

height, take a view of mortals here below. What strange medley of management, what confusion of prospect is here ! What infinite variety in religion, government, and fortune ! Go on with the speculation, stretch your thoughts over time and nature, and look upon things in the different aspects of the past and the present ; consider how the world withers and wears off ; that the ages before were unacquainted with you, and so will many of those that come after ; that neither your power nor your fame reaches far among the barbarians ; how many are there that never heard of your name, how many that will quickly forget you, and how many that admire you now, will censure you afterwards ! In short, memory and fame, and all those things which are commonly so much valued, are no better than toys and amusements.

XXXI. Be always easy and upright ; let fortitude guard *without* and honesty *within* ; keep your mind and your motions true to the interest of mankind, for then you know your faculties are in the right posture that nature has set them.

XXXII. The greatest part of your trouble lies in your fancy, and therefore you may disengage yourself when you please. I will tell you which way you may move much more freely, and give ease and elbow-room to your mind. Take the whole world into your contemplation, and the little time you are to live in it. Consider how fast the scenes are shifted, and how near the end of all things lies to their beginning ! But then the extent of duration in which we are nothing concerned ! The ages before our birth and after our death are both infinite and unmeasurable.

XXXIII. Whatever makes a figure now, will quickly decay and disappear. And those that gaze upon the ruins of time will be buried under them. And then the longest and the shortest liver will be both in the same condition.

XXXIV. If you would walk *within* people, and discover their intentions, and look through their ceremony and respect, you must strain for observation ; and strip them to the soul if you can. Such a narrow inquiry will, among other things, bring a great deal of vanity to light ; yes, mortals are very full of themselves ; when they commend or censure, do you a good or ill turn, they are strangely conceited of the performance.

XXXV. The dissolution of forms is no loss in the mass of matter.

Things are changed this way, it is true, but they do not perish. Providence, by which all things are well contrived, delights in these alterations; they have always had their range in the world, and always will have. What then? Will you blame the conduct of the first cause? Were all things made, and must they always be out of order? What! are there so many gods in being, and none able to conquer and correct this evil? And is nature indeed condemned to an everlasting misfortune?

XXXVI. The materials of bodies, if you examine them, are strangely coarse. Those that are animated have little in them but water, and dust, and bones, and something that is offensive. And then if you go to metals, minerals, etc., marble is no more than a callous excrescence, nor gold and silver any better than the dregs and sediment of the earth. Fine clothes are nothing but hair twisted together, and smeared with the blood of a little fish.¹ And thus I might proceed further. And as for spirits, they are somewhat of kin to the rest, and are chased from one figure to another.²

XXXVII. Come, you have lived long enough, unless you could make more of it. Here is nothing but grumbling and apishness to be met with. What makes you disturbed? What can you be surprised at? What has happened to you worse than you had reason to expect? Does form or matter, body or spirit, make you uneasy? Look into them, and you may probably be relieved. Now, for your comfort, these two are nature's all, and there is no third thing to molest you. It is high time therefore to interpret the gods rightly, and throw off your chagrin against heaven.

XXXVIII. Three years' time to peruse nature and look over the world is as good as a hundred.³

XXXIX. If such a man has done amiss, the mischief is to himself; and it may be, if you inquire, he is not neither.

XL. Either all things are ordered by an intelligent being, who makes the world but one family (and if so, why should a part, or single member, complain of that which is designed for the benefit

¹ This made the purple dye.

² The Stoics held the soul a composition of fire and air, and by consequence it must be corruptible.

³ See Book iii. sect. 7, Book vi. sect. 23.

of the whole?), or else we are under the misrule of atoms and confusion. Now, take the case which way you please, there is either no reason or no remedy for complaint; and therefore it is to no purpose to be uneasy.

XLI. I hope you understand your mind better than to kill and bury it, and make it little enough for the coarse functions and fate of the body.

XLII. Either the gods have power to assist us, or they have not; if they have not, what does praying to them signify? If they have, why do not you rather pray that they would discharge your desires than satisfy them; and rather set you above the passion of fear than keep away the thing you are afraid of? For if the gods can help us, no doubt they can help us to be wiser. But it may be, you will say, they have furnished me sufficiently for these matters. Why then do not you make use of your talent and act like a man of spirit, and not run cringing and creeping after that which is out of your reach? But then who told you that the gods do not assist us in things which we might possibly compass by ourselves? Let me prescribe the matter of your devotions. For instance: This man prays that he may gain such a woman, it may be to debauch her; but do you rather pray that you may have no such inclination. Another invokes the gods to set him free from a troublesome superior; but let it be your petition that your mind may never put you upon such a wish. A third is mighty devout to prevent the loss of his son; but I would have you pray rather against the fear of losing him. Let this be the rule for your devotions, and see if the event does not answer.

XLIII. When I was sick, says Epicurus, I did not discourse the company about my diseases, or the torment I was troubled with. No; my system of natural philosophy was part of my subject; and my main concern was, that my mind might not give way to my body, nor grow uneasy under pain. I made no great business of a recovery, nor gave any handle to the doctors to brag of their profession, but held on with fortitude and indifferency. Thus he. And when you are sick, or under any other disadvantage, cannot you behave yourself in this manner? It is practicable to all persuasions in philosophy to stand their ground against all accidents, and not to fall into the weaknesses and folly of the ignorant. We must always be prepared for the present, mind the thing before us, and the tools too with which we are to work.

XLIV. When you are shocked by any man's impudence, put this question to yourself, Is it possible for such impudent people not to be in the world? No indeed.¹ Why then do you wish for an impossibility? For this lewd, ill-behaved fellow is one of those necessary rascals that the world cannot dispense with. This reflection will furnish you with patience for a knave or any other ill body. For when you consider that there is no living without this sort of cattle, you will treat them with more temper upon occasion. And to fortify you further, you will find that nature has armed you at all points, sent an antidote against every disease, and provided you some virtue or other against all sort of vice and immorality. For the purpose, if you have to do with a troublesome blockhead, you have meekness and temper for your guard, and so of the rest. It is likewise in your power to inform the man better and set him right; for every one that does an ill action is really out of his way, and misses his mark, though he may not know it. Besides, what harm have you received? If you examine the case you will find none of these provoking mortals have done your mind any damages. Now that is the only place in which you are capable of being hurt. Pray, where is the wonder if an ignorant fellow has done like himself? If you expected other things from him, you are much to blame. His want of sense or principles might make you conclude upon his misbehaviour, and yet when that which was most likely has happened, you seem surprised at it. Further, when you complain of a notorious knave, you are still more to blame; for though his honesty might have been a disappointment, falsehood ought to be none. And what could make you believe he would baulk his custom and fancy for your sake? To go on, you have done a kindness to such a person, and because he makes no return you grow peevish and satirical upon him. In earnest, this is a sign that you had a mercenary view, and that you were but a huckster in the mask of a friend; for otherwise you would have been satisfied with a generous action, and made virtue her own reward. To argue the point a little: You have obliged a man; it is very well. What would you have more? Is not the consciousness of doing a good office a sufficient consideration? You have humoured your own nature, and acted upon your constitution: and must you still have something over and above? This is just as if an eye or a foot should demand a salary for their service, and not see a pin or move a step without something for their pains. For as these organs are contrived for particular functions, which when they perform

¹ The Stoics fancied vice necessary to the being of virtue. *Vid. Annot. Gatak.*

they pursue their nature, and attain their perfection ; so man is made to be kind and oblige, and his faculties are ordered accordingly. And therefore when he does a good office, and proves serviceable to the world, he follows the bent and answers the end of his being ; and when he does so, he moves smoothly, and is always in the best condition.



BOOK X.

I. O MY soul ! Are you ever to be rightly good, uncompounded and uniform, unmasked and made more visible to yourself than the body that hangs about you ? Are you ever likely to relish good nature and general kindness as you ought ? Will you ever be fully satisfied, get above want and wishing, and never desire to fetch your pleasure out of anything foreign, either living or inanimate ? Not desiring, I say, either time for longer enjoyment, nor place for elbow-room, nor climate for good air, nor the music of good company ? Can you abstract yourself thus from the world, and take your leave of all mortals, and be contented with your present condition, let it be what it will ? And be persuaded that you are fully furnished ; that all things will do well with you, for the gods are at the head of the administration ; and they will approve o nothing but what is for the best, and tends to the security and advantage of that good, righteous, beautiful, and perfect animal,¹ which generates and supports all things, and keeps those things which decay from running out of compass, that other resembling beings may be made out of them. In a word, are you ever likely to be so happily qualified, as to converse with the gods and men in such a manner as neither to complain of them nor be condemned by them ?

II. Examine what your nature requires, as if you had no other law to govern you : and when you have looked into her inclinations, never baulk them, unless your animal nature or the interest of your body are likely to be worse for it. Then you are to examine what your animal nature or the interest of your senses demands : and here you may indulge your appetite as far as you please, provided your rational nature does not suffer by the liberty. Now your

¹ The world, or God. See Book iv. sect. 40, Book v. sect. 8.

rational nature admits of nothing but what is serviceable to the rest of mankind : keep to these rules, and you will have no need of rambling for further instruction.

III. Whatever happens, you have no reason to take it ill, for either you have strength to bear it, or you have not ; if you have, exert your nature, and never murmur at the matter : but if the weight is too heavy for you, it will crush your senses, and then you won't feel it. And here you are to remember that to think a thing tolerable is the way to make it so : now, to think it necessary is the way to think it tolerable. Press it but strongly from the topics of interest or duty, and you will go through.

IV. Is any one mistaken ? Undeceive him civilly, and show him his oversight ; but if you cannot convince him, blame your own management, though it is possible you may not always deserve it.

V. Whatever happens to you, was pre-ordained your lot, and that chain of causes which constitutes fate, tied your person and the event together from all eternity.

VI. Either atoms and chance, or nature,¹ are uppermost : now I am for the latter part of the disjunction, and lay it down for a ground in the first place, that I am part of that whole which is all under nature's government. Secondly, I am in some measure related to those beings which are of my own order and species. These points being agreed, I shall apply them : insomuch then as I am a part of the universe, I shall never be displeased with the general appointment : for that can never be prejudicial to the parts which is serviceable to the whole ; neither is the universe clogged with any incumbrance, for the nature of no being is an enemy to itself. But the world² has this advantage above other particular beings, that there is nothing to limit or overrule it ; no foreign power to force it upon unfriendly productions. Since therefore I am a member of so magnificent a body, and belong to such an uncontrollable sovereignty, I shall freely acquiesce in whatever happens to me. Further, inasmuch as I have a particular relation to my own species, I will never do anything against common right or the interest of society. On the other hand, I shall make it my business to oblige mankind, lay out my whole life for the advantage of the public, and forbear all sort of liberty which has a tendency

¹ God.

² Or God.

to the contrary. And by holding to this conduct I shall be happy of course; as that burgher must needs be who is always plodding for the benefit of his corporation, and perfectly satisfied with that interest and station the government shall assign him.

VII. Whatever lies within the compass of the universe, must of necessity corrupt and decay; by corruption I mean only alteration. Now if this be an evil, it is a necessary one; by consequence the whole of nature must be in a bad condition, by having the parts so slenderly put together, and so very much disposed to moulder and drop in pieces. And if the case stands thus, nature must either design unkindness to herself, by making the parts of her own body subject to an unavoidable misfortune, or else she huddled up things in the dark without foreseeing what would become of them: but both these suppositions are highly improbable. Now if any man has a mind to leave nature or the first cause out of the scheme, and affirm that things follow the make and tendency of their constitution; he that affirms this does but expose himself by granting, in the first place, that the parts of the universe are made for alteration: and then falls a wondering and growling at decay and revolution, as if such accidents were unnatural and extraordinary; especially since things do but return whence they came, and fall back no further than their first principles. For upon the dissolution of particular bodies, either the elements are scattered at large, or else they march straight to their head-quarters; and that which is solid turns to earth, and the particles of air join their own element: and thus they are received into the main body of the universe; the universe, I say, which will either be destroyed by fire, after a certain period, or else be renewed by perpetual vicissitudes. To return; I would not have you think that those particles of earth or air, which you have now in your constitution, are the same with those you brought into the world with you. Do not mistake; your body has been made over and over since that time. The matter which now belongs to you is as it were but of yesterday's growth; though you have lived so long in the world, your carcase is but a young one, for you have taken it all in at your mouth but somewhat lately; and therefore, when you perceive it wear off, you need not be so much troubled at the loss; for the alterations in your body do not rob you of the flesh and blood you had from your mother, but only of some fresher recruits of no long standing. But suppose you had still the same body you were born with, what would you do with it without the benefit of change? Without a new supply of matter, which must alter the case, nourishment and growth are perfectly impracticable:

besides, death cannot be far off, and then both new matter and old must take their leave and be swept to their respective elements.¹

VIII. When you have given yourself the titles of a man of modesty and good nature, of truth and prudence, of resignation and magnanimity, take care that your practice answers up to your character; and if your distinctions and your life do not agree, if any of these glorious names are lost in your mismanagement, recover them as soon as you can. Remembering withal, that prudence implies consideration, care, and comprehensive inquiry: that to be unanimous² or resigned, signifies a cheerful compliance with the allotments of providence. That magnanimity imports an elevation of soul, a noble contempt of pleasure and pain, of glory and death; and all those things which people are either fond or afraid of. Now if you can earn the honour of this style, and neither fly out of the compass of the character, nor yet desire it from other folks, you will be quite another man, and steer a quite different course from what you do at present. And indeed it is high time to begin: for to desire to go on at this rate, to be polluted with appetite and harassed with passion any longer, is a senseless and a scandalous wish. It resembles the meanness of those poor wretches in the amphitheatre, who when they are half devoured,³ and have nothing but wounds left them, beg notwithstanding to be respited till the morrow; though they know themselves only reserved for the same teeth that tore them before. Act up then to these few names of credit, and work them into the soul of you. And if you find your virtue big enough for the practice, stand your ground, and think yourself transported to the Fortunate Islands.⁴ But if you are overmatched, and begin to give way, and perceive your station and impediment, even knock off, and retire where you may manage better. And if this will not do, you may give life the slip; but then let there be nothing of passion or hurry in the manner. Walk gravely and handsomely into the other world; and thus the last action of your life will be the only one worth the owning. And to remember those good qualities above mentioned the more effectually, you should consider that imitation is the most acceptable part of worship, and that the gods had much rather mankind should resemble than flatter them: that operation is the right proof of nature; that trees are distinguished by their fruit, dogs by the qualities proper to their kind; and thus it holds with

¹ D'Acier.

³ By lions and other beasts of prey.

² Τοσύνμφορον.

⁴ The Paradise of the heathens.

men too, who ought to quit that name, unless they can answer the idea, and make out their claim by their actions.

IX. Unless you are very careful, this campaigning, tempestuous life you are engaged in, the liberties of your court, your own laziness, and the flattery of your subjects, will constantly be doing you disservice, wear out the noble impressions of philosophy, and make your study of nature insignificant. How then are you to manage upon all occasions? In such a manner as to omit neither business nor thinking. To be modest in the consciousness of your improvement, but not so far as to undervalue your knowledge, and keep it out of sight. When you are thus well skilled, both in theory and practice, then your virtues will regale you, and you will relish the advantage of philosophy. Then you will be able to understand the bottom of everything; to pronounce upon its nature, the ingredients it was made of, and the weight it has in the world; to calculate its continuance, who are likely to be affected with it, and what powers they are which can both give, and take it away.

X. A spider when she has caught a fly thinks she has done some great matter, and so does a sportsman when he has run down a hare, and a fisherman too, when he has overreached a sprat or a gudgeon. Some others must kill a boar or a bear before they can grow conceited; and a fourth sort value themselves extremely upon their hunting the Sarmatian moss-troopers. Though it may be, in this last case, if you go to the definition of robbing, the one are as much thieves as the other.

XI. Sit closely to the study of physics, that you may observe the steps, and learn the history of nature, and trace the progress of bodies from one form and species to another: contemplate often upon this subject, for there is nothing contributes so much to greatness of mind, as a thorough insight into these matters.¹ He that is rightly affected with this speculation, has in a manner laid his body aside and all that belongs to it. He considers that this world will quickly be over with him, that he must take his leave of mankind, and remove into another condition. In consequence of these thoughts, he is all justice and resignation.² And as for what people think or talk of him, or practise against him, he never minds it. He has but two points to secure, that is, to be honest in what he does, and contented with what he receives.³ As for other

¹ See Book iii. sect. 11.

² That is, to Providence.

³ From fate.

projects and fancies, he has done with them. His business is only to live by reason, and to follow that path which nature has chalked out for him, for in so doing he has the deity for his guide.

XII. What need you be anxious about the event, when you may examine the enterprise, and debate the reasonableness of it? If you find it practicable and proper, go on, and let nothing divert you: but if you cannot see through it, make a halt, and take the best advice upon the case. And if your measures happen to be broken by some new emergency, make the most of what is in your power and always stick to the point of honesty; for after all, that is the best stake in the hedge: for, though the grand design may not succeed, yet when it is fairly undertaken, and well managed, it makes one easy under the miscarriage. Reason and justice are pleasant companions; and those that keep to them are always satisfied, and in good humour.

XIII. When you are first awake you may put this question: whether another man's virtue will signify anything to the doing your business? No, unless you help yourself, another man's mind will no more improve you, than another man's mouth will nourish you. This thought may do you service in a morning, and help to make the day more significant. And, now I think on it, do not forget what sort of men those are which value themselves so much upon the good or ill character they give their neighbours; one would imagine by their bragging they could govern the world with their tongues, and talk people into what condition they had a mind to. But then these mighty men of satire and panegyric, how scandalously do they live! How are they overgrown with luxury and lewdness! How foolish are their fancies, and how unreasonable their fears! How much truth do they murder with their pratings; and how often do they steal from an honest man, to make a knave look the better! But after all they have the worst of it, by abusing that reason which might have served them to so many excellent purposes.

XIV. He that considers that nature¹ has the disposal of all things, will address her in this language of respect: "Give me what you please, and take what you please away. I am contented." This is the strain of a man bred to sobriety and good principles. And though the expression may be extraordinary, there is not the

¹ God.

least tincture of vanity in it, but it proceeds wholly from obedience and satisfaction.

XV. Your time is almost over, therefore live as if you were retired in the country. Place signifies nothing; virtue and philosophy will thrive everywhere, provided you mind your business. Never run into a hole and shun company. No, let the world have the benefit of a good example, and look upon an honest man; and if they do not like him, let them knock him on the head; for it is much better he were served so, than to live at their rate of disorder.

XVI. Notion without practice is impertinence; spend no more time than in stating the qualifications of a man of virtue, but endeavour to get them.

XVII. Take the whole bulk of matter, and all the extent of time frequently into your thoughts: and then consider that all particular bodies are but a grain in the proportion of substance, and but the turning of a wimble in respect of time.

XVIII. Do not suffer the appearances of things to dazzle your sight and deceive you. Examine them closely, and you will find them ready to decay and tumble. And that all things are made as it were to be unmade again.

XIX. Consider what an humble figure the biggest people make when they are eating, sleeping, and doing the other coarse work of nature, to which they are all condemned! But then when they are in their altitudes, in their pomp, or in their passion, strutting or mauling their inferiors; you would take them for another sort of creatures, and that they fancy themselves more than mortal men! And yet how many little masters did they lately cringe to! how mean was their service and their salary! and what a sorry condition will they come to in a short time!¹

XX. That's best for every man which God sends him; and the time of His sending too is always a circumstance of advantage.

XXI. The earth, as the poet has it,² "loves the refreshment of a shower, and the clouds when they are loaden, love to send it." And the world loves to execute the decrees of fate; and therefore

¹ Either by misfortune or death.

² Eurip.

say I to the world,¹ your inclinations and mine shall always be the same.

XXII. Either you will take the benefit of custom, and keep to your old course of life, or you will step farther into the world, as your fancy shall lead you, or else death will give you your *quietus est*; one of these cases must happen, therefore be not discouraged.

XXIII. Take it for a rule, that philosophy is everywhere practicable; and that there is no such great matter in retirement. A man may be wise and sedate in a crowd as well as in a desert, and keep the noise of the world from getting within him. In this case, as Plato observes,² "the walls of a town and the enclosure of a sheepfold may be made the same thing."

XXIV. How does my mind stand affected? What condition is my understanding in? And to what uses do I put it? Does not thought and reason run low with me? Am I not grown selfish, and broken loose from the general interest? Is not my soul as it were melted into my senses, and perfectly governed by them?

XXV. He that runs away from his master is a fugitive; now the law³ is every man's master, and therefore he that transgresses it is a deserter. And under this character we may range all those that are dissatisfied with the administration of the world; angry at what is past, and uneasy about the future. For these people, were it in their power, would set aside that justice which gives every one his due, and break through the orders of providence.

XXVI. The formation of the foetus is a great subject for contemplation. The first principles of life are extremely slender and mysterious; and yet nature works them up into a strange increase of bulk, diversity, and proportion. And after the birth is over, the infant is supported by throwing a little nourishment down the throat on it. And here the force and conduct of the operation is extraordinary. For what can be more surprising than to see such wonderful effects from so unpromising a cause? To see growth and motion, and strength and beauty; all the functions and force and ornament of the creature sprout out of a little pap or gruel? These things though they are wrought in the dark, and we cannot trace them with our senses, no more than we can the causes of gravitation; for all this, our understandings may reach a great way,

¹ Or Providence.

² Plato, *Thraetet.*

³ The law of nature, or God.

and discover the miracles of Providence, though not the manner of their performance.

XXVII. You will do well to remember that the world is just as it was formerly, and will go on at the same rate when you are dead and gone. If you either dip into history, or recollect your own memory, you will perceive the scenes of life strangely uniform, and nothing but the old plays revived. Take a view of the courts of Adrian, Antoninus Pius, of Philip of Macedon or Croesus; and you will find the grimace and entertainment the same, only the actors are different.

XXVIII. He that struggles with his fortune and makes an affliction on it, is much like a hog that kicks and cries out when his throat is cutting: and he that mourns privately over himself when he is sick, is not much better. We should consider that we are tied to the chains of fate, that all accidents are inevitable, that none but rational creatures have the privilege of moving freely, and making necessity a choice. All other things are forced onward, and dragged along to their doom.

XXIX. Consider the satisfactions of life singly, and examine them as they come up; and then ask yourself, if death is such a terrible bugbear in taking them from you?¹

XXX. When anybody's misbehaviour disturbs you, dismiss the image of the injury, and bethink yourself whether you have not been guilty of the same fault. For instance, whether you have not over-valued money, or pleasure, or fame, or the like. Such reflections will quickly make you cool, and come to a temper; especially if you consider the offender was not altogether his own man, but under the force of some untoward passion or other. You would do well therefore, if you can, to step in to the rescue, and free him from the cause of his disorder.

XXXI. When you consider Satyrion the Socratist, think upon Eutiches or Hymen;² and when you remember Euphrates, think upon Eutylichion or Sylvanus; and when Alciphron comes into your head, carry your thoughts to Tropæophorus; and when you are musing

¹ See Book xii. sect. 31.

² The first proper name throughout this enumeration denotes a philosopher that lived before the emperor's time, the others, those who were his contemporaries.

upon Xenophon or Crito, let Severus come into the contemplation; and when you make yourself the subject of your meditations, bring some of the emperors your predecessors into your company; and thus set the dead and the living of the same character and profession always one against another, then ask the question, Where are those men that made such a figure formerly? The answer will be, they are nowhere, or at least nowhere that I know of. Thus you will be strongly convinced that men are but smoke and bubbles; they vanish as they rise, and break soon after the swelling, and this impression will go the deeper, if you consider that what is once perished and sunk, will never come up again exactly.¹ As for your share of time; it is but a moment in comparison; why then cannot you manage that little handsomely, and be satisfied? What a noble opportunity of improvement do you run away from? For what are all the revolutions of nature, and the accidents of life, but trials of skill and exercises of reason? A wise man that has looked through the causes of things, makes but a diversion of them. Go on then with the theory and practice of philosophy, till you have digested the subject and conquered the difficulty; for I would have you be like a strong stomach, that masters all sort of diet, and makes nourishment of it; or, if you please, like a fire well kindled, which catches upon everything you throw in, and turns it into flame and brightness.

XXXII. Put it out of the power of truth to give you an ill character; and if anybody reports you not to be an honest or a good man, let your practice give him the lie. This is all very feasible; for pray who can hinder you from being just, sincere, and good-natured, if you have a mind to it? To make all sure, you should resolve to live no longer than you can live honestly; for, in earnest, you had much better be nothing than a knave.

XXXIII. What is it which is most proper to be said or done upon the present occasion? That question I confess is pertinent, but, let it be what it will, I am sure it is in your power to come up to it, and therefore never pretend it impracticable. You will never leave grumbling and growling till you have brought your fancy to your philosophy; till you can practise virtue with a gust, and make your duty your pleasure. And why you should not do this I cannot imagine; for the practice of virtue is nothing but human powers naturally set on work; it is only putting the wheels in the motion they were contrived for, and going just as you were made. Now

¹ *Vid. Annot. D'Acier.*

nature's postures are always easy, and, which is more, nothing but your own will can put you out of them. The motion of a cylinder may be stopped, fire and water may be checked in their tendency, and so may any part of the elementary, vegetative, and animal world. In this case a great many obstructions may interpose. But there is nothing can block up a soul, stop the course of reason, or hinder a thought from running in the right channel. He that considers the irresistible liberty of the mind, that she moves as easily as fire does upwards, as a stone downwards, as a cylinder on a smooth descent, will trouble his head about nothing further. For all other impediments proceed either from the body, which he looks upon rather as a carcase than a companion, or else they are founded in opinion; and unless we betray ourselves, and desert our reason, can do us no manner of mischief; otherwise, ill fortune, as it is commonly called, would make a body an ill man. For all other productions of nature or art, when any harm happens to them, they are certainly the worse for it; but here a man is the better for what he suffers; he improves his value, and raises his character, by making a right use of a rugged accident. In short, I would have you remember that no burgher can receive any damage by that which does not affect his corporation; neither can the community suffer, unless the laws by which it is governed are broken and suffer too. But these misfortunes, as they are called, do not violate the constitution, nor break in upon the laws; therefore they do not damage the corporation, nor by consequence any member in it.¹

XXXIV. He that is well tinctured with philosophy needs but a short receipt. A common cordial will keep up such a man's spirits, and expel the cold from his heart. A verse or two out of Homer will serve for a hint, and do his business. Let the poet speak,—

Men are like leaves in verdure and decay,
As spring supplies what autumn blows away,
So mortals fade and flourish in their turns.²

You see how slenderly human felicity is put together, your children are but leaves upon the matter, a little blast may take them from you. The freshest laurels wither apace, and the echoes of fame are soon silenced (and which has some comfort), so is censure and reproach too. All these matters, like leaves, have their

¹ By the city or corporation the emperor means the world, and by the laws, the order and decrees of Providence. See Book v. sect. 22.

² Hom. *II. E.*

spring for growing, then a puff of wind sends them packing, and quickly after the wood is new furnished again. Things are strangely short-lived, and yet your appetites and fears grasp and scamper at that rate, as if all were everlasting. But for all your haste your head will be laid in a short time, and then he that is your chief mourner will quickly want another for himself.

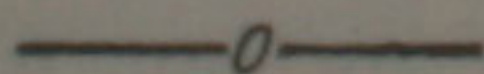
XXXV. An eye that is strong and rightly disposed is indifferent to all colours; therefore if it calls for greens, it is a sign it is weak and out of order. Thus when the hearing and smelling are in a good condition, they do not pick and choose their objects, but take in all manner of scents and sounds. Thus a strong stomach despatches all that comes into it, like a mill that grinds all sorts of grain; and thus a mind that is sound and healthy is prepared to digest all sorts of accidents; and therefore when it is clamorous in such wishes as these, "O that my children may live and flourish, that I may be everybody's favourite, and be commended for everything I do:" when the mind, I say, is thus sickly and untoward, it is just like an eye that is all for green colours, and like a set of teeth that would touch nothing by their goodwill but flummery and pudding.

XXXVI. There is nobody so happy in his family and friends, but that some of them when they see him going will wish for a good riddance, and almost keep a holy day for his death. Let him be a person of never so much probity and prudence, do you think somebody or other will not drop some of these sentences over his grave? "Well, our man of order and gravity is gone, we shall now be no more troubled with his discipline! I cannot say he was ill-natured to any of us, but for all that, I am sensible he disliked our management in his heart." This is the best treatment a good man must expect. But alas! as for our conduct, how many reasons will people muster up to be rid of us! If you consider this when you are dying, you will quit with the less reluctance. Say then to yourself, "I am leaving an odd sort of world, where the sharers in my fortune, and the objects of my care and kindness, those people for whom I have drudged, and contrived, and wished so heartily, count my life no better than a grievance, and would fain be shut of me; now who would be fond of staying in such company any longer?" However, this thought must not go so deep as to sour your humour. You must keep your temper, and part friendly with everybody; but then your good-nature must not make you hang back; for as when a man has an easy death, the soul slides gently out of the body and takes her leave without tugging, so you

must walk off handsomely, and bid the world adieu without regret. It is true, nature has twisted your interests and tied you together, but now she loosens the knot, and makes the sign to disengage. I'll part then with the world as with my friends and relations, but for all my kindness I will not be dragged from them; no, Providence would have me move freely, and therefore I'll do it.

XXXVII. Let it be your constant method to look into the design of people's actions, and see what they would be at, as often as it is practicable. And to make this custom more significant, practise it first upon yourself.

XXXVIII. Remember that which pulls and hales you from one passion to another is no external force, but your fancy within you. There lies the rhetoric that persuades you. That is the live thing, and to speak plainly, that is the man after all. But when you talk of a man, I would not have you tack flesh and blood to the notion, neither those limbs which are made out of it; these are but tools for the soul to work with, and no more a part of a man than an axe or a plane is a piece of a carpenter. It is true, nature has glued them together, and they grow as it were to the soul, and there is all the difference; but the use of them depends solely upon the mind, it is the will that either checks or sets them agoing. They have but the force of instruments, and signify no more without foreign direction than a shuttle, a pen, or a whip, which will neither weave, nor write, nor lash the horses without somebody to manage them.



BOOK XI.

I. THE properties of a rational soul are these. She has the privilege to look into her own nature, to cut out her qualities, and form herself to what temper she pleases. She enjoys her product (whereas trees and cattle bring plenty for other folks). Whether life proves long or short, she gains the ends of living. Her business is never maimed by interruption, as it happens in a dance or a play; no, she is never surprised, her performances are struck out at a heat, and always finished and entire, so that she may say with modesty enough, "I have sustained no damages, but carry off all that belongs to me." Further, she ranges through the whole world,

views its figure, looks into the vacuum on the outside of it,¹ and stretches on to an unmeasurable length of time. She contemplates the grand revolutions of nature, and how the universe will be destroyed,² and renewed at certain periods. She considers that there will be nothing new for posterity to gaze at, and that our ancestors stood upon the same level for observation. That all ages are uniform and of a colour, insomuch that in forty years' time a tolerable genius for sense and inquiry may acquaint himself with all that is past and all that is to come. Lastly, it is the property of a rational soul to love her neighbours, to be remarkable for truth and sobriety, to prefer nothing to her own dignity and authority, which is likewise the custom and prerogative of a law; and thus far the quality and measures of right reason and public justice are the same.

II. The way to despise the pleasure of a fine song, a well-performed dance, or the olympic exercises, is as follows: As for the song, take the music in pieces, and examine the notes by themselves, and ask as you go along, "Is it this, or this single sound that has subdued me?" You'll be ashamed to confess the conquest, and so get clear of the charm. Thus, to lessen the diversion of dancing, consider every movement and gesture apart. And this method will hold with respect to the olympic exercises.³ In short, all other entertainments but those of virtue abate by taking them asunder, and therefore apply the expedient to all other parts of your life.

III. What a brave soul is that, that's always prepared to walk out of the body, and unconcerned about her being either extinguished,⁴ scattered, or removed! Prepared, I say, upon judgment, and not out of mere obstinacy, like the Christians;⁵ to recommend the example, this fortitude must have nothing of noise or ostentation, but be carried on with a solemn air of gravity and consideration.

IV. Have I obliged anybody, or done the world any service? If so, the action has rewarded me; this answer will encourage good-nature, therefore let it always be at hand.

¹ The Stoics imagined that on the outside of the world there was a void or vacuum, that is, extension unfurnished with substance or body.

² By conflagrations.

³ Boxing, running, wrestling, leaping, and playing at quoits, etc.

⁴ Into atoms.

⁵ The true bravery of the Christians was misrepresented to the emperor.

V. What may your trade or profession be? It is to live like a man of virtue and probity. And how can this end be better compassed than by the contemplation of the nature of the world, and of mankind in particular, and the influence the one has upon the affairs of the other?

VI. As to dramatic performances, tragedy appeared first. The design of them was to show the misfortunes of life were customary and common. That thus the fiction might reconcile them to the reality, and that what diverted them upon the stage might surprise them the less when they meet with it in the world. Thus people see there is no living without accidents. Mortifications, and severe ones too, will happen; kings and princes cannot stand clear of them. And to give the stage-poets their due, they have some sententious and serviceable passages, as for instance,—

If I and mine are by the Gods neglected
There's reason for their rigour.

Again,

Ne'er quarrel accidents, for things are sullen,
And don't regard your anger.

Once more,

Fate mows down life like corn, this mortal falls,
And t'other stands a while.¹

These instances may suffice, otherwise I might go on with them. Next to tragedy, old comedy took a turn upon the stage; and here pride and ambition were lashed and pointed at with great freedom and authority, and not without some success. And for this reason Diogenes sometimes made use of the poet's discipline. You are now to observe that middle comedy succeeded to the old, and the new to the middle; this last kind sinking by degrees to the buffoonery of the *Mimi*. It is true, there are some useful expressions to be met with even here; but then you are to consider the tendency of the whole poem, and what these dramatic diversions drive at in general.²

VII. Nothing is clearer to me than that the principles you go upon³ are as good a foundation for philosophy and improvement as are to be met with in any other sect whatsoever.

¹ Eurip. *Hypsipyl.* See Book vii. sect. 39, 41, 42.

² It is D'Acier's observation that the emperor condemns all sorts of plays, though upon the comparison he prefers the old comedy to the new, because the old made instruction, not pleasure, their principal design.

³ The emperor's main principles are the love of God and our neighbour.

VIII. A bough, by being lopped off from another, must of necessity be lopped from the whole tree. Thus a man that breaks with another loses the benefit of the whole community. It is true, a bough is lopped off by a foreign hand, but this moral amputation is all voluntary; it is the man that pulls himself asunder by his untoward aversion to his neighbour. He little thinks by this unhappy division, how he disincorporates himself from the body of mankind! And here the goodness of God who founded this society is extraordinary. He has put it in our power to grow to the limb we left, and come again into the advantage of the main body. But if this misfortune is often repeated, it will be a hard matter to restore the part, and close the division. For as gardeners observe, a bough cut off and grafted in again is not in the same good condition with another which always flourished upon the trunk; for, though the first does not grow out of its kind, yet it suffers somewhat in its figure and beauty.¹

IX. Never grow sour upon people's malice or impertinence. Can they beat you off your reason, or stop your progress in virtue? Not at all. Be not then disconcerted, nor check your good-nature towards them. If you meet with opposition and ill-will, you must neither be diverted nor disturbed, but keep your point, and your temper too. For as it is a weakness to lose your spirits, and be thrown off your conduct, so it is likewise to be angry with impertinent people. Upon the whole, they are both a sort of deserters from Providence, who are either frightened from their duty, or fall out with those of their own nature and family.²

X. Nature falls short of art in no instance, art being but an imitation of nature; and if so, the most perfect and best furnished nature cannot be supposed to work with less reach than a common artificer. Now in all arts, the less in value are contrived for the sake of the greater; this therefore is the method of general nature, or the first cause. And upon this ground justice is founded, which consists in a regard and preference of things according to their dignity and worth. The other virtues are likewise governed by this rule, and are but acts of justice differently applied. But just we can never be, if we are eager and anxious about external advantages, if we are apt to be imposed on, and grow heedless and inconstant in our motion.

XI. Aversions and desires are the general occasions of disturbance;

¹ See Book v. 8, Book viii. 34.

² See Book ii. sect. I.

now since the objects of these passions do not press upon you, but it is you that make up to them in some measure, whereas they stand off, and keep their distance,¹ your method is therefore, to let your opinion about them lie still; this suspension of your judgment will bring you towards an indifference. And then you will neither pursue nor avoid them any longer.

XII. The figure of the soul, as we may call it, is then round and uniform, when she neither reaches after anything foreign, nor shrinks in, out of cowardice and fear. When her superficies is thus even, the light plays better upon her. The prospect of truth and nature is enlarged; and she sees the world and herself to the most advantage.

XIII. Does any one despise me? What is that to me? I will take care not to give him any reason for his contempt. Does any one hate me? It may be so; I shall not concern myself about it. And, more than that, another man's malice shall never spoil my temper. I will continue kind and good-humoured to all the world, even to the injurious person himself. I am always ready to show him his error, without ruffling, or making a merit of my own patience; but frankly, and with all the cordial sincerity imaginable, as Phocion² seemed to behave himself towards the Athenians. Indeed your mind should always be so disposed as to bear the narrowest inspection, that the gods may examine you with pleasure, and perceive that you are neither angry nor uneasy at anything. Now if you follow the current of your nature, and do a handsome action, where is the harm of it? What! are you unwilling to submit to providence? To comply with the interest of the universe, when you know you were made on purpose for it?

XIV. People generally despise where they flatter, and cringe to those they would gladly overtop; so that truth and ceremony are two things.

XV. How fulsome and hollow does that man look that cries, "I am resolved to deal clearly with you"! Hark you, friend, what need of all this flourish? Let your actions speak. To go to the right of it, your face ought to vouch for you, and your sincerity be legible upon your forehead. I would have virtue look out of the

¹ See Book v. sect. 19, Book ix. 15.

² Phocion at his execution charged his son not to bear a grudge against the Athenians for putting him to death. Plut.

eye, no less apparently than love does. I would have honesty so incorporated with the constitution, so mixed up with the blood and spirits, that it should be discoverable by the senses, and as easily distinguished as rankness, or a strong breath; so that a man must be forced to find it out whether he would or no. But on the other side, an affectation of being real is an untoward pretence. Nothing is more scandalous than false friendship, and therefore of all things avoid it. In short, a man of integrity and good-nature can never be concealed, for his character is wrought into his countenance.

XVI. To bestow no more upon objects than they deserve, and where things are indifferent to let our thoughts be so too, is a noble expedient for happiness; the way to come up to this indifferency, is to look through matters, and take them quite asunder,¹ remembering always, that things cannot charge into the soul, nor force upon us any opinions about them. They stand aloof, and are quiet; it is our fancy that makes them operate and gall us; it is we that rate them and give them their bulk and value; and yet it is in our power to let it alone; and if any false colours are laid on by surprise, we may rub them out if we please. We are likewise to consider that this trouble will not last, that death will relieve us quickly; where then is the difficulty of standing upon our guard a little while? If therefore your circumstances put you in a way of improvement, and there is anything to be made out of them, bid them heartily welcome, and then your inclination will make you easy. But if they prove unmanageably cross (which by the way is a wrong supposition), look out for something that is more serviceable to the dignity of your nature; and never let infamy, or being unpopular, deter you from the pursuit. For certainly every man may take leave to make himself happy if he can.

XVII. Consider the original of all things, the matter they are made of; the alterations they must run through, and the qualities consequent upon it; and that all this instability of nature has no manner of harm in it.

XVIII. Concerning those that offend and disoblige you, consider in the first place, the relation you stand in towards them, and that you are all made for each other. And as for your own part, you are particularly set at the head of the world; and like a ram in a flock, designed for defence and protection. You may go

¹ See sect. 2.

higher in your reasoning if you please, and consider that either chance or providence governs the universe; if the latter, then the coarser parts of the creation were made for the service of their betters; and these last for the interest and support of each other.

Secondly, consider how wretchedly they mismanage their own business, and how far they are gone in luxury and libertinism; especially you should remember what strong prejudices they lie under, how confident they are in their mistakes, and with what satisfaction they play the fool.

Thirdly, consider that if those that disoblige you are in the right, you have no reason to be angry; but if they are in the wrong, it is because they know no better. They are under necessity of their own ignorance. For as all error is involuntary, so nobody would lessen themselves so much as to miss either honesty or good manners, if they were rightly aware of it. And thus we see people will not endure the charge of avarice, ingratitude, or knavery, without being stung at the imputation.

Fourthly, do not forget you are like the rest of the world, and faulty yourself in a great many instances; that though you may forbear running riot in some cases, it is not for want of an inclination. And that nothing but cowardice, vanity, or some such scandalous principle, hinders you from breaking out.

Fifthly, that it is sometimes a hard matter to be certain whether you have received ill-usage or not. For men's actions oftentimes look worse than they are. And one must be thoroughly informed of a great many things before he can be rightly qualified to give judgment in the case.

Sixthly, when you are most angry and galled, remember that human life lasts but a moment, and that we shall all of us very quickly be laid in our graves.

Seventhly, consider that it is not other people's actions (for they are lodged at home, and are neither good nor bad to any but those that do them) which disturb us, but only our own opinions about them. Do but then dismiss these notions, and do not fancy the thing a grievance, and your passion will cease immediately. But how can this fancy be discharged? By considering that bare suffering has nothing of infamy or scandal in it. Now, unless you

refrain the notion of evil to what is scandalous and dishonest, your own virtue will grow precarious, and you will be under a necessity of doing a great many unwarrantable things.¹

Eighthly, consider that our anger and impatience often prove much more mischievous than the provocation could possibly have done.

Ninthly, that gentleness and good-humour are invincible, provided they are of the right stamp, without anything of hypocrisy or grimace. This is the way to disarm the most barbarous and savage. A constancy in obliging behaviour, will make the most outrageous person ashamed of his malice. The worst body imaginable cannot find in his heart to do you any mischief, if you continue kind and unmoved under ill-usage, if you strike in with the right opportunity for advice; if, when he is going to do you an ill turn, you endeavour to recover his understanding, and retrieve his temper in such gentle language as this: "Prithee, child, be quiet, men were never made to worry one another; in earnest, if you go on, my dear friend, you will have the worst of it; and as for my part, I am proof against everything but my own folly." Then proceed to illustrate the point, and let your arguments be general and inoffensive: show him that brutes are upon better terms than this comes to; that it is not the custom of bees to spend their stings upon their own kind, nor of one herd of cattle to draw up against another. And let all this be done out of stark love and kindness, without anything of bantering or biting. You must likewise stand clear of vanity in your address; do not seem to flourish upon the subject, as if you were declaiming in the schools, and courting the audience for commendation: if there is any company, never set yourself off to them: but discourse him with as little straining and affectation, as if there was nobody but himself.

Lay up these nine heads in your memory, with as much care as if they were a present from the nine Muses: for now it is high time to begin to be a man for your life time. And here you must take care to guard against flattery, as well as anger; for these are both unserviceable qualities, and do a great deal of mischief in the world. And for a farther preservative against the latter, remember that frowardness and rage are marks of an unmanly disposition. Mildness and temper are not only more human, but more masculine too: one thus affected appears much more brave and firm,

¹ See Book ix. 1.

and better fortified, than he that is fuming and out of sorts. For impassibility is an argument of greatness; and he that has the least feeling in these cases, has always the most strength: on the other hand, as grief is a sign of weakness, so is anger too; a man is wounded in both these passions, and the smart is too big for him.

As you have received these nine precepts from the Muses, take this tenth, if you please, from their president and instructor, Apollo: that to wish all people may not do ill things is to wish an impossibility, and no better than a piece of distraction. But then to give them leave to plague other folks, and desire to be privileged yourself, is a foolish and a haughty expectation.

XIX. There are four ill qualities we must be particularly careful to avoid,¹ and pull them up as fast as we find them grow in our heads, and undertake them as they rise in this fashion. This fancy, say, is groundless and unnecessary, this rough behaviour makes society and correspondence impracticable, this other is but a copy of your countenance; you cannot say it from your heart.² Now this is a very bad character. There are three of them. And whatever you are conscious degrades the diviner part of you, makes your mind truckle to your body, and your reason to your pleasures, look upon that as the fourth.

XX. Those particles of fire and air which are lodged in your body, notwithstanding their tendency to mount, submit to the laws of the universe, stick close to your constitution, and keep the rest of the elements company. Again, the earthly and watery part in you, though they naturally press downwards, are raised above their level, and stand poised in a foreign region. Thus the elements serve the interest of the world; and though they seem to stand bent and uneasy, they keep their post till the signal is given to march off and separate. And is it not then a scandalous business that your mind should be the only deserter, and grow mutinous about her station, especially when her orders agree with her constitution, and nothing that is unnatural is enjoined? and yet she will not bear the conduct of her own faculties, but runs perfectly counter to humanity. For when a man turns knave or libertine, when he gives way to fears and fits of the spleen, he does, as it were, run away from himself and desert his own nature. And further, when his mind complains

¹ D'Acier supposes the emperor means suspiciousness, ill language, lying, and intemperance.

² See Book ii. 16.

of his fortune, he quits the station in which Providence has placed him. For acquiescence and piety are no less his duty, and his talent too, than honesty between man and man. For these virtues carry up to the common interest, and are rather of greater antiquity and value than fair dealing itself.¹

XXI. He that does not always drive at the same end will never be uniform and of a piece in his conduct. But this hint is too short, unless you describe the quality of this design, and what it is that we ought principally to aim at. Now as people do not agree in the preferences of choice and the notion of advantage, unless in what relates to the common good, so a man ought to propose the benefit of society and the general interest of the world as his main business. For he that levels at this mark, will keep an even hand, and be always consistent with himself.

XXII. Remember the story of the country and city mouse, and how pitifully the former was frightened and surprised.²

XXIII. Socrates used to say the common objects of terror were nothing but bugbears, fit only to scare crows and children.

XXIV. The Lacedæmonians at their public shows seated strangers under a canopy in the shade, but made their own people shift, and take their convenience as they found it.³

XXV. Socrates, being invited to Perdiccas's court,⁴ made this excuse: "I dare not come," says he, "for fear of being put under an incapacity of returning an obligation, which I take to be the worst way of destroying a man imaginable."

XXVI. It is a precept of the Epicurean philosophers, that we should look back to the virtue of former ages, and always furnish our memory with some eminent example.

XXVII. The Pythagoræans would have us look up into the sky every morning, to put us in mind of the order and constancy of the heavenly bodies, of the equality and perpetuity of their motion, of

¹ Piety the foundation of justice.

² This hint, I suppose, was designed to show the danger of curiosity and appetite.

³ It was the custom of the Lacedæmonians to breed their people hardily.

⁴ Seneca reports this invitation was made by Archelaus, king of Macedon.

the fineness and purity of their matter, and how frankly they lie open to observation; for a star never wears a mask, nor puts any clothes on.

XXVIII. Remember how unconcernedly Socrates wore a sheepskin, when Xantippe¹ had got his coat on, and run out with it; and how handsomely he laughed off the matter to his friends, who were strangely out of countenance by seeing him in such a disguise.

XXIX. People don't pretend to teach others to write and read, till they have been taught themselves. This rule holds stronger in the niceties and importance of life, in which no man is fit to govern, till he has first learned to obey.

XXX. Be dumb; slaves have not the privilege of speaking.²

XXXI. I smiled within myself.³

XXXII. They will treat their parents with rebellious language.⁴

XXXIII. He is a madman that expects figs on the trees in winter, and he is little better that calls for his children again when they are dead and buried.

XXXIV. Epictetus would have a man, when he is kissing and caressing his child, say to himself at the same time, "To-morrow perhaps this pretty thing may die and leave me." These are four ominous reflections, you will say. That is your mistake; the consequences of mortality and the course of nature are no ominous things to think on, otherwise it would be an ominous business to cut down a little grass or corn.

XXXV. Grapes are first sour, then ripe, then raisins; these are all no more than bare alterations, not into nothing, but into something which does not appear and come up at present.

XXXVI. As Epictetus observes, nobody can rob another of his will, nor by consequence make seizure of his virtue.

¹ His wife.

² A tragic poet quoted by Philo, *De Libert. Viri boni*.

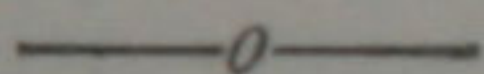
³ Hom. *Odyss.*

⁴ Hesiod, *Oper. lib. i. v. 184*. These shreds of poetry seem to be set down by the emperor as hints for further meditation. (Gatak.)

XXXVII. The same philosopher has taught us the art of managing our assent, and preventing our reason from being imposed on; that we should enterprise with a reserve for disappointment, that our inclinations should be generous and benevolent, and proportioned to the merit and dignity of things, that we must keep our desires from being headstrong and unruly in all cases, and never have an aversion for anything which it is out of our power to hinder.

XXXVIII. Therefore, as Epictetus observes, the contest is no trifle, but whether we are to live in our wits, or out of them.¹

XXXIX. It is a saying of Socrates to some untoward people: "What would you be at? Would you have the soul of a man or of a beast in you? Of a man, without all doubt. Of what sort of men, of those that use their reason, or those that abuse it? Of the first, you may be sure. Why, then," continues the philosopher, "don't you look out for this privilege? Because we have it already. What makes you then disagree, and fall foul upon each other?"



BOOK XII.

I. ALL those things you drudge and range so much ground for, you may have at your ease, unless you are afraid of making yourself too happy. Your method to do your business is not to concern yourself about the time past, for that is never to be recovered, to rest the future with Providence, and only stick to the present, and improve that to all the noble purposes of piety and justice. The pious part will be discharged by being contented with your fate; and why should you not, since nature made you for each other?² And as to the obligations of justice, you will acquit yourself here, provided you speak truth boldly and above-board, and make law and the dignity of things your rule to act by. When you are not to be checked in your progress by the misbehaviour, the ignorance, and impertinent reports of other people, nor yet by the sense and sufferings of your own carcase, though by the way it is a question whether it suffers or not.³ To go on; if, since your life is almost

¹ The Stoics reckoned all people madmen that did not live up to the precepts of virtue and philosophy.

² See Book v. sect. 8.

³ See Book vii. sect. 16, 18.

up, you lay aside all other matters, and only cultivate your mind, and pay a regard to the governing and diviner part of yourself; if you are not at all afraid of losing your life, but of missing the ends of it, and not living as you should do; then you will act suitably to your extraction, and deserve to have the Deity for your Maker; then you will be no longer a stranger in your own country, nor be surprised at common accidents; you will never be anxious about the future, nor stand to the courtesy of events.

II. The Almighty sees through the soul of every man as clearly as if it was not wrapped up in matter, or had anything of the shroud and coarseness of body about it. And God being a spirit, acts only as such, and concerns Himself for no other beings but those of His own nature. Now, if you would learn to do thus, a great deal of trouble would be saved, for he that can overlook his limbs and make his carcase sit loose about him, will hardly disturb himself about the house he dwells in; about his equipage or reputation, or any part of the furniture and magnificence of a figure.

III. You consist of three parts, your body, your breath,¹ and your mind; the two first are yours to take care of, but the latter is properly your person. Therefore, if you abstract from the notion of yourself, that is, of your mind, whatever other people either say or do, or whatever you may have said or done yourself formerly, together with all that which disturbs you under the consideration of its coming to pass hereafter; if you throw the necessary motions of your carcase out of the definition, and those of the vortex that whirls about you, and by this means preserve your rational faculties in an independent state of innocence, free from force and infection, holding close and steady to the virtues of justice, truth, and acquiescence; if, I say, you keep your mind separate and distinguished from the objects of appetite and the appendages of time, both past and future, and make yourself like Empedocles's world,

Round as a ball, and spinning on your axis;²

and concern yourself to live no longer than your lifetime, that is, the present moment;³ if you do all this, you may move on till death stops you with credit and satisfaction.

IV. I have often wondered how it comes to pass that everybody should love themselves best, and yet value their neighbour's opinion

¹ See Book ii. sect. 2.

² Turning upon your reason.

³ See Book ii. 14.

about themselves more than their own. Therefore, if any god, or eminent instructor in philosophy, should stand at a man's elbow, and order him to turn his inside outwards, and publish every thought and fancy as fast as they came into his head, he would think it a hard chapter, and not submit so much as to a day's discipline. Thus we stand more in awe of fame than conscience, and regard other people's judgments above our own.

V. How comes it about, that since the gods have contrived all things so well, and so much to the benefit of mankind, they should overlook this particular, and suffer men of great virtue and merit, who by their piety and devotion were, as it were, the domestics of the powers above, and kept always a correspondence with heaven; that they should suffer such men, I say, to be finally extinguished by death, and not give them their being again? Now, if the case stands thus, you may be assured, had it been proper, the gods would have ordered it otherwise; for had it been reasonable, it would have been possible. Nature¹ would certainly have brought it forth if it had been suitable to her perfections. Therefore, from its not being matter of fact, if indeed it is not, you may undoubtedly conclude it ought not to be so; for, don't you perceive that in reasoning this point you dispute the administration of Providence? Now, if the justice and goodness of the gods were not extraordinary, this liberty would not be allowed, neither would you presume so far if you thought otherwise. But if they have these perfections, they will never neglect their affairs, nor blemish their world with anything that is unreasonable or unjust.

VI. Accustom yourself to master things of the greatest difficulty, and which you seem to despair of; for if you observe the left hand, though, for want of practice, it is insignificant to other business, yet it holds the bridle better than the right, because it has been used to it.

VII. Consider what death will make of you, both as to body and mind; recollect the shortness of life, the unmeasurable extent of time both past and future, and how tenderly all things are put together.

VIII. Let it be your method to contemplate spirits apart from their bodies, for these are no better than the shell they are shut up in. Mind the aim and the end of people's actions; examine the

¹ God.

value of fame, the force of pain, the ascendant of pleasure,¹ and see what death amounts to. Consider upon what account a man grows troublesome to himself,² that nobody can be hindered by another, and that opinion is the main thing which does good or harm in the world.

IX. We must manage the precepts of philosophy like those that wrestle and box in the circus, and not like a gladiator; for your fencer, if he drops his sword, is hewn down immediately; but the other that makes weapons of his limbs has them always about him, and has nothing to do but to keep his hands and feet stirring.

X. Be not satisfied with a superficial view, but penetrate the nature and quality of things; and to this purpose you must divide them into matter and form,³ and inquire into the end they were made for.

XI. What a mighty privilege is a man born to, since it is in his power not to do anything but what God Almighty approves, and to be satisfied with all the distributions of Providence!

XII. When things follow from the course and constitution of nature, we ought not to murmur at it. Not against the gods, for they have neither ill-will nor impotence, and by consequence can do nothing amiss; nor yet against men, for their misbehaviour is all involuntary,⁴ therefore we must complain of nobody.

XIII. How unacquainted is that man with the world, and how ridiculous does he appear, that makes a wonder of any thing he meets with here!

XIV. Either the order of things is fixed by irrevocable fate, or Providence may be worked into compassion, or else the world floats at random without any steerage. Now, if nature lies under an immovable necessity, to what purpose should you struggle against it? If the favour of Providence is to be gained, qualify yourself for the divine assistance; but if chance and confusion carry it, and nobody sits at the helm, be you contented, and ride out the storm patiently, for you have a governor within you,⁵ though the world

¹ See Book vii. 33, Book v. 26.

² See Book ix. 26.

³ See Book ii. sect. 12, Book iv. 21, Book vii. 29.

⁴ See Book vii. sect. 63, 64.

⁵ Your reason.

has none. And if the waves run too high, let them roll off your carcase and your fortune, but there is no necessity your mind should be driven with them.

XV. A lamp, unless you put it out, holds its light, and shines without interruption; and can you find in your heart to see your honesty sink in the socket, to outlast your sobriety, and let your virtue be extinguished before you?

XVI. When you fancy any one has transgressed, say this to yourself: How do I know it is a fault? And granting it is, it may be his conscience has corrected him; and if so, he has given himself a sour box on the ear. Besides, you are to remember, that to wish an ill man should not do amiss is just as wise as it would be to desire an unripe fig should not taste of the tree; that children should not squall in the cradle, nor horses neigh, nor a great many other things act according to the necessity of their condition. Pray, how would you have a man of such an unfortunate disposition behave himself? If you believe the case may be remedied, and are such a doctor at his disease, do so much as cure him.

XVII. If it is not decent, never do it; if it is not true, never speak it: let this always be your rule.

XVIII. Look always nicely into whatever makes an impression upon your mind; distinguish it into matter and form; find out the purpose and design for which it was contrived, and the period of time, too, beyond which it is unlikely to continue.

XIX. Consider, for it is high time, that you have something more divine in you than the mechanism of passion, than the wires and tackling of a puppet. What then is my soul made of? Is it fear, or jealousy, or lust? Or anything of this coarse nature? Certainly no.

XX. Take care never to do anything without thought and design, nor for any other end either, but what may be serviceable to the interest of society.¹

XXI. Consider that in a little time you will neither have place nor being, that your contemporaries will have the same fate, and the present scene of nature be shut up; for all things change of

¹ That is, of mankind in general.

course, and wither and drop in pieces, that new ones may be made out of them.

XXII. Thoughts are, in a great measure, masters of things, and, which is more, it is in your own power to think as you please; therefore do not suffer opinion to cheat you any longer. Disengage from the tyranny of fancy, and then, as if you doubled some dangerous cape, you will have nothing but a steady course, a smooth sea, and a land-locked bay to receive you.

XXIII. Every operation that ceases in due time, suffers nothing by breaking off; neither does the agent receive any harm upon this score. Thus life, which is nothing but a series and continuation of action, comes to no damages by having a seasonable period put to it; neither does he that lays this motion asleep sustain any loss, provided it is done at a proper juncture. Now, nature assigns the term, and sets out the bounds of life; sometimes this period is fixed by particular nature or force of constitution, as it happens when a man dies of old age; but let it come late or early, common nature¹ has certainly a hand in it. And thus the parts of nature, changing from one form to another, preserve the world in perpetual youth and vigour. Now, that is always as it should be, both as to time and quality, which makes for the service of the universe.² From hence it follows, that bare dying can be no real evil, seeing there is nothing of baseness or moral turpitude in it; for it is both involuntary with respect to ourselves, and serviceable to the general interest; therefore there can be nothing of scandal in it. Nay, it is certainly a good thing, since it is suitable and seasonable for the universe. And thus a man that goes off smoothly is, as it were, carried out of the world by inspiration. For he that follows the Deity with his motions, and with his will too, seems actuated by a divine impression.

XXIV. Let these three hints lie ready for service. First, as to your own actions, let nothing be done rashly, nor to no purpose, nor indeed in any other manner than justice herself would have ordered it. And as for casualties and the state of your fortune, consider that they are the blind distributions of chance, or else the appointment of Providence. Now, either to murmur against chance, or impeach Providence, is extremely absurd. Secondly, consider what a slight thing man is, from his conception to his birth or

¹ God.

² See Book iv. sect. 23, Book v. sect. 8.

animation ;¹ and from his first breath to his last, in the parts of his composition, and in the state of his dissolution. Thirdly, consider that, if you could shoot yourself at pleasure into the sky, and thence take a view of human affairs, you would perceive a strange medley of humour and condition ; and discover at the same time the air and ether too plentifully stocked with inhabitants,² and that if you mounted never so often, you would have the old prospect. Alas ! things are generally of the same complexion, and of the same short continuance too, and yet how strangely we are conceited of them !

XXV. Discharge opinion,³ and you are safe ; and pray who can hinder you from doing it ?

XXVI. When you are uneasy upon any account, you seem to forget that all things fall out according to the good pleasure of Providence, and that another man's fault is no concern of yours ; that what you reckon grievances is nothing but the old way of the world, and will come over again when you are dead and gone, and are now to be met with in a thousand places. You have forgotten that all mankind are of kin ; for though they may be unallied in flesh and blood, their understandings are all of the same family. You do not remember that every man's soul is a portion of the Deity, and derived from thence ; that we have nothing properly our own, but that our children, our bodies, and our breath, are all borrowed from heaven ; that opinion governs all, and things are only as you think them ; and that it is not possible for anybody to live or lose any more than the present moment. All this you seem to have forgotten.

XXVII. Reflect frequently upon those that have formerly been mightily disturbed with accidents of any kind ; that have carried their animosities and feuds to the most flaming excess ; that have made the most glorious figure, or met with the greatest misfortune ; and then ask yourself, Where are they all now ? They are vanished like a little smoke ; they shrank within the compass of an urn, and are nothing but ashes and romance,⁴ and it may be have not so much as the last imaginary advantage neither. Recollect likewise all that humour and oddness that some people affect, to appear as

¹ The Stoics believed a human foetus not animated till the time of birth. Tertull. *De Anim.*

² It was the opinion of the Platonists and Stoics that the air and sky were inhabited by spirits suitable to the respective regions.

³ Opinion is a common, but false notion of things.

⁴ See Book viii. sect. 25.

Fabius Catullinus did at his country seat, as Lucius Lupus and Stertinius did at Baiæ, to act the fancy of Vertius Rufus, or the liberties of Tiberius at Capreæ; thus people dote upon figure and singularity, though it is sometimes in lewdness;¹ but granting it is somewhat better, the prize is insignificant, and the play not worth the candle. It is much more becoming a philosopher to stand clear of affectation; to be honest and regular upon all occasions, and to follow cheerfully wherever the Gods lead on. As for pretence and hypocrisy, it is all stuff; for nothing is more scandalous than a man that is proud of his humility.

XXVIII. To those that ask me the reason of my being so earnest in religious worship;—Did I ever see any of the gods? or, which way am I convinced of the certainty of their existence?—in the first place I answer, that the gods are not invisible;² but granting they were, the objection would signify nothing. For I never had a sight of my own soul, and yet I have a great value for it, because it is discoverable by its operations. And thus, by my constant experience of the power of the gods, I have a proof of their being, and a reason for my veneration.

XXIX. The best provision for a happy life is to dissect everything, view it on all sides, and divide it into matter and form; to practise honesty in good earnest, and speak truth from the very soul of you: and when you have done this, live easy and cheerful, and crowd one good action so close to another, that there may not be the least empty or insignificant space between them.

XXX. The light of the sun is but one and the same, though it is divided by the interposition of walls and mountains, and abundance of other opaque bodies. There is but one common matter for corporeity, though it is parcelled out among bodies of different qualities. There is but one sensitive soul, notwithstanding it has peculiar conveyances, runs in innumerable channels, and supplies a vast number of animals distinct from each other. And lastly, the rational soul, though it seems to be split into distinction, is but one and the same.³ Now, excepting this last, the parts of the other species of form⁴ and matter, though

¹ That of Tiberius was such.

² The sun, the moon, and the stars, were gods in the opinion of the Stoics.

³ The Stoics held the rational soul a part of the Deity.

⁴ By form in rational creatures, the emperor seems to mean the mind, in animals the sensitive soul, in vegetable and inanimate things the principle of union which supports them in their distinction, and tacks their being together. (D'Acier.)

without apprehension or any common affection to tie them to each other, are yet upheld by an intelligent being, and by that faculty which pushes things of the same nature to the same place. But human understandings have a peculiar disposition to correspondence; they stick together by inclination, and nothing can extinguish such sociable thoughts in them.

XXXI. What is it you hanker after? Is it bare existence? or sensation? or motion? or strength, that you may lose it again in decay? What! is it the privilege of speech, or the power of thinking in general? Is any of this furniture big enough for desire? If all these things are trifles upon the matter, proceed to something that is worth your while; and that is, to be governed by reason and the Deity. And yet you cannot be said to value these last mentioned privileges rightly, if you are disturbed because death must take them from you.¹

XXXII. What a small part of unmeasurable time falls to the share of a single mortal, and how soon is every one swallowed up in eternity! What a handful of the universal matter goes to the making a human body, and what a very little of the universal soul too,² to raise it into an animal! And on what a narrow clod, with respect to the whole earth, do you crawl upon! Consider all this, and reckon nothing great, unless it be to act in conformity to your own reason, and to suffer as the Almighty shall appoint you.

XXXIII. The great business of a man is to improve his mind and govern his manners; this is minding the main chance. As for all other projects and pursuits, whether in our power to compass or not, they are no better than trifling and amusement.

XXXIV. We cannot have a more lively and promising notion, to set us above the fear of death, than to consider that it has been despised even by that sect³ who made pleasure and pain the standard of good and evil.

XXXV. He that likes no time so well as that fixed by Providence, he that is indifferent whether he has room for a long progress in reason and regularity or not,⁴ or whether he has a few or a great

¹ See Book ix. sect. 7, Book x. sect. 28.

² The emperor means the sensitive or vital soul, as the Stoics called it.

³ The Epicureans.

⁴ See Book ii. sect. 1.

many years to view the world in ; a person thus qualified will never be afraid of dying.

XXXVI. Hark ye, friend, you have been a burgher of this great city;¹ what matter though you have lived in it but a few years? if you have observed the laws of the corporation, the length or shortness of the time makes no difference. Where is the hardship, then, if Providence, that planted you here, orders your removal? You cannot say you are sent off by a tyrannical and unrighteous sentence ; no, you quit the stage as fairly as a player does, that has his discharge from the master of the revels. But I have only gone through three acts, and not held out to the end of the fifth. You say well ; but in life three acts make the play entire. He that appoints the entertainment is the best judge of the length of it ; and as he ordered the opening of the first scene, so now he gives the sign for shutting up the last. You are neither accountable for one or the other ; therefore retire in good humour, for he by whom you are dismissed means you no harm.

¹ The world.

THE END.

