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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. III. Of Three Commerces.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53414](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53414)

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 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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an honourable Testimony of the elder *Cato*: *Huic versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceret, quodcunque ageret* *. *This Man's Parts were so convertible to all Uses, that a Man would think he was born only for whatever he did.* Might I have the Liberty to dress my self after my own *Mode*, there is no Fashion so graceful to which I would be so fixt, as not to be able to disengage my self from it. Life is an unequal, irregular, and a multiform Motion. 'Tis not to be a Friend to a Man's self, much less his own Master; 'tis not to be a Slave so incessantly, to be so led by the Nose by one's own Inclinations, that a Man cannot turn aside nor wring his Neck out of the Collar. *That our Inclinations are not always to be follow'd.* I speak it now in this part of my Life, wherein I find I cannot disengage my self from the Importunity of my Soul, by reason that it cannot commonly amuse itself but on things wherein it is perplex'd, nor employ it self but intirely, and with all it's Force. Upon the lightest Subject can be offer'd, it makes it infinitely greater, and stretches it to that Degree, as therein to employ it's utmost Power, wherefore it's Idleness is to me a very painful Labour, and very prejudicial to my Health. Most Men's Minds require foreign Matter to exercise and enliven them, mine has rather need to sit still and repose itself. *Vitia otii negotio discutienda sunt* †. *The Vices of Sloth are to be shaken off by Business*; for it's chiefest and most painful Study, is to study itself. Books are to it a sort of Employment that debauches it from it's Study. Upon the first Thoughts that possess it, it begins to bustle and make trial of a Vigour in all Senses, exercises it's Power of handling, sometimes making trial of it's Force, and then fortifying, moderating, and ranging itself by the way of Grace and Order. It has of it's own wherewith to rouze it's Faculties: Nature has given to it, as to all others, Matter enough of it's own to make Advantage of, and Subjects proper enough, where it may either invent or judge. Meditation is a powerful and full Study to such as can effectually employ themselves. I had rather forge my Soul than furnish

* *Livius, l. 34.*† *Senec. Epist. 56.*

it. There is no weaker or stronger Occupation, than that of entertaining a Man's own Thoughts, according as the Soul is. The greatest Men make it their whole Business. *Quibus vivere est cogitare* *. *To whom to live is to think.* Nature has also favour'd it with this Privilege, that there is nothing we can do so long, nor any Action to which we more frequently, and with greater Facility addict ourselves. 'Tis the Business of the Gods, says *Aristotle*, and from whence both their Beatitude and ours proceed. The principal Use of Reading to me, is, that by various Objects it rouses my Reason, and employs my Judgment, not my Memory. Few Entertainments then detain me without Force or Violence; it is true, that the Beauty and Neatness of a Work takes as much, or more, with me, than the Weight and Depth of the Subject; and forasmuch as I slumber in all other Communication, and give but a negligent Attention, it often falls out, that in such mean and pitiful Discourses, I either make strange and ridiculous Answers unbecoming a Child, or more indiscreetly and rudely maintain an obstinate Silence. I have a melancholick and pensive Way, that withdraws me into my self, and to that a stupid and childish Ignorance of many very ordinary things; by which two Qualities it is come to pass, that Men may truly report five or six as ridiculous Tales of me, as of any other whatever. But to proceed in my Subject: this difficult Complexion of mine renders me unfit for common Society, and very nice in my Conversation with Men, whom I must cull and pick out for my Purpose. We live and negotiate with the People; if their Conversation be troublesome to us, if we disdain to apply our selves to mean and vulgar Understandings (and the Mean and Vulgar are oft as regular, as those of the finest Thread; and all Wisdom is Folly, that does not accommodate it self to the common Ignorance) we must no more intermeddle either with other Men's Affairs or our own; and all Business both publick and private must be manag'd apart from the Populace. The least forc'd, and most natural Motions of the Soul, are the most beautiful; the best

* *Cic. Tusc. l. 5.*

Employments, those that are least constrain'd. Great God! how good an Office does *Wisdom* perform to those whose Desires it limits to their Power! That is the most happy Knowledge. *According to what a Man can*, was the Sentence which *Socrates* was so much in love withal, a *Motto* of great Substance; we moderate and adapt our Desires to the nearest and easiest to be acquir'd things. Is it not a foolish Humour of mine, to separate my self from a thousand to whom my Fortune has attached me, and without whom I cannot live, to cleave to one or two that are out of my Commerce, or rather a fantastick Desire of a thing I cannot obtain? My soft indolent Manners, Enemies of all Sourness in Conversation, may easily enough have secur'd me from the Envy and Animosities of Men; I do not say so as to be belov'd, but never any Man gave less Occasions of being hated; but the Coldness of my Conversation has reasonably depriv'd me of the Good-will of many, who are to be excus'd, if they interpret it in another and worse Sense. I am very capable of contracting and preserving uncommon and exquisite Friendships; and the more so because I greedily seize upon such Acquaintance as fits my liking: I throw my self with such violence upon them, that I hardly fail to stick, and generally make an Impression where I hit, of which I have made often happy Proof. In common Friendships I am cold and shy, for my Motion is not natural, if not with full Sail: Besides, my Fortune having train'd me up from my Youth in, and given me a Relish of one sole and perfect Friendship, it has in truth given me a kind of Disgust to others, and too much imprinted in my Mind, that they are Beasts of *Company*, as the Ancients said, but not of the *Herd*: Thus I have a natural Difficulty in communicating my self by halves, and with that reserved, and servile, and jealous Prudence dictated to us in the Conversation of numerous and imperfect Friendships. And we are principally enjoyn'd to these in this Age of ours, when we cannot talk of the World, but either with Danger or Falshood. Yet do I very well discern, that he who has the Conveniencies (I mean the essential Conveniencies) of Life for his End, as I have, ought to fly these Difficulties and Delicacy of Humour, as much as the Plague. I should

should commend a Man of great Birth, join'd to great Talents, that knows both how to bend and to slacken himself; that finds himself at ease in all Conditions of Fortune, that can discourse with a Neighbour, of his Building, Hunting, or any little Contest betwixt him and another; that can chat with a Carpenter or a Gardener with Pleasure. I envy those who can render themselves familiar with the meanest of their Followers, and familiarize themselves with the meanest of their Servants, and find Entertainment among their own Attendants. I dislike the Advice of *Plato*, that Men should always speak in a magisterial Tone to their Domesticks, whether Men or Women, without being sometimes facetious and familiar. For besides, my Reason is inhumane and unjust, to set so great a Value upon this pitiful Prerogative of Fortune; and the Governments, wherein less Disparity is permitted betwixt Masters and Servants, seem to me the most equitable. Others study how to raise and elevate their Minds, I, how to humble mine, and to bring it low; 'tis only vicious in Extension.

*Magisterial
Language to Ser-
vants reprov'd.*

Narras, & genus Æaci

Et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio :

Quo Cbium pretio cadum

Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,

Quo præbente domum, et quota

Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces †.

Thou por'st on *Helvicius*, and studiest in vain
How many Years past betwixt King and King's Reign;
To make an old Woman e'en twitter for Joy
At an eighty eight Story, or the Scuffle at *Troy*.

But where the good Wine, and best Fire is,

When the cruel *North Wind* does blow,

And the Trees do Penance in Snow;

Where the Poet's Delight and Desire is,

Thou pitiful Book-worm ne'er troublest thy Brain*.

† *Hor. lib. 3. Ode 19.*

* *Paraphras'd by T. F.*

Thus,

Thus, as the *Lacedæmonians* Valour stood in need of Moderation, and of the sweet and harmonious Sound of Flutes to soften them in Battle, lest they should precipitate themselves into Temerity and Fury; whereas all other Nations commonly make use of harsh and shrill Sounds, and of loud and imperious Voices, to incite and heat the Soldiers Courage to the last Degree: So, methinks, that contrary to the usual Method, in the Practice of our Minds, we have for the most part more need of Lead, than Wings; of Temperance and Composedness, than Ardour and Agitation. But above all things 'tis, in my Opinion, egregiously to play the Fool, to put on the Gravity of a Man of Understanding amongst those that know nothing: To speak in Print, *favellar in punta di forchetta*: You must descend to those with whom you converse; and sometimes affect Ignorance, lay aside Constraint and Subtilty; 'tis enough in common Conversation to preserve Decency and Order, as to the rest, flag as low as the Earth, if they desire it. The Learned often stumble at this Stone; they will be always shewing their utmost Skill, and strow their Writings all over with the Flowers of their Eloquence: They have in these Days so fill'd the Cabinet and Ears of the Ladies with it, that if they have lost the Substance, they at least retain the Words: So as in Discourse upon all sorts of Subjects, how mean and common soever, they speak and write after a new and learned Way.

*Hoc sermone parent, hoc iram, gaudia, curas,
Hoc cuncta effundunt animi secreta, quid ultra?
Concumbunt doctè*.*

In the same Language they express their *Fears*,
Their *Anger*, and their *Joys*, their *Griefs*, and *Cares*,
And all their *Secrets* do pour out: What more?
In the same learned Phrase they play the *Whore*.

And quote *Plato* and *Aquinas* in things which the first they meet could determine as well. The Learning that cannot penetrate their Souls, hangs still upon the Tongue. If those of Quality will be persuaded by me,

* *Juven. Sat. 6.*

they

they will content themselves with setting out their proper and natural Treasures; they conceal and cover their Beauties under others that are none of theirs: 'Tis a great Folly to put out their own Light, to shine by a borrow'd one: They are inter'd and buried under the Article *Capsula tota*. It is because they do not sufficiently know that the World has nothing fairer than themselves, 'tis for them to honour the Arts, and to paint Painting. What need have they of any thing, but to live belov'd and honour'd? They have, and know but too much for this. They need do no more, but rouze and heat a little the Faculties they have of their own. When I see them tampering with *Rhetorick, Law, Logic*, and the like Drugs, so improper and unnecessary for their Business, I begin to suspect, that the Men, who inspire them with such things, do it that they may govern them upon that account. For what other Excuse can I contrive? It is enough that they can, without our Instruction, govern the Graces of their Eyes to Gaiety, Severity, and Sweetness, and season a Denial either with Anger, Suspence, or Favour, and that they need not another to interpret what we speak for their Service. With this Knowledge they command with the Switch, and rule both the *Regents* and the Schools. But if nevertheless they think much to give place to us in any thing whatever, and will out of Curiosity have their Share in Books; Poetry is a Diversion proper for them, 'tis a wanton and subtle, a dissembling and prating *Art*, all Pleasure, and all Show like themselves. They may also extract several Conveniencies from History. In *Philosophy*, out of the moral part of it, they may select such Instructions as will teach them to judge of our Humours and Conditions, to defend themselves from our Treacheries, to regulate the Ardour of their own Desires, to manage their Liberty, lengthen the Pleasures of Life, and mildly to bear the Inconstancy of a Servant, the Rudeness of a Husband, and the Importunity of Years, Wrinkles, and the like. This is the utmost of what I would allow them in the Sciences. There are some particular Natures that are

Poesy allow'd to Women.

What kind of Philosophy is proper for Women.

private

private and retir'd; my natural way is proper for Communication, and apt to lay me open; I am all without, and in sight, born for Society and Friendship; The Solitude that I love my self, and recommend to others, is chiefly no other, than to withdraw my Thoughts and Affections into my self; to restrain and check, not my Steps, but my own Cares and Desires; resigning all foreign Solitude, and mortally avoiding Servitude and Obligations; and not so much the Crowd of Men, as the Crowd of Business. Local Solitude, to say the truth, does rather give me more room, and set me more at large: I more willingly throw my self upon Affairs of State, and the World, when I am alone. At the *Louvre*, and in the Bustle of the *Court*, I fold my self within my own Skin. The Crowd thrusts me upon my self. And I never entertain my self so wantonly, so licentious, nor so particularly, as in places of Respect, and ceremonious Prudence; our Follies do not make Men laugh, but our Wisdom. I am naturally no Enemy to a Court-Life, I have therein past a good part of my own, and am of a Humour to be cheerful in great Companies, provided it may be by Intervals, and at my own time: But this Softness of Judgment whereof I speak ties me by Force to Solitude, even in my own House, in the middle of a numerous Family, and a House sufficiently frequented. I see People enough, but rarely such with whom I delight to converse. And I there reserve both for my self and others an unusual Liberty: There is in my House no such thing as Ceremonies, ushering or waiting upon them down to the Coach, and such other troublesome Ceremonies as our Courtesy enjoins, (O servile and importunate Custom!) every one there governs himself according to his own Method; let who will speak his Thoughts, I sit mute, meditating and shut up in my Closet, without any Offence to my Guests. The Men, whose Society and Familiarity I covet, are those they call sincere and ingenuous Men, and the Image of these makes me dislike the rest. It is, if rightly taken, the most uncommon of our Forms, and a Form chiefly owing to *Nature*. The End of this Commerce is simply Privacy, Frequentation and Conference, the Exercise

cise

cise of Souls, without other Fruit. In our Discourse all Subjects are alike to me; let there be neither Weight nor Depth, 'tis all one, there is yet Grace and Pertinency, all there is tinctured with a mature and constant Judgment, and mixt with Bounty, Freedom, Gaiety, and Friendship. 'Tis not only in talking of the Affairs of *Kings* and *States*, that our Wits discover their Force and Beauty, but every jot as much in private Affairs. I understand my People even by their Silence and Smiles; and better discover them perhaps at *Table*, than in the *Council*. *Hippomachus* said very well, *That he could know the good Wrestlers by only seeing them walk in the Street*. If Learning will please to take a Share in our Talk, it shall not be rejected, not magisterial, imperious, and importunate, as it commonly is, but suffragan and docile in it self. We there only seek to amuse ourselves, and to pass away our time agreeably; when we have a mind to be instructed and preached to, we will go seek it in it's Throne. Let it debase it self to us for once, if it so please; for useful and profitable as it is, I presuppose that even in the greatest Need, we may do well enough without it, and perform our Business tho' we have not it's Assistance. A Man well born and practised in the Conversation of Men will, by the Strength of his own Genius, render himself agreeable to all. Art is nothing but the Counter-part and Register of what such noble Minds produce. The Conversation also of beautiful and well-bred Women, is also for me a most sweet Commerce: *Nam nos quoque Oculos eruditos habemus* *. If the Soul has not therein so much to enjoy, as in the first, the bodily Senses, which participate so much the more of this, bring it to a Proportion near to, though, in my Opinion, not equal to the other. But 'tis a Commerce wherein a Man must stand a little upon his guard, especially those of a vigorous Constitution, as I am. I burn'd my self that way in my Youth, and suffered all the Torments that *Poets* say are to be inflicted on those who precipitate themselves into Love without Order or Judgment. It is true, that this Lash of the Whip has since been a good Monitor to me.

* *Cicero*.

*Quicumque Argolicâ de classe Capharea fugit,
Semper ab Euboicis vela retorquet aquis* *.

O'th' Græcian Fleet, who would *Caphareus* flee,
Must always steer from the *Euboic* Sea.

'Tis Folly to fix all a Man's Thoughts upon it, and Madnes to engage in it with a furious and indiscreet Affection; but on the other side, to engage there without Love and without Inclination, like *Comedians*, to play a common part, without putting any thing to it of his own but Words, is indeed to provide for his Safety; but withal, after as base and cowardly a manner, as he who should abandon his Honour, Profit or Pleasure, for fear of Danger; for it is most certain, that from such a Practice, they who set it on foot can expect no Fruit that can please and satisfy a noble Soul. A Man must of Necessity have in good earnest desir'd that which he in good earnest expects to have a Pleasure in enjoying. I say, though Fortune should unjustly favour their Dissimulation, which often happens, because there is none of the Sex, let her be as ugly as the *Devil*, who does not think herself well worthy to be belov'd, and that does not recommend herself either by her Youth, her fine Hair, or her graceful Motion, (for Women totally ugly there are not more than perfectly beautiful) and the *Brachman* Virgins, for want of any other Recommendation, the People being assembled by the Common Crier to that effect, come out into the Market-place to expose their matrimonial Parts to publick View, to try if those at least were not sufficient to get them Husbands. Consequently there is not one who does not easily suffer herself to be persuaded by the first Vow that is made to serve her. Now from this common Treachery of Men, that must fall out, which we already experimentally see, either that Women rally together, and separate themselves by themselves to avoid us, or else form their Discipline by the Example we give them, play the Parts of their Farce as we do ours, and give themselves up to the Sport, without Passion, Care, or Love: *Neque af-*

* *Ovid. Trist. l. 1. El. 1.*

sectui suo aut alieno obnoxio; believing, according to the Persuasion of *Lysias* in *Plato*, that they may with more Utility and Convenience surrender themselves up to us the less we love them. Where it will fall out, as in *Comedies*, that the People will have as much Pleasure or more than the *Comedians*. For my part, I no more acknowledge a *Venus* without a *Cupid*, than a *Mother* without *Issue*: They are things that mutually lend, and owe their Essence to one another; so this Cheat rebounds back upon him who is guilty of it, it does not cost him much indeed, but he also gets little or nothing by it. They who have made *Venus* a *Goddeſs*, have taken notice that her principal Beauty was incorporeal and spiritual. But the *Venus* which these People hunt after, is not so much as humane, nor indeed brutal; the very Beasts will not accept one so gross and so earthly. We see that Imagination and Desire often heats and incites them before the Body does; we see in both the one Sex and the other, they have in the *Herd* choice and particular Election in their Affections, and that they have amongst themselves a long Commerce of good Will. Even those to whom old Age denies the Practice of their Desire, do yet tremble, neigh, and shew Extasies of Love. We see them before the Act full of Hope and Ardor, and when the Body has play'd it's Part, yet please themselves with the sweet Remembrance of the Pleasure past; some that swell with Pride after they have performed, and others, who tir'd and fated, do yet by Vociferation express a triumphing Joy. The Man that has nothing to do, but only to discharge his Body of a natural Necessity, need not trouble others with such curious Preparations. It is not Meat for a gross and boisterous Appetite. As one who does not desire that Men should think me better than I am, I will here freely discover the Errors of my Youth. Not only for the Danger of impairing my Health, (and yet I could not be so careful, but that I had two light Mischances) but moreover upon the account of Contempt, I have seldom given myself up to common and mercenary Embraces. I would heighten the Pleasure by the Difficulty, by Desire, and a certain kind of Glory; and was clearly of

Modest and noble Amours of Tiberius.

Those of Flora.

Tiberius's Mind, who in his *Amours* was as much taken with Modesty and Birth as any other Quality; and of the Courtesan *Flora's* Humour, who never prostituted herself to less than a Dictator, a Consul, or a Censor, and solaced herself in the Dignity of her Lovers; doubtless Pearl and Tissue, Titles and Attendants, add something to it. As to the rest, I had a great Esteem for Wit, provided the Person was without bodily Exception; for, to confess the Truth, if the one or the other of these two Perfections must of necessity be wanting, I should rather have quitted that of the Understanding, that has it's Use in better things; but in the Subject of Love, a Subject principally relating to the Senses of Seeing and Touching, something may be done without the Graces of the Mind, without the Graces of the Body nothing. Beauty is the true Prerogative of Women, and so peculiarly their own, that ours, though naturally requiring another sort of Feature, is never in it's Lustre, but when puerile and beardless, confus'd and mix'd with theirs. 'Tis said, that such Youths as are prefer'd to the *Grand Signior* upon the Account of Beauty, which are an infinite Number, are at the farthest dismissed at two and twenty Years of Age. Reason, Prudence, and Offices of Friendship, are better found amongst Men, and therefore it is, that they govern the Affairs of the World. These two Commerces are fortuitous, and depending upon others; the one is troublesome by it's Rarity, the other withers with Age, so that they could never have been sufficient for the Business of my Life. That of Books, which is the third, is much more certain, and much more our own. It yields all other Advantages to the other two; but has the Constancy and Facility of it's Service for it's own Share: it goes side by side with me in my whole Course, and every where is assisting to me. It comforts me in my Age and Solitude; it eases me of a troublesome Weight of Idleness, and delivers me at all Hours from Company that I dislike; and it blunts the Point of Grievs, if they are not extreme, and have not got an entire Possession of my Soul. To divert myself from a troublesome Fancy, 'tis but to run to my Books, they presently

presently fix me to them, and drive the other out of my Thoughts; and do not mutiny to see that I have only recourse to them for want of other more real, natural and lively Conveniencies; they always receive me with the same Kindness. *He may well go a foot, they say, who leads his Horse in his Hand.* And our *James*, King of *Naples* and *Sicily*, who, handsom, young and healthful, caus'd himself to be carry'd up and down in a Barrow, sitting on a pitiful Pillow, and clad in a Robe of coarse grey Cloth with a Cap of the same; but attended nevertheless by a royal Train of *Litters*, *led Horses* of all sorts, Gentlemen and Officers, therein shew'd but a weak and unsteady Austerity. The sick Man is not to be lamented, who has his Cure in his Sleeve. In the Experience and Practice of this Sentence, which is a very true one, all the Benefit I reap from Books consists; and yet I make as little use of it almost as those who know it not; I enjoy it as a *Miser* does his Money, in knowing that I may enjoy it when I please; my Mind is satisfied with this *Right* of Possession. I never travel without Books, either in Peace or War; and yet sometimes I pass over several Days, and sometimes Months, without looking into them; I will read by and by, say I to my self, or to Morrow, or when I please, and Time steals away without any Inconvenience. For it is not to be imagin'd to what Degree I please my self, and rest content in this Consideration, that I have them by me, to divert my self with them when I am so dispos'd, and to call to mind what an Ease and Assistance they are to my Life. 'Tis the best *Viaticum* I have yet found out for this human Journey, and very much lament those Men of Understanding who are unprovided of it. And yet I rather accept of any sort of Diversion, how light soever, because this can never fail me. When at Home, I a little more frequent my Library, from whence I at once survey all the whole Concerns of my Family: As I enter it, I from thence see under my Garden, Court, and Base-court, and into all the parts of the Building. There I turn over now one Book, and then another, of various Subjects, without Method or Design: One while I meditate, another I record, and dictate as I walk to and fro, such Whimsies as these with which I

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here

here present you. 'Tis in the third Story of a Tower, of which the Ground-Room is my Chapel, the second Story an Apartment with a withdrawing Room and Clofet, where I often lie to be more retired. Above it is a great Wardrobe, which formerly was the most useles part of the House. In that Library I pass away most of the Days of my Life, and most of the Hours of the Day. In the Night I am never there. There is within it a Cabinet handsom and neat enough, with a very convenient Fire-place for the Winter, and Windows that afford a great deal of Light, and very pleasant Prospects. And were I not more afraid of the Trouble than the Expence, the Trouble that frights me from all Business, I could very easily adjoin on either Side, and on the same Floor, a Gallery of an hundred Paces long, and twelve broad, having found Walls already rais'd for some other Design, to the requisite height. Every Place of Retirement requires a Walk. My Thoughts sleep if I sit still; my Fancy does not go by it self, my Legs must move it; and all those who study without a Book are in the same Condition. The Figure of my Study is round, and has no more flat Wall than what is taken up by my Table and Chairs; so that the remaining parts of the Circle present me a View of all my Books at once, set upon five Degrees of Shelves round about me. It has three noble and free Prospects, and is sixteen Paces Diameter. I am not so continually there in Winter; for my House is built upon an Eminence, as it's Name imports, and no part of it is so much expos'd to the Wind and Weather as that, which pleases me the better, for being of a painful Access, and a little remote, as well upon the account of Exercise, as being also there more retir'd from the Crowd. 'Tis there that I am in my Kingdom, as we say, and there I endeavour to make my self an absolute *Monarch*, and to sequester this one Corner from all Society, whether Conjugal, Filial, or Civil. Elsewhere I have but verbal Authority only, and of a confus'd Essence. That Man, in my Opinion, is very miserable, who has not at home where to be by himself, where to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. Ambition sufficiently plagues her Profelytes, by keeping themselves always in shew, like the

the Statue of a publick Place. * *Magna Servitus est magna Fortuna. A great Fortune is a great Slavery.* They have not so much as a Retirement for the Necessities of Nature. I have thought nothing so severe in the Austerity of Life that our Religious affect, as what I have observ'd in some of their Orders; namely, to have a perpetual Society of place by Rule, and numerous Assistants among them in every Action whatever; and think it much more supportable to be always alone, than never to be so. If any one shall tell me, that it is to undervalue the *Muses*, to make use of them only for sport, and to pass away the Time; I shall tell him, that he does not know the value of Sport and Pastime so well as I do; I can hardly forbear to add further, that all other end is ridiculous. I live from Hand to Mouth, and, with reverence be it spoken, I only live for my self; to that all my Designs do tend, and in that terminate. I studied when young for Ostentation; since to make my self a little wiser; and now for my Diversion, but never for any Profit. A vain and prodigal Humour I had after this sort of Furniture, not only for supplying my own needs and defects, but moreover for Ornament and outward show; I have since quite abandon'd it. Books have many charming Qualities to such as know how to choose them. But every Good has it's Ill; 'tis a Pleasure that is not pure and clean, no more than others: It has it's Inconveniencies, and great ones too. The Mind indeed is exercised by it, but the Body, the care of which I must withal never neglect, remains in the mean time without Action, grows heavy and melancholy. I know no Excess more prejudicial to me, nor more to be avoided in this my declining Age. These are my three belov'd, and particular Occupations; I speak not of those which I owe to the World by Civil Obligations.

* *Seneca de Consol. ad Polyb. c. 26.*