speak it, nor hardly to write it these forty Years; and yet upon an extreme and sudden Emotion, which I have falln into twice or thrice in my Life (and once seeing my Father in perfect Health fall upon me in a Swoon) I have always uttered my first Outcries and Ejaculations in *Latin*. Nature starting up, and forcibly expressing itself in spite of so long a Discontinuation; and this Example is said of many others. They who in my time have attempted to correct the Manners of the World by new Opinions, have indeed reform'd seeming Vices, but the real and essential Vices they leave as they were, if they do not augment them; and Augmentation is therein to be fear'd, we defer all other well-doing of less Cost and greater Merit, upon the account of these external Reformations, and thereby expiate at an easy Rate, for the other natural, consubstantial, and intestine Vices. Look a little into our Experience. There is no Man, if he listens to himself, who does not in himself discover a particular and governing Form of his own that justles his Education, and wrestles with the Tempest of Passions that are contrary to him. For my part, I seldom find myself agitated with Surprizes; I almost always find my self in my place, as heavy and unweildy Bodies do: If I am not at home I am always near at hand; my Debauches do not transport me far, there is nothing strange or extreme in the Case: and yet I have found and vigorous Raptures and Delights. The true Condemnation, and which touches the common Practice of Men, is, that their very Progress itself is full of Filth and Corruption; the Idea of their Reformation blotted, their Repentance sick and faulty, very near as much as their Sin. Some either

either for having been link'd to Vice by a natural Propensity, or long Practice, cannot see the Deformity of it. Others (of which Constitution I am) do indeed weigh Vice, but they counter-balance it with Pleasure, or some other Occasion, and suffer, and lend themselves to it for a certain Price, but viciously and basely however: yet there might perhaps be imagin'd so vast a Disproportion of Measure, where with Justice the Pleasure might excuse the Sin, as we say of Profit; not only if accidental, and out of Sin, as in Thefts; but in the very Exercise of it; as in the Enjoyment of Women, wherein the Temptation is violent, and 'tis said, sometimes not to be overcome.

Being the other Day at an Estate in *Armaignac*, belonging to a Kinsman of mine, I there saw a Country-Fellow that was by every one nick-nam'd *The Thief*; who thus related the Story of his own Life: That being born a Beggar, and finding that he should not be able to get his living by his Hands, he resolv'd to turn *Thief*, and by his Strength of Body, had exercised this Trade all the time of his Youth in great Security; for he never made his Harvest or Vintage upon other Men's Grounds, but a great way off, and in so great Quantities, that it was not to be imagin'd one Man could have carried away so much in one Night upon his Shoulders; and moreover, was so careful equally to divide and distribute the Mischief he did, that the Loss was of no less Importance to every particular Man. He is now grown old and rich, for a Man of his Condition, thanks be to his *Trade*, which he openly confesses to every one; and to make his Peace with *God*, he says, that he is daily ready by good Offices to make Satisfaction to the Successors of those he has robb'd, and if he do not finish, (for to do it all at once he is not able) he will then leave it in Charge to his Heirs to perform the rest proportionably to the Wrong he himself only knows he has done to every one. By this Description, whether true or false, this Man looks upon Theft as a dishonest Action, and hates it, but less than Poverty, and does simply repent; but for as much as was thus recompens'd he repents not. This is not that Habit that incorporates us into Vice, and conforms even our Understanding it self to it, nor is it

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it that impetuous Whirl-wind, that by sudden Gusts troubles and blinds our Souls, and in the Moment precipitates us, Judgment and all, into the Power of Vice.

What I do, I do thoroughly by Custom, and proceed all of a Piece; I have seldom any Movement that steals away, or hides it self from my Reason, and that is not conducted by the Consent of all my Faculties: My Judgment therefore has either all the Blame or all the Praise of it; and the Blame it once has it ever keeps; for almost from its Birth it has always had the same Inclination, the same Course, and the same Force. And as to universal Opinions, I fix'd my self from my Childhood in the place where I resolv'd to stick. There are some Sins that are impetuous, prompt, and sudden; let us set them aside; but in these other Sins so often repeated, deliberated and contrived, whether Sins of Complexion, or Sins of Profession and Vocation; I cannot conceive that they can have so long been settled in the same Resolution, unless the Reason and Conscience of him who has them, be constant to have them so, and the Repentance he boasts to be inspir'd with on a sudden, is very hard for me to imagine. I follow not the Opinion of the *Pythagorean Sect*, that Men take up a new Soul when they repair to the Images of the *Gods* to receive *Oracles*, unless they mean that it is new, and lent for the time, our own shewing so small signs of Purification and Cleanness, fit for such an Office. They act quite contrary to the Precepts of the *Stoicks*, who strictly command us to correct the Imperfections which we know our selves guilty of, but forbid us to alter the Repose of our Souls. These make us believe that they have great Grief and Remorse within; but of Amendment, Correction, or Interruption, they make nothing appear. It cannot certainly be a perfect Cure, if the evil Humours are not wholly discharged; if *Repentance* were laid in the Scale, it would weigh down Sin. I find no Quality so easy for any Man to counterfeit as Devotion, if his Life and Manners are not conformable to it:

Devotion easy to counterfeit.

The Effence of it is abstruse and occult, but the Appearances easy and pompous. For my own part, I may de-

fire in general to be other than I am; I may condemn and dislike my whole Frame, and beg of God Almighty for an entire Reformation, and that he will please to pardon my natural Infirmity: But methinks I ought not to call this Repentance, any more than my not being satisfied that I am not an *Angel* or *Cato*; my Actions are conformable to what I am, and to my Condition. I can do no better, and *Repentance* is not properly concern'd in things that are not in our Power; Sorrow is, I imagine, an infinite number of Natures more elevated and regular than mine; and yet I do not, for all that, improve my Faculties; neither my Mind nor my Arm becomes more vigorous for conceiving those of another to be so. If to imagine and wish a nobler way of acting than that we have, should produce a *Repentance* of our own, we must then *whence produc'd.* repent us of our most innocent Actions, forasmuch as we well suppose, that in a more excellent Nature they would have been carried on with greater Dignity and Perfection; and would that ours were so. When I reflect upon the Behaviour of my Youth, and compare it with that of my old Age, I find that I have acquitted my self equally well in both, according to my Capacity. This is all that my Resistance can do. I do not flatter my self; in the same Circumstances I should always be the same. It is not a Spot, but rather an universal Tincture, with which I am stained. I know no lukewarm, superficial, ceremonious Repentance: It must sting me to the Quick, it must pierce into my Bowels as deep and seize me as universally as God sees into me, before I can call it Repentance. As to Employment, many good Opportunities have escap'd me for want of good Conduct; and yet my Deliberations were sound enough according to the Occurrences presented to me. 'Tis their way to chuse always the easiest and the safest Course. I find that in my former Deliberations, I have proceeded with Discretion according to my own Rule, and according to the State of the Subject propos'd, and should do the same a thousand Years hence on the like Occasions. I do not consider what it is now, but what it was then, when I deliberated on it.

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The Force of all Counsel consists in the Time ; Occasions and Things eternally shift and change. I have in my Life committed some great and important Errors, not for want of good Understanding, but for want of good Luck. There are secret and not to be foreseen Parts in Matters we handle, especially in the Nature of Men ; mute Conditions, that make no show, unknown sometimes even to the Professors themselves ; that spring and start up by accidental Occasions. If my Prudence could not penetrate into, nor foresee them, I blame it not : 'tis commission'd no farther than it's own Limits. If the Event be too hard for me, and take the Side I have refus'd, there is no Remedy ; I do not blame myself, I accuse my Fortune, and not my own handy-work ; this cannot be called Repentance. *Phocion*, having given the *Athenians* an Advice that was not follow'd, and the Affair nevertheless succeeding contrary to his Opinion, some one said to him, *Well, Phocion, art thou content that Matters go so well! I am very well pleas'd*, replied he, *that this has happen'd so well, but I do not repent that I counsel'd the other*. When any of my Friends address themselves to me for Advice, I give it candidly and clearly, without sticking, as almost all other Men do, at the hazard of the thing, that it may fall out contrary to my Opinion, by which means I may be reproach'd for my Counsel ; I am very indifferent as to that, for the Fault will be theirs in having consulted me ; and I could not refuse them my best Advice. I, for my own part, can rarely blame any one but myself for my Oversights and Misfortunes. For indeed I seldom consult the Advice of another, if not by Honour of Ceremony, or excepting where I stand in need of Information, as to Matter of Fact. But in things wherein I stand in need of nothing but Judgment, other Mens Reasons may serve to fortify my own, but have little Power to dissuade me. I hear them all with Civility and Patience ; but, to my Knowledge, I never made use of any but my own. With me they are but Flies and Atoms, that confound and distract my Will. I lay no great Stress upon my Opinions ; but I lay as little upon those of others, and Fortune rewards me accordingly. If I receive but little Advice,

I also give but little ; I seldom consult others, and am seldom believed, and know no Concern, either publick or private, that has been mended or bettered by my Advice. Even they whom Fortune had in some sort ty'd to my Direction have more willingly suffered themselves to be governed by any other Counsels than mine ; and as a Man who is as jealous of my Repose as of my Authority, I am better pleas'd that it should be so. Leaving me there, they act according to my Profession, which is to settle, and wholly contain myself within myself. I take a Pleasure in being uninterested from other Mens Affairs, and disengaged from being their Guarantee, and responsible for what they do. In all Affairs, that are past, be it how it will, I have very little Regret ; for this Imagination puts me out of my Pain, that they ought to fall out so ; they are in the great Revolution of the World, and in the Chain of Stoical Causes. Your Fancy cannot, by Wish and Imagination, remove one Tittle, that the great Current of things will not reverse, both the past and the future. As to the rest, I abominate that accidental Repentance which Old Age brings along with it ; and he, who said of old, that he was oblig'd to his Age for having wean'd him from Pleasure was of an Opinion very different from mine. I can never think my self beholden to Impotency for any good it can ever do me. *Nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab Opere suo Providentia, ut Debilitas inter optima inventa sit.* Nor can Providence ever be seen so averse to her own Work, that Debility should be rank'd amongst the best things. Our Appetites are rare in Old Age ; a profound Satiety seizes us after the Act ; I see nothing of Conscience in this, Heaviness and Weakness imprint in us a drowsy and rheumatick Virtue. We must not suffer ourselves to be so wholly carried away by natural Alterations, as to suffer them to bastardize our Judgment. Youth and Pleasure have not formerly so far prevail'd upon me, that I did not well enough discern the Face of Vice in Pleasure, neither does that Distaste, that Years have brought me, so far prevail with me now, that I cannot discern Pleasure in Vice. Now that I am no more in my flourishing Age, I judge as well of these things as if I was. I, who narrowly and strictly examine it, find my Reason

Reason

Reason the very same that it was in my most licentious Age, tho' perhaps a little weaker, and more decay'd by being grown old; and I find that the Pleasure she refuses me upon the account of my bodily Health, she would no more refuse now in Consideration of the Health of my Soul than at any time heretofore. I do not repute her more valiant for being out of Combat. My Temptations are so broken and mortified, that they are not worth her Opposition, holding but out my Hands I repel them. Should one present her the old Concupiscence, I fear she would have less Power to resist it than heretofore. I do not discern that Reason in herself judges any thing otherwise now, than she formerly did, nor that she has acquir'd any new Light. Wherefore, if there be Convalescence, 'tis an enchanted one. Miserable kind of Remedy, to owe a Man's Health to his Disease! 'Tis not our Misfortune that can perform this Office, but the good Fortune of our Judgment. I am not to be made to do any thing by Persecutions and Afflictions, but curse them: That is for People that are not to be rous'd but by a Whip. My Reason is much more active in Prosperity, and much more distracted, and harder put to it to digest Pains than Pleasures; I see best in a clear Sky. Health admonishes me more cheerfully, and consequently to a better purpose than Sickness. I did all that in me lay to reform and regulate myself from Pleasures at all Times, when I had Health and Vigour to enjoy them. I should be troubled and asham'd that the Misery and Misfortune of my Age should be prefer'd before my good, healthful, sprightly, and vigorous Years; and that Men should esteem me, not for what I have been, but by that miserable part of myself, where I have as it were ceas'd to be. In my Opinion 'tis the happy Living, and not (as said *Antisthenes*) the happy Dying, in which human Felicity consists. I have not made it my Business to make a monstrous Addition of a Philosopher's Tale to the Head and Body of a Libertine; nor would I have this wretched Remainder give the Lie to the pleasant Sound, and long Part of my Life. I will present myself uniformly throughout. Were I to live my Life over again, I should live it just as I have done. I neither complain of the past, nor

do I fear the future: and if I am not much deceiv'd, I am the same within that I am without.

'Tis one main Obligation I have to Fortune, that the Succession of my bodily State has been carried on according to the natural Seasons. I have seen the Leaves, the Blossoms, and the Fruit, and now see the Tree wither'd; happily however, because naturally. I bear the Infirmities I have the better, because they came not till I had Reason to expect them; and also because they make me with great Pleasure remember that long Felicity of my past Life. My Wisdom perhaps may have been the same in both Stages of Life; but it was more active, and of a better Grace whilst young, flourishing, sprightly, and ingenuous, than when broken, peevish, and uneasy, as it is at present. I renounce then these casual and painful Reformatations. God must touch our Hearts, our Consciences must amend of themselves, by the Force of our Reason, and not by the Decay of our Appetites. Pleasure is in itself neither pale nor discolour'd, to be discern'd by dim and decay'd Eyes. We ought to love Temperance for it self, and in Obedience to God who has commanded it and Chastity; but what I am forced to by Catarrhs, or owe to the Stone or Colick, is neither Chastity nor Temperance. A Man cannot boast that he despises and resists Pleasure, if he cannot see it; if he knows not what it is, cannot discern it's Graces, Forces and most alluring Beauties; I know both the one and the other, and may therefore the better say it; but methinks our Souls in old Age are subject to more troublesom Maladies and Imperfections than in Youth. I said the same when young, and then I was reproach'd with the want of a Beard, and I say so now when my grey Hairs give me some Authority; we call the Difficulty of our Humours, and the Disrelish of present Things, Wisdom, but in Truth we do not so much forsake Vices as we change them, and in my Opinion, for worse. Besides a foolish and feeble Pride, and impertinent Prating, froward and unfociable Humours, Superstition and a ridiculous Desire of Riches when we have lost the Use of them; I find more Envy, Injustice and Malice, Age imprints more Wrinkles in the Mind, than it does in the Face, and Souls are
never,

never, or very rarely seen, that in growing old do not smell sour and musty. Man moves all together, both towards his Perfection and Decay. In observing the Wisdom of *Socrates*, and many Circumstances of his Condemnation I should dare to believe, that he himself, by Collusion, in some Measure purposely contributed to it; fearing by a longer Life, he having then reached his seventieth Year, to see his lofty Wit and universal Knowledge cramp't and stupified by old Age. What strange Metamorphoses do I see Age make every Day in many of my Acquaintances! It is a powerful Distemper, which naturally and imperceptibly steals in upon us, and therefore a vast Provision of Study and great Precaution are absolutely necessary to avoid the Imperfections it loads us with, or at least to weaken their Progress. Notwithstanding all my Retrenchments and Redoubts, I find Age gaining upon me Inch by Inch; I make as stout a Defence as I can, but I am entirely ignorant whither it will drive me at last. At all Hazards, I am satisfied that when I fall, the World may know from whence I fell.



C H A P. III.

Of Three Commerces.

WE must not rivet ourselves so close to our Humours and Complexions. Our chiefest Sufficiency is to know how to apply ourselves to divers Customs. 'Tis to be, but not to live to keep a Man's self tied and bound by Necessity to one only Course. Those are the bravest Souls that have in them the most Variety, and that are most flexible and pliant; of which here is

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