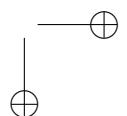
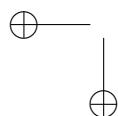
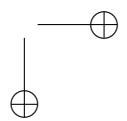
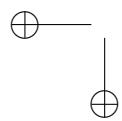
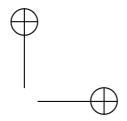
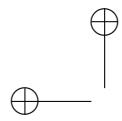
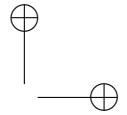
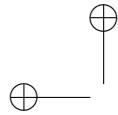


**JOUBERT**  
A SELECTION FROM  
HIS THOUGHT





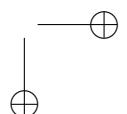
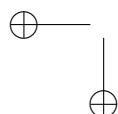


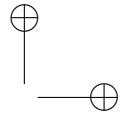
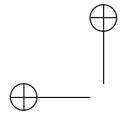
**JOUBERT**  
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HIS THOUGHT

*Translated by*  
*Katharine Lyttleton*

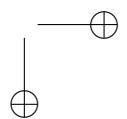
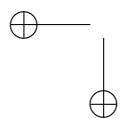
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*Mrs. Humphry Ward*

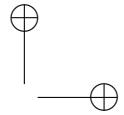
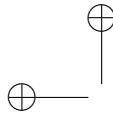
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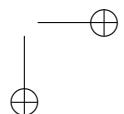
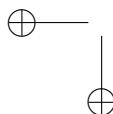


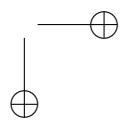
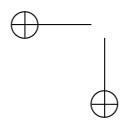
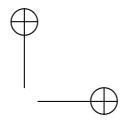
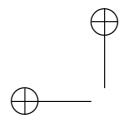
## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

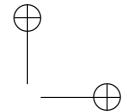
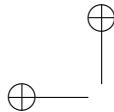
The Translator acknowledges gratefully the kind permission granted by Mrs. Matthew Arnold to quote in the following pages Mr. Matthew Arnold's translations of the thoughts introduced by him into his essay on Joubert.\* Where this has been done, the translation is acknowledged in a footnote.

The Translator has altered the arrangement of the chapters from that of the French edition so far as to place the section entitled 'The Author, drawn by Himself' at the end of the book instead of at the beginning. This change has been made in the belief that the section will have greater interest, and perhaps command a more friendly judgment, after the reader has made acquaintance with the author through the channel of his reflections on greater and more impersonal subjects.

\**Essays in Criticism. First Series.*





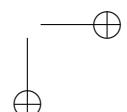
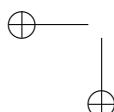


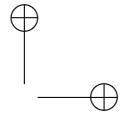
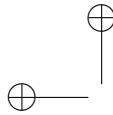
## INTRODUCTION\*

### I

In May 1824 there died in Paris a man who had in its perfection that rarest of all gifts, the gift for friendship. He was himself possessed of fine literary taste, of many thoughts, and a practised charm of style; but his work was and remains less than himself; and admirable and delightful as were the literary fragments he left behind him – the fragments of maxim and reflection which are known to us as the *Pensées de Joubert* – the man who produced them, as he moved among his friends, chatting, writing, kindling was not only more admirable and more delightful, but also of greater literary effect. Joubert was the counsellor and herald of Chateaubriand – that great Chateaubriand of whom M. de Vogüé has just said that henceforward any one

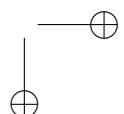
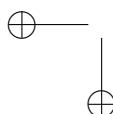
\*The chief books to be consulted are: *Pensées de J. Joubert, précédées de sa correspondance, etc.*, Paris, 1848; *Les Correspondants de Joubert*, par M. Paul de Raynal; *Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire*, par Sainte Beuve; *Pauline de Beaumont*, par M. Bardoux; *Chateaubriand's Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, 12 vols., Paris, 1849–50.

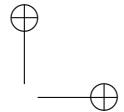
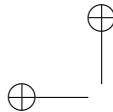




well acquainted with French literature, and picking up a book without name and without date, will always be able to say: 'This was written before or after Chateaubriand.' He was also the intimate friend and critic of some of the men who, after the boundless ruin and dislocation of the Terror, came together under the Consulate and the Empire for the re-building of institutions in a re-organised France. The old University of Paris, for instance, was no more. The new University, as Bonaparte designed and re-created it, had for its first grand master Fontanes, the intimate friend of Joubert, and Joubert belonged to its first Council. He took an eager interest in the University affairs, and there are letters of his extant on the re-organisation of studies and administration which breathe the very spirit of French culture – its delicacy and acuteness, its classical tradition, its prejudices and limitations.

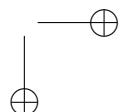
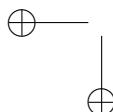
But Joubert himself was never an official, nor a man of action, not even a man of letters in the professional sense – far from it. *Inspirez et n'écrivez pas!* says a French writer speaking to women, and Joubert took these words to himself, and may almost be said to have made a rule of life from them. He did write indeed; there are the *Pensées* – sure of their modest but enduring place in French literature. But this writing of his was infinitely slow and scanty. It was the quiet, lifelong deposit of himself. Drop by drop the thoughts fell, crystallising and taking shape in a gentle and tranquil obscurity. And, in general, he did not write them for writing's sake. They came to him from

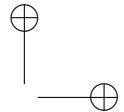
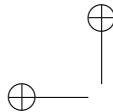




friendship, from talk with Fontanes or Chateaubriand, from the play of mind excited in him by a letter to Madame de Beaumont or Madame de Vintimille – in short, from that delicate social art which was once the source and stimulus of half the great things in French literature, and is still, in spite of all drawbacks and destructions, more active and more exquisitely understood in France than elsewhere. He lived, he thought, he felt, through his friends. Though his life was often solitary, his mind was never alone. A man of very uncertain health, his physical weakness gave him the opportunity for many subtleties and perfections of sympathy that sound men have no time for. As Chateaubriand so finely said of him, ‘His great aim was tranquillity, and no one was so troubled as he. – *C’était un égoïste qui ne s’occupait que des autres.*’

This short sketch will not attempt any fresh estimate of Joubert as a man of letters. In this respect the judgment which, for English readers, holds the field is the judgment of Matthew Arnold. The well-known study in the *Essays in Criticism*, from which a certain number of translations have been carried to the following pages by the permission of Mr. Arnold’s representatives, made Joubert’s place in English literary thought, and keeps him there. The impression which it left remains; and from one especially who not only derived from Matthew Arnold a literary impulse and joy never to be forgotten, but stood to him besides in the close and tender relations of kinship, a few supplemental and biographical pages, based here and



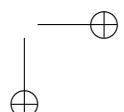
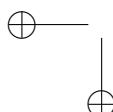


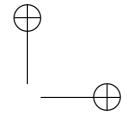
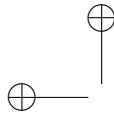
there on recent books, are all that a reader will look for. A whole band, moreover, of competent French critics have dwelt on Joubert's merits and affinities as a French writer. So that although it will be necessary to recall a few literary *data* in the following pages, and I shall also allow myself to quote Amiel's verdict on Joubert as a writer and thinker – a verdict published long after the *Essays in Criticism* – what I shall mainly dwell on will be the facts and relations of Joubert's personal history. Enough is known to us to show him 'in his habit as he lived,' as a man, a friend, a correspondent. And the reader who takes with him the memory of these personal incidents and affections will find, as he turns to the *Pensées*, that it invests them with a new charm, that it neutralises that slight air of pedantry which perhaps such a book must always wear in the eyes of after-generations, and makes him docile and friendly towards the writer, even when he is most fine-spun, or most dogmatic.

## II

Joseph Joubert was born in 1754, and he died in 1824. Those seventy years saw the disappearance of the old Europe, and the tragic birth of the new. Joubert was a child in southern France at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War; he went up to Paris at four and twenty, in the death-year of Voltaire and Rousseau, when Diderot, to whom he attached himself, was still at the height of power; he saw the triumph of the

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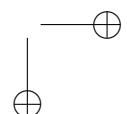
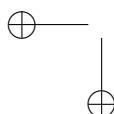


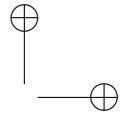
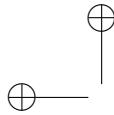


‘salons’ and the appearance of the *Confessions*; he passed through the Revolution and the Terror; he helped Chateaubriand to give voice and expression to that new and stormy life of Europe which was none the less conscious of all that it had conquered because it returned so passionately, so remorsefully, to much that it had overthrown; and he outlived Napoleon, and died a few weeks after Byron.

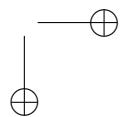
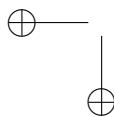
Of this long life, the determining facts, intellectually, were no doubt Joubert’s intercourse with Diderot in youth, and his later friendship with Chateaubriand, which began in 1800, when Joubert was forty-six.

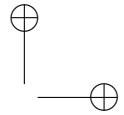
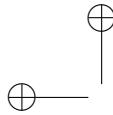
The two are in reality closely connected. It was under the influence of the most varied and inventive genius of the eighteenth century that Joubert caught his first glimpses of a new literary age, that he developed his presentiment of a literary art, more penetrating, heartfelt, and profound, than the eighteenth century was able to realise; it was Diderot the experimenter, Diderot the daring and inexhaustible author of the *Neveu de Rameau*, who set the younger man on the alert, whose influence developed in a mind that might have easily turned to the affectations and trivialities of literature, those *hardiesses*, – as his friends called them – that affinity for and prophecy of the Romantic spirit which emerges so curiously in Joubert, amid the classical culture and measure, the judgments, admirations and dislikes, that belong in the main to the France of his youth, the France of the philosophers.





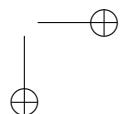
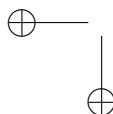
But though he deeply felt the influence of Diderot, and never in his later days spoke ill of him, Joubert was no child of Liberalism. He reproaches himself in later life that he was for a time led away by the philosophers. In reality he must always have moved among them as an alien. It was not for nothing that he was brought up by the 'Pères de la Doctrine Chrétienne' at Toulouse. He was on the side of faith both by temperament and training, and though his quick intellect felt the spur of Paris in those eager rushing years that preceded the Revolution, the deeper instincts of his fastidious, critical nature, his passion for measure, order, antiquity, and the subtler kinds of beauty, threw him inevitably into opposition, withdrew him from the crowd, and made him distrust the optimists of the moment, the champions of progress and 'perfectibility.' What he felt and thought, however, during the first years of the Revolution there is little or no direct evidence to show. He married at Paris, in 1793, in the very midst of the Terror; and when the storm is over we see him first as the devoted friend and correspondent of Pauline de Beaumont; then as the herald of Chateaubriand and of a re-adorned Catholicism; and finally as the eager admirer of the First Consul and of that one-man power, in which, at its rise, and before the Empire, the delicate student and recluse saw the only hope for his country. From the return of the Bourbons onwards Joubert must be held to belong to the camp of reaction, so far at any rate as his friends and surroundings were concerned. It is clear enough that in the last

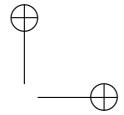
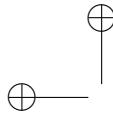




years of his life his house in the Rue St. Honoré was the centre of many unwise people and many tyrannical opinions. As a sympathetic Frenchman puts it, he and his friends 'sought to restore and strengthen in the heart of man the feelings that preserve, instead of, like their predecessors, encouraging and spreading abroad the feelings that destroy.' His cautious nephew and biographer, M. Paul de Raynal, admits that in his last years some of his old comrades visited him less frequently than before, because of the invasion of his house and *salon* by 'opinions that cared little for conciliation'; and the key to Joubert's own inmost feelings and to his tolerance for men like the intolerant and ultramontane M. de Bonald may be found in sayings like these from the *Pensées*: 'We must oppose to liberal ideas the moral ideas of all times'; or - 'Our age has believed itself to be making progress, when it was merely marching towards precipices'; or - 'It was from errors of the mind that all our woes sprang. And those most obstinately imbued with them have been the most criminal.'

Nevertheless, Joubert can never have been in full sympathy with his reactionary circle. As soon as any opinion tended to violence his temperament rebelled. He would cut himself off at any rate from its active expressions, from the newspapers or the politics through which it worked; he would refuse to be its slave; he would make perpetual effort, lessening in strength no doubt as the years passed on, to recover or to retain his mental pliancy and freedom. It was to this mingled

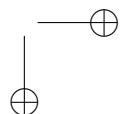
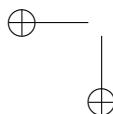


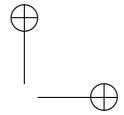
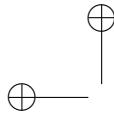


love for the old, and secret inborn jealousy for the new, that we may trace his recognition of Chateaubriand.

With all the later portion of Joubert's life, indeed, the career and success of Chateaubriand are no less significantly connected than the influence of Diderot with his earlier years. The novelty and poignancy of Chateaubriand's talent laid hold on him, because behind his reserve, his moderation, his critical subtlety, he was all the time on the watch for novelty and poignancy. And when the new and all-conquering talent threw itself into the service of the old Church, and of the expelled faith, which was now flowing back upon France like some great river upon its ancient channels, Joubert made himself alternately the herald and the guardian of the new force. When *Atala* is on the point of appearing, he scolds Madame de Beaumont's anxieties, in a memorable passage, that belongs to the history of French literature: —

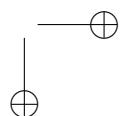
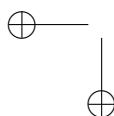
'I cannot share your fears,' he says, 'for what is beautiful must please; and in this book there is a *Venus*, heavenly for some, earthly for others, but perceptible by all. It is not a book like other books. There is in it a charm, a talisman, which belongs to the fingers of the workman. He has scattered it everywhere, because his hand has been everywhere; and wherever this charm, this stamp, this character makes itself felt, there will be pleasure, and a pleasure that satisfies. The book is *done*, and therefore the critical moment is over. Succeed it must, because it comes from the enchanter.'

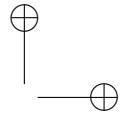
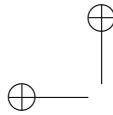




And later, when, after the brilliant success of *Atala*, Chateaubriand and Madame de Beaumont were together at Savigny, bringing the *Génie du Christianisme* into final shape, Joubert, the learned and the critical, is tormented with one dread only – lest the poet should trust too little to his poetry, and too much to his authorities. ‘For Heaven’s sake,’ he cries to Madame de Beaumont, ‘don’t let him read too much, or quote too much! Tell him the public will care very little for his quotations and a great deal for his thoughts; that people are much more curious about his genius than his learning; that they will look not for truth, but for beauty, in his book; that his gift alone, not his learning, will make the fortune of it; that in short he must depend on Chateaubriand to make the world love Christianity, and not upon Christianity to make the world love Chateaubriand.’

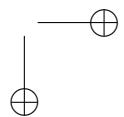
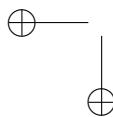
Never, given the moment and the man, did friend or critic speak with a more penetrating insight. The advice was itself the fruit of long literary training, working on an exquisite literary sense. On the other hand, Joubert’s experience of Chateaubriand, his reflections upon the nature of that strange inaugurative genius, and on the differences between his friend and himself, may be traced in many passages of the *Pensées*. He unfolds thought after thought, most suggestive, most modern, as to the power of mere personality, the uselessness of mere taking thought, the spell that belongs to the ‘enchanter,’ and to the personal accent that none can acquire or imitate. And one feels that all

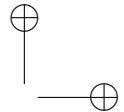
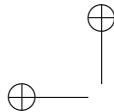




the time he is thinking of Chateaubriand. Moreover, that he has in view all through that great French public, which is above all preoccupied with the secrets of expression, and of effect.

Far away, in Germany, a learning was growing up, at this very moment, on these very subjects, beside which the quotations and authorities of the *Génie du Christianisme* look poor indeed. But this learning has not yet crossed the French border. M. Taine, and his brilliant sketch of the invasion of the French mind by German science, are still in the distance; M. Renan is not yet born; and the prevailing French tone on matters of research is that expressed in a contemptuous sentence of Fontanes' to Gueneau de Mussy: – 'A German, at the end of thirty years, knows much, but knows it ill; a Frenchman, like you – (the young gentleman, while unluckily ignorant of numismatics, is somehow to be fitted into a numismatical post) – at the end of a few months knows a little less, but knows it well.' Joubert's whole-hearted belief in Chateaubriand belongs, like Fontanes' scorn for the Germans, to the pre-researching age in France. But it springs still more from the traditional French passion for form, touched by something peculiarly modern; informed by sympathies that belong to a new time; more intimate, passionate, interrogative, personal; searching ever wider horizons, and sinking ever deeper plummets into the human soul. Chateaubriand brought a new landscape, a new passion, a new thrill into French literature. In doing it he was often vain, extravagant,

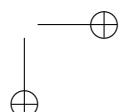
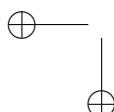


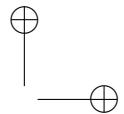
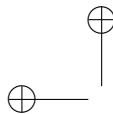


and false. His learning was hasty and borrowed, his pretensions enormous. The Ginguenés and Morellets of the time – true sons of the Encyclopedia and the Enlightenment – threw themselves upon his work, and found no difficulty whatever in tearing it to pieces. Joubert, as critical, as classical as any one else, knew better. The delicate invalid and recluse, who lived shut up with his Plato and Virgil, his Cicero and Plutarch, his La Bruyère and his Bossuet, for whom Racine was not pure enough, and Rousseau only a corrupting and poisonous force – this subtlest and most concentrated of writers, tormented, as he tells us, with the desire to get a phrase into a word and a book into a phrase, did yet discern in the stormy gift of Chateaubriand, in his glowing, faulty abundance, the dawn of that great Romantic movement, at once so tender to the past and so infinitely curious of new experience, in which we moderns still stand. It is this critical perception in Joubert which assures him his place, his small but honoured place, in the history of French letters. For it is these intuitions which make the critic himself creative, which, in their degree, snatch him also from ‘black Orcus’ and put him among the stars.

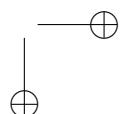
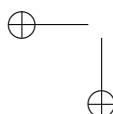
### III

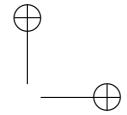
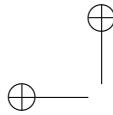
The relation to Diderot, then, and the relation to Chateaubriand – these are the two points to be remembered in Joubert’s literary history. In his private and personal history the points of determining im-





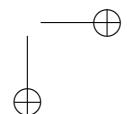
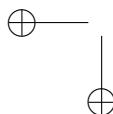
portance are his marriage, his devotion to Pauline de Beaumont, and the friendship of his later years for Madame de Vintimille. These indeed are its only incidents, unless we except his passing activity in the affairs of the new University under his friend Fontanes' grand-mastership. After his marriage in 1793, during the great years when Europe was re-made, the Joubert family knew no external event more exciting than their spring migration to Paris, matched by their winter return to their home at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne. And in his daily life Joubert was always protecting himself against emotions, keeping out the newspapers, refusing to read or discuss politics when politics became tormenting, withdrawing himself from all the persons and writings that did not yield him pleasure or edification. He would spend whole days in bed, clad in the 'pink silk spenser' that his friends remembered, couched there 'like a horse in its stall,' trying to feel nothing and think of nothing. And all the time, as Chateaubriand testifies, one of the most agitated and troubled of men! – troubled by literary effort and the pains of literary production, but troubled above all by the efforts, ambitions, and sorrows of a small number of beloved human beings, and throwing into a letter, a suggestion, a criticism, the whole nervous energy of his fragile being. There is a picture of him still in the possession of his family which shows precisely the thin face and form, the sharp features, the bright yet dreamy eye that any reader of the letters and *Pensées* might have expected. A friend said of him that he had

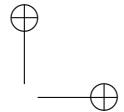
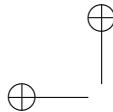




the air of a soul that has somehow met with a body, and is doing the best it can with it; and Joubert's half-feminine interest in his own peculiarities accepted the description and liked it.

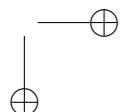
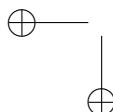
From all his later troubles of health or feeling his marriage, which took place in his fortieth year, seems to have been his best and enduring defence. His happiness was there, though not his romance. Originally, his union with Mademoiselle Moreau de Bussy was brought about by that fine French sense for what is practical and profitable, which has so much to do with French marriage in its best aspects. Joubert had been accustomed to visit some relations at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, one of the grave, red-roofed Burgundian towns. There he met with Mademoiselle Moreau de Bussy, a lady no longer young, living with her old mother and her brothers, all like himself – for he was a doctor's son – of a quiet professional type. Presently this little circle of relations and friends was broken by two deaths; and at last the eldest brother died. The active, managing daughter, a person of undemonstrative manners, but absorbed nevertheless in her family affections and domestic duties, was suddenly bewildered, thrown out of gear, by sorrow. Her breakdown under it seems to have astonished herself, and still more her old friend Joseph Joubert. He became her comforter; then all at once their relation and its possibilities appeared to him in a new light, and he wrote her the following letter – how characteristic both of the man and the *milieu!* –

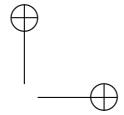
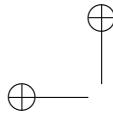




'I am, alas – and I groan over it – your oldest friend now that so many others are no more; the words rise to my pen from the very bottom of my heart. Think always how dear you are to me for many reasons; round you have gathered and concentrated all the feelings that were once inspired in me by a whole group and society. I love now, in you, both yourself and your brother, and your friend – the country which gave me so much pleasure, and the memories that my heart reveres.

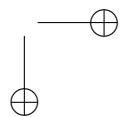
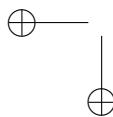
'You are a trust that your misfortunes have laid on me; a trust that I must keep and guard at all costs; a trust that I must have within reach, so that I may watch over it constantly. Yes, I must be near you, and you near me. What is the good of all that I say to you, and of all that I could say to you? It is like dropping good wine into a glass full of tears; one must first pour them away, and dry up the source of them; and no hand can do it, unless perhaps it be mine. To this use I devote it. It rests with you to make me waste my time, my health, my soul and body, in cares, efforts and prayers; or, on the other hand, to spare me all that, and to leave me what strength I have for other things, by consenting blindly to what must come if you live, and I live. Consent, then, at once: afterwards I will do whatever you like; consent, because you trust me: I will justify the trust: consent, in spite of yourself, and with repugnance, – I care nothing now for all that; it is the will's turn. If I were only twenty-five, I would give you ten years to think, and to answer me. But I am just thirty-eight; I won't give you a day, an hour, a minute, and I will be as obstinate as a mule. Spare me then a sea of trouble, and in one word say to me: *Very well! I consent to it, in the hope that some day I may wish it.*'

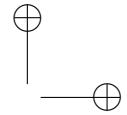
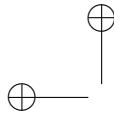




Mademoiselle Moreau de Bussy consented. Joubert, already the beloved friend of her mother and brothers, entered the Villeneuve household; there was some talk for a time of a separate *ménage*; then it died away, and the delicate, sweet-tempered, whimsical man of letters became the pride, almost the spoilt child of his adopted family, and lived with them to the end on terms of the most honourable and scrupulous affection. A number of the sayings in the *Pensées* must be interpreted in the light of the patriarchal customs, the fine frugal old-world manners, the sober generosities and reasonable faiths that seem to have prevailed in this large middle-class family of the most typical French stock, whereof Joubert had thus become a member. For his wife, she remained his guardian and best friend for thirty years; she had not much literature, nor many emotions; but she knew neither selfish passions nor small jealousies; and to move her to expression you had only to be ill and unhappy. In one of his later letters Joubert quietly says of her: 'I knew that she had merit, and some charms. The charms are gone; the merit remains.' And again, to Madame de Beaumont: 'I count a great deal on your discernment to discover the feelings and the merit that she has the bad habit of not showing enough. In old days, when I met her among her people, she seemed to me a violet under a bush. And since then fate has come upon her; her griefs have trampled her under foot, and her leaves hide her from sight.'

There was no romance, then, in this marriage, though there was much solid affection and common



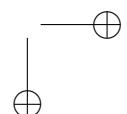
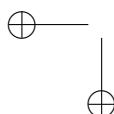


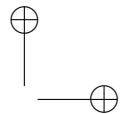
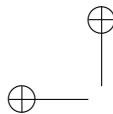
sense. Spell, illusion, the sense of charm and torment, entered Joubert's life with Pauline de Beaumont.

#### IV

Sometime in the summer of 1794, either just before or just after the fall of Robespierre, it came to the Jouberts' knowledge that a young lady, the married daughter of that ill-fated Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. de Montmorin, who had perished in the September massacres of '92, was in hiding at a vinedresser's cottage, a few miles from Villeneuve, somewhere on the road between Passy-sur-Yonne and Sens. The account of what she had gone through took hold on Joubert; he went over at once to see what he could do for her. They met outside the cottage, and as he talked with Pauline de Beaumont, Joubert, the learned and meditative student, seems to have realised for the first time that particular heightening which birth and manner, and all the subtler arts of social charm, can add to the attractions of a woman who possesses besides heart and sweetness, that intelligence, rather receptive than original, which makes her the natural friend of distinguished men – of men who seek in a woman just that degree of fine ability which evokes their own, and pass coldly by the rival and clamant genius of a Madame de Staël.

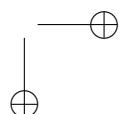
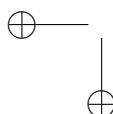
When Joubert first saw Pauline she was under the immediate shadow of calamities that had in truth exhausted the springs of being, and left her only a few

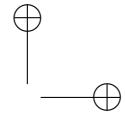
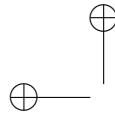




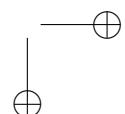
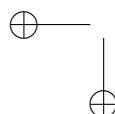
years to live. It was not two years since her father had been hacked to pieces outside the Abbaye prison, and it was only a few months since her mother and her young brother Calixte had fallen under the guillotine, and her poor sister, the Vicomtesse de Luzerne, had died of fever and anguish in the horrible hospital of the Saint Lazare prison, in February or March, '94. When the agents of the Committee of Public Safety fell upon the château near Passy in which the Montmorins were gathered, they carried off the mother, son, and two daughters. But Pauline was so ill and thin that they thought her dying, and in order not to be troubled with her on the journey to Paris, they stopped the cart and dropped her on the snow-covered road. She crawled back to a cottage belonging to some peasants she knew. They took her in, and about the middle of May she heard that mother, sister, and brother had been put to death, while every week's news, besides, told her of friend after friend thrown to the blood-thirst of Paris. From these blows she never recovered, though she lived for nine years afterwards. When Chateaubriand put up a monument to her in Rome, the sculptor under his direction imagined a tender and pathetic figure stretching her arms towards a throng of faces looking down upon her, and the sure instinct of the poet engraved below the cry of Rachel - '*Quia non sunt!*'

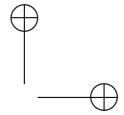
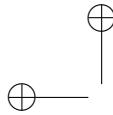
Her condition and her story took possession of Joubert and of his wife. They urged her to come to them at Villeneuve. Pauline, however, preferred to stay with





the labourer who had sheltered her, but during the autumn and winter months the constant interchange of visits, books, and letters between her and the Vileneuve household laid the foundations of a friendship that was to mean a great deal to Madame de Beaumont, and still more to Joubert. Pauline de Beaumont was a person in whom the intellectual and aristocratic traditions of eighteenth century Paris were equally strong. As a girl in her father's house we hear of her spending 7000 *écus* in a year on the purchase and binding of books; and when Joubert first saw her he found her buried in the study of philosophy, especially of Kant. The agony she had suffered and witnessed had produced two marked effects. Her religious faith was gone; the world in her eyes had neither God nor justice. On the other hand, her intelligence had revived with passionate force. One must love no more, believe no more, she seems to have said to herself; the world is too horrible; but in books and speculation one may at least forget it for a while – till the end comes. She read, therefore, incessantly – literature, history, philosophy. And what she read she discussed with Joubert. After her death, Joubert wrote to a friend: – 'Madame de Beaumont understood everything. You and I will never find her like again.... She was excellent to consult about ideas. She judged them admirably, and one might be sure that what had charmed her was exquisite indeed – if not for the crowd, at least for the elect.'

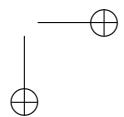
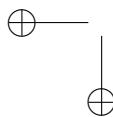


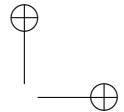
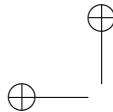


For six years, to comfort and cheer Pauline de Beaumont, to talk, read, and discuss with her, made the constant emotion, the daily innocent joy of Joubert's existence. His romance, profound as it came to be, was as harmless as himself. He was constantly contriving for this lonely woman small pleasures, gifts, and surprises; he tried to scold her back gently into health and happiness, as he had done with his wife, only in subtler and less homely ways.

'I shall never be able to admire you at my ease,' he writes to her in the early days of their friendship, — 'and to respect you as much as I should like to do, until I discover in you the finest courage of all, the courage to be happy.

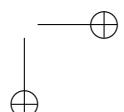
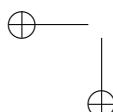
'But to reach it, you must first of all have the courage to take care of yourself, the wish to get well, and the will to be cured. I shall only believe you capable of it when you have lost, once for all, your charming fancy for dying on a journey, in some village inn. . . . In the name of intelligence, reason, humanity, and virtue, I conjure you, as soon as you get to Paris, to consult first of all a good doctor, and then to do what he tells you. You want not only to live quietly, and by rule; you want positive remedies. . . . If you delay these precautions, you will have in the end to go far from home, and from us, and perhaps without gaining anything by it. That, you will say, will be best of all. It would be soonest ended. Soonest, yes — but not soon. Dying takes a long time, and if, brutally speaking, it is sometimes agreeable to be dead, it is frightful to be dying for centuries. In short, when one has life one must love it; it is a duty. As for the whys of this statement, they are innumerable; I confine

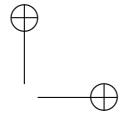
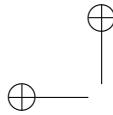




myself to asserting it. Perhaps it will annoy you; but even to please you, I am not going to keep silence on such a truth.'

All the lighter and more graceful sides of life, and the more exquisite forms of courtesy were no doubt largely developed in Joubert by his knowledge of Madame de Beaumont. She and her friends taught him – the doctor's son, from a provincial *milieu* – what they had to give. The class to which Pauline de Beaumont belonged has the leisure to be witty, to think out all the delicacies of social relation, to build up the little nothings – the letters, talks, and walks – of every day, into a many-coloured fabric of pleasure. Joubert's nephew and biographer rather pompously admits: 'It was – why deny it? – a happy circumstance in his life, this close friendship which chance brought about between himself and all that Paris could still supply of persons distinguished by birth, fortune, education, and good taste. Men assuredly are the sons of their works; but however gifted they may be, they owe nearly always a part of their ultimate worth to some accidental meeting or event.' Certainly during the nine years of their friendship, above all during the six years before Chateaubriand intervened, Joubert, as his papers testified after his death, wrote more freely, more happily, more effectively than before. The Joubert family learnt at last to spend part of every year in Paris, in order, as it would seem, to be near Madame de Beaumont, and through her little *salon* in



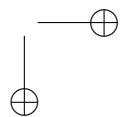
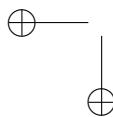


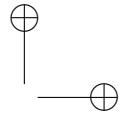
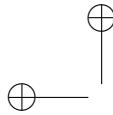
the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg Joubert found his way to a world where he belonged, a world of fastidious thought and feeling where he was amply at home.

From the letters of these years one might quote a number of delightful passages, passages that have the gentle humour, the affectionate lightness of Cowper, or – here and there – passages in direct relation with great men and great events, such as our English letter-writer cannot show.

Here is a letter of protest addressed to Madame de Beaumont at Theil – to a lady tired of herself, her thoughts, and the country, and half inclined to go to Paris in search of friends, talk, and news. Joubert is indignant; he guesses that it is Madame de Staël, *le tourbillon*, as he liked to call the author of *Corinne*, who is drawing her back to the agitations of Paris. He is afraid for her health. And besides, while she is at Theil or at Passy she is his neighbour, and within his reach; letters and books pass between them perpetually, and Joubert is happy: –

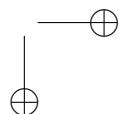
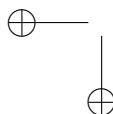
‘I commend you,’ he writes, ‘to all the saints, male and female, of Theil, to its caverns of green, its lakes of air and sunshine, and that river of light which flows between you and Sens! I commend you also to those glassy pools, which reflect your weeds. Mr. Shandy thinks much of pools and ponds; he will have it that a healing virtue rises from them. If so, may their divine mist steal on you – steep your soul in it! Malediction on those whose society has put you out of love with solitude! They may be proud of it; I regard it as a crime. Why must you go and live with these restless spirits? They have at

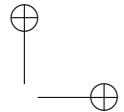
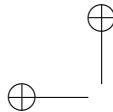




their head a whirlwind that is always hunting the clouds. They would like to ride the storm, of which all the time they are the mere playthings. The tumult in which they live has spoilt you; – but you will come round!'

Nothing in the world, he declares, is more fatal both to happiness and goodness than the 'passions of the mind,' when they are continuous. Intellectual craving is the most tormenting and insatiable of all cravings. It can be satisfied so rarely that the mind in which it reigns is forever tormented by 'desire without possession, and voracity without a prey.' As for the social passion, 'the passion for the public good' – to which no doubt Madame de Staël has often appealed – it is 'at this particular moment' pure folly. Bonaparte was 'at this particular moment' pursuing his victorious career in Italy; Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant were fighting for the defence of the Directory and constitutional liberty against the royalists on the one hand and the rising power of the young conqueror on the other. The forces that were to rule the future were still unrevealed, though the 18th Fructidor, the next great step in Bonaparte's career, was just approaching. 'The world,' cries Joubert, 'is given over to chance. Those who think they can stop its course by throwing into the waves the gravel and sand of their small intrigues' – (a shot meant of course for Madame de Staël and her circle) – 'are ignorant of all and everything. I greatly prefer to them the modest gentleman who spends his harmless time in dropping stones into his well, and

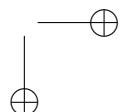
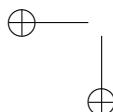


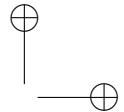
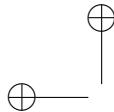


watching the rounds they make. He at least knows he is of no use, but these people think themselves important, and Heaven knows what time, brains, and merit they waste to become so! They are like children playing at disturbing crowns, and mending sceptres. 'They say they are anxious, and they are only restless. I beseech of you, on bended knees, love to be quiet! Admire, venerate repose! It is, I assure you, at this moment the only way to make few mistakes, and suffer few woes. I am so persuaded of it, that I have just sent orders to Paris that no more newspapers are to be sent to me, produced by people who can read and write, I will not be ignorant of what happens; but I will think about it, trouble about it no more.'

But for all this petulance, when Bonaparte at last takes his place, when the hour and the man have met, Joubert has an admirable passage. He rejoices in returning order, and what seems to him – though not to the keener eyes of Madame de Staël – returning liberty.

'Bonaparte is an admirable vice-king,' he writes in 1800. '*Cet homme n'est point parvenu il est arrivé à sa place.* I love him. But for him one could feel no admiration any more for anything alive and powerful.... I wish him constantly all the virtues, all the resources, all the enlightenment, all the perfections that he lacks, or that he has never had time to get. Through him enthusiasm, which was lost, idle, extinguished, annihilated, has sprung up again; and not only for him, but for all other great men, whom he too admires. His adventures have silenced the intellect, and kindled the imagination.

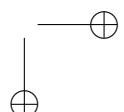
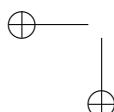


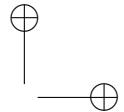
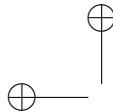


Wonder is born again, for the delight of a saddened earth, where no excellence was left conspicuous enough to impose itself on the rest. May he keep all his success; may he be more and more worthy of it; may he remain master for long! He is master indeed; and he knows how to be. We had infinite need of him! But he is young, he is mortal, and I despise all his associates!"

This was in 1800 – a year of infinite importance for Pauline de Beaumont, and through her for Joubert. Chateaubriand, newly returned from his eight years' exile in England, was brought one day, in the spring of 1800, by Fontanes, his friend and Joubert's, to the little *salon* in the Rue Neuve du Luxembourg. Pauline de Beaumont was then just thirty, and in the height of her delicate and plaintive charm. She was about to free herself by divorce from the last links of a degrading marriage – marriage with a man who had probably played a small but hideous part in the massacre of all her kindred under the Terror. She was beginning to recover her cheerfulness, and apparently her health. Many friends surrounded her, of whom Joubert was the most intimate and the most devoted. But the deepest and happiest emotions of life poor Pauline herself had never known. The entrance of Chateaubriand, young, handsome, moody, absorbed in his own genius, steeped in the selfishness of the artist, yet capable at any moment of a childish spontaneity and charm which ravished his companions, was the stroke of destiny for a woman who craved to love, and was now, by giving her heart to Chateaubriand, to

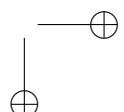
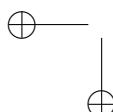
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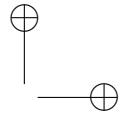
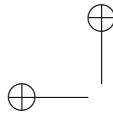




lose whatever faint last chance remained to her of happiness. Thenceforward Pauline de Beaumont's life was not her own. She lived for the writer of *Atala*, for his hopes, his fame, his success. Her fragile being consumed itself in efforts and ambitions for the man who had thus suddenly enchanted her.

But happiness was impossible. Chateaubriand was married, in the first place; although his wife at that moment meant little or nothing to him, and it was nearly ten years since he had seen her. In the next, he was absorbed in the passion for literary success, and it is perfectly clear that, until the last touching weeks in Rome, Pauline de Beaumont was mainly important to him because she greatly contributed to that success. He was her willing guest for seven months in a country home at Savigny, while she threw herself heart and soul into the completion of the *Génie du Christianisme*, listening, inspiring, criticising, copying for him in the morning, walking with him in the afternoon, writing letters to Joubert and others in quest of the books he wanted, and expressing to Joubert her trembling anxiety lest lack of knowledge or courage on her part should stand in the way of the due perfecting of the book, and the necessary correction of its faults. They were the happiest months of Pauline's existence. But the book was finished at last, and Pauline was called back to Paris by the illness of a little niece. All in fact was over; and she knew it. In the course of the following year, after the enormous success of his book, and as the reward of it Chateaubriand went to Rome



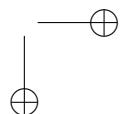
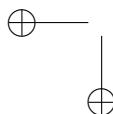


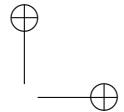
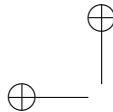
as secretary to the embassy of Cardinal Fesch. Pauline de Beaumont was left behind to read the old books, to write the old letters to Joubert, and presently to recognise that she was very ill. She went to Auvergne to take a 'cure' at Mont-Dore, and during the weeks of lonely suffering that she spent there, she wrote a few tragic fragments of a journal that still exist.

'How can I desire to live?' she writes. – 'My past life has been a series of misfortunes; my present life is full of agitation and trouble: all repose of mind has fled me for ever.

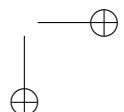
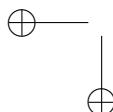
'This is the 10th of May, the anniversary of the deaths of my brother and my mother! "Péris, la dernière et la plus misérable!" – Oh, why have I not the courage to die? This illness that I was almost weak enough to fear appears to have been arrested, and perhaps I am doomed to live long. It seems to me, however, that I should die with joy. Nobody has more cause to complain of nature than I. She has denied me all, and yet she has given me the power to feel, to realise all that I have missed.'

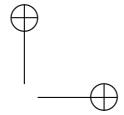
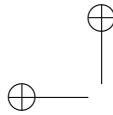
She craves for letters from friends, especially from Joubert, but when they come they give her small pleasure. The restlessness of death is already upon her, and presently the desire to see Chateaubriand again at Rome becomes too strong to be resisted. She speaks vaguely at first to Joubert of going 'to the south'; then she discloses the Roman project. He seems to have opposed it with energy. 'That fatal journey to Rome,' he says later, 'and the desire to prevent it,





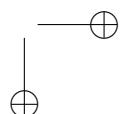
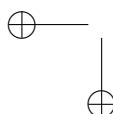
absorbed all my thoughts, all my powers.' But he could not prevent it. Madame de Beaumont arrived in Rome late in October. She drove in the Campagna with Chateaubriand, she felt the glow of the Italian sun, the breath of the Roman magic. For three weeks she struggled against death; then she died; and the incident which, as his friends feared, was to make Chateaubriand ridiculous, won him the sympathies of Rome, and smoothed away a number of difficulties with which his enormous vanity and his incalculable moods had already encumbered his path. In the *Mémoires d'Outretombe*, he gives an account, touched with all the charm of his extraordinary literary gift, of Pauline's death. During her last hours he seems to have given her full assurance of a devotion which could no longer embarrass either himself or her; and her poor heart was comforted. 'As she listened to me,' he says, 'she seemed to die, *désespérée et ravie*.' The phrase must have satisfied the artist; it still haunts the reader. But the Catholic also shows to advantage in these last scenes. The horrors of the Revolution, as we have seen, had robbed Madame de Beaumont of her faith. But as death approached, Chateaubriand prevailed upon her to send for a priest. A good French priest arrived, and heard her confession; afterwards Chateaubriand and her two old servants received the Sacrament with her. When it was all over, and Chateaubriand returned to her, she received him with a faint smile. '*Etes-vous content de moi?*' she asked him; and they were almost

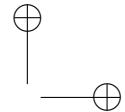
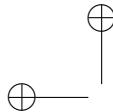




her last words. All her charm is in them, and all her fate.

During these three years of Chateaubriand's ascendancy, and during the weeks of her last illness, Joubert's affection for her must have been often sorely tried. He felt no jealousy; he resolutely refused to admit a breath of scandal. He showed and felt an interest in Chateaubriand's success only second to hers; he was always ready to advise and to encourage; and when the great book appears, no one more generous and more triumphant than he. But the old response, the close and eager friendship, were his no longer; and as the emotions of these months wore away Pauline's strength, Joubert's affection for her took a much deeper and more tumultuous note. 'My kindnesses,' he says, in a letter to his friend M. Molé, 'have the tenderness and the fire of passions' – apparently because, in him, mind and imagination mingled with all his feelings, took possession of them, were constantly employed in heightening them, searching them out, giving them vivid and subtle expression. This brooding introspective mood, he would seem to say, destroys passion: 'My passions have always lasted but a short time, and have left no trace'; but it makes feeling infinitely more productive, expansive, and lasting than it commonly is. And certainly feeling – the sympathy of one human being for another – has seldom found more tender and profound expression than in the last letters of Joubert to Madame de Beaumont. They were written to her during her stay at Mont-Dore, and they show

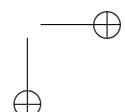
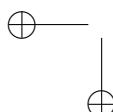


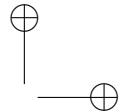
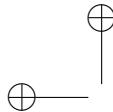


the increasing anxiety and dread with which his mind was filled, both as to her moral and physical health, with admirable force; they are a lasting witness to the character of the man who wrote them.

On the 23rd of August he writes: —

'When you get no letters from us, it is at the most one little pleasure the less for you in the world; but when we get none from you, we suffer an unbearable torment.... Fear implies with me an unnatural and abnormal state. Judge, then, to what a condition I have been reduced by the terrors of every sort that have shaken me this week, of which you were the subject. I was slow to take alarm; but when the utmost limit of expectation had passed, when the post, which comes three times a week, went by time after time without bringing anything from you; when, in short, the terrible *no* which always greeted my question — "Are there any letters from Mme. de Beaumont?" — had made my ears burn by its obstinacy and monotony, a kind of trembling took possession of my heart, and I filled all the house with my complaints. At last, a letter that I received yesterday from Mme. de Vintimille tells me that you had written to her from Mont-Dore; that you were much bored, which is at least a sign of life; and that the waters sent you to sleep, which at any rate must rest you. I shall never see her writing again without a keen pleasure, not only on her own account, but still more on yours, and because of the extreme relief that her letter brought me. Now, let your letters arrive when they please, I am at rest. There will be nothing lost but pleasure, and after the trouble of mind I have gone through, everything seems to me rest and happiness.

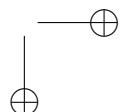
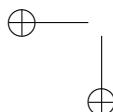


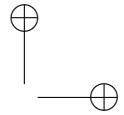
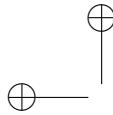


‘This letter from Mme. de Vintimille was put into my hands when we were just getting into the carriage. I had not opened it before we set out, because it had taken me some time to growl and storm over the fact that there was nothing else for me than that. We were going sadly towards Bussy, when, as I read the letter by the light of one of the four windows of the carriage, I found and read aloud the mention that it made of you. The surprise of it put the whole carriageful in spirits in a moment, down to the children and the horse. So remind yourself sometimes with what incurable fidelity we all love you, in this little corner of the earth; and may that induce you to get well, and to let us know what it is that you are doing for that good end.’

A little later, his language about her health takes a more serious, a more touching tone. He speaks once more of the care of health as a duty that ‘it pleases Heaven to lay upon us’; and then he remembers that Madame de Beaumont does not allow herself the comforts and restraints of religious hope. The thought distresses and bewilders him.

‘I have brought in Heaven’ (he says) ‘as a necessary ingredient in this hotch-potch of advice. But if you will persist in getting rid of Heaven, in separating it from the earth which it surrounds, and from your ideas of existence, I don’t know indeed what those who have no health are to make of the world and life, – unless they have the support of some absorbing friendship. . . . Alas, I feel that my pen wavers, and my mind sinks in discouragement. It wanders and stammers, it retreats abashed, when it speaks to you so – just as my tongue

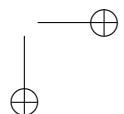
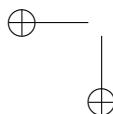


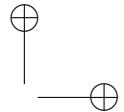
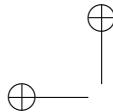


does whenever I see that some one does not understand me. I must watch and wait till some happy circumstance has revived in you that store of clear reason, which is not lost, which is always there. Whenever it gathers strength again, you will wish to live, you *will* live, and you will get well without thinking of it. Meanwhile, as to my particular maxim, take my prescription, and bear with it: *life is a duty*. . . . I dare not oppose your plans for the South: you might cough less there; and nothing matters so much. I await your decision with anxious impatience, as one waits for the news of some great lawsuit in which all one's fortune is engaged. If the North carries the day, then you must come and pass the winter here. You should have a room to the south, Mme. St. Germain' (her maid) 'beside you; a climate worse perhaps than that of Paris, but a repose that you will find nowhere else, and which is, in my belief, the remedy that you need most.

'Write me short letters (it needs some self-control to give you that advice!), and take care of yourself. That is all I ask of you as long as you live, to pay me for all the torments that you inflict on me.'

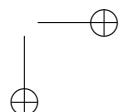
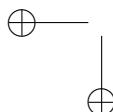
The anguish deepens. The Roman plan is disclosed to him, and he dreads everything – the fatigue of the journey, the emotions of the meeting with Chateaubriand. At last he knows that Madame de Beaumont has left France for Italy, and he writes to her at Rome. The letter is dated the 12th of October, three weeks before her death, and there is nothing to show us whether it ever reached her: –

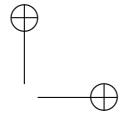
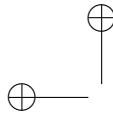




'If I have not written to you, it is from grief. Your departure in such a state of fatigue, and your immense distance from us have made me miserable. I do not think that I ever knew a sadder feeling than that which has been my bitter breakfast every morning lately, when at waking, ever since your last letter, I have said to myself: "Now she is out of France" – or, "Now she is far away" – and so on....

'By now you have arrived; but are you peaceful? Are you rested? Are you recovered? It would take me very long to be able to believe it. Your life whirls in a perpetual storm, and if you are only to be held up by the inevitable curiosity and excitement brought to bear upon you, that alone will do you injury. My God! My God! – Make haste, if you wish me to be at peace, if you wish me to forgive you, if you wish that I should recover a little repose of mind, make haste to tell me that you are better, or I shall die in a dumb rage. In my sadness and ill humour I have broken off all communication with the whole world. The letters that people write me make a heap beside me; I can't even read them to the end. I write no more. Wrapped in my grief like a dark cloak, I hide myself in it, I bury myself in it, I live in it dumb and silent. The pleasure that I once had in talking is altogether lost for me. I make vows of silence. I shall stay here all the winter. My inner life will be known only to God and myself. My heart keeps all its old affections, but they bring me joy no longer. You beg me to love you always. Alas! can I do anything else? – whatever you are, and whatever you may wish. There was between us a sympathy to which you have sometimes opposed many an obstacle and many a contradiction. But when my feelings are strong and deep, nothing can change them, weaken them, or interrupt them, No one has ever filled me with a more solid, a more faithful attachment

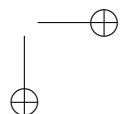
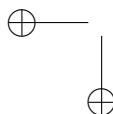


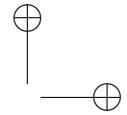
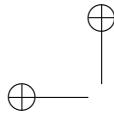


than you. — Write to us as often as you can. Among all your letters, perhaps there may be some that will console me. I have need of it, I shall long have need of it. Perhaps there would have been more prudence, more discretion, if I had said less; but I should have offended the truth too much, and I dare to believe that you will prefer my sincerity to a reserve which would have hidden from you the mortal pain you have inflicted upon me, but would, at the same time, have concealed from you this last and new expression of an affection that has no bounds, and that nothing can ever diminish in the least. — Good-bye, cause of so many griefs, who have been for me so often the source of so many joys! Good-bye! Take care of yourself, watch over yourself, and come back some day to us, if it were only to give me for one instant the ineffable pleasure of seeing you again.'

In the presence of feeling so true and so impassioned, one may well understand how it was that for twenty-one years afterwards, till Joubert's own death in 1824, the month of October was specially consecrated in the Joubert household to the memory of Pauline de Beaumont. They thought of her, they spoke of her, they prayed for her.

'I will tell you nothing of my grief,' writes Joubert to a common friend, after the fatal news had reached him. 'It is not extravagant, but it will be eternal.... Chateaubriand no doubt regrets her as much as I, but he will not miss her so long. For nine years I have never had a thought in which she was not in some way or another concerned. This is one of those habits which



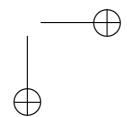
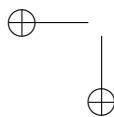


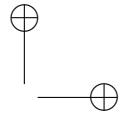
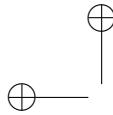
is not undone, and I shall never again have an idea with which her memory and the grief of her absence will not mingle.'

This is to be loved indeed, with a true and disinterested affection, over which it is salutary to linger. In these rushing days we moderns have small leisure even to feel, still less to know our own griefs, to be acquainted thus with our own soul. It is easy to dismiss, even to despise, these more expansive and articulate emotions of the past; but it is probably more human to let our sympathy with them tend to correct and enrich the present.

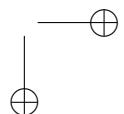
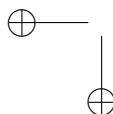
In the last twenty years of Joubert's life, the few letters that remain to us are almost equally divided between literary and university affairs and those devoted to another friendship – that with Madame de Vintimille. For her Joubert retains to the end his old playfulness and charm; he shows once more his power and constancy of feeling. It is not the feeling which Pauline de Beaumont had commanded; that voice in Joubert's life is heard no more. But otherwise all his strong interests, whims, antagonisms remain. He reads passionately, yet always fastidiously. He shows a kind of old-maidish care at once of his health and of his peace of mind. At one moment he will throw himself with a fearless independence and energy into the forcing of his ideas of administration and reform upon his friend Fontanes, the Grand Master; at another he will retire to his bed for days together, to avoid the excitement of friends and conversation. One day

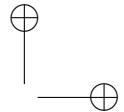
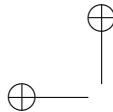
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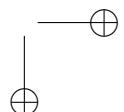
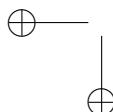
he will live on milk, another day on mincemeat; at one time he has a mania for exercise, at another will hardly drive over the smoothest pavement. One thinks of Mr. Woodhouse, with his gruel. But all through he is what he is meant to be – friend, talker, thinker – the impulse and the critic of other men's lives. 'All who knew M. Joubert,' says Chateaubriand after his death, 'will miss him eternally.' His very whims and obstinacies increased his hold. They were all gentle, all of the mind. He hated the strife of politics, and would have nothing to do with it. But no book that he disliked, however famous, could pass the door of his library; and of many books that he admitted he would destroy portions, and leave them shivering in their half-empty covers. As time went on, no doubt, the freedom and originality of judgment which had led him to welcome the genius of Chateaubriand abated somewhat. He fell back upon the old French culture, and found it enough. The circle of men and ideas in which he lived has after all a cribbed and cloistered air, compared with other circles of the time. Joubert knows no English, no German. He reads Kant, in Latin, but only to exclaim against the formlessness of the German mind. He reads Richardson and Shakespeare in translations; but only, at last, to maintain that the Abbé Delille's translation of *Paradise Lost* is and must be better than the original. A certain primness and affectation invades his maxims and reflections; the great tide of modern criticism and modern poetry to which in his vigorous middle years he had found

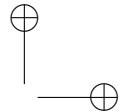
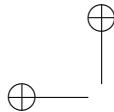




the courage to yield himself, seems in the end to pass him by. ‘His philosophy,’ says Amiel of him in 1851, ‘is merely literary and popular; his originality is only in detail and in execution. . . . All that has to do with large views, with the whole of things, is very little at Joubert’s command; he has no philosophy of history, no speculative intuition.’ But within his own limits, as Amiel confesses abundantly, Joubert is still among the first and choicest. Within the sphere of all that is subtle and delicate in imagination and feeling, ‘within the circle of personal affection and pre-occupation, of social and educational interests, he abounds in ingenuity and sagacity, in fine criticisms, in exquisite touches.’ His letters are ‘remarkable for grace, delicacy, atticism and precision,’ and he is one of those men who are ‘superior to their works, and who have themselves the unity which these lack.’

Beside this verdict of Amiel’s, with its praise and its depreciation, let us recall once more Matthew Arnold’s generous sentences. — ‘Joubert is the most prepossessing and convincing of witnesses to the good of loving light. Because he sincerely loved light, and did not prefer to it any little private darkness of his own, he found light; his eye was single, and therefore his whole body was full of light. And because he was full of light, he was also full of happiness. In spite of his infirmities, in spite of his sufferings, in spite of his obscurity, he was the happiest man alive; his life was as charming as his thoughts.’ And then, before we enter the circle of the *Pensées*, and surrender ourselves to their mea-

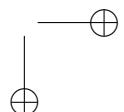
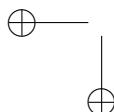


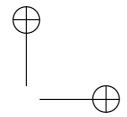
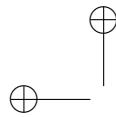


sured grace, their old-world precision, their delicate and leisurely meditation, let us approach them finally through this lovely passage of Chateaubriand's, written many years after Joubert's death, but still warm with memory and grief: —

‘Where now,’ he asks himself, as he looks back from the days of Louis Philippe on the friends of 1803 — ‘where now is all this circle? Ah! if you wish to prepare for yourself eternal mourning, make plans — surround yourself with friends! Mme. de Beaumont is dead, Chênedollé is dead, Mme. de Vintimille is dead. In old days I used to visit M. Joubert at Villeneuve during the vintage: I used to walk with him on the hills above the Yonne; he would gather mushrooms under the plantations, and I autumn crocuses from the fields. We talked of all kinds of things, and particularly of our friend, Mme. de Beaumont, absent for ever: we recalled the memories of youth, and its hopes. The evening brought us back to Villeneuve, a town still surrounded with crumbling walls from the time of Philippe Auguste — walls with ruined towers, whence rose the smoke of fires kindled in them by the vintagers. Far off on the hill Joubert would show me a sandy pathway leading through woods, the path which he used to take when he went to see Mme. de Beaumont, at the time that she was hiding in the chateau of Passy during the Terror.

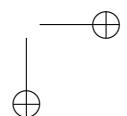
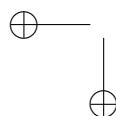
‘Since the death of my dear host, I have crossed the Sens country four or five times. From the high-road I saw the hills: Joubert walked there no more;

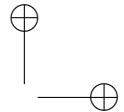
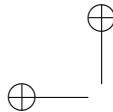




I recognised the fields, the vines, the little heaps of stones where we used to sit and rest. Passing through Villeneuve I looked down the deserted street, and at the closed house of my friend. The last time that this happened to me I was going as ambassador to Rome. Ah, if he had still been there, I would have carried him off with me to the tomb of Mme. de Beaumont! It pleased God, however, to open to M. Joubert a heavenly Rome, better fitted still to his Platonist and Christian soul. I shall meet him no more here below. "I shall go to him; he will not return to me."

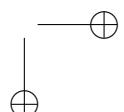
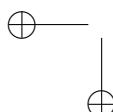
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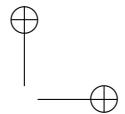
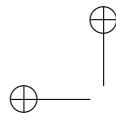




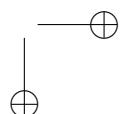
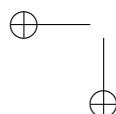
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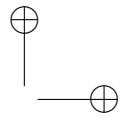
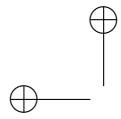
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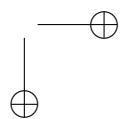
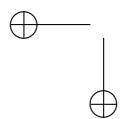
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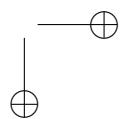
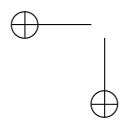
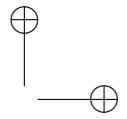
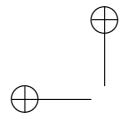


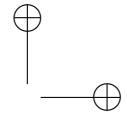
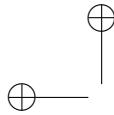


**JOUBERT**

A SELECTION FROM  
HIS THOUGHT







### OF GOD, CREATION, ETERNITY, PIETY, RELIGION, ETC.

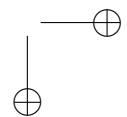
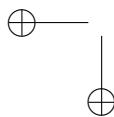
God is so great, and so vast, that to understand Him it is necessary to divide Him.

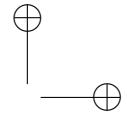
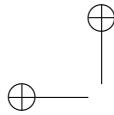
We always believe that God is like ourselves. The indulgent proclaim Him indulgent, the malignant preach Him as terrible.

All fine and delicate thought in which the soul truly takes part recalls us to God and to piety. The soul cannot stir, awaken, open its eyes without feeling God. God is felt by the soul as air is felt by the body.

Dare I say it? God may be easily known if only we do not force ourselves to define Him.

Earth is only comprehensible to those who have known heaven. Without the world of religion, the world of sense offers nothing but a desolating enigma.





The God of metaphysics is but an idea, but the God of religion, the Creator of heaven and earth, the sovereign Judge of actions and thoughts, is a force.

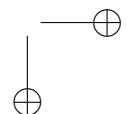
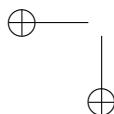
Because matter is constantly in our sight, we are hindered from seeing it. In vain do you glorify the workman by showing us the wonders of his work; the quantity blinds us, the object distracts us, and the end, though for ever indicated, is for ever invisible.

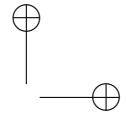
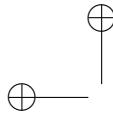
Would God have made human life merely to contemplate the flow of it, merely to watch the tossing, and tumbling, the play, and the variety – or merely to have the sight of ever-moving hands passing a torch from one to another? No; God does nothing but for eternity.

Our immortality is revealed to us by an inner message breathed at birth into the soul. God Himself when He created us implanted this word, engraved this truth, of which the tones and tokens are indestructible. But, in doing this, God whispers to us and enlightens us secretly. To catch His accents, we must have an inner silence; to see His light, the senses must be closed, and we must look within.

Whither go our ideas? Into the memory of God.

God, in creating our souls and our natures, speaks to them, and gives them teaching whose import is forgotten, but whose impress remains; of this speech and of this light, thus implanted, there remain through the darkest hours of the soul, and in the most forgetful hours of the mind, a murmur and a reflection that

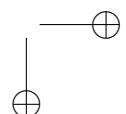
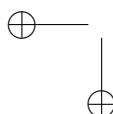


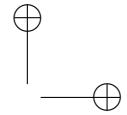
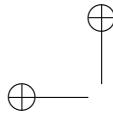


never cease, and that sooner or later disturb us amid our worldly distractions.

Will God permit fine thoughts to rank with fine actions? Will there be a reward for those who have sought for them, who have delighted in them, and applied themselves to them? Will the philosopher and the politician be repaid for their projects as the good man for his good deeds? And has useful labour merit in the eyes of God, like a good life? It may well be; but the reward of the first is not as certain as that of the second, and will not be the same; God has put no hope or certainty of it into our souls; other motives guide us. However, I can well imagine Bossuet, Fénelon, Plato, laying their work before God, even Pascal and La Bruyère, even Vauvenargues, and La Fontaine, for their works reflect their souls, and could be counted to their credit in heaven. But it seems to me Rousseau and Montesquieu would hardly dare to present their work: they have only put into it their talents, their moods and their industry. As for Voltaire, his works also reflect the man, and they will be counted – but to his cost.

God takes the ages into account. He pardons the coarseness of some, the over-refinement of others. Little known by some, mis-known by others, in His even scales He counts to our excuse the superstitions and the unbeliefs of the times in which we live. Our age is sick; He sees it. Our understanding is maimed; He will pardon us, if we give wholly to Him whatever there may be left in us that is sound.





To have a good intelligence and a bad brain – that is fairly common among the delicate spirits.

Oh! ye fat geniuses, despise not the lean!

There is a weakness of body which comes from the strength of the mind, and a weakness of mind which comes from the strength of the body.

A mind has still some strength, so long as it has strength to bewail its feebleness.

All fine natures have the quality of lightness, and as they have wings to rise with, so have they also wings to go astray.

There are some men who are only in full possession of their minds when they are in a good temper, and others only when they are sad.

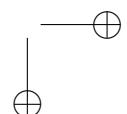
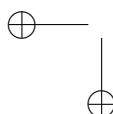
There are some who can only find activity in repose, and others who can only find repose in movement.

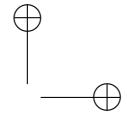
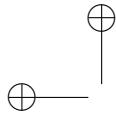
Minds that never rest are greatly prone to go astray.

To occupy ourselves with little things as with great, to be as fit and ready for the one as for the other, is not weakness and littleness, but power and sufficiency.

Those who have denied themselves grave thoughts, are apt to fall into sombre thoughts.

Enlightenment – a great word! Some men think themselves enlightened, because they are decided, taking conviction for truth, and strong conception for intelligence. Others, because they know all that can be





said think that they know all truth. But which of us is enlightened by that eternal light that shines as it were from the walls of the brain, and makes forever luminous those minds wherein it enters, and those objects that it has touched!

The man of imagination without learning has wings and no feet.\*

In some minds there is a nucleus of error, which attracts and assimilates everything to itself.

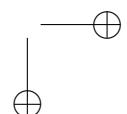
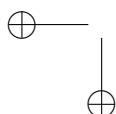
If men of imagination are sometimes the dupes of appearance, colder intellects are often the dupes of their own reasonings.

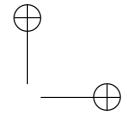
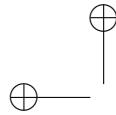
It is no use to hold ideas strongly, the important thing is to have strong ideas; that is to say, ideas that contain a great force of truth. Now the truth, and its force depend in no way upon the brain of the man. We call him a strong man who resists all argument, but that is only a strength of attitude. A blunt arrow, launched by a strong hand, may hit hard, because it flies from body to body; but strong lungs and great determination will not give true efficacy to a weak idea loudly expressed, for it is only mind that flies to mind.

The lofty mind finds pleasure in generalities; the weighty mind loves applications.

Questions show the mind's range, and answers its subtlety.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





## OF THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

The passions must be purified; by good guidance and control they can all be made innocent. Even hatred may be praiseworthy when it arises only from a keen love of good. Whatever purifies the passions strengthens them, makes them more lasting, and the sources of greater delight.

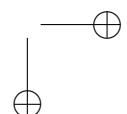
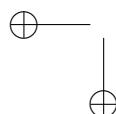
We employ in the service of our passions the stuff that was given us for happiness.

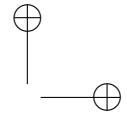
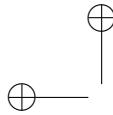
Passions of the mind, and ambitions of the body, are both monstrosities.

The passions are but nature; it is impenitence that corrupts.

Repentance is nature's effort to rid the soul of its corrupting forces.

Remorse is the punishment of crime; repentance is its expiation. The one belongs to a tormented conscience, the other to a soul that has changed for the better.





Ignorance and vice are the sources of distrust, as enlightenment and virtue are the sources of trust. Suspicion is the portion of the blind.

All the passions seek what feeds them: fear loves the idea of danger.

Sentiment makes everything but itself seem insipid; that is its drawback. It is also the great drawback of pleasure that it creates a distaste for reason.

The man who fears pleasure is of finer stuff than the man who hates it.

There is much coldness of soul in every kind of excess; – it is the deliberate and voluntary abuse of pleasure.

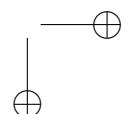
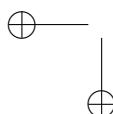
Nothing dwarfs a man so much as petty pleasures.

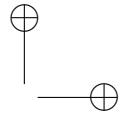
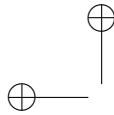
The man who sings when he is alone, and when, so to speak, his whole being is at a standstill, shows by this alone a certain balance and harmony in his condition; all his strings are in tune.

Good temper is fruitful in happy fancies, in fair vistas, in hopes, and plans of pleasure. Good temper is to the pleasures of man what imagination is to the fine arts – it delights in them, loves, multiplies, creates them.

Gaiety clears the mind, especially in literature; tedium confuses it; great tension warps it; the sublime refreshes it.

Grace resides in garments, movements, or manner. Beauty in the nude, and in form. This is true of the





body; but when it is a question of feelings, beauty lies in their spiritual quality, and grace in their reserve.

Grief tends to an equilibrium. Tranquillity of life may sometimes be a counterpoise to the weight of a moment's despair.

In both anger and grief there is a spring, that we must know both how to hold, and how to let go.

It is always our incapacities that irritate us.

Happiness is to feel one's soul good; there is really no other, and one may have this happiness even in sorrow: hence there are some griefs that are preferable to any joy, and that would be preferred by all who have felt them.

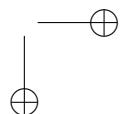
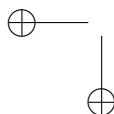
One element in all happiness is to feel that we have deserved it.

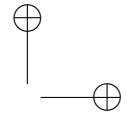
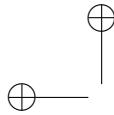
Those who love always have no leisure to pity themselves, or to be unhappy.

We must not only cultivate our friends, but our own power of friendship; we must preserve it with care, tend it and water it, so to speak.

He who cannot idealise what he sees is a bad painter, a bad friend, a bad lover; he cannot raise his heart and mind to the point of affection.

We must offer our esteem to our friends, as we would a meal, in which everything is abundant – without taxing or curtailing any part of it.





Those who watch with a malicious eye for the faults of their friends discover them with joy. He cannot be a friend who is never a dupe.

When we love, it is the heart that judges.

He who has none of the weaknesses of friendship, has none of its powers.

We always lose the friendship of those who lose our esteem.

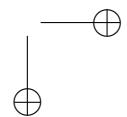
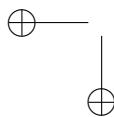
It is a cruel situation when we cannot make up our minds to hate and despise the man whom we cannot esteem or love.

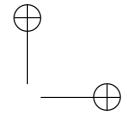
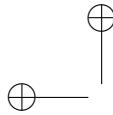
Frankness is often lost between friends by the silence, the tact and the discretion which they practise towards one another.

Time calms all excitements, even the excitement of friendship; the most enduring fidelity outlives its admirations.

A man who betrays no foibles is either a fool or a hypocrite, whom we should distrust. There are some faults so allied to good qualities, that they proclaim them, and of such faults we do better not to cure ourselves.

Our fine qualities are often only loved and praised because their brilliance is tempered by our defects. Often indeed it happens that we are more loved for our faults than for our qualities.





The faults that make a man ridiculous hardly make him odious; so, by being ridiculous, we escape being odious.

We must make ourselves beloved, for men are only just towards those whom they love.

We can only hope for true affection from those who are naturally gentle and loving.

Do not admit the greedy among your friends or your disciples, for they are capable of neither wisdom nor fidelity.

Men often choose to love those whom they fear, so as to be protected by them.

The hatred between the two sexes is almost unquenchable.

The punishment of those who have loved women too much, is to love them always.

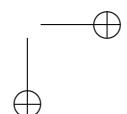
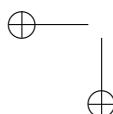
Tenderness is the repose of passion.

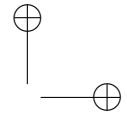
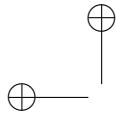
To speak ill of some one betrays less indifference than to forget him. '*L'oubi!*' how is it that the word sounds so soft?

Hidden perfumes and secret loves betray themselves.

He that has seen a thing often, and wishes to see it again with pleasure, instinctively seeks the companionship of some one who has not seen it.

Everything that multiplies the ties that unite man to man, makes him better and happier.





A multitude of affections enlarges the heart.

It is a happiness, and a great piece of good fortune, to be born good.

In most honourable feelings there is something better and more powerful than calculation and reasoning. There is instinct, and necessity.

Pity is the root of all goodness. Pity therefore must enter into all our feelings, even into our indignation, and into our hatred of wicked men. But must there also be pity in our love for God? Yes, pity for ourselves, as there always is in gratitude. Thus, all our feelings are tinged with pity, for ourselves or for others. The love the angels bear us is nothing but an abiding pity, an eternal compassion.

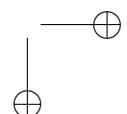
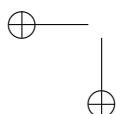
If we are not on our guard, we tend to condemn the unfortunate.

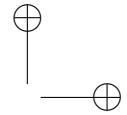
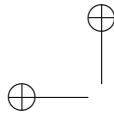
Men should be trained to pity misfortune even more than to bear it.

Do not let your intellect be more exacting than your taste, nor your judgment more severe than your conscience.

The good actions that we have never done are for the will a discovery and a stimulus.

To receive benefits from some one is a surer way of gaining his affection than to render him a service. The sight of a benefactor is often irksome; while that of a





man we are benefiting is always pleasant. In loving him we love our own handiwork.

The wish to be independent of all men, and not to be under obligations to any one, is the sure sign of a soul without tenderness.

We like to do our good actions for ourselves.

The pleasure of giving is a necessary element in true happiness; but the poorest can have it.

We may permit our conscience to approve us, but not our thoughts.

Let us have an uplifted heart; and a humble mind.

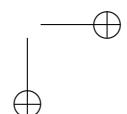
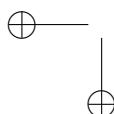
The vanity which enters into the desire to please, and to make ourselves pleasing to others, is a half-virtue, for it is evidently a half-humility and a half-kindness.

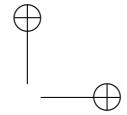
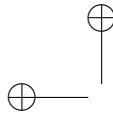
There is in the heights of the soul a region open indeed to the breath of praise, but inaccessible to self-conceit.

An innocent vanity that feeds on the slightest applause may be an amiable weakness quite in keeping with man's nature, especially the nature of a poet; but pride is the enemy of kindness.

Vanity only listens to reason when it has been satisfied.

It is a good thing to open a vein in a man's vanity, lest he should keep it all in, and it should wear him out. Vanity must, so to speak, be bled daily.





Satisfied self-love is always tender. Even pride itself has its moments of tenderness.

Proud natures love those whom they serve.

Conceited people always seem to me, like dwarfs, to have the stature of a child, and the countenance of a man.

Ambition is pitiless; all merit that does not serve its ends is despicable in its eyes.

Admiration is a relief to the attention – a limit that the mind sets itself, for its own pleasure and repose.

There is a craving to admire which is common among certain women in literary ages, and which is another form of the craving to love.

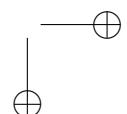
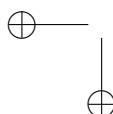
The idea of God is conveyed by worship, the idea of power by submission, and of merit by respect.

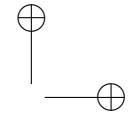
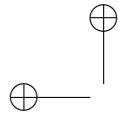
Power over ourselves and over others commands respect, and indeed exacts it, like a tribute.

We must try, as best we may, to despise no one.

Everything wears out, even esteem, if we do not take care of it.

It is still better to feel respect than to inspire it, for the respectful are always to be esteemed. The feeling springs from an estimate of worth, of which the worthless are incapable.

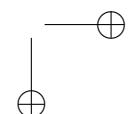
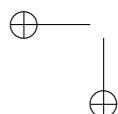


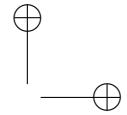
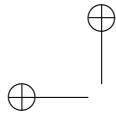


It would be difficult to live at once despised and virtuous; we need support.

Chastity enables the soul to breathe a pure air in the most corrupt places; by continence she is strong, whatever may be the condition of the body; she is royal by her empire over the senses; she is beautiful by her light and peace.

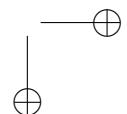
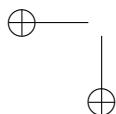
Ah! God! what wonderful loves are born of chastity! and of what raptures do our excesses deprive us!

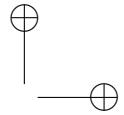
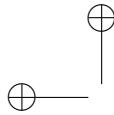




### WHAT IS MODESTY?

Modesty is an indefinable sensitive fear, that makes the soul, so long as it is delicate and tender, recoil and hide within itself, like the flower, its fitting, symbol, at the approach of anything that might wound it by a rude touch, or a light that comes too soon. Hence the disturbance that arises within us when harm draws near, and which so troubles and confuses our thoughts that the evil gains no hold upon them. Hence also that tact which is the advance-guard of all our perceptions, that instinct warning us of all that is forbidden – that motionless flight, that blind discernment, that silent indication of all that must be avoided, or that should remain unknown. Hence also that timidity, which sets all our senses on their guard, and prevents youth from endangering its innocence, emerging from its ignorance, or breaking in upon its happiness. Hence also that shrinking, whereby inexperience seeks to keep itself intact, and shuns too great delight, fearing some harm.

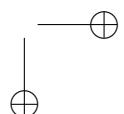
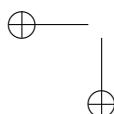


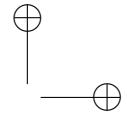
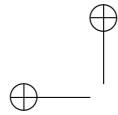


Modesty lowers the lids between our eyes and the outward world, and puts a still more wonderful and useful veil between our eyes and our understanding. The spectator perceives it by a certain distance in nearness, by the magical heightening which it lends to our every form, to the voice, appearance, movements, filling them with grace. Modesty is to beauty, and to the slightest of our charms, what limpidity is to a fountain, glass to a pastel, or atmosphere to a landscape.

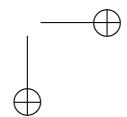
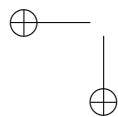
Need we any longer discuss its necessity? What the white of the egg, and the web that contains it, are to the fledgeling, the capsule to the seed, the calyx to the flower, the sky to the world, modesty is to our virtues. Without this protective shelter they could not blossom; their sanctuary would be violated; the seed would be laid bare, the offspring lost.

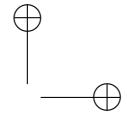
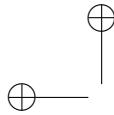
Modesty in youth bequeaths to our maturer life fruits still more precious: a purity of taste, the delicacy of which nothing has blunted; a clear imagination that nothing has dimmed; an active and firmly knit mind, ever ready to rise into the heights; an enduring elasticity, unwrinkled and unmarred; the love of innocent pleasures – the only pleasures that have become familiar to us; the power of being easily made happy, springing from the habit of finding happiness within ourselves; a something which can only be compared to the velvet of a flower, that has been long folded within its impenetrable sheath, where no breath has touched it; a spell that arises from the soul, and that she exerts





upon everything, so that everything becomes endlessly lovable to her, and she endlessly loving; honour eternally unstained – for it may here be confessed, what it may sometimes be well to forget, that no pleasure stains the soul when it comes through senses with which this incorruptibility has been slowly and gradually blended. Lastly, so strong a habit of self-approval, that it would be impossible to do without it, and that we must live irreproachable to be able to live content.





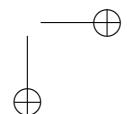
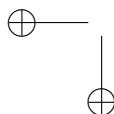
### **OF THE VARIOUS AGES OF LIFE, SICKNESS AND DEATH**

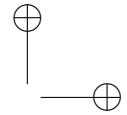
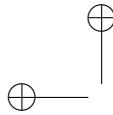
Nothing costs children so much trouble as thought. This is because the ultimate and essential destiny of the soul is to see and to know, and not to think. Thought is one of the tasks of life, a method of attainment, a road, a passage, but not an end in itself. To know, and to be known, are the two points of rest; here will be the happiness of souls.

Whatever children love they torment and persecute.

When children play they go through all the actions necessary to persuade themselves that their fictions are realities. Their toys bring a whole mimic world within their grasp, proportioned to their age, their stature, and their strength.

There is only one age at which the seed of religion can be well sown. It cannot spring up in soil that the passions have dried, hardened, or laid waste.





Think well of no young man whom the old men do not  
find polite.

Go, and inquire of the young; they know everything!

The beginning and the end of human life are the best  
of it, or at least the most worthy of our reverence;  
the one is the age of innocence, the other the age of  
reason.

What in youth is passion, in old age is vice.

He who is afraid of being a dupe while he is young,  
runs the chance of being a knave when he is old.

To do well, we should forget our age when we are old,  
and not feel our youth too keenly when we are young.

There is nothing good in a man but his young feelings  
and his old thoughts.

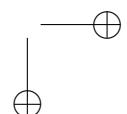
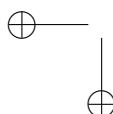
Old age loves measure, but youth loves excess.

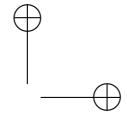
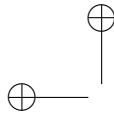
The evening of life comes bearing its own lamp.

Every year forms a knot in our nature, as it does in  
trees; some branch of intelligence develops, or decays  
and dries up.

The studious idler knows that he is ageing, but cares  
little; for his kind of study he will always be equally fit.

With advancing age a kind of exfoliation of our moral  
and intellectual being takes place; the mind crumbles,  
our notions and opinions detach themselves so to speak  
in layers, from the core of our nature; and earlier





impressions that are more closely bound up with this revive, and re-appear, as the rest are separated off, and reveal what is beneath.

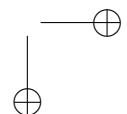
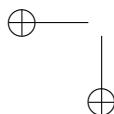
We may advance far in life without ageing. Progress, after maturity has been reached, consists in retracing our steps, and perceiving where we have been mistaken. The disillusionment of old age is a great discovery.

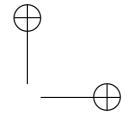
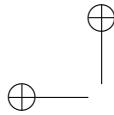
Old age is the time when the chrysalis is sinking into slumber.

It seems as though for some fruits of the mind, the winter of the body were the autumn of the soul.

So long as a man's mind remains clear, he retains fire, intellect and memory enough to talk with Heaven, and with simple and good souls; this is enough; all the rest is a superfluity, useful only in business, in pleasure, and in the pursuit of fame. Now what business has a man, what honours or pleasures does he need, when he has nothing that is indispensable to ask of fortune – when he is wise, and when he is old?

Old age, in its nearness to Eternity, is a kind of priesthood, and if it be passionless, consecrates us. Old age, then, seems authorised to express opinions on religion, but not without diffidence, not without fear. If in old age man be without passions, yet he has not always been so, and the habit of them remains; though near to God, he still bears upon him the impress of earth; and lastly, he deceived himself for a long time, so let him fear lest he deceive himself still, and most of all lest he deceive others.





What is left of human wisdom after age has purified it, is perhaps the best that we have.

A fine old age is a fine promise to all who behold it; for every one may hope the same for himself, or for those around him. We see in it the prospect of something that we all hope to attain; and love to see that it has beauty.

Old men are the majesty of the people.

There is an age at which one sees nothing in the countenance but the expression, in the figure but the support of the head, in the whole body but the dwelling-place of the soul.

Politeness smooths away wrinkles.

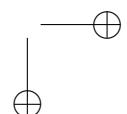
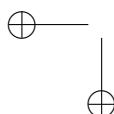
Let us beware of a supercilious old age.

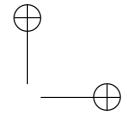
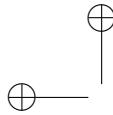
Garments that are clean and fresh have about them a kind of youthfulness, with which old age does well to clothe itself.

Though your opinion may be right, you are wrong to maintain it against an old man.

Our friendship for an old man has a peculiar character; we love him as we love all fleeting things; he is like a ripe fruit that we expect to see fall. It is something of the same with an invalid; in the words of Epictetus, 'I have watched a fragile thing break.'

It is fearful to think of, yet it may be true – that old men like to outlive their fellows.





Life is a country that the old have seen, and lived in.  
Those who have to travel through it can only learn  
the way from them.

We must respect the past, and mistrust the present, if  
we wish to provide for the safety of the future.

Our life is woven wind.\*

How many people drink, eat, and are married; buy,  
sell, and build; make contracts and take care of their  
money; have friends and enemies, pleasures and pains;  
are born, grow, live, and die, – but still – asleep!

A little vanity, and a little gratification of the senses  
– these are what make up the life of the majority of  
women and of men.

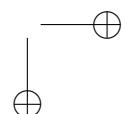
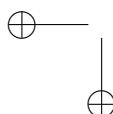
Our whole life is employed in concerning ourselves  
about other people; we spend half of it in loving them,  
the other half in speaking ill of them.

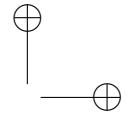
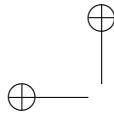
To live we need but a short life; but to act we need a  
long one.

We are priests of Vesta; our life is the sacred flame  
that we are called upon to feed, until God Himself  
quenches it within us.

Every one is a Clotho to himself, and spins the thread  
of his own destiny.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





We should deal with our life as we deal with our writings: bring the beginning, middle, and end into agreement and harmony. To do this, we must make many erasures.

In consultation think of the past, in enjoyment think of the present; in all that you do think of the future.

Two signs of decay – to love only beautiful women, and to tolerate evil books.

We are happy if we part from health to enter into wisdom.

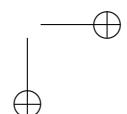
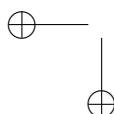
‘Qui n’a pas l’esprit de son age, de son age a tout le malheur,’ says Voltaire; and not only should a man have a mind attuned to his years, but also to his fortune and his health.

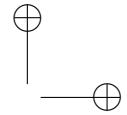
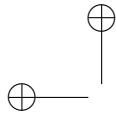
The expression of innocence that may be seen on the faces of convalescents, comes because the passions are in repose, and have not yet resumed their sway.

To be born obscure and to die illustrious are the two extremes of human felicity.

Let us die good-tempered, if we can.

Patience and misfortune, courage and death, resignation and the inevitable, generally come together. Indifference to life arises with the impossibility of preserving it.



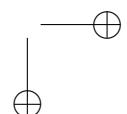
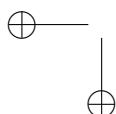


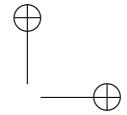
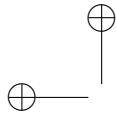
This life is but the cradle of the other. Of what importance then are illness, time, old age, and death? They are but different stages in a transformation that doubtless has only its beginning here below.

When death approaches, thought still plays in the brain like a light vapour just about to disperse. Wavering up and down, it floats there like a soap-bubble, that in a moment will become a drop of water.

The poetry that Socrates said the gods had warned him to study before he died was not the Homeric, but the Platonic, the poetry of the Spirit and of Heaven, the poetry that entrances the soul, and lays the senses to sleep. Whether in captivity, or when strength fails, or in old age, we should make it our study; and therein may the dying man find his delight.

When we have found what we were searching for, we have no time to proclaim it; – we must die!





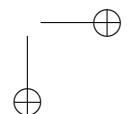
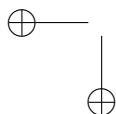
**OF DOMESTIC LIFE,  
SOCIETY, CONVERSATION,  
POLITENESS AND MANNERS**

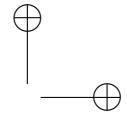
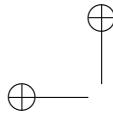
In a well-ordered state kings bear rule over kings, that is to say over fathers of families – masters on their own ground, each governing his own house. If any one of these govern his house badly, it is a great evil, no doubt, but a much lesser evil than if he did not govern it at all.

To govern one's house is to be truly a citizen; it is to take real part in the general government of the state, to exercise her finest rights, and to make her progress easier. Every head of a family should be both pontiff and king in his own house.

Few men are worthy to be heads of families, and few families are capable of having a head.

One should only choose for a wife a woman whom one would choose for a friend, were she a man.





The triumph of a woman is not to tire out and vanquish her persecutors, but to soften their hearts, and make them lay down their arms.

Only from the indissolubility of marriage can arise a woman's true participation in her husband's dignity, and from that in turn spring all the outward consideration, honour, and respect paid to her.

A woman can only with dignity be wife and widow once.

Children can only be well cared for by their mothers, and men by their wives.

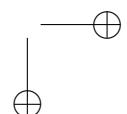
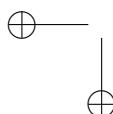
There are some good qualities which are not transmitted, and which do not enter into the stream of heredity. All that is delicate is evanescent. The son of a serious and strong man is generally himself a man of sense; the son of a man of genius is rarely a man of genius.

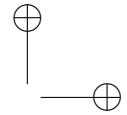
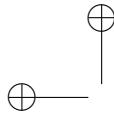
The use of one's bed, when alone in it, is to gain wisdom. 'A man should make for himself a temple of his bed,' says Pythagoras.

The table is a kind of altar which should be decked for festivals and holidays.

To be an agreeable guest one need only enjoy oneself.

An evening meal is the joy of the day; a morning feast is a debauch. I detest songs at the breakfast-table.





Neither for his pleasure nor for our own should we have a boon-companion as our habitual guest. He palls on us, and we on him.

In all temperance there is a suggestion of cleanliness, and of elegance.

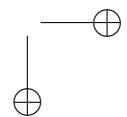
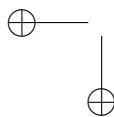
A moderation with which goodness has nothing to do is not lovable.

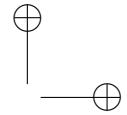
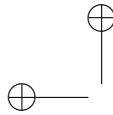
A little of everything, nothing too easily – there is no better road to moderation, wisdom and content.

Take care that something in your house shall always be wanting, whereof the deprivation is not too painful, while to wish for it is a pleasure. We must keep ourselves in such a condition that we can never be either satisfied or insatiable.

The attention we bestow on a house and its furniture is taken away from its master, just as the temple diverts attention from its God.

'It is not civil to contradict any one in his own house': so goes the saying. Every man has the right to be absolute master there, to live like a king, and to be happy there even through his self-love. There his infirmities are, as it were, permitted, and his faults take their ease. He is at home: whoever comes there enters into a foreign dominion. Such privileges as these, among civilised people, make domestic life delightful, and preferable to all the independence of savage and isolated man. Moreover, this life has its duties, which





continually call upon us for the sacrifice of its rights. But the surrender that we make of them is voluntary, generous, honourable, and thus becomes a possession, an enjoyment, and a happiness the more.

We should wear our velvet within, that is to say, show ourselves most amiable to those of our own house.

Gentle manners and pleasant greetings are cards of invitation that circulate all the year round.

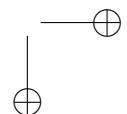
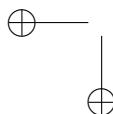
To see the world is to judge the judges.

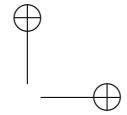
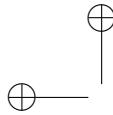
He who is a model to society is not called upon to be its instrument.

In Paris, good company and the society of literary people skim the mind, and so purify the taste. There one's second-rate ideas are used up in conversation; the best are kept for writing down.

How many things we say in good faith in discussing a subject, that we should never think of if we contented ourselves with knowing it, without talking about it. The intelligence is warmed, and its warmth produces what it could never have drawn from its light alone. Talking is a source of error, but perhaps also of some truth. Speech has wings; it carries us whither we could not otherwise go.

We should only put into a book the amount of wit that it wants; but, in conversation, we may have some to spare.





In play a man may carry wit to excess, and yet please;  
let him do it in earnest, and the charm is gone.

In conversation one is content to point to things and  
ticket them with their names, without giving oneself  
time to form an idea of them.

It is a great disadvantage in a dispute, to be mindful  
of the weakness of our own arguments, and the force  
of other people's; but it is fine to perish so.

The aim of argument, or of discussion, should not be  
victory, but progress.

It is never other people's opinions that displease us,  
but only the desire they sometimes show to impose  
them upon us, against our will.

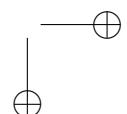
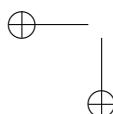
The pleasure of pleasing is legitimate; the desire to  
dominate is odious.

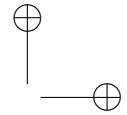
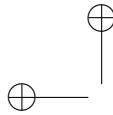
Contradiction only irritates us, because it disturbs us  
in our peaceful possession of some opinion, or of some  
preeminence. That is why it is more irritating to the  
weak, than to the strong; and to the infirm, than to  
the healthy.

We may convince others by our own arguments, but  
they can only be persuaded by their own.

A good argument, if we know it thoroughly, needs but  
a word to make it understood.

Often an argument is good, not that it is conclusive,  
but that it is dramatic – because it has the character of  
its propounder, and springs from the depths of himself.





For there are arguments *ex homine*, as there are some *ad hominem*.

In the discussions with which man torments his own mind, and the minds of others, the difficulties that he has to combat spring not from things, but from his ideas of them.

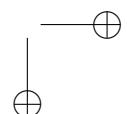
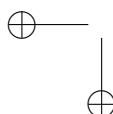
We may pride ourselves on our reasonableness, but not on our reasoning; on our sincerity, but not on our infallibility.

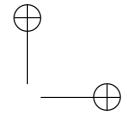
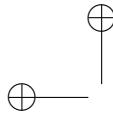
Frankness is a natural gift, habitual veracity a virtue.

Caution, which is excellent when business has to be carried out, hinders it when it is being planned, and is only to its owner's advantage. In deliberation it is sincerity that is wanted. Sincerity opens up new paths for investigation; it leads the mind over more points, and multiplies alternatives among the expedients that suggest themselves; in fact it is the main agent towards a happy result; for, to choose well, it is better to have the choice of a thousand than of two.

Free explanation is only possible where there is some hope of arriving at an understanding; and we can only hope to arrive at an understanding with people who are already half of our opinion.

Some one has said in joke that 'when two people understand each other they have nothing more to say to each other.' Yes; but they are tempted to avoid and fly from each other, when there is no understanding.





We must learn how to enter into, and how to depart from, the ideas of others; just as we should know how to depart from our own, and return to them again.

There are people who, when they enter into our ideas, seem to be entering into a hovel.

What can one put into a mind which is filled, and filled with itself?

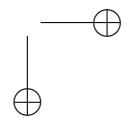
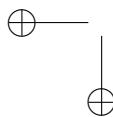
Oil flowing over marble is the image of a character impenetrable by the gentleness of persuasion. Life is hurried, and these rigid characters, whatever their secret weakness, resemble barriers which we would rather walk round than step over, when they lie in our path. Instead of laying siege to their opinions in due form, we blockade them, or we turn aside.

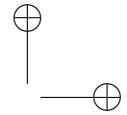
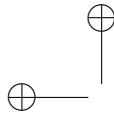
Intractable minds expose themselves to flattery. One naturally seeks to disarm those whom one can neither conquer nor combat.

Of all monotonies that of assertion is the worst.

We should always have in our heads one free and open corner, where we can give place, or lodging as they pass, to the ideas of our friends. It really becomes unbearable to converse with men whose brains are divided up into well-filled pigeon-holes, where nothing can enter from outside. Let us have hospitable hearts and minds.

To write would be a hundred times less laborious than conversation with those people who are continually rubbing pumice-stone over all that you think and say.





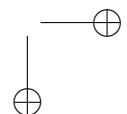
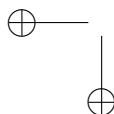
They hurt you: in their company relaxation is impossible; it is a tournament, a fencing-match, a duel. The aimless and unnecessary constraint that they impose upon us is the most unbearable of all forms of dependence.

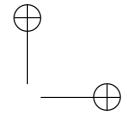
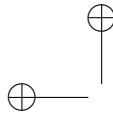
The attention of the listener serves as accompaniment to the music of the discourse.

Every one should be provided with that sort of indulgence, and that readiness to listen, which makes the thoughts of others bloom. It is a bad sort of cleverness which deprives the character of kindness, indulgence, and sympathy, which makes it difficult for us to live and talk with others, to make them pleased with us, and pleased with themselves – in a word, to love and be lovable. The gentle mind is patient, gives itself without hurry to the task of understanding, is open to conviction, afraid of obstinacy, and would rather learn than take the lead.

To be liked is better worth our while than to be valued.

There are some conversations in which neither the soul nor the body take part. I mean those conversations in which no one speaks from the depth of his heart, nor even with the true temper of his mind; in which there is neither freedom, nor gaiety, nor flow, nor play; in which we find neither movement nor repose, neither distraction nor relief, neither concentration nor diversion; in fact, where nothing has been given, and





nothing received, where therefore there has been no true exchange.

In society we talk of what we can touch lightly; in a true intimacy there is little talk that does not go deep.

The true *bon-mot* surprises him who makes it as much as those who hear it....

A clever talk between two men is a unison; between a man and a woman it is harmony, a concord; we come away satisfied by the one, enchanted by the other.

Never show warmth where it will find no response. Nothing is so cold as feeling which is not communicated.

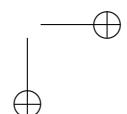
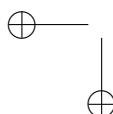
In conversation, passion, which is vehement, should be only the handmaid of the intelligence, which is calm. It is allowable, even praiseworthy, in talking, to follow one's mood; but one must think and judge only with one's reason.

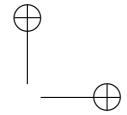
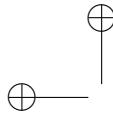
It is better to turn over a question without deciding it, than to decide it without turning it over.

He who cannot keep silence never gains ascendency. In action, spend yourself; in speech, spare yourself; in action, fear sloth; in speech, fear abundance, ardour and volubility.

Taciturnity is, in some men, a matter of policy, a kind of charlatanism, which has the same effect as all secret charlatanisms.

Use only gold and silver coin in the commerce of speech.





To know oneself is a duty; but we are not called upon to know others. To take note of their defects, beyond the first glance, is useful for our business, but useless and even harmful for our character.

To make what is not ridiculous appear so, is, in some degree, to make good evil.

Whoever laughs at evil of any kind has not a perfectly true moral sense. To find amusement in evil is to rejoice in it.

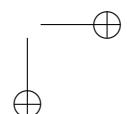
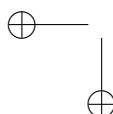
We must use art in showing our hatred and contempt. Rude words wound good taste; foolish laughter is always the laughter of a fool, and makes the laugher detestable.

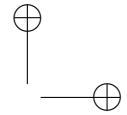
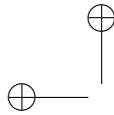
In speaking of what is hateful, gentle natures always speak with reserve; they spare others and themselves.

Never show the reverse of a medal to those who have not seen its face. Never speak of the faults of a good man to those who know neither his countenance, nor his life, nor his merits.

We do much harm and much injustice by taking for an intellectual error what is only an error of opinion, or for a defect of temper what is only a defect of character; by judging a man from one remark, a life from one act, a soul from one impulse, every one of which may be exceptional.

Even if it be pardonable to judge the living by our feelings, we must judge the dead by our reason alone.





Having become immortal they can only be judged by an immortal law, the law of justice.

Heaven often punishes the faults of worthy men through their reputation, by handing it over to calumny.

To say of a vain man who talks too much, that he is a good father, and a good neighbour, and a generous host, is to judge with the soul. To say, on the contrary, of the worthy father of a family, the obliging neighbour, and hospitable householder, that he is a chatterbox, is to judge with the wit; it is to forget the face for the mole, and the whole plane for one point upon it.

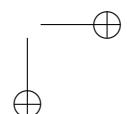
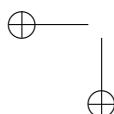
To attribute to a good fellow merits which he has not, is to fail to recognise those that he has.

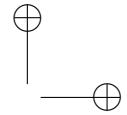
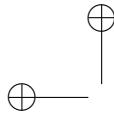
To be always disregarding appearances argues a low or corrupt nature, but to be always the slave of them argues smallness of mind. Duty and convention do not always agree.

Deference for age, merit, and dignity is a part of the duty, but in the case of equals, foreigners, or strangers it is a part of politeness – of a true civility.

Politeness is the blossom of our humanity. Whoever is not sufficiently polite, is not sufficiently humane.

Politeness has the effect of blunting the sharp edge of our character, and preventing it from wounding others. We should never lay it aside, even when we come into collision with coarse natures.





It is the sign of a graceful and urbane temper to begin with esteem and confidence in our relations with others. It proves at least that we have lived for a long time in good fellowship with the world and with ourselves.

Politeness is to kindness what words are to thought. It acts not only on our manners but on our mind and heart; it moderates and softens all our sentiments, opinions, and speech.

Civility is a part of integrity.

Ease of manner is pleasing, even without kindness; with kindness added it is enchanting.

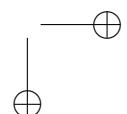
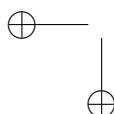
The naive character exposes itself to ridicule without foreseeing it; the frank character foresees it without fear. Those who have been able to keep their own freshness of nature are always charmed with it in others, even when it is of a kind contrary to their own.

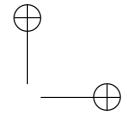
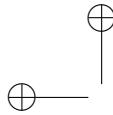
All simplicity runs the risk of ridicule, and yet never deserves it, for in all simplicity there is trust without calculation; it bears the signs of innocence.

Credulity is the sign of a good disposition.

Gravity is only the bark of the tree of wisdom; but it preserves it.

Sweet temper is a great excellence. It implies sympathy for all that wins the attention, and it refuses attention to nothing that is innocent. It is the childlike quality grown-up, preserved, strengthened and developed. It





serves the ordinary man for happiness, and to the busiest and the greatest of men it becomes an abundant source of pleasure and relaxation.

Business relations have a sort of ugliness which good-nature smooths down. It even gives them charm.

Movement should have grace, thought should have bloom, accent should be sincere, the hand free; – the intention just; judgment upright.

Oh! what a little thing may hinder a line, a poem, a picture, a feature, a face, a speech, a word, an accent, a gesture from touching us!

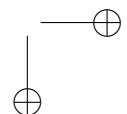
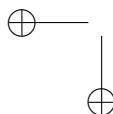
Good taste is necessary to the half of morals; for it regulates convention.

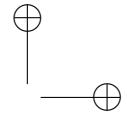
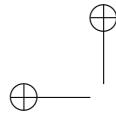
Simple dress makes those who wear it simple; complicated dress insensibly complicates the manners of the most simple people. Not every man can provide himself with dress that suits his character; but all, inevitably, suit their manners to their clothes.

Grace imitates modesty, as politeness kindness.

All grace is the product of some kind of patience, and therefore of some force exerted upon itself. Grace and self-restraint are all one.

Strength is a matter of nature, but grace is a matter of habit. This delightful gift needs practice to become lasting.

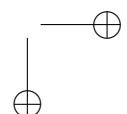
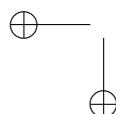


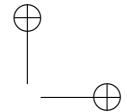
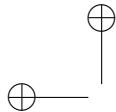


We should not disparage outward beauty, for it is the natural expression of beautiful realities. We ought only to blame what belies them.

Good manners tend to imitate the look of health. This depends upon a well-constructed body; and a good manner has something of the same effect. We hold ourselves up to appear tall; we square our shoulders to broaden the chest; we walk with uplifted head to give graceful length to the neck.

Manners are an art. They may be perfect, or praiseworthy, or faulty; but they are never of no importance. How is it that we have no precepts by which they can be taught, or at least principles by which we can learn to judge of them, as we do of sculpture or of music? The science of manners is probably more important than we generally believe to the happiness and the virtue of men. If virtue leads to conduct, conduct leads to virtue: now manners are an essential part of conduct. Therefore let us train ourselves, on all occasions, in fine, simple, fitting manners, if we would reach the heights of goodness.





### **OF WISDOM, VIRTUE, AND MORALITY, OF LAW AND DUTY**

Wisdom is a science whereby we distinguish things that are good for the soul from those that are not. It is the science of sciences, because it alone knows their value, their exact importance, their true use, their dangers, and their purpose.

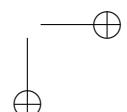
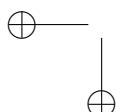
Wisdom is rest in the light. Happy are the minds lofty enough to be at ease in that radiance.

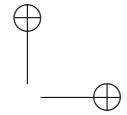
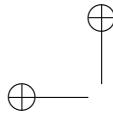
Consult the ancients, listen to the aged. He cannot be wise who depends on his own wisdom, nor learned who depends on his own knowledge.

Wisdom is the strength of the weak.

The combination of knowledge and illusion is the charm of life and of art.

Common sense suits itself to the ways of the world. Wisdom tries to conform to the ways of Heaven.





Human wisdom keeps the ills of life at a distance. Divine wisdom alone can put us in possession of true joy. In seeking human wisdom we must use action; but in seeking divine wisdom we must use repose and meditation.

Whenever our judgments and our feelings lack patience, they also lack wisdom and virtue.

Never regret the time that was needed for doing good.

Never cut what you can unravel.

Goodness is the health of the soul. It gives a savour to life's humblest herbs.

Goodness loves to diffuse itself, and those who have it love to give it.

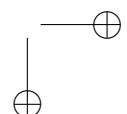
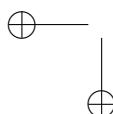
Virtue by calculation is the virtue of vice.

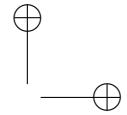
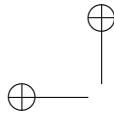
His own virtue and the happiness of others are the two ends of man's life on earth. His own happiness, in truth, is his highest aim; but it is not what he should seek for; it is only what he may expect and obtain, if he be worthy.

In the pursuit of goodness there is some use in making our witness before the world as satisfactory as we can.

Necessity may render a doubtful action innocent; but it cannot make it praiseworthy.

Perfect innocence is perfect ignorance. It is neither prudent nor cautious, and one cannot build upon it:





but it is a lovable quality, which we revere almost as much as virtue, and love more.

We are not innocent when we harm ourselves.

Women think that whatever they dare do they may do.

No virtue seems small when it is shown on a great stage.

Perhaps, for worldly success, we ought to have virtues that make us beloved, and faults that make us feared.

Good people of every sort are easy to deceive, because, loving goodness passionately, they easily believe in everything which gives them the hope of it.

Everything should be done as good people wish.

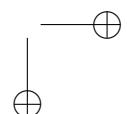
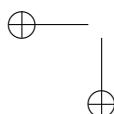
Everything may be learnt, even goodness.

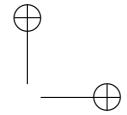
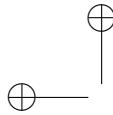
Let every vice in others produce a virtue in you. Let anger make you gentle, avarice make you generous, and excess make you temperate.

Morality must have a Heaven, just as a picture must have atmosphere.

There are some people who keep their morality in the piece: it is a stuff of which they never make themselves a coat.

A conscience to oneself, a morality to oneself, a religion to oneself! – These things, by their nature, cannot be private.





No one can see except by his own lamp, but he can walk and act by the light of another.

We must be provided with anchor, and ballast: that is to say, with fixed and steadfast opinions. Keep your ballast, and rest on your anchors, without drifting. For the rest, let fly the colours, and let swell the sails; the mast only must keep steady.

A maxim is the exact and noble expression of an important and undeniable truth.

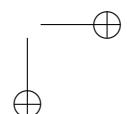
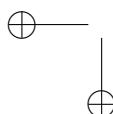
Maxims are to the intelligence what laws are to conduct; they do not enlighten, but they guide, they direct, they save us insensibly. It is the thread in the labyrinth, the compass during the night.

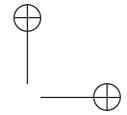
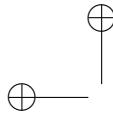
Never set forth evil maxims, however well expressed, to catch the attention and memory of mankind.

Often one has the feeling of a truth, without holding it as an opinion, and then it is lawful to direct our conduct by what we feel, and not by what we think. There are even some very grave matters, and most important questions, in dealing with which our ideas must spring from feeling; if they have any other source, all will go wrong.

Clear ideas are good for speaking; but it is nearly always on some confused ideas that we act. It is they which direct life.

There are a great many decisions into which our judgment does not enter at all. We decide without evidence,





from weariness or in haste, in order to put an end to a tiresome inquiry, or to some uncertainty in ourselves that torments us; we decide at last by will, but not by intelligence.

Reason may warn us what to avoid; the heart alone tells what must be done. God is in our conscience; but not in our gropings. When we argue, we walk alone, and without Him.

To think what we do not feel, is to lie to ourselves. Everything that we think we must think with our whole being, soul and body.

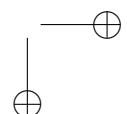
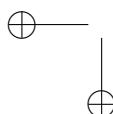
To perform the smallest actions from the greatest motives, and to see in the smallest things the widest relations, is the best way of perfecting within us our feeling self and our thinking self.

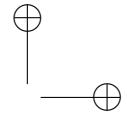
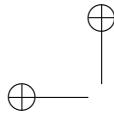
To oppose nature to law, our own reasoning to established custom, and our own conscience to public opinion, is but to oppose the uncertain to the certain, the unknown to the known, the singular to the universal.

The goal is not always meant to be reached, but to serve as a mark for our aim. So is it with the precept that we are to love our enemies.

Let us think of the highest law as neither in us, nor in the world about us, but above us.

When we act, we must follow the rules, and when we judge, we must allow for exceptions.





He who lives without an aim, and, as it were, at random, lives a dull life. In the moral life, if we wish for pleasure, we must propose to ourselves an aim and reach it; now every aim is a limit. Not only is there no goodness where there is no rule and law, but there is not even pleasure. Even the games of children have laws, and could not exist without them; these laws are a constraint, and yet, the more strictly they are observed, the greater is the enjoyment.

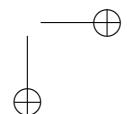
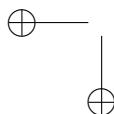
There is a repose in order, that endears to men the authority which establishes law and insures their submission to it.

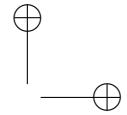
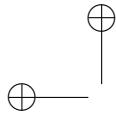
Let us beware of making a mere proposition of something that is a precept, a law, a commandment.

In lawless times, even worthy men become less worthy. Life becomes like a bridge without a breastwork, whence the passionate hurl themselves into vice at their will, and the drunken without their will. In good times we are better, and in evil times worse than ourselves.

Every man must have within him a force which makes even his most secret actions bend to law; he must bring to bear upon himself, his thought and action, the vision of his intelligence and the arm of his will. Every one should be the magistrate, the king, the judge of himself.

If sensation is to be the rule of judgment, a gust of wind, a cloud, a vapour, changes the law.





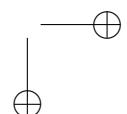
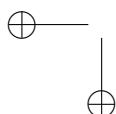
What is duty? With regard to ourselves, it is to be independent of the senses, and with regard to others, it is to be untiring in giving help and support; help to live well, to do well, to will well, to wish well; help by agreement and by opposition, by giving and by withholding, by firmness and by compliance, by praise and by blame, by silence and by words, by what is pleasant and by what is painful. Dwellers on the same earth, travellers of the same hour, and companions along the same road, we ought to help one another; and when we reach the resting-place, we shall have first to render an account of what each has done for the happiness of the rest – for joy, or for goodness. A kind look will win its reward.

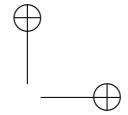
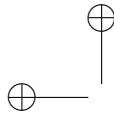
It is equally easy to prove our liberty, either by crime, which means resisting the bent of our nature towards right-doing, or by acts of goodness, which mean a deflection of its bent towards pleasure.

Without duty, life is soft and boneless; it cannot hold itself together.

We must not look duty in the face, but listen to it, and obey, with eyes down. There is something impudent in lifting the veil between us and what is sacred.

Alas! – always busied with other people's duties, and never with our own!





**OF ORDER AND CHANCE,  
OF GOOD AND EVIL FORTUNE**

All are born to observe law, and few are born to establish it.

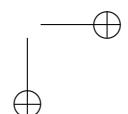
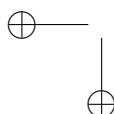
The weakness that brings us back to order is better than the strength that leads us away from it.

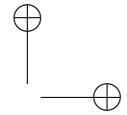
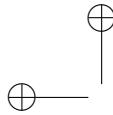
True rhythm is so naturally agreeable to us that it is impossible to sing in tune and dance in time without pleasure. Moral order is also measure and harmony; it is therefore impossible to live well without a secret and intense pleasure.

Every thought of duty holds a man to his place in the universe, makes him feel and love it, like his native spot, easeful, comfortable, accustomed.

Happy is he who is only fit for one thing! In doing it he fulfils his destiny.

There are some ills that are the health of the soul, ills that are preferable to that bodily strength which





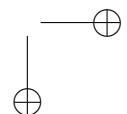
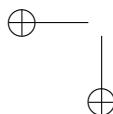
hardens the organs, oppresses the soul, and crushes the mind.

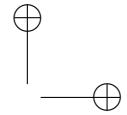
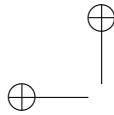
There is for the soul but one way of escaping the ills of life; that is, to escape its pleasures, and to seek her own higher.

Neither love nor friendship, respect nor admiration, gratitude nor devotion, should rob us of our conscience, and our discernment of good and evil. This is a possession that we are forbidden to sell, and for which nothing could repay us.

The good is worth more than the better. The better rarely lasts.

Perhaps by a just disposition of Providence, crimes multiply the ills that they seek to prevent. Perhaps if Caligula had not been killed by a blow, and by a conspiracy that at first seemed praiseworthy, Claudius would not have reigned, nor Nero, nor Domitian, nor Commodus, nor Heliogabalus. Caligula, after a few crimes, would have fulfilled his days, would have died in his bed, and the succession of the Roman Emperors would have taken another, and a happier course. Perhaps what is evil, or tainted with evil, produces nothing but evil. God keeps misfortunes in His own hand, and deals them out in season. We are enjoined to do good, and good only; that is our task.





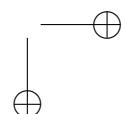
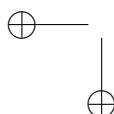
### OF TRUTH, ILLUSION, AND ERROR

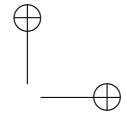
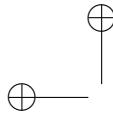
Truth does not, and cannot come from ourselves. In all that is spiritual it comes from God, or from those spirits, the friends of God, on whom His light has shone; in what is material, from the things where God has placed it. Therefore in all that is spiritual we must first take counsel of God, then of the wise, and lastly of our own souls; and in all that is material we must search things to their depths.

Study the sciences in the light of truth, that is – as before God; for their business is to show the truth, that is to say, God everywhere. Write nothing, say nothing, think nothing that you cannot believe to be true before God.

Supreme truths have such beauty, that even the errors that turn our minds upon them have some charm, and the shadows that veil them have a kind of radiance.

Our moments of light are moments of happiness. When light shines in the mind, it is fair weather there.





We love repose of mind so well, that we are arrested by anything which has even the appearance of truth; and so we fall asleep on clouds.

In light there are two points; the point that illuminates, and the point that bewilders. Let us keep to the first.

What is true in the lamp-light is not always true in the sun-light.

Time and truth are friends, although there are many moments hostile to truth.

When one loves truth it is always some pleasure to hear a man say what he thinks, and even to see a man do what he has willed to do.

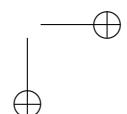
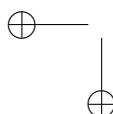
There are some natural and inborn prejudices that go in advance of judgment, and lead it where it is necessary that it should go, and by paths that it must follow, if it is to make true progress. If we refuse such guides we go astray....

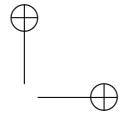
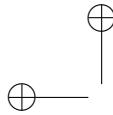
Carefulness to speak the truth well, so as to capture the attention, is a duty, a function of the good man, and a mark of his goodness.

What is ingenious comes very near to being true.

The joy that truth and great thoughts give us, makes itself felt in the words with which we utter them.

There are some truths that must be coloured in order to make them visible. Above all, anything that depends upon imagination can only have outward existence





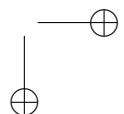
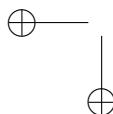
through the medium of form and colour. Truth must be wrapped in these, if it is to attract the eye.

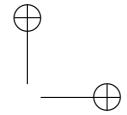
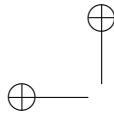
Have such a mind, that truth may enter it naked, and leave it adorned.

Truth takes a certain character from the souls wherein she enters. Rigorous and harsh in the arid souls, in the loving souls she becomes tempered and gentle.

The charm of truth is to be veiled. The wise have always spoken in riddles, and riddles that are for the moment insoluble are a great means of instruction, an instruction that we love because it comes of our own work; for the answer belongs to the reader who has sought it, as well as to the author who has placed it there. If a truth is nude, and crude, that is a proof it has not been steeped long enough in the soul, nor turned over long enough in the mind; the intelligence has not purified it enough, the heart infused it enough with its own essence, nor the imagination robed it enough in its own garments. The mind has done no more than square it, like a piece of wood rough-hewn by the first-comer. Truth, or rather the matter that contains it, should be handled and re-handled until it becomes clearness, air, light, form, and colour.

'Fear God' has made many men pious, the proofs of the existence of a God have made many men atheists. From the defence springs the attack; the advocate begets in his hearer a wish to pick holes; and men are almost always led on, from the desire to contradict the





doctor, to the desire to contradict the doctrine. Make truth lovely, and do not try to arm her; mankind will then be far less inclined to contend with her.\*

Illusion is an integral part of reality, depending upon it, as the effect upon the cause.

God turns everything to account, even our illusions.

Illusions come from Heaven, errors come from ourselves.

Superiority may be as much a source of error as mediocrity.

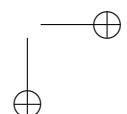
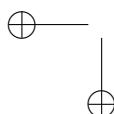
The credulity that comes from the heart does no harm to the intelligence.

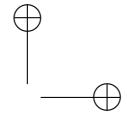
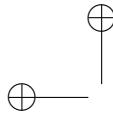
There are invincible errors, that one should never attack.

The worst quality in error is not its falseness, but its wilfulness, blindness, and passion.

Some error always fastens upon the great current truths of the world, and some fable on the great events that have strongly attracted the attention of the multitude. As there is always some illusion in every mind, so is there always some mind to fasten its illusion on what passes through it. Thus no reality is without its element of the marvellous, if it has had wide circulation, and has passed from mouth to mouth.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





The most useful knowledge is to know that we have been deceived, and the most delightful discovery is to find out that we have been mistaken. ‘Capable of forsaking an error’ – this is fine praise, and a fine quality.

We may fall into inconsistency through error. It is a fine thing to fall into it through truth, and then we must throw ourselves into it headlong.

Those who never retract love themselves better than truth.

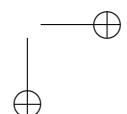
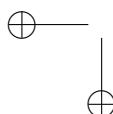
Woe to him who deceives himself late! he will not undeceive himself.

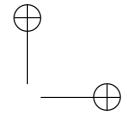
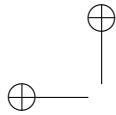
When a mind has returned to a truth from which it had departed, it will not leave it again.

There are some minds which arrive at error by all truths; there are others, more fortunate, which arrive at the great truths by all errors.

Simple and sincere minds are never more than half mistaken.

There are no mistakes into which a man may not fall in good faith from an over-tension of mind; but even in these cases, we may often admire the bow and its strength, whilst we think little of the arrow.





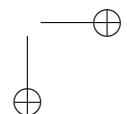
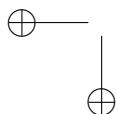
## OF PHILOSOPHY, METAPHYSICS, ABSTRACTIONS, LOGIC, SYSTEMS

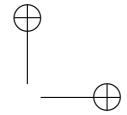
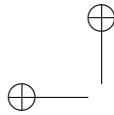
*I – whence, – whither, – wherefore, – how? –* there is the whole of philosophy: existence, origin, place, end, and means.

As poetry is sometimes more philosophical even than philosophy, metaphysic is, by its nature, more poetical even than poetry.

The mind takes pleasure in metaphysics because there it finds room; elsewhere, everything is too full. The mind needs a fantastic world in which it can move and wander; it delights less in the objects it meets with than in the space itself. It is thus that children love sand, and water, and all that is fluid or flexible, because they do with it what they will.

Practice is serious, but theory is recreation; there the soul finds gaiety and fresh youth, through the joys of the intelligence.





What deceives us in morals is the excessive love of pleasure. What checks and hinders us in metaphysics is the love of certainty.

Metaphysics make the mind singularly firm; that is why, sometimes, nothing is so cruel as a metaphysician.

Religion is the only kind of metaphysic that the common people are able to understand and accept.

It is the devout who are the practical metaphysicians.

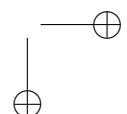
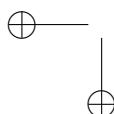
The true science of metaphysics consists not in the rendering abstract that which is sensible, but in rendering sensible that which is abstract; apparent that which is hidden; imaginable, if so it may be, that which is only intelligible; and intelligible finally, that which an ordinary attention fails to seize.\*

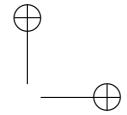
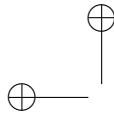
Distrust, in books on metaphysics, words which have not been able to get currency in the world, and are only calculated to form a special language.†

Whatever may be said, metaphors are as essential to metaphysics as are abstract terms. When metaphors fail you, then, try abstract terms, and when abstract terms are at fault, try metaphor. Grasp the proof, and show it as best you can; there is the whole art and rule of the matter.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.

†Matthew Arnold's translation.





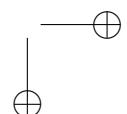
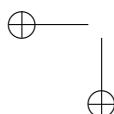
Before an abstract idea can become something of which the mind can form a picture, or even a conception, how much time is needed! How many touches and retouches are wanted to give substance to the shadow!

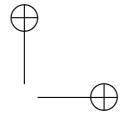
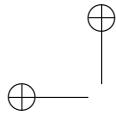
A choice of words that presents at first ideas with which you agree, and thus draws you on to admit others with which you would not have agreed, is an argument in disguise. It has the force and the power of a real argument, but is without its harsh, imperious, or repulsive quality.

There is in the mind a perpetual circulation of unconscious arguments.

Right reasoning has its own rules and physiognomy. Truth of conception has neither; but it is very superior to the other.

As soon as an argument attacks any universal practice or instinct, it may be difficult to refute, but it is certainly delusive. You may not be able to answer it; you must none the less be firm in resisting it. The wise man escapes from it by holding to the common opinion.





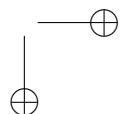
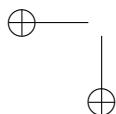
### OF SPACE, TIME, LIGHT, AND SOUND

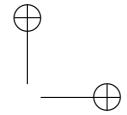
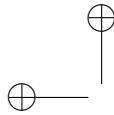
Even in eternity there is time; but it is not an earthly and worldly time, counted by the movement and succession of material bodies; it is a spiritual and incorruptible time, measured by the affections of spirits and by the succession of the thoughts which are their movements. It destroys nothing, it completes. Its changes are but improvements and developments. It consumes evil to make room for good, and effaces good for what is better. It provides God with His pageants, and will so provide Him for ever.

Light is the shadow of God; all clearness is the shadow of light.

The first morning light rejoices us more than the hours that follow. It has really an essential character of mirth, wherewith it colours all our moods, without any effort of our own.

The fire, they say, makes company; that is because it makes thought. Physically, there is something pecu-





liarly inspiring in the sight of fire. The attitude, the silence, the place, the kind of reverie into which we fall as we warm ourselves – all these combine to give the mind more steadiness and more activity. The hearth is a Pindus and the Muses are there.

The sound of the drum drives out thought; for that very reason is it the most military of instruments.

Without the song of the grass hopper as an accompaniment, the quiver of the sunlit air in great summer heat is like a dance without music.

We should not gather anything that grows in graveyards, and even the grass should have a sacred uselessness.

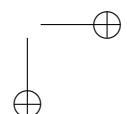
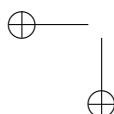
Places die like men, although they appear to last on.

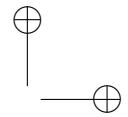
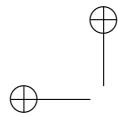
Monuments are the links which unite one generation with another. Preserve what your fathers have seen.

Agriculture produces good sense, and good sense of an excellent kind.

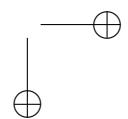
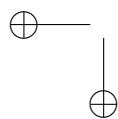
In gardening we enjoy the purer and more delicate delights of husbandry.

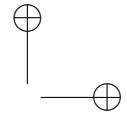
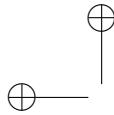
I never like evergreen trees. There is something black in their green and cold in their shade, something dry, pointed and prickly in their leaves. As besides, they lose nothing and have nothing to fear, they seem to me without feeling, and therefore interest me little.





Carnivorous animals care not only for their prey, but for the chase. It is their game, their pastime, their pleasure. All, in fact, hunt gaily – laughingly – so to speak.



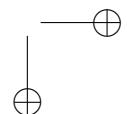
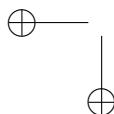


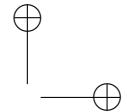
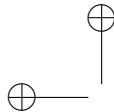
## OF GOVERNMENTS AND CONSTITUTIONS

Politics are the art of knowing and leading the multitude, or the majority; its glory is to lead them, not where they wish, but where they ought to go.

Those who wish to govern, like a republic, those who wish to be well governed, like nothing but monarchy.

To place power where force is not, and to provide force with counterpoise – there is the secret of the political world. The more moral power or force there is in a state to counterbalance actual or physical force, the more skilfully is that state constituted. There is no art, no balance, no political beauty in a country where force and power are found in the same hands, that is to say, in the hands of the majority. Thus the history of democracies has neither brilliance nor interest until force has been actually displaced by the ascendency of some good man over the movements of the multitude, which alone is strong in itself, and without fiction. Fiction! – it is wanted everywhere. Politics themselves are a kind of poetry.





Whatever we may do, power is everywhere one, necessarily, inevitably, indispensably one, and that one – a man. It is not worth while to torment ourselves as we do, to give this unit a deceptive appearance of multiplicity.

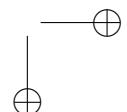
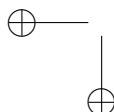
Do not disgust kings with their part, for it is a necessary one.

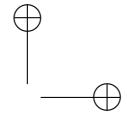
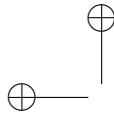
It is because the masters placed over us are the equals of their subordinates, that they need to be surrounded with pomp. In all things, kings must be adorned, both for their own benefit and for ours.

As a savage will sacrifice his whole subsistence to his hunger, the despot sacrifices his authority to his love of power; his reign devours the reign of his successors.

Governments are things that establish themselves; they are not made, they make themselves. They may be strengthened and given consistency, but not being. Let us be well-assured that no government can be an affair of choice; it is almost always an affair of necessity.

In matters of government, justice must always be the goal; it need not always have been the starting-point. What may console us, and reconcile us to this, is the consideration of a sad truth, which need rarely be called to mind, but which must be known; – that in all places, and in all times, every political organism has begun with some injustice; and good laws, among all peoples, have begun by consolidating that which already existed.



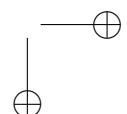
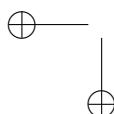


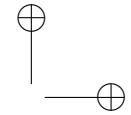
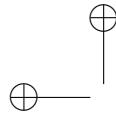
Let time be your example; it destroys everything slowly; it undermines, wears out, uproots, detaches, and never tears away.

To talk of nothing but prosperity and commerce is to talk like a merchant, and not like a philosopher. To aim only at the enriching of nations is to act like a banker, but not like a legislator.

There is an impulse towards novelty – the daughter of time – which leads to development; there is another – the daughter of men – daughter of passion and caprice, which disturbs everything, confuses everything, and allows nothing to complete itself and to last. It does away with all antiquity; it is the mother of disorder, ruin, and misfortune.

If we impose some disabilities upon men without property, we do not necessarily hold that they are less inclined to love goodness, or their country; this opinion would do riches too much honour; but every one may convince himself by his personal experience that the man who is exposed to the waves of fate and the gusts of chance is less master of himself, and runs risks of exaggeration; because he has neither happiness nor leisure enough for calm thought and the regulation of his feelings and ideas. He is less wise, not by his own fault, but by fault of his condition. It is for this reason alone that we may, until that condition be changed, refuse the administration of public affairs to him who has not had personal affairs to handle.



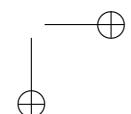
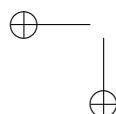


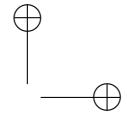
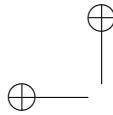
Submit to your own nature; if it means you to be mediocre, be mediocre. Yield to those wiser than you, adopt their opinions, and do not trouble the world, since you cannot govern it.

We easily tolerate an authority that we hope one day to exercise ourselves.

The great men of certain periods and certain circumstances are only men more strongly possessed than their fellows by the dominant opinion, the opinion that all wish to see prevail.

All conquerors have had something coarse in their views, their genius, and their character.





## OF LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND LAWS

There is indeed a right of the wisest, but not a right of the strongest.

Let us ask rather for free souls than free men. Moral liberty is the only important, the only vital liberty; the other is only good in so far as it favours this.

Liberty is a tyrant governed by his caprices.

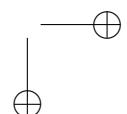
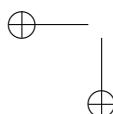
Liberty! liberty! – in all things justice, and there will be enough liberty.

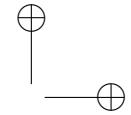
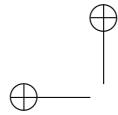
Justice is the right of the weaker. In ourselves, it means the good of others, and in others our good.

There are crimes that fortune never pardons.

Generally speaking, innocence falls short of its apology, the crime is less than the accusation, and the ill less than the complaint.

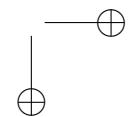
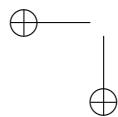
Indulgence must not speak too loud, for fear of awakening justice.

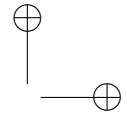
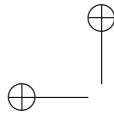




We should place those whose opinion has great authority in the temple of the wise, and not on the bench of the debaters. We should employ them to decide, not to deliberate. They should pronounce the law, and not swell the majority. As they have no peers, they should have no party.

To govern a body of commonplace and fickle men with success, a man must be like them, commonplace and fickle.



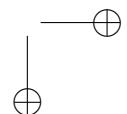
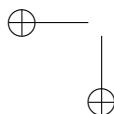


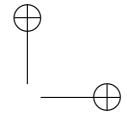
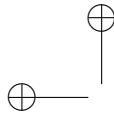
**OF CUSTOMS AND HABITS,  
BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE,  
AND THE CHARACTER OF NATIONS**

Here are some manners and customs which belong to human nature, and will always be found everywhere. It is said of this or that custom that it is Greek, Roman, or barbarous; for my part, I say that it is human, and that men contrive and invent it wherever the need for it arises.

If we would know everything that is worthy of imitation, we must devote some of our study and observation to legends. What is marvellous in the lives of the Saints is not their miracles, but their manner of life. Disbelieve their miracles, if you like, but at least believe in their lives, for nothing is better attested.

The human race, taken as a whole, is a moving body, ever seeking to find its level.





One should be a pebble in the torrent, keep one's veining, and roll with the stream – without being either solvent or dissolved.

Few men are worthy of experience. The greater part allow it to corrupt them.

To ask of human nature that it should be infallible and incorruptible is to ask of the wind that it should not blow.

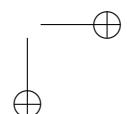
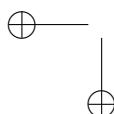
The experience of many opinions gives the mind much flexibility, and strengthens it in those that it believes to be the best.

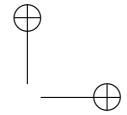
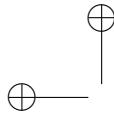
If you are puzzled to know which of two opinions is the truest, choose the most seemly.

Some opinions come from the heart; and whoever has no fixed opinion, has no steadfastness of feeling.

The multitude are capable of virtue, but not of wisdom. More infallible in a question of value than in a question of preference, they can recognise, but they cannot choose. There is more meaning than one would think in the joke against a butcher who, having need of a lawyer, went into the law-courts, and there chose the stoutest.

‘I think as my land thinks,’ said a landowner: a saying full of meaning, that we may apply every day. Some, in fact, think like their land, others like their shops, others like their hammers, and others like their empty purses that long to be filled.





The character of the true *bourgeois* is to be the peaceful and idle possessor of what he has; he is always pleased with himself, and easily pleased with other people.

In the uneducated classes, the women are superior to the men; in the upper classes, on the contrary, we find the men superior to the women. This is because men are more often rich in acquired virtues, and women in natural virtues.

Men are never – even when the benefits are immense – capable of a constant affection for those who corrupt them.

All luxury corrupts either conduct or taste.

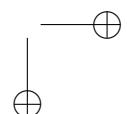
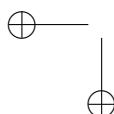
An idea of peace, as well as of intelligence, is associated with study, which makes uncultivated people respect it, and almost envy it as a happiness.

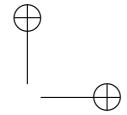
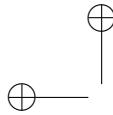
After a soldier's life, nothing is fine but study, or piety.

When a people that has not much originality wishes to be distinguished in letters, its natural tendency is to throw itself into learning; this is the only way to its end. Nature gives greater patience to the minds that she has made less penetrating.

Everything that corrupts, ferments.

The same cold-bloodedness that makes us say, 'The State is old, and ought to perish,' might well make us say, 'My father is old, and ought to die.' It is a temper not to be tolerated.





Power is a beauty; it even makes women like old age.

There is a kind of quarrelsomeness in the nature of men and nations. When this spirit of dispute and contention spends itself on trifles, why lament? Those are the happy times. The evil to fear is that which attacks and disturbs what is fundamental in social order.

In politics always let the grumblers have a bone to gnaw.

It seems as though nations love perils, and when they have none, they create them.

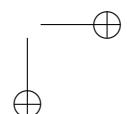
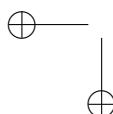
From ail cries, and from all complaints, a vapour rises; from this vapour a cloud forms; and from this cloud issue lightnings and tempests.

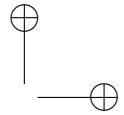
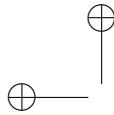
A great bond is set up between nations that have been long at war with one another. War is a kind of commerce that binds together even those whom it divides.

The French are born frivolous; but they are born temperate. Their intelligence is nimble, pleasant, but not imposing. Among them even the wise men seem, in their writings, to be youths.

Apart from family affection, all sustained feeling is impossible to the French.

Newspapers and books are more dangerous in France than elsewhere, because every one there insists on





being clever; and those who have no cleverness themselves, always suppose a great deal in the author they are reading, and at once try to think and speak like him.

In France it seems as though people care for the arts, more to criticise them than to enjoy them.

The wind should be tempered and chosen for French heads; for every wind makes them turn.

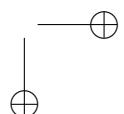
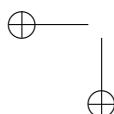
Frenchmen are more capable than any one else in the world of going mad without losing their heads. They hardly ever make mistakes except on a system, so little are they made for system. Their reason goes more quickly and surely to the point than their reasoning.

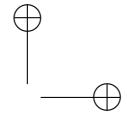
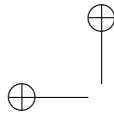
In the men of the South wickedness evaporates in words and thoughts. Less subtle and more serious in those of the North, it can only find satisfaction in deeds.

It is a habit among Southern people to say indifferent things with animation and fire. This is because their usual vivacity is a matter of the blood, and not of the soul.

Englishmen are honourable in their private affairs, but dishonourable in the affairs of their country.

The English are brought up in the respect of serious things, and the French in the habit of mocking at them.

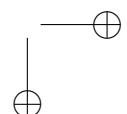
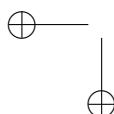


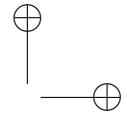
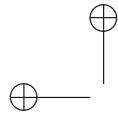


In England the parliament is king, and the king minister, but a minister hereditary, perpetual, inviolate. A maimed, one-eyed, limping, one-armed monarch, but an honoured one.

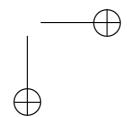
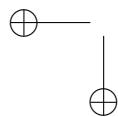
The Spaniards have the same inflation in their feelings that one finds in their books; an inflation all the more deplorable because it covers a real force and grandeur of character. They made themselves odious and criminal by a senseless love of display, and are still suffering to-day from the horror inspired in us by the conquerors of the Indies. Their example should teach other nations to be more careful of the honour of their name, and to keep it spotless; for, in spite of oneself, one applies to individuals, even in the relations of private life, the judgment which one has formed on the manners and general character of their nation.

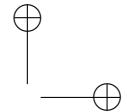
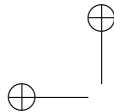
This is how one might apportion the commerce of nations according to their character. The Spaniard – jeweller, goldsmith, stone-cutter; the Englishman – manufacturer; the German – paper-merchant; the Dutchman – provision-merchant; and the Frenchman – fashion-monger. In navigation, the first is brave, the second clever, the third scientific, the fourth industrious, and the fifth adventurous. It would be well to give a ship a Spanish captain, an English pilot, a German boatswain, and Dutch sailors; the Frenchman sails on his own account. You must hold out a conquest to the first, an enterprise to the second, research to the third, gain to the fourth, and *coup de main* to the fifth. The





first likes long voyages, the second important, the third useful, the fourth lucrative, and the fifth rapid voyages. The first embarks to go, the second to act, the third to see, the fourth to make a profit, and the fifth to arrive. The sea, in fact, is to the Spaniard a road, to the Englishman a dwelling-place, to the German a study, to the Dutchman a means of transport, to the Frenchman a postchaise.





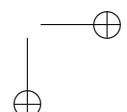
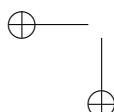
## OF ANTIQUITY

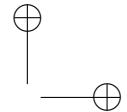
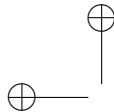
Where the ancients said 'our ancestors' we say 'posterity' ... it is the magic of the future, and not of the past, that allures us.

Many words have changed their meaning. For example, among the ancients the word 'liberty' had at bottom the same meaning as *dominium*: 'I would be free' meant to them, 'I wish to govern, or administer the State,' and to us it means, 'I wish to be independent.' With us 'liberty' has a moral meaning, and with them it had an entirely political meaning.

Contempt for personal insult was one of the characteristics of ancient manners.

The ancients always extol firmness as a rare and heroic quality. They must have been naturally far removed from our coldness of heart and manners. There was in the soul of the ancients a sensitiveness and a tenderness that is lost to us. Our more exact ideas have made us harder judges even of heroes.





To the Greeks, and above all to the Athenians – belong literary and civil beauty; to the Romans – moral and political beauty; to the Jews – religious and domestic beauty; to all other nations – the imitation of these three.

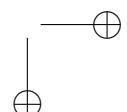
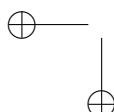
The Greeks loved truth, but they could not resist the longing to adorn it, or the opportunity to make it beautiful; they loved to express even the most solid truths in words that float.

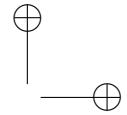
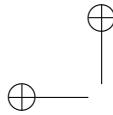
The Athenians, and the Greeks generally, laid great stress on beauty of disposition. Penetration of mind, gentleness, and courage made the perfection of a man in the eyes of Socrates and Plato: gentleness, which makes a man peaceful in the State, and pleasant to his fellow-citizens; courage, which makes him strong in misfortune, temperate in his pleasures, and formidable to his enemies; penetration of mind, which makes him delightful in his intercourse with friends, and perfect in his own life, in that it enables him always to see what is the best, and to do it.

To preserve, and to know; according to Plato the happiness of private life consists in these two.

It seems to me much harder to be a modern than one of the ancients.

When I speak of antiquity I mean a sane antiquity, for there has been an insane and exaggerated – the antiquity of Porphyry and Iamblicus.



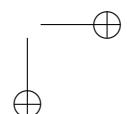
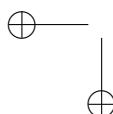


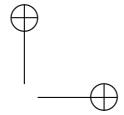
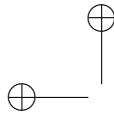
The Athenians had delicacy both of mind and of ear. They would not have borne with an unpleasing phrase, even as a quotation. One might say, that when they wrote, they were always in a good humour. They disapproved in style of that harshness which is the indication of sour, morose or melancholy manners.

God, not willing to bestow truth upon the Greeks, gave them poetry.

The ancients were wont to say that a too ornamental style of speaking had no moral quality – that is to say, did not express the character and the disposition of the speaker. All elaborations of style, in fact, can show nothing more than our literary habits, skill and resource.

The Greeks took pleasure in speaking their own language, and in feeling it flow from their pens, and from their tongues; it charmed them. This was because their language was easy, and it was easy because its elegant phrases were in common use; every one, both authors and people, spoke it with the same purity. Thus the most polished writers make frequent allusion to the popular proverbs; Plato is full of them. Now allusions are what give most magic to style, and most entertainment to the mind. They enliven and refresh it. In France we have been used to say that maxims were the proverbs of the educated class. At Athens the maxims of the educated class, and the proverbs of the market-place, were one and the same thing.





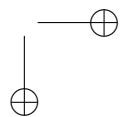
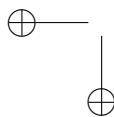
In speaking the Latins listened to themselves, while the Greeks watched their words; for they wished their words to match their thoughts. The first aimed at rhythm, pomp, dignity, and eloquence; the second at clearness and grace.

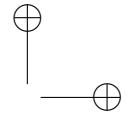
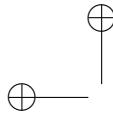
In writing, the ancients had a mind more at ease than we. They were not embarrassed by a thousand considerations that are forced upon us, concerning a crowd of books already known to our readers, which we cannot help perpetually combating or recalling. Being obliged thus to be either in harmony or in discord with all existing books, we sing our part in the midst of clamour; whilst the ancients sang their solo in peace.

It is above all the language of the ancients that we must diligently scrutinise.

The classics are an encyclopedia of style, where we find examples of the art of saying everything with delicacy, good taste, and beauty; for they speak of everything with a mild accent, and in a fine language. Even their indifferent work bears the impress of a fine type. They had no more genius than we have, but their art excelled ours; in their country there was better taste, and they had inherited better traditions.

It is true oratory to make use in speaking of the authority of the ancients, and true morals to revere it. The philosophy that appeals to this authority in argument is gentler, more persuasive, and more likely to make the world better. A spirit of wisdom breathes upon us





as we read the classics, and penetrates the enchanted soul.

The dregs even of Greek literature in its old age have a certain delicacy.

The classics must be read slowly; we need much patience, that is to say, much attention, if we are to get much pleasure from the reading of great works.

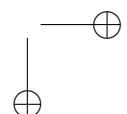
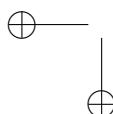
Antiquity! – I love it better in ruins than restored.

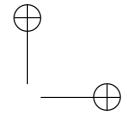
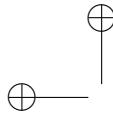
‘The fault is not in the writer, but in the time,’ said Aristarchus, speaking of those beauties in ancient writings which later generations can no longer feel; meaning by this, and rightly, that tastes had changed, and not the dishes or their flavour.

We cannot say anything without confusing and tumbling it. The ancients smoothed and unfolded everything.

In our writings, thought seems to move like a man who walks straight on. In the writings of the ancients, on the contrary, its movement is like the soaring of a bird that circles as it goes. They aimed at grace ‘*quid deceat, quid non*’ – rather than at force and accuracy. Observe the peculiar freedom of thought and imagination of the Greeks. In comparison, we seem in our writings like convicts fastened to the chain, like slaves bent upon their task, like idiots in a rapture.

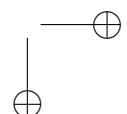
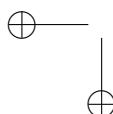
The minds of the ancients were not trained like ours to contention and effort. They were all the better

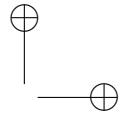
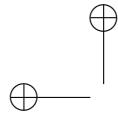




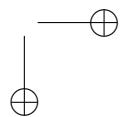
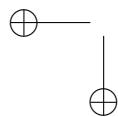
adapted to impart their ideas to the minds of the vulgar, incapable and unfitted as these generally are for laborious and sustained attention.

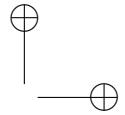
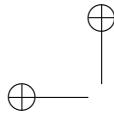
A pathetic, lofty, harmonious style fitted for the eloquence of the tribune came as easily to a Greek or a Roman as a witty, polished, lively, terse, bantering, flattering style does to a Frenchman. The talent for domestic and social life predominates amongst us, as the talent for public life did among the ancients. From childhood they were taught to speak to the multitude and practised in it from early youth; we are trained to speak to individuals. They had a language rich in metaphor and sonorous words, ours abounds in words of double meaning and ingenious turns of phrase. It was as easy for them to make long, grave and pathetic speeches as it is to us to talk for long together of pleasant things. The letters of Cicero are extremely short, and have little ornament. His speeches on the contrary have an inexhaustible supply of it; in them his mind appears ever varied, ever fruitful, and seems never to be weary. It would have been as difficult for Cicero to write a letter like Voltaire, as for Voltaire to make a speech like Cicero. It would have even been a great effort to an intellectual Roman to write a letter such as those that Caraccioli ascribes to Clement XIV. No Roman woman, such for example as Veturia, mother of Coriolanus, could have succeeded in forging a letter worthy of Madame de Sévigné. Perhaps however a flower-girl in Athens might have succeeded. – It has been well said that every language has its own char-





acter; but like all other things that make the wealth of nations, the wealth of each language proceeds from the use that men have made of it in their traffic with each other.





## OF THE PRESENT TIME

We live in an age when superfluous ideas abound, and necessary ideas are lacking.

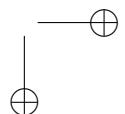
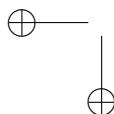
To make our temper the rule of our judgments, and to let our whims decide our actions, is a terrible habit of the time.

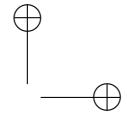
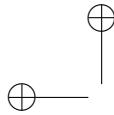
There are no irreconcilable enmities at the present day, because disinterested sentiments no longer exist; it is a good born of an evil.

The age suffers from that most terrible malady of the mind, a disgust for religion. It is not religious liberty, but irreligious liberty that it claims.

Men have torn up the roads which led to Heaven, and which all the world followed; now we have to make our own ladders.

Irreligion, in the world, is nothing more than a prejudice; for if some springs from inheritance and the time,





there is another which is the product of books and of fashion.

Politics are a matter rather of the practical than the scientific reason, of the faculty of choice rather than of logic, of judgment rather than demonstration. Thus, treated as they are nowadays, we mistake the nature, kind and classification of politics, and make use of unfit methods and instruments.

In political institutions nearly everything that we now call an abuse, was once a remedy.

The *salons* have ruined morals; railery has destroyed society and the throne.

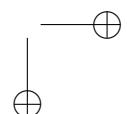
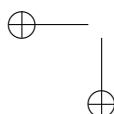
Self-indulgence has destroyed religion, morality, and politeness.

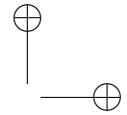
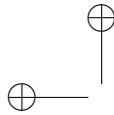
Whenever the words altar, tombs, inheritance, native land, ancient custom, foster-mother, master, piety, are heard or pronounced with indifference, all is lost.

In all our plans of improvement and reform there is a perpetual hyperbole of intention, which makes us aim above and beyond the mark.

Filled with a gigantic pride and, like giants at enmity with the gods, this century, in all its ambitions, has taken colossal proportions; a true Leviathan among the ages, it would have liked to devour them all.

There are a great many people in the world holding wrong opinions, who were made to have right ones,





and others holding right opinions who were made to have wrong

To be capable of respect is almost as rare in these days as to be worthy of it.

Where the age is breaking down, it must be propped up.

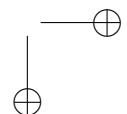
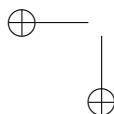
If nations have an old age, let it at least be grave and holy, and not frivolous and profligate.

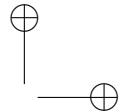
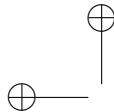
Let our philosophy be in sympathy with antiquity and not with novelty, aiming rather at utility than brilliance, and loving to be wise rather than bold. The presumption is always in favour of what has been; for if it has lasted so long, there has been some reason for its existence and its duration, and this reason can have been nothing but its harmony with already existing things, with a need of the time, or a natural want, with some necessity in fact which will restore it if it be destroyed, or will make the absence of it be felt by some grave inconvenience.

There can be no good time in the future that does not resemble the good times of the past.

In literature nothing makes minds so imprudent, and so bold, as ignorance of past times and contempt for old books.

There was a time when the world influenced books, now books influence the world.





After the *Nouvelle Héloïse* young people made a pose of being lovers, as before they had done of being drinkers or fencers. It is rather to the shame of the age than to the honour of books, when it happens that romances exercise such an ascendency over habits and customs.

In most books I perceive will rather than intelligence. – Ideas! who has ideas? There are approvals and disapprovals; the mind works by assent or refusal; it judges, but it does not see.

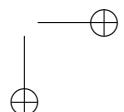
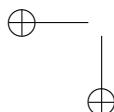
Everything that is easy to say well has been perfectly said; the rest is our business, or our task; and how great a task!

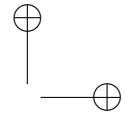
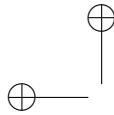
Nowadays, nearly everybody excels in refinement of style; it has become a common art. The exquisite may be found everywhere, the satisfying nowhere. ‘I should like to smell of the dungheap,’ said a witty woman.

One can hardly express how sensual the mind has become in literature. People will have some beauty, some bait in the most austere writing. They thus confound what pleases with what is beautiful.

The reason why we have no poets is because we can do without them. Our taste does not insist upon them because they are essential neither to our morals, our laws, our political festivals, nor our domestic pleasures.

The first poets and writers made mad men wise; modern writers try and make wise men mad.



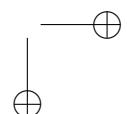
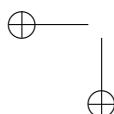


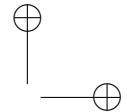
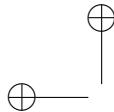
Taste in literature is become so domestic, and approbation so dependent on pleasure, that in a book we look first of all for the author, and in the author for his humours and his passions. We ask that the soul of a writer should show itself with the strength and the weakness, the knowledge and the errors, the wisdom and the illusions, which bring a man down to our level, and are such as we like to find in our friends. We ask no longer for a wise guide, but for a lover or friend, or at least an actor, who shows himself off and charms our taste much more than our reason, by his part and by his play. We want books that will keep us in a good humour, not that will make us better; we ask that we should be able to touch and handle those who have written them, that they should have, in fact, flesh and blood. We have scarcely any admiration left for pure mind. . . .

One of the ills of our literature is that our educated men have little genius, and our geniuses have little education.

Rude minds with robust organs have come bursting into literature, and it is they who weigh down its flowers.

How many learned men are working at the forge of science – laborious, ardent, tireless Cyclops, but one-eyed!





## OF EDUCATION

Children need models rather than critics.

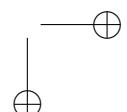
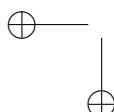
Education should be tender and severe, not cold and soft.

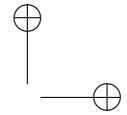
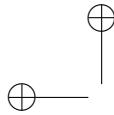
Too much severity freezes our faults, and fixes them; often indulgence kills them. A good praiser is as necessary as a good corrector.

When severity is applied in the wrong place, the sense of where to apply it rightly is lost.

Teach children how to be good, but not how to feel. Other people's arguments may make you reasonable, and other people's maxims well-behaved; for virtue can be acquired; but borrowed feelings are an odious hypocrisy; they substitute a mask for a face.

Insight is better than precept, for insight recognises, and applies precepts in the right way. Therefore give children such light as will enable them to distinguish good from evil in all things, without trying to teach





them all that is bad, and all that is good, in immense and impossible detail; they well distinguish it well enough.

Children should have their tutor within; he is much better placed and more watchful there than at their side; all children are naturally disposed to receive him; and in their conscience there is always a place ready for him.

Neither in metaphysics, nor in logic, nor in morals must we give to the head what should be the business of the heart or the conscience. Make the love of parents a feeling and a command; never the subject of a thesis, or of mere demonstration.

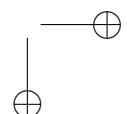
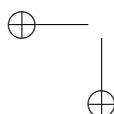
When children ask for an explanation, if it is given them, although they may not understand it, they are nevertheless content, and their minds are at rest. And yet what have they learnt? That what they wished to know is very difficult to know. But that is in itself knowledge; so they wait, patiently, and with reason.

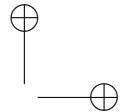
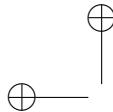
Education consists of things that should be said and things that should not be said, of silences and of teachings. Everywhere there are *verenda*, *nefanda silenda*, *tacenda*, *alto premenda*.

In bringing up a child, think of its old age.

The word *good* said to a child is always understood, and no one explains it to him.

The direction of the mind is more important than its progress.

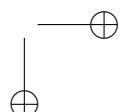
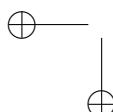


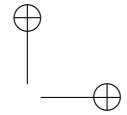
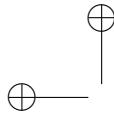


Let us leave to each his own measure of talent, character, and temperament – trying only to perfect them. . . . Those who are born delicate should live delicate, but healthy; those also who are born robust should live robust, but temperate; let those with swift minds keep their wings, and the others their feet.

In literature give children only what is simple. Simplicity has never corrupted taste; all that is bad in poetry is incompatible with it. It is thus that the purity of water is destroyed by the intermingling of earthy matter. Our taste in food is corrupted by too strong flavours, and our literary taste, pure in its beginnings, is ruined by over-emphasis. Be careful of these young eyes and young minds; make them happy; give them authors that repose and delight them.

By teaching Latin to a child we teach him how to be a judge, a lawyer, and a statesman. The history of Rome, even the history of its conquests, teaches the young firmness, justice, moderation, the love of country. The virtues of her generals were still the virtues of the magistrate, and in their military tribunals they wore the same demeanour as in the curule chair. The actions, the words, the speeches, the precedents in Latin books, are all useful for the formation of public men. These books alone would be enough to teach the magistrate who knew the history and position of his country, what are his duties, and what should be the conduct of his life, his talents, and his tasks. This was well known to the eminent judge, who, in this century





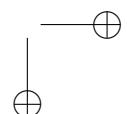
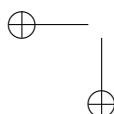
when excellent books have been written to cry down classical education, and when many people approve the study of modern languages only, said with as much courage as good sense, 'I wish my son to know a great deal of Latin.'

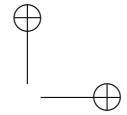
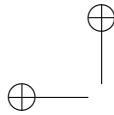
It is easier to make regularity beautiful than disorder, because disorder is naturally hostile to beauty, and to make it beautiful needs a peculiar power, that only nature can bestow. So that we should only give the regular as a model to beginners. The masters alone have the right to set any other before themselves.

To teach is to learn twice over.

The books of a teacher should be the fruit of a long experience, and the occupation of his retirement.

'Inspire, but do not write,' said Lebrun. This is what needs saying to teachers; but they refuse to be like the Muses, and will write!



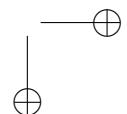
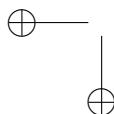


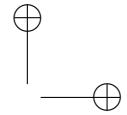
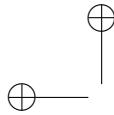
## OF THE FINE ARTS

Art is skill reduced to theory.

Far from relegating the arts to the class of useful superfluities, we should rank them among the most precious and important possessions of human society. Without the arts it would not be possible for the greatest minds to make the larger part of their conceptions known to us. Without them, the most perfect and upright man could not enjoy all the pleasures of which his own goodness makes him susceptible, or all the happiness that nature designed for him. Some emotions are so delicate, and some objects so enchanting, that they can only be expressed by colour and sound. The arts ought to be regarded as a kind of separate language; as our only means of communication with the inhabitants of a sphere higher than our own.

The doctrine that imitation is the principal foundation of the fine arts has a truer meaning and a wider application than people think. A man paints himself in his works, and is only satisfied with them when he





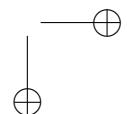
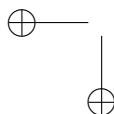
has succeeded in making them adequately render the proportions of his own nature; I do not mean those which he clearly perceives in himself, but those that are hidden there, and that only become visible in the copy that he unconsciously makes of them.

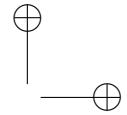
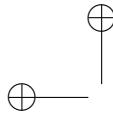
Imitation should proceed by suggestion only. If the poet makes a passionate man speak, he should put into his mouth only the suggestions of the words that a really passionate man would employ. If the painter colours some object, the colours must only suggest the true colours. A musician should only employ what suggests the real sounds, and not the real sounds themselves. The same law should be observed by the actor in his choice of tones and gestures. This is the great rule, the first rule, the only rule. All successful artists have perceived it, and observed it....

The most beautiful forms of expression in all the arts are those that seem to be the fruit of a moment of high contemplation.

What is the beautiful? – beauty seen by the eyes of the soul.

It should be the aim of intelligence to produce results like itself – that is to say, sentiments and ideas; and the arts should aim at the effects of intelligence. Artist! if you rouse nothing in us but sensations, what are you doing with your art that the prostitute with her trade, and the hangman with his, cannot do as well as you? If your work recognise only the bodily, if it appeal only





to the senses, you are but a workman without a soul,  
and your skill is merely of the hands.

Ordinary fact, mere reality, cannot be the object of art. Illusion based upon truth; that is the secret of the fine arts.

There are in art many beauties which only become natural by force of art.

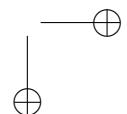
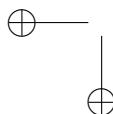
All that is capable of exact analysis, and therefore of easy imitation, should be banished from works of art; we do not want to see too clearly whence comes the effect that they make upon us. The naiad, in art, should hide her urn; the Nile its source.

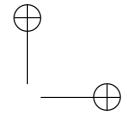
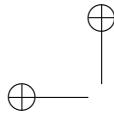
A work of art should be an entity, and not a thing at random. It should have its own proportions, character, and nature; a beginning, a middle, accessories, and an end. We must be able to distinguish in it a body and members, a whole figure – in short, a personality.

In art, look for that line of life and of beauty which, even whilst expressing nothing, adds loveliness to the forms which it defines and the surfaces over which it passes. It should flow unbroken in the mind; but the hand cannot trace it without breaking off, and beginning again, many times.

Elegance comes from clearness of forms, which makes them easy to grasp, and even easy to number.

To be natural in art is to be sincere.





Grace is the natural garb of beauty; in art, force without grace is like an anatomical figure.

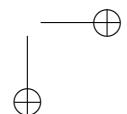
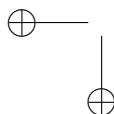
Architecture should be representative not only of the place, but of the man; a building should make evident to the eye the man who dwells within. The stones, the marble, the glass should speak, and say what they hide.

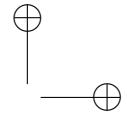
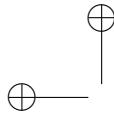
In portraying moral nature what the artist has most to fear is exaggeration; just as in portraying physical nature what he has most to fear is weakness.

A crucifixion should represent, at the same time, the death of a man and the life of a God. Whilst setting before our eyes a body destined for the grave, the painter should nevertheless make us see in it the element and germ of a near and supernatural resurrection. If he choose for the subject of his picture the moment of the pangs of death, he must so represent the victim as to show the God learning how man suffers. The impression of divinity and blessedness should mingle with all the signs of suffering and death.

When a painter wishes to represent an event, he can hardly put too many figures on the scene; but when he wishes to express a passion only, he can hardly employ too few.

A painter or a sculptor who does not know how to show the intangible and immortal soul in all his works, produces nothing that is really beautiful.





To look at a bad picture with respect, and at a good one with delight, is, I think, the most seemly, and I will even say, the most honourable attitude of mind that honest ignorance can either adopt or display.

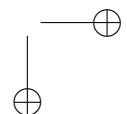
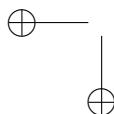
Dramatic art has no aim but representation. An actor should be half-real, and half a shadow of the real. His tears, his cries, his words, his gestures should be half feigned and half true. In fact, to make a scene fine, the spectator must think that he is imagining what he hears and sees, and everything in it must seem to him like a beautiful dream.

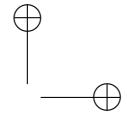
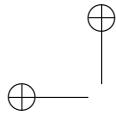
The object of all representation is to produce a fixed idea, which can be reproduced, at all times, with certainty. Now, to succeed in this the representation should be very definite – that is to say, very exact and very finished in all those parts of it which are meant to produce the effect at which we aim.

Dancing should give you the idea of a lightness and a suppleness that are not of the body. The sole merit of the arts, and the object at which they all should aim, is to make the soul imaginable by means of the body.

All modulations of sound are not a song, and all voices that execute beautiful airs do not sing. Song should produce enchantment. But for this, a disposition both of soul and throat is necessary, which is uncommon even among great singers.

Melody consists in a certain flowing of sweet and liquid sounds, like the honey from which it takes its name.



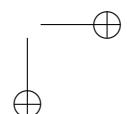
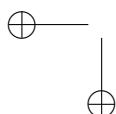


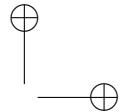
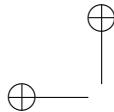
In the time of danger, music lifts our thoughts above it.

Songs with a refrain only suit the expression of feelings in which the soul loves, so to speak, to turn round and round, and from which she can only separate herself after a long circuit. All emotions that we express, just in order to breathe them forth and calm ourselves, admit of recurrent melody only in its most short and broken form, like the famous air, '*Che farò senza Euridice?*'

The music of a dirge seems to let sounds die.

It is not always necessary in music to express a marked movement or a distinct emotion. The song itself can be the object of the song. If it paints a soul in tune, a gift rising and falling through a lovely scale of sounds, a power which, in careless freedom, the sport of a thousand swift and passing affections, plays between earth and heaven – a mind at leisure, so to speak, which flies at random like the bee, touches a thousand things, without resting on any, and caresses every flower, humming its pleasure as it goes – you need ask for nothing more.





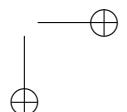
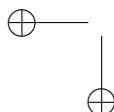
## POETRY

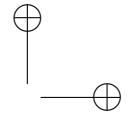
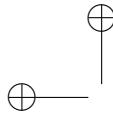
And what is poetry? I know nothing about it at present, but I maintain that in all the words that a true poet uses, the eye finds a certain phosphorescence, the taste a certain nectar, the mind an ambrosia, which are not in other words.

The inarticulate accents of the passions are not more natural to man than poetry.

The intellect contributes nothing to true poetry; it is a gift implanted in us by Heaven; it rises only from the soul; it comes to us in reverie; but do what we may, thought will never find it. The mind, however, prepares it by offering to the soul things which thought, so to speak, digs out. Emotion is the cause, knowledge is the matter of poetry. The matter without cause avails nothing; it would be better to have the cause without the matter. He who has a fine gift, even if it lie idle, is conscious of it and made happy by it.

In eager minds, where reasoning ends, poetry begins.





The harmony of nature, contemplated by a mind in harmony, is the groundwork, the foundation, the essence of poetic beauty.

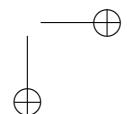
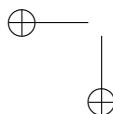
Nothing that does not carry us away is poetry. The lyre is, in some sort, a winged instrument.

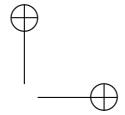
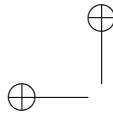
The poet must not only play the Phidias and the Dædalus to his own verse, but also the Prometheus, and endow it, not only with form and movement, but also with soul and life.

The highest poetry is pure and holy in its essence – let us say even, by its position; for the natural dwelling-place of poetry keeps it high above the earth, and on the borders of Heaven. Thence, like the immortal spirits, it sees souls and thoughts, and but little of bodies.

He who has never been touched by the spirit of devotion will never become a poet. Even the example of Voltaire does not belie this assertion. He had been a child, and the proof that he had once been subject to religious impressions is that he passed his life in recalling, decrying, and combating them.

Do you wish to know the mechanism of thought, and its power? Read the poets. Do you wish to know ethics and politics? Read the poets. Fathom the meaning of what delights you in them; that is the truth. The poets should be the great study of the philosopher who wishes to know mankind.





The poet questions himself; the philosopher contemplates himself.

Poets have a hundred times more sense than philosophers. In their search after beauty, they light upon more truths than philosophers find in their search after truth.

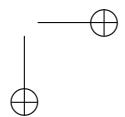
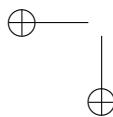
The true poet has words that show his thoughts; thoughts that reveal; and a soul that mirrors all things. He has a mind full of distinct images; whilst ours are only full of confused indications.

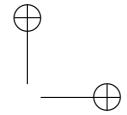
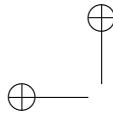
Other writers set their thoughts before us; poets engrave them on our memory. They have a language, supremely dear to memory, less by virtue of its forms than of its spiritual character. Visions spring from their words; and images from the things they have touched.

There must be in a poem, not only the poetry of images, but also the poetry of ideas.

Fine verse is breathed forth like perfume or sound.

A poet's every word rings with so clear a sound, has so distinct a meaning, that the attention which lingers on it enchanted can also easily leave it to pass on to the words that follow, where moreover another pleasure awaits it, the surprise of seeing, all of a sudden, common words grown beautiful, obscure words flooded with light, and well-worn phrases restored to their first freshness.





Fine poetry, whether epic, dramatic, or lyric, is nothing but the waking dreams of a wise man.

In the ode, a poet must be allowed, as a repose and relaxation, the pleasure of talking of himself.

A poet should not traverse at a walk an interval that he can clear at a leap.

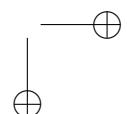
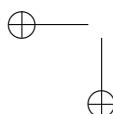
There is some poetry that people call swift when it is only restless; it moves more than it advances; it has no wings, but claws and feet – you can see the joints work. Serious verse should have a stately step, and must not tramp. When the poet wishes to paint swiftness, let him give it the march of the Homeric Gods, '*Il fait un pas et il arrive.*'

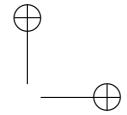
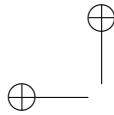
In ordinary language words call up the reality, but when language is truly poetic, the reality calls up the words.

In poetic style each word resounds like the tone of a well-strung lyre, and leaves behind it waves of sound.

Singing is the natural voice of the imagination. History is related, but fables are sung; reason speaks, but imagination hums a tune. If maxims and laws have a certain rhythm, it is because memory loves a cadence, and recollection takes pleasure in symmetries.

Every work of genius, be it epic or didactic, is too long if it cannot be read in one day.



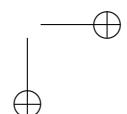
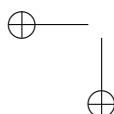


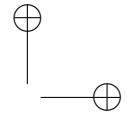
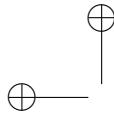
For the success of an epic poem, half the ideas and half the story should be already known to its readers. The poet then has to deal with a public which is anxious to hear what he himself is anxious to tell. So both author and readers are in an epic vein – a coincidence which is really indispensable.

He who has no poetry in himself will find poetry in nothing.

Words light up, when the poet's finger touches them with its phosphorus.

As the nectary of the bee changes flower-dust to honey, or like the liquid that transmutes lead to gold, so the poet with his breath lightens, inflates, and colours words. He knows wherein consists the charm of words, by what art to build with them enchanted castles.



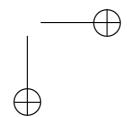
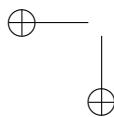


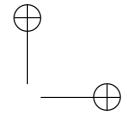
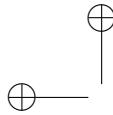
## STYLE

Man likes to move what is movable; and to vary what is variable; thus every age makes some mark upon language; and the continual influence of that spirit of invention which creates speech ends by corrupting it.

It is always by going beyond, rather than by falling short, that languages become corrupted; by going beyond their accustomed accent, their natural energy, their traditional brilliancy.

In literature it is well for the writer to go back to the sources of a language, because he thus opposes antiquity to fashion, and besides, when a man discovers in his native tongue that touch of unfamiliarity which stimulates and awakens the taste, he speaks it better, and with more pleasure. As for the drawbacks, they are *nil*. Faults that have grown old and obsolete have lost their power to harm, and there is nothing more to fear from their contagion.





To give an old word freshness of meaning which it had lost through age and decay, is not to change it, but to give it new life. Like the fields, languages are enriched by digging; to make them fruitful, when they are no longer virgin soil, we must dig deep.

All languages are rivers that run gold.

When we restore the natural and primitive meaning to words, we re-furbish, clean, and restore to them their first brilliance; we recast the coin, and return it, with fresh brightness, to circulation; we renew as with a die the defaced stamp.

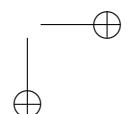
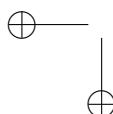
In the French language, words drawn from the gaming-table, from war, the chase, and the stable are of noble descent.

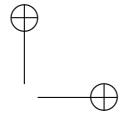
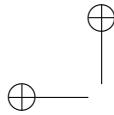
It is important to fix the language of science, above all the language of metaphysics, and to preserve, as much as possible, the expressions used by great men.

Before employing a fine phrase, make a place for it.

All fine speech is capable of more than one interpretation; when a beautiful phrase suggests a finer meaning than the author intended, it is well to adopt it.

Words should stand out from the paper; that is to say, should attach themselves easily to the attention and to the memory; they should be handy to quote, and to transplant.





If language be considered as a kind of music, then liquid and flowing words are the finest and best; but if it be considered as a painting, then harsh words are often excellent, for they give character.

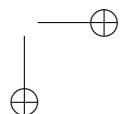
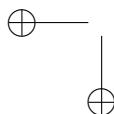
The man of dull brain and common ideas should make use of the first words that come. Brilliant phrases are the natural expression of an adorned memory, a stirred heart, an enlightened mind, and a keen eye.

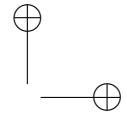
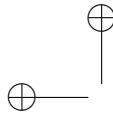
For an expression to be fine, it must say more than is necessary, and precisely what has to be said; it must combine abundance with economy, the little with the much; in short, its sound must be brief, its meaning infinite. Everything luminous has this character. A lamp, whilst it lights the object on which it is turned, lights also twenty others, for which it was never intended.

Words, like glass, obscure when they do not aid vision.

We must acknowledge, as masters of language, alike those who know how to misuse it, and those who know how to use it well. But these last are the kings of language; the first are its tyrants.

Phrases and words must agree with the voice, and the voice must be in keeping with the place. Words fit to be heard by all the world, and the phrases that fit these words, are ridiculous at times when we have only to talk to the eye or, so to speak, in the ear of a single reader.





Whatever people may say, it is meaning above all that gives sound and harmony; and as in music the ear charms the mind, so in the music of speech it is the mind that ministers to the charming of the ear. Except for a few very harsh, or a few very sweet words, languages are composed of words of neutral sound, of which the meaning determines the charm, even for the ear. For instance, in the line of Boileau –

*'Traçat à pas tardifs un pénible sillon'* –

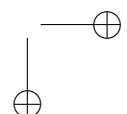
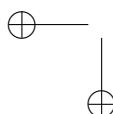
the uncouth combination of all these syllables – ‘*tra, ça, ta, pas, tar*’ – is hardly, if at all, noticeable – so true is it that the sense makes the sound!

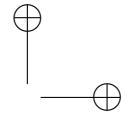
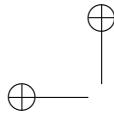
*'Moi, j'en étais haïe, et ne puis lui survivre.'* The gentleness of the sound in the word ‘*haïe*’ tempers its meaning, and softens the violence of it. From this mingling of harshness of meaning with gentleness of sound issues a saying which is only mournful; and mournful words are beautiful.

In style the introduction of pleasing ambiguities is a great art.

Sometimes a vague term is preferable to a precise one. To use the phrase of Boileau, some obscurities are elegant; some majestic; some even necessary – for they make the mind imagine what no clearness could make it see.

The hidden meaning of words in common use – often a meaning of much breadth and importance, but a





breadth and importance that we feel, without seeing – is like a light in a mist. It is the lamp of the glowworm which lights a single point, but lights it certainly. It is within the glow-worm, but far from its eye, which thus sees all, except the light itself.

Do not let your phrase hamper your thought; it should be to it like a body that does not cramp the soul. Nothing too exact! – this is the great rule of grace, in literature as in conduct.

Thoughts never lack words; it is words that lack thoughts. As soon as a thought has reached its full perfection, the word springs into being, offers itself, and clothes the thought.

He who is content to half-understand, is content to half-express; thence comes your facile writer.

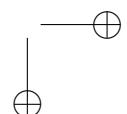
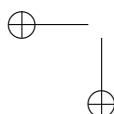
The best literary periods have always been those in which authors have weighed and counted their words.

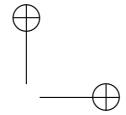
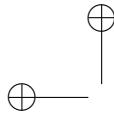
‘Style is a habit of mind,’ said Dussault. Happy are they with whom it is a habit of soul!

In some cases the thought produces the style; in others the style produces the thought.

La Bruyère says that judgment should be the source of thought; yes! but temper or imagination may be the sources of expression.

Keep your mind above your thoughts, and your thoughts above your expressions.





One likes to make the very sound of the words foretell the relation that exists between the thoughts they express.

When once the mind has tasted of the sap of words, it can no more do without it; it drinks thought there.

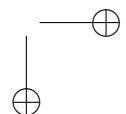
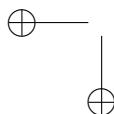
It seems to be with our thoughts as it is with flowers. Those that are simple in expression bear seed; those that are as it were doubled by their richness and splendour, charm the mind, but produce nothing.

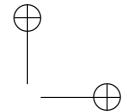
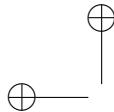
When the form of a phrase catches our attention more than the matter, we tend to believe that the thought has been invented for the phrase, the story for the telling, the censure for the epigram, the eulogy for the love-poem, the opinion for the good saying.

There are habits of the brain in writing as there are habits of the hand in painting; the important thing is that they should be good. Too strained a mind, too stiff a finger, are alike unfavourable to ease, grace, or beauty. Skill is a habit of mind; excellence or perfection is a habit of soul.

There is a kind of style which consumes so much thought, puts so much force into action, makes us expend so much, and, to maintain it, wastes so much tissue, that it ruins the mind.

There are some turns of phrase so striking that they take possession of the attention, to the point of distracting it from the thought. Their special function





is to show the habits and gestures of the mind, which are often as agreeable and important to know as the thoughts themselves.

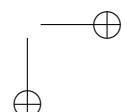
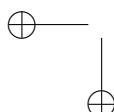
All forms of style are good, provided that they are used with taste; there are numberless expressions that are faults in some writers and beauties in others.

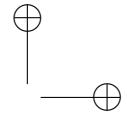
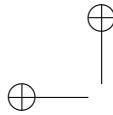
Included in the main stream of language there is a kind of special language, which I should like to call historical, because it only expresses things which have relation to our present manners, our existing governments – in short, to all that state of things which changes day by day and will pass away. Whoever aims at a durable style should use this kind of language extremely sparingly.

Orators, and the moralists of copious style, should be translated freely; but poets and the gnomic writers strictly: their character demands it.

In the art of grouping words and thoughts, it is essential that thoughts, phrases, and periods should stand out each in their own proportions, be sustained by their own mass, and balanced by their own weight. ‘*La Bruyère*,’ said Boileau, ‘saved himself the trouble of transitions.’ Yes, but he had given himself another, the trouble of grouping. For transition, one relation suffices; but for grouping you want a thousand – a harmony complete, natural, inevitable.

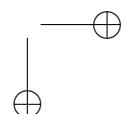
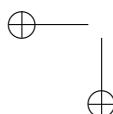
There is a kind of clearness and frankness of style which is the outcome of temper and disposition, like

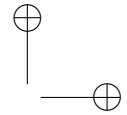
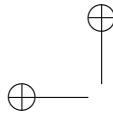




frankness of character. We may like it, but we must not insist upon it. Voltaire possessed it; the ancients did not. The inimitable Greeks had truth, fitness, and friendliness of style, but not frankness. This quality is, besides, incompatible with others which are essential to beauty. It may be combined with power, but not with dignity. There is something courageous and daring in it, but also something rather abrupt and petulant. Drances, in Virgil, has a frank style, and so far he is modern, he is French.

Sincerity is an indispensable quality in style, and one which is by itself enough to recommend a writer. If, on all sorts of subjects, we tried at the present day to write as they wrote in the time of Louis XIV, we should have no sincerity of style, for we have no longer the same habit of mind, the same opinions, or the same manners. A writer who tried to write verse like Boileau would be right, although he is not Boileau, because there it is only a question of borrowing a mask: he would be playing a part rather than adopting a personality. But a woman who wished to write like Madame de Sévigné would be ridiculous, because she is not Madame de Sévigné. The more the kind of writing you attempt depends on your own character and the manners of your time, the more widely should the style of it differ from that of writers who have only become models because in their works they excelled in painting either the manners of their epoch or their own character. Good taste itself in this case allows a deviation from the best taste; for even good taste





changes with manners. In the case of things that only bad taste can express or paint, it were better to abstain entirely from expressing or painting them. There are, however, some styles and some matters that are unchangeable. Ecclesiastical manners and opinions, for example, should always be the same, for there it is not a question of passing moods, and I think a sacred orator would do well to write and think, as Bossuet would have written and thought.

Literary style consists in giving substance and form to the thought, by means of the phrase.

The attention is like a narrow-mouthed vessel; pour into it what you have to say cautiously, and, as it were, drop by drop.

It is great art to know how to make one's thought fly like an arrow, and bury itself in the attention.

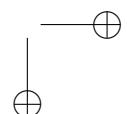
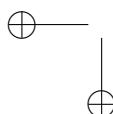
Some kinds of style are pleasant to the sight, harmonious to the ear, silky to the touch, but scentless and tasteless.

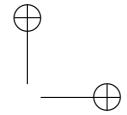
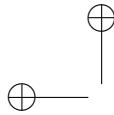
The most humble style has the savour of beauty, if it expresses a great and beautiful soul.

Only a temperate style is classical.

Some literary expressions are like colours: often time must fade them before they can give general pleasure.

In all solid things, such as architecture, and in all forms of very decided thought, such as maxims or





vehement satire, you cannot make your contrasts and your harmonies too strong. But in all that is effusion, abandonment, softness, they are better suggested than completed.

The pleasure of expectation deceived, but agreeably deceived, may be compared to that of suspension in music. This kind of effect is generally produced by interrupted symmetries, or broken cadences, as you may see in certain rustic airs, and in the style of Fénelon – a practice which gives freshness to the song, and charm to the style.

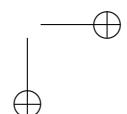
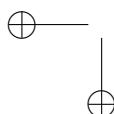
To write well, combine strong metaphor with subdued metaphor, strongly marked forms with indefinite forms.

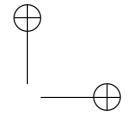
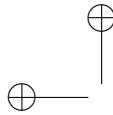
A concise style is the product of thought. When we have given a thing intense thought, then we can shape it in words. When we ponder but little, or not at all, on what we have to say, then our language is flowing, but without form; thus the spontaneous may have grace, but it lacks precision.

Brevity adorned – the highest beauty of style.

Those whose thought never goes beyond their words, nor their vision beyond their thought, have a very decided style.

A grave urbanity marks the academic style; it is the only style which befits a man of letters speaking to other men of letters.





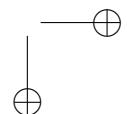
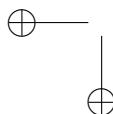
There is a 'bookish' style which savours rather of paper than of the world, of authorship rather than of the essence of things.

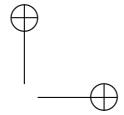
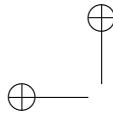
An oratorical style has often the same drawback as an opera, where the music drowns the words; in this case, the words obscure the thought. The writer is carried away by his style and made to deceive himself, as he also carries away his reader, and inclines him to be deceived.

Beware of tricks of style.

The characteristic style of the letter-writer is playful and urbane.

It is by means of familiar words that style takes hold of the reader and gets possession of him. It is by means of these that great thoughts get currency and pass for true metal, like gold and silver which have had a recognised stamp put upon them. They beget confidence in the man who, in order to make his thoughts more clearly perceived, uses them; for people feel that such an employment of the language of common human life betokens a man who knows that life and its concerns, and who keeps himself in contact with them. Besides, these words make a style frank and easy. They show that an author has long made the thought or the feeling expressed his mental food; that he has so assimilated them and familiarised them that the most common expressions suffice him in order to express ideas which have become every-day ideas to him by the length of





time they have been in his mind. And lastly, what one says in such words looks more true; for, of all the words in use, none are so clear as those which we call common words; and clearness is so eminently one of the characteristics of truth, that often it even passes for truth itself.\*

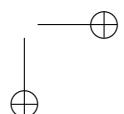
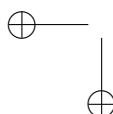
Colloquial expressions, by their very familiarity, produce an impression of greater sincerity. They please because they reveal the man even more than the author. But they should be placed in style, like folds in a drapery; broad spaces round them can alone excuse them.

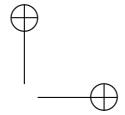
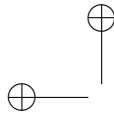
An inflated style ‘bags’ everywhere; the thoughts in it have little connection with the subject, or the words with the thought. Between them all there is air, vacuum, or too much space. The epithet ‘inflated’ as applied to style is one of the most daring, but one of the most fitting metaphors that has ever been hazarded. So, every one understands it, and no one is surprised by it. A turgid style is another thing. It has more consistency than the other, it is better filled; but its fulness is a deformity, or at least an excess. It is too bulky – too fat – or even too large.

There is a kind of author who begins by making his style jingle, so that you may say of him, ‘*He has gold!*’

There is no good and beautiful style that is not full of subtleties, but of delicate subtleties. Delicacy and

\*Matthew Arnold’s translation.





subtlety are the only true signs of talent. Everything else can be imitated – force, gravity, vehemence, even ease; but subtlety and delicacy are impossible to counterfeit for long. Without these, your wholesome style expresses only an upright mind.

Images and comparisons are necessary in order to give ideas a double hold upon the mind. These gain from them at once a physical and an intellectual force.

When the image takes the place of the object, and the shadow becomes the substance; when the expression is so pleasing that we are no longer inclined to go beyond it, to arrive at the meaning; when the metaphor, in short, absorbs the whole attention, we are stopped on our way, the road is mistaken for the resting-place, because our guide leads us wrong.

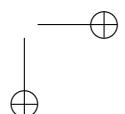
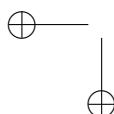
We may grasp and understand, by the help of metaphor; but we cannot judge and prove.

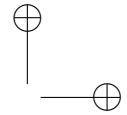
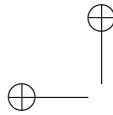
Polish and finish are to style what varnish is to a picture; they preserve it, give it permanence, and in some sort immortalise it.

We only become correct by correcting.

The rare style is good, when you get it; but I prefer the style that one expects.

Sharpness, fitness, clearness of expression are of the nature of thought. Transparency is its beauty. Therefore, if it is to seem natural, thought must needs use





art. Feeling is not under the same necessity; one is heat, the other is light.

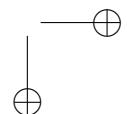
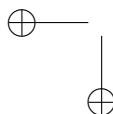
Often thoughts cannot touch the understanding unless pointed with words.

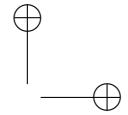
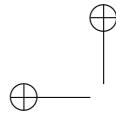
Ingenious turns of phrase direct and control the mind.

When we come on something farfetched in a good style, it is rather a misfortune than a fault; for it means that the author has not had the time nor the good fortune to find what he was looking for. He has not lacked taste, but success.

The sallies of wit sometimes spring from the fact that the mind, after looking all round a thing, seizes swiftly on that aspect of it which will stimulate curiosity, and leaves the aroused attention to deal with the rest. Witticisms are the resource of those who are impatient to be understood, who wish to convey everything, but not to say everything. They spring from a great desire to be understood in the most rapid way possible. They are the spurs that awaken the intelligence. Extreme sagacity develops the talent for wit, because it makes it a necessity.

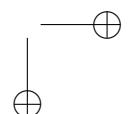
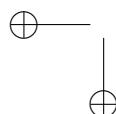
As some poetry comes near to being prose, so some prose may come near to being poetry. Nearly everything that expresses a decided feeling or opinion has some quality of measure and metre. This kind of prose is not so much a matter of art as of the influence and dominion of character over talent.

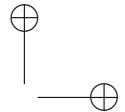
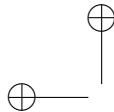




If dissonance is to be an element of beauty, it must be employed by some one who is versed in harmony, and remembers it, even whilst avoiding it; in the same way caricature, to be of any value, must be handled by some one who has the model of what is great in his mind, and remembers it even whilst departing from it.

To finish and complete your thought! – how long it takes, how rare it is, what an immense delight! For finished thought easily makes its way into the mind; to please, it need not even be beautiful; it is enough that it should be finished. The condition of the soul from which it springs communicates itself to other souls; and conveys to them its own repose.





## OF THE QUALITIES OF A WRITER

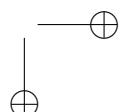
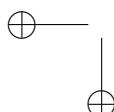
To make a great singer, a great painter, a great musician, a great writer, there must be enthusiasm in the voice, in the colour, the sounds, the words; yet this enthusiasm must be hidden and almost imperceptible; from it springs what we call charm.

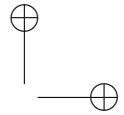
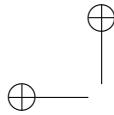
Buffon says that genius is but the capacity for patience. The capacity for long and unwearied attention is in fact the genius of observation; but there is another genius, that of invention, which is the capacity for a lively, quick and constant insight.

Without self-abandonment, or rather without rapture, there is no genius.

Goodness is the beginning of beauty.

The sublime has two manners, sublimity of thought or sublimity of feeling. In the second, a man has words that burn, penetrate, transport. In the first, he has but words of light; they give little heat, but they enchant.





Over-emphasis spoils the pen of the young, just as high singing spoils their voice. To learn to husband force, voice, talent, and intellect – this is the use of art, and the only way to excel.

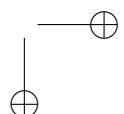
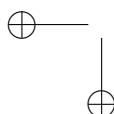
Where there is no delicacy there is no literature. A work which contains nothing but vigour, and a kind of fire without brilliancy, reveals nothing but the character. Any one can do the like, if he have the nerve, gall, pride, and animal force.

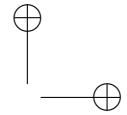
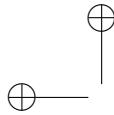
Be profound with clear terms, and not with obscure terms. What is difficult will at last become easy; but as one goes deep into things, one must still keep a charm, and one must carry into these dark depths of thought, into which speculation has only recently penetrated, the pure and antique clearness of centuries less learned than ours, but with more light in them.\*

Affectation is chiefly a matter of expression; pretentiousness of the vanity of the writer. By the one the author seems to say, 'I want to be clear,' or 'I want to be exact'; and he does not annoy us; by the other he seems to say, 'I want to shine'; and we hiss him. Here is the general rule: – whenever a writer is thinking only of his readers he is excused. Whenever he is thinking only of himself, we make him suffer for it.

Some writers are reproached that their style is far-fetched. As for myself, I seek far and wide in books for the exact expression, the simple expression, the

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





expression best suited to the subject before me, to the thought in my head, the feeling in my heart, to what goes before, to what follows after, and to the place that is waiting for the word. We speak of what is natural, but there is the naturally vulgar and the naturally distinguished. The natural expression is not always the most hackneyed, but is the one that best harmonises with the essence of the meaning. Habit is not nature, and the best is not what presents itself first, but what will endure.

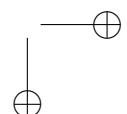
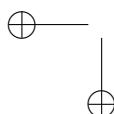
Literary manner is to literary method what hypocrisy is to virtue: but it is a sincere hypocrisy; he who has it is its dupe.

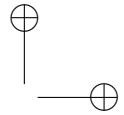
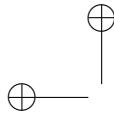
The natural gift! – it is but the material that art must use, the silk that it must spin and smooth.

When any one writes with ease, he always believes himself to have more talent than he has. In order to write well there must be a natural ease, and an acquired difficulty.

Facility is hostile to the sublime. Look at Cicero; he lacks nothing, but obstacle and spring.

When a piece of work has been done, there still remains one very difficult thing to do, that is, to give it a varnish of ease and an air of pleasure, that may hide from the reader and spare him all the trouble that the author has taken.





If a work show the marks of the file it has not been polished enough; if it smell of the lamp, your night-watches have been too short.

Sagacity needs but a moment to see everything; precision needs years to express everything.

Perfection is made up of minute details. It is not the use but the misplaced use of them, that is ridiculous.

Genius begins great works; but labour alone finishes them.

Idleness is a necessity for the mind, as much as work. Talent is ruined by writing too much, and rusted by not writing at all.

Ignorance, which in morals lessens the fault, in literature is itself a capital offence.

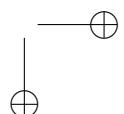
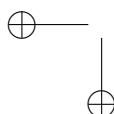
Forgotten and neglected studies are not always the worst; sometimes even they are the best.

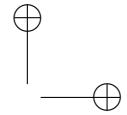
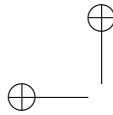
We know nothing well till a long time after we have learnt it.

It is impossible to become very well-informed if we read only what is agreeable.

This is perhaps a not unimportant counsel to give to writers; write nothing that does not give you great pleasure; emotion passes easily from writer to reader.

Young writers give their minds a great deal of exercise, and very little food.





To make something agreeable that has never been so before, is a kind of creation.

Commonplaces have an eternal interest. They are the unchanging material that the human mind, everywhere and always, must employ when it wishes to give pleasure. Circumstances give it variety. No music is more pleasing than variations on well-known airs.

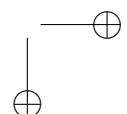
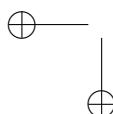
To try and do without the necessary, or make use of the useless; both sources of mischief in composition.

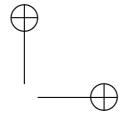
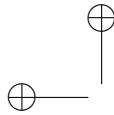
It is well to write down our views, perceptions and ideas, but not our judgments. The man who always writes down his judgments is forever placing a Calpe and an Abila before his eyes. He makes of them a *ne plus ultra*, and goes no further.

A writer should never give forth the whole of his thought, unless it be of a kind that it is well to be rid of. Breathe out all your anger, but not all your kindness; all your abuse, but not all your praise. Do not quench the mind's fire; still more do not empty it. Keep back always a little of its produce, and leave something of its honey to the bee itself for nourishment.

Those who do all that they can, are in danger of showing their limits. Neither talent, nor strength, nor expenditure should be carried to this extreme.

The fine feelings and beautiful ideas that we wish to set forth successfully in our writings, ought to be very





familiar to us, so that the ease and charm of habit may be felt in their expression.

A good judge finds everywhere thoughts that interest him, even in the conversation of fools, and in the most commonplace writings. These thoughts circulate like gold pieces that all the world uses, without noticing their brightness, their intrinsic value, and their beauty. And yet jewels can be made of them but the art lies in knowing how to work them up.

We should only believe in our feelings, after the soul has been long at rest from them; and express ourselves, not as we feel, but as we remember.

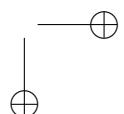
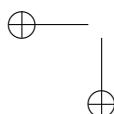
All that we say should take colour from ourselves, from our souls. This operation is slow, but it immortalises.

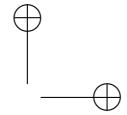
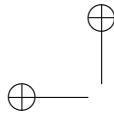
A work of art must not give the impression of a reality, so much as of a thought. Our thought indeed is always nobler, finer, and more apt to touch the soul, than the objects it presents, even when it presents them well.

Three things are necessary to make a good book: talent, art, and skill – that is to say, nature, industry, and habit.

In writing, we ought to fancy ourselves in the presence of the lettered few; but it is not to them that we should speak.

In the pure realm of art, illuminate your subject with one single ray of light, starting from one point.





Because of the nature of our taste, because of the qualities that a real or fictitious subject must have, if it is to please the imagination, and interest the heart – in short, because of the given conditions and unchangeableness of human nature, there are not many epic subjects, not many tragic, not many comic; and in the combinations by which we try to create new ones, we often attempt the impossible.

For an ordinary book you want nothing but a subject; but in a fine work there must be a germ that develops of itself in the mind like a plant. There are no fine works but those that have been long – if not laboured – at least dreamed over.

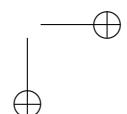
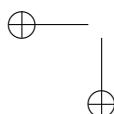
A thought is perfect only when it is at disposal – that is to say, when it can be detached and placed where you will.

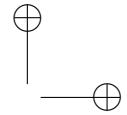
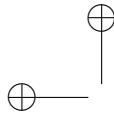
In composing, one hardly knows what one meant to say, until one has said: it. The word, in fact, is what completes the thought and gives it existence. By the word it springs into light – *in lucem prodit*.

The end of a work should always recall the beginning.

Let the last word be the last; it is like the last touch that gives the exact shade of colour; there is nothing to add to it. But then, what care we must take not to say the last word first!

Many useless phrases come into the head, but the mind grinds its colours out of them.





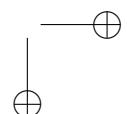
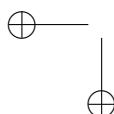
A man must say what he thinks, if he is to be satisfied with himself, and with what he says; but to be eloquent, fruitful, varied, abundant – in a word, to be an orator, it is perhaps necessary only to have to say what one thinks vaguely, has thought but a little while, or even thinks at the moment. The glow of thought, in fact, comes from its novelty and superabundance, from the very indecisions of the mind. The wise man, that is to say, he who only brings into the light of day what he has fully matured, may have the eloquence of the oracle, but he will never flow like Cicero. To make fine speeches with ease, a man must work upon himself as he wishes to work upon his hearers; he must, that is, persuade himself, as he speaks, of the truth of what he is saying.

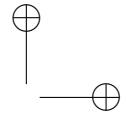
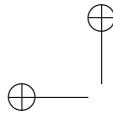
Men can only be persuaded to what they wish. So that, in order to dissuade them, you need only make them believe that what they wish is not in fact what they think they wish.

There is a great charm in seeing facts through words, because then one sees them through a thought.

You should only mix with historical narrative such reflections as the intelligence of a judicious reader would not be enough to suggest to him.

History, like perspective, needs distance. Facts that are too abundantly attested cease, in some degree, to be malleable.





Both the tragic and comic author should preserve a meditative habit of mind; the one that he may be equal; the other that he may be superior to his task.

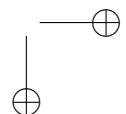
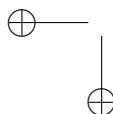
Comedy springs from the seriousness of the character represented; pathos from the patience or the calm of the sufferer. There is nothing comic without gravity, nothing pathetic without self-control. He who makes you laugh must forget that he is ridiculous, and he who weeps must disguise or keep back his tears.

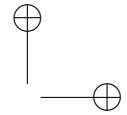
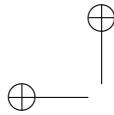
The truly comic excites not only gaiety, but delight. This is because in true comedy there is plenty of light and space; the characters appear whole and clear; the spectator can see all round them.

Comedy should never present what is repulsive.

The theatre should amuse worthily, but should only amuse. To try and make it a school of morals is to corrupt both morals and art. A heroic and poetic morality may have its use there; but ordinary morality, when it is taught upon the boards, catches from them a something comic, or tragic, which reduces it to an actor's verbiage.

With the fever of the senses, the delirium of the heart and the weakness of the spirit, with the storms of time and the great scourges of life, hunger, thirst, dishonour, sickness and death, authors may go on as long as they like weaving romances that make us weep, but the soul says, 'You hurt me.'





'I hunger, I thirst – give.' Here is the material for a fine deed, but not for a fine work.

Does talent, then, need passion? Yes, a great deal of repressed passion.

There need not be love in a book to charm a reader; but there must be a great deal of tenderness.

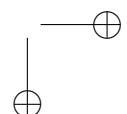
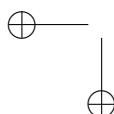
Paint at least in the great, absorbing passions the cry of the nature that they torment, and the effort of the soul that they exhaust.

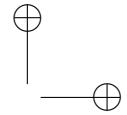
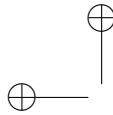
There never was an age of literature whose dominant taste was not diseased. The triumph of the best artists is to make healthy work agreeable to diseased taste.

In works of taste and genius of every kind, the form is the essential thing, and the matter only an accessory.

Literary things belong to the intellectual domain; to talk of them with the passions of that domain is contrary to the fitness and proportion of things, as well as to intelligence and good sense. The bitter zeal of some critics for good taste, their indignation, vehemence, and heat are ridiculous; they write about words as it is only permissible to write about morals. The things of the mind must be dealt with by the mind, not by the impulses of passion and spleen.

Where there is no charm and no serenity, there is no literature. There must be some amenity even in criticism. If it entirely lacks this it ceases to be literary.





Criticism without kindness troubles taste, and poisons the savour of things.

The charm of criticism is to make us acquainted with minds; the maintenance of good rules is but its professional business, and the least of its uses.

The critics by profession are seldom able to distinguish or appreciate uncut diamonds or gold in the bar. They are traders, and in literature they only recognise current coin. Their criticism has scales; but no crucible and no touchstone.

In literature how many people have a correct ear, and sing out of tune!

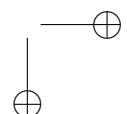
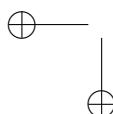
Good judgment in literature is a faculty of slow growth, which only reaches its full development very late.

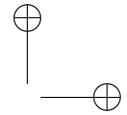
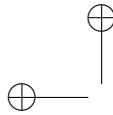
In literature it is the first flavours that make or unmake the taste.

In moments of universal emotion there is not a single man that has not taste. Observe at the theatre how quick is the response, how exquisite the discernment, of stirred hearts!

In books we take for eloquence not only all that strengthens our passions, but also whatever strengthens our opinions.

The writers who have influence are the only men who express perfectly what others think, and who awaken in men's minds feelings that were ready to blossom. In the depths of human minds all literatures lie dormant.





The exception belongs to art as well as the rule. The one defends, the other extends its domain.

The surprising surprises once; but the admirable is admired more and more.

In the case of perfection, the first glance leaves us with nothing more to wish for; but with always some beauty, some charm, some merit still to discover.

The books that we plan to re-read in our old age are something like the places where we should wish to grow old.

The best literary work does not intoxicate – it enchant.

From all good literary work there rises, as it were, a kind of spiritual form that easily fastens on the memory.

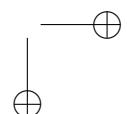
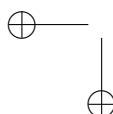
There are some books in which we seem to breathe a delicate air.

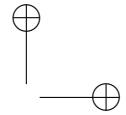
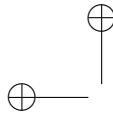
When you read a well-written book, the mind has one clear impression the more, if only by the idea or memory of it that remains with us.

Few books give life-long pleasure. There are some for which, with the growth of time, wisdom, and good sense, we lose all taste.

Talent follows the voice of praise; it is the siren that leads it astray.

In literature, and in the accepted judgments upon authors, there is more conventional opinion than truth.





How many books, whose reputation is made, would make none if it were still to win!

The second-rate is excellence, for the second-rate.

Of its own nature the intelligence abstains from judging what it does not know. It is vanity that forces it to pronounce, when it would otherwise keep silence.

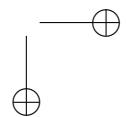
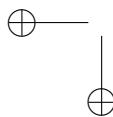
What is of doubtful or moderate merit, needs the praise of others to make it please the author; but what is perfect carries with it the conviction of its own beauty.

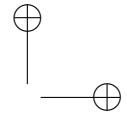
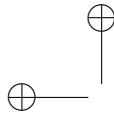
There are many writings of which nothing remains – as from the sight of a stream flowing in clear ripples over small pebbles – but the memory of words that have fled.

True scholars and true poets become such, more for pleasure than by labour. What impels them, and restrains them, in their studies is not their ambition but their genius.

What some minds produce does not come from their soil, but from the enriching nutriment with which it has been covered.

All men of talent are worth more than their books; men of genius and scholars are worth less, as the nightingale is worth less than her song, the silk-worm less than her industry; and as the instinct is greater than the animal.





There are some phantom authors, and some phantom books.

Literature, which M. de Bonald calls the expression of society, is often nothing but the expression of our studies, our temper, or our personality; and this last is the best. There are books so fine that literature in them is but the expression of those that write them.

National literature begins with fables, and finishes with novels.

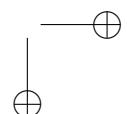
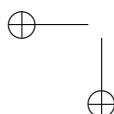
Alas! it is books that give us our greatest pleasures, and men that cause us our deepest pains. Sometimes even, thoughts console us for things, and books for men.

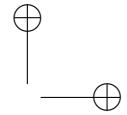
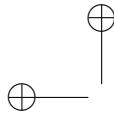
We find little in a book but what we put there. But in great books, the mind finds room to put many things.

A writer should be capable of excess, but never guilty of it; for though the paper be long-suffering, the reader is not, and his satiety is more to be feared than his hunger.

To be prodigal of words and thoughts betrays a foolish mind. Richness lies in excellence, not in abundance. Economy in literature proclaims the great writer. Without order and sobriety, there is no wisdom; without wisdom no greatness.

A few memorable words may be enough to reveal a great mind. A single thought may contain the essence of a whole book; a phrase may have the beauties of



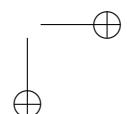
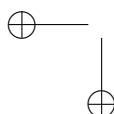


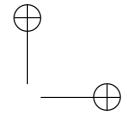
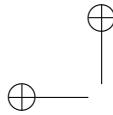
a vast work; the one may be worth the many; and there is a simplicity so finished and perfect, that it equals a great and glorious composition in merit and in excellence.

Whether one is an eagle or an ant in the intellectual world seems to me not to matter much; the essential thing is to have one's place marked there, one's station assigned, and to belong decidedly to a regular and wholesome order. A small talent, if it keeps within its limits, and rightly fulfils its task, may reach the goal just as well as a greater one. To accustom mankind to pleasures which depend neither upon the bodily appetites nor upon money, by giving them a taste for the things of the mind, seems to me, in fact, the one proper result which nature has meant our literary productions to have. When they have other fruits, it is by accident, and, in general, not for good. Books which absorb our attention to such an extent that they rob us of all fancy for other books, are absolutely pernicious. In this way they only bring fresh crotchets and sects into the world; they multiply the great variety of weights, rules, and measures already existing; they are morally and politically a nuisance.\*

Let us remember the phrase quoted by St. Francois de Sales, about the *Imitation*, 'I have sought repose everywhere, and have only found it in a little corner, with a little book.' Happy the writer who can make a beautiful little book.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





## LITERARY JUDGMENTS

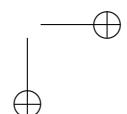
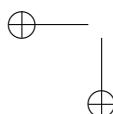
### WRITERS OF ANTIQUITY

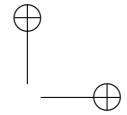
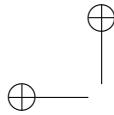
There will never be a bearable translation of Homer, unless every word in it is chosen with art – is full of variety, novelty, and charm. The expression too must be as antique, as unadorned as the manners, the incidents, and the figures that are put upon the stage. With our modern style, everything in Homer is distorted, and the heroes seem like clowns who are aping the grave and the proud.

Spirit of flame by his very nature, not only illumined but luminous, Plato shines by his own light. The splendour of his thought colours his language. Brilliance in him is born of the sublime.

Plato spoke to an extremely ingenious people, and was bound to speak as he did.

Seek only in Plato for forms and ideas; that is what he sought himself. There is more light in him than there





are objects, more form than matter. We must breathe him, but not feed upon him.

Plato shows us nothing, but he brings brightness with him; he puts light into our eyes, and fills us with a clearness by which all objects afterwards become illuminated. He teaches us nothing; but he prepares us, fashions us, and makes us ready to know all. Somehow or other the habit of reading him augments in us the capacity for discerning and entertaining whatever fine truths may afterwards present themselves. Like mountain air, it sharpens our organs, and gives us an appetite for wholesome food.\*

Plato loses himself in the void, but one sees the play of his wings, one hears their rustle.†

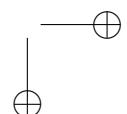
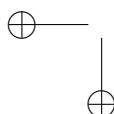
In Plato, Socrates too often appears as the philosopher by profession, instead of being content to show himself as the philosopher by nature and goodness.

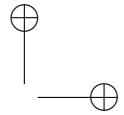
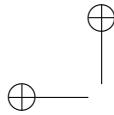
Homer wrote to be sung, Sophocles to be declaimed, Herodotus to be recited, and Xenophon to be read. From purposes so varied innumerable differences in their style were sure to arise.

No writer had greater boldness of expression than Cicero. You think him cautious and almost timid; and yet no tongue was ever less so than his. His eloquence

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.

†Matthew Arnold's translation.





is limpid; but when it must, it flows in great rapids and cascades.

There are a thousand ways of preparing and seasoning speech; Cicero liked them all.

In Catullus are found two things which make the worst combination in the world: affectation and coarseness. Generally, however, the principal idea in each of his little pieces is of a happy and innocent kind; his airs are pretty, but his instrument is vulgar.

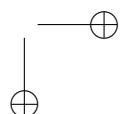
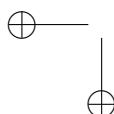
Horace contents the mind, but he does not rejoice the taste. Virgil satisfies taste as much as thought. The recollection of his verses is as delightful as the reading of them.

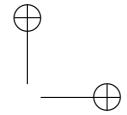
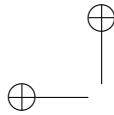
In Horace there is not one expression nor, so to speak, one word, that Virgil would have wished to use, so different are their styles.

Take away Juvenal's gall, and Virgil's wisdom, and you will have two bad authors.

Plutarch, in interpreting Plato, is clearer than he, and yet has less light, and gives the soul less joy.

The style of Tacitus, although less beautiful, less rich in pleasing colour and in variety of expression, is perhaps more perfect than even that of Cicero; for every word in it has been thought over, and has its exact weight, measure, and quantity. Now, supreme perfection lies in the perfect union of perfect elements.





In Tacitus, we must not only look for the orator and the writer, but for the painter, the inimitable painter, of actions and thoughts.

In the narratives of Tacitus the interest of the story will not allow us to read little at a time, and the depth and grandeur of expression will not allow us to read much. The mind, as if divided between curiosity which leads it on, and attention which holds it back, feels a certain fatigue; the writer, in fact, takes possession of the reader, to the point of doing him violence.

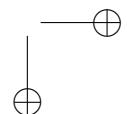
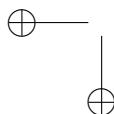
The style of Tacitus was made to paint dark souls and disastrous times.

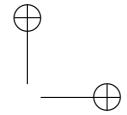
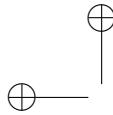
#### **RELIGIOUS WRITERS**

St. Thomas and St. Augustine are the Aristotle and the Plato of theology. But St. Thomas is more Aristotelian than St. Augustine is Platonic.

Pascal speaks the language of a Christian misanthropy that is at once strong and gentle. As there are few who have the feeling, so are there few who have had the style. He had a power of strong conception, but he invented nothing; that is to say, he discovered nothing new in metaphysics.

The greater number of Pascal's thoughts on law, habits, customs, are only the thoughts of Montaigne that he has recast. Behind the thought of Pascal you see the





attitude of that firm and passionless mind: it is this, above all, which makes it so imposing.

In Bossuet's style a Gallic frankness and good temper make themselves felt, and yet with dignity. He is stately and sublime – popular, and almost naif.

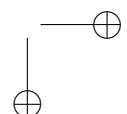
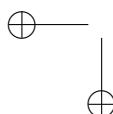
Voltaire is clear like water, and Bossuet clear like wine: but it is enough; he nourishes and fortifies.

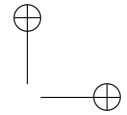
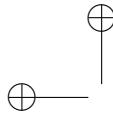
Bossuet employs all our idioms, as Homer employed all the dialects. The language of kings, of statesmen, and of warriors; the language of the people and of the student, of the country and of the schools, of the sanctuary and of the courts of law; the old and the new, the trivial and the stately, the quiet and the resounding – he turns all to his use; and out of all this he makes a style, simple, grave, majestic. His ideas are like his words, varied – common and sublime together. Times and doctrines in all their multitude were ever before it. He is not so much a man as a human nature, with the temperance of a saint, the justice of a bishop, the prudence of a doctor, and the might of a great spirit.\*

Fénelon knows how to plead, but not how to teach. As a philosopher he is almost divine; as a theologian almost ignorant.

Fénelon had that happy type of mind, talent, and character which never fails to give everybody the im-

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.



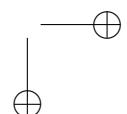
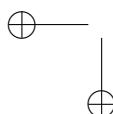


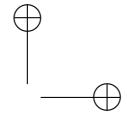
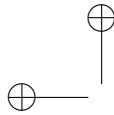
pression of being better than it is. In the same way we attribute to Racine what belongs only to Virgil, and always expect to find in Raphael beauties which are perhaps more often to be met with in the works of two or three other painters than in his own.

#### METAPHYSICIANS

Bacon put his imagination into physical science as Plato had put his into metaphysics; Bacon was as bold and adventurous in building up conjectures by the aid of experience as Plato was magnificent in the setting forth of probabilities. Plato, at least, gives his ideas as ideas; but Bacon gives his as facts. Therefore he is more misleading in natural science than the other in metaphysics. See his *Historia Vitæ et Mortis*. Nevertheless both were great and splendid minds. Both clove a broad way through literary space; Bacon with the light firmness of his tread, Plato with the broad sweep of his wing.

Hobbes, it is said, was a bad-tempered man; this does not surprise me. Bad temper more than anything else makes the mind and tone decided; it is what irresistibly leads us to concentrate our ideas. It abounds in lively expression; but, to become philosophical, it must spring exclusively from the unreasonableness of others, and not from our own; from the evil mind of the time in which we live, and not from our own evil mind.



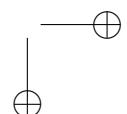
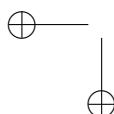


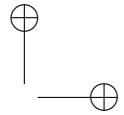
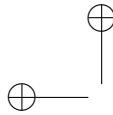
Locke's book is imperfect. His whole subject is not in it, because it was not in the author's mind beforehand. He throws himself upon the lesser parts of it, which he divides and subdivides for ever. He leaves the trunk for the branches, and his work has too many ramifications.

Locke shows himself nearly always to be an inventive logician, but a bad metaphysician; in fact, an enemy to metaphysics. He was not merely destitute of metaphysic, he was incapable of it, and hostile to it. A good questioner, a good experimenter, but without light; a blind man who makes good use of his stick.

Kant seems to have made a laborious language for himself, and as it was laborious to him to construct, so is it laborious to us to read. Thence, doubtless, it arises that he has often mistaken his method for his matter. He thought he was making ideas when he was only making phrases. His language and his concepts have something so opaque about them, that it was impossible for him not to believe that there was some solidity in them. Our French transparency and lightness deceive us less. Here is a subject for treatment: 'Of the deceptions that the mind practises upon itself, according to the nature of the language that it employs.'

One is tempted to say to Kant, 'Show us where the unknown begins': that we never see.





**PROSE WRITERS, PHILOSOPHERS,  
POLITICAL WRITERS**

All the old French prose was modified by the style of Amyot, and by the character of the work that he had translated. The rest were but commentators. Plutarch himself is nothing more; a commentator, not of words, but of thoughts.

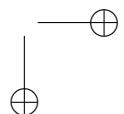
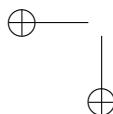
In France, Amyot's translation has become an original work from which people like to quote.

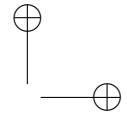
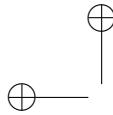
Nothing illuminates like a joke; nothing is so nimble and gay as the wantonness of wit. The gaiety of Gramont and Hamilton is less elegant than that of Voltaire; but it is more exquisite, more charming, more perfect.

In Montesquieu there are political ideas, but no political feeling. His works are nothing but a series of considerations. It is political feeling, however, that makes the soul and life of a State. Apart from it, the activity of empires has no motive power from within.

Montesquieu was a fine brain without discretion.

The mind of Montesquieu perpetually emits sparks which dazzle, delight, and even inflame, but illuminate little. His is a mind full of juggleries, with which he blinds his readers. One learns better how to be a king from one page of *The Prince* than from four volumes of the *Esprit des Lois*.



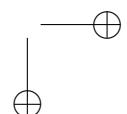
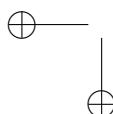


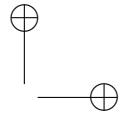
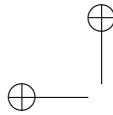
Montesquieu was a master of terse expression; he knew how to make little phrases say great things.

Voltaire has spread an elegance throughout the language which tends to banish kindness. Rousseau has robbed souls of their wisdom, whilst talking to them of virtue. Buffon gives the mind a taste for magniloquent phrases. Montesquieu is the wisest; but he seems to teach the art of making empires; one thinks one learns it by listening to him; and every time one reads him, one is tempted to try and build one.

Voltaire's mind came to its maturity twenty years earlier than the minds of other men, and remained in full vigour thirty years later. Our ideas sometimes lend charm to our style; his style lent it to all his ideas.

Voltaire's mind was skilful, adroit, doing everything that he wanted, and doing it well and quickly, but incapable of maintaining the highest level. He had the gift of raillery, but he did not know the science of it; he never knew what things may be laughed at, and what things may not. He is a writer against whose wonderful elegance we should be on our guard, or we shall never think anything serious. At once active and brilliant, he occupied the region that lies between folly and good sense, and alternated perpetually between the two. He had a great deal of the good sense that is useful to satire; that is to say, an unfailing eye for the ills and defects of society; but he never looked for the remedy. One would have said that they existed solely for his malice and amusement; for he either mocked at





them or was irritated by them, without ever pausing to pity them.

Voltaire would have patiently read through thirty or forty folio volumes to find one small irreligious joke.

Voltaire is sometimes sad: he has emotion; but he is never serious. His very graces have an effrontery about them.

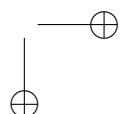
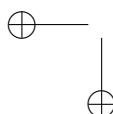
There are some faults that are difficult to perceive, which have not been classified or determined, and which have no name. Voltaire is full of them.

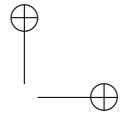
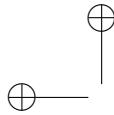
Voltaire knew the light and disported himself in it, but in order that he might scatter and deflect all its rays, like a mischievous child. He is a goblin, who in the course of his evolutions sometimes takes on the shape and air of high genius.

Voltaire had correctness of judgment, liveliness of imagination, nimble wits, quick taste, and a moral sense in ruins.\*

Voltaire is never alone with himself in his writings. Like a perpetual journalist, he entertained the public every day with the events of the day before. His temper was of more use to him in writing than his reason or his knowledge. Some hatred or some scorn made him write all his works. Even his tragedies are but a satire on some opinion.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





To despise and cry down the times of which we treat, as Voltaire did, is to take all the interest out of the history we write.

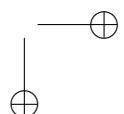
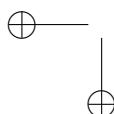
Voltaire is the most debauched of spirits, and the worst of him is that one gets debauched along with him. If he had been a wise man, and had had the self-discipline of wisdom, beyond a doubt half his wit would have been gone; it needed an atmosphere of licence in order to play freely....\* Those people who read him every day, create for themselves, by an invincible law, the necessity of liking him. But those people who, having given up reading him, gaze steadily down upon the influences which his spirit has shed abroad, find themselves in simple justice or duty compelled to detest him.

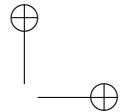
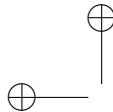
It is impossible to be satisfied with Voltaire, and impossible not to be fascinated by him.

Voltaire has charming movements, and hideous features, like the monkey. One can always see in him, behind the skilful hand, an ugly face.

Voltaire had the art of familiar style. He gave it every form, every charm, every beauty of which it is susceptible; and because he used it in treating all subjects, his deluded age believed that he had excelled in all. Those who praise him for his taste perpetually confound taste and brilliance. One never likes him; but one admires

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





him. He enlivens, he dazzles; it is to the mind's love of movement that he appeals, and not to taste.

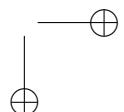
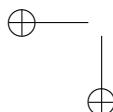
I see very well that a Rousseau, I mean an amended Rousseau, might be very useful nowadays, might even be necessary; but at no time can a Voltaire be good for anything.

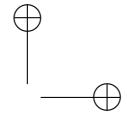
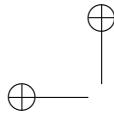
Voltaire has introduced a fashion of such luxury, in intellectual work, that one can no longer offer ordinary viands in anything but gold and silver dishes. So much trouble to please the reader is rather a sign of vanity than virtue, of the wish to beguile than the wish to serve, of ambition rather than authority, of art rather than nature; and all these charms point rather to a great master than a great man.

Voltaire, by his influence and the lapse of time, has blunted the severity of reason in most of us. He has infected the air of his age, and imposed his taste even on his enemies, and his judgments on his critics.

J. J. Rousseau had a voluptuous mind. The soul in his writings is always mingled with the body, and never separates from it. No man has made us feel more vividly than he the contrast of flesh with spirit, and the delights of their union.

Rousseau imparted, if I may so speak, *bowels of feeling* to the words he used (*donna des entrailles à tous les mots*), and poured into them such a charm, sweetness so penetrating, energy so puissant, that his writings have an effect upon the soul something like that of





those illicit pleasures which steal away our taste, and intoxicate our reason.\*

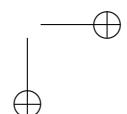
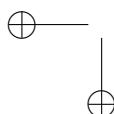
Give malice to Fénelon and calm to Rousseau – you would make out of them two bad authors. The gift of the first lay in his reasonableness; of the second in his folly. So long as nothing stirred his passions, Rousseau was second-rate: everything that made him good made him vulgar. The genius of Fénelon, on the contrary, lay in his goodness.

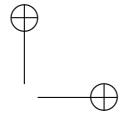
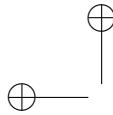
When we have read Buffon, we think ourselves learned. When we have read Rousseau we think ourselves virtuous; for all that, we are neither the one nor the other.

An irreligious piety, a corrupting austerity, a dogmatism that destroys all authority; that is the character of Rousseau's philosophy.

Life without actions; life entirely resolved into affections and half-sensual thoughts; do-nothingness setting up for a virtue; cowardliness with voluptuousness; fierce pride with nullity underneath it; the strutting phrase of the most sensual of vagabonds, who has made his system of philosophy and can give it eloquently forth; the beggar warming himself in the sun, and finding his delight in scorning the human race – that is Rousseau.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





I speak to the tender souls, the ardent souls, the lofty souls, to the souls born with one or other of these distinctive characters of religion, and I say to them, 'Nothing but Rousseau can separate you from religion, and nothing but religion can cure you of Rousseau.\*

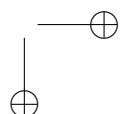
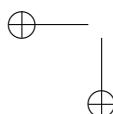
Diderot and the philosophers drew their learning from their brains, and their arguments from their passions or their fancies.

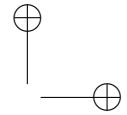
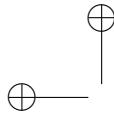
There is, in the style of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a prism, which tires the eyes. When one has been reading him for a long time, it is delightful to see that the grass and the trees in the country have less colour than they have in his writings. His harmonies make us love the dissonances that he banished from the world, and that we meet with at every step. Nature has its music certainly; but happily it is rare. If real life gave us the melodies that these gentlemen find everywhere, we should live in a state of ecstatic langour; and we should die of drowsiness.

#### POETS AND NOVELISTS

Petrarch for thirty years adored not the person, but the image of Laura; so much easier is it to preserve our feelings and ideas than our sensations. Hence the fidelity of the old knights.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





Petrarch thought little of his Italian poetry, whereby he became immortal; he preferred his Latin. This is because his age loved Latin, but did not yet love Italian.

The *dic mihi, musa* is wanting in the tales of Boccaccio. He adds nothing to what has been told him, and his invention never goes beyond the field of his memory. His story ends where the popular tale ends; he respects it as he might respect truth.

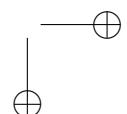
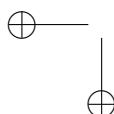
Tasso was a profound thinker upon his art, and it would be a service rendered to letters to examine his prose works and his literary principles. This character of a thinker, moreover, shows itself even in his verses: they have a form that would be suitable to maxims. The poet in him has no kinship with the ancient poets, but there is some kinship between him and the philosophers of old.

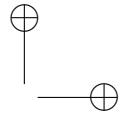
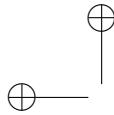
‘Et souvent avec Dieu balance la victoire.’\* – There is the unpardonable fault of Milton’s poem.

There may be a loftiness of soul that contributes nothing to the practice of the arts nor to the beauty of composition, while it does add to the respect which the merit of the author, as shown in his work, inspires in us.

Racine’s genius lay in taste, as with the ancients. His elegance is perfect, but it is not supreme, like Virgil’s.

\*Boileau, *L’Art Poétique*, Chant III.





Racine's talent is in his works, but Racine himself is not there. And so he himself grew tired of them.

Those who find Racine enough for them are poor souls and poor wits; they are souls and wits which have never got beyond the callow and boarding-school stage. Admirable, as no doubt he is, for his skill in having made poetical the most humdrum sentiments, and the most middling sort of passions, he can yet stand us in stead of nobody but himself. He is a superior writer; and, in literature, that at once puts a man on a pinnacle. But he is not an inimitable writer.\*

Boileau is a powerful poet, but in the world of half-poetry.<sup>†</sup>

Neither Racine's poetry nor Boileau's flow from the fountain-head. A fine choice of models is their gift. It is not that with their souls they copy souls, but that with their books they copy books. Racine is the Virgil of the ignorant.

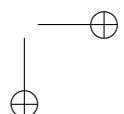
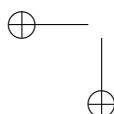
Molière is comic by dint of his unconcern; he makes men laugh, and does not laugh himself; and in this lies his excellence.

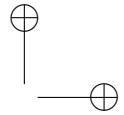
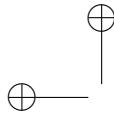
In Tartufe Molière made mock of the forms of religious feeling, and that is certainly a great evil.

Regnard is jocular like the valet, and Molière comic like the master.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.

†Matthew Arnold's translation.



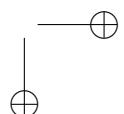
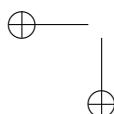


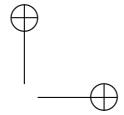
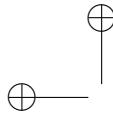
In La Fontaine there is a plenitude of poetry that is nowhere to be found in other French writers.

Cervantes in his book has a middle-class (*bourgeois*) familiarity and good-nature, with which the translation of Florian is out of harmony. In translating Don Quixote, Florian has altered the lilt of the tune and the musical key of the original. He has changed the flow of an abundant spring into the leaping and murmuring of a rivulet; little sounds, little movements – very pleasant no doubt when it is a matter of a thread of water rolling over pebbles, but false and intolerable when applied to a wide stream flowing in full course over fine sand.

There is in the world one woman of vast soul and lofty mind. Madame de Staël was born to excel in the moral life; but her imagination has been beguiled by something more brilliant than true good; the splendour of the flame and the fires have led her astray. She has taken the soul's fevers for its faculties, excitement for a power, and our wanderings from the path for progress towards the goal. The passions, in her eyes, have become a kind of dignity and glory. She has wished to paint them as the finest thing in the world, and mistaking their enormity for their greatness, has made a monstrous romance.\*

\*The allusion of course is to *Corinne*, which Joubert particularly disliked.





#### ON SOME ROMANCES OF THE TIME

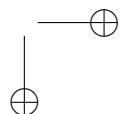
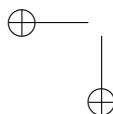
A novel, regarded as a work of art, should paint a flame, but not a furnace. To realise such destinies as these ladies imagine would be to plunge life into hell.

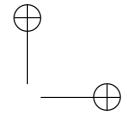
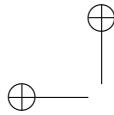
Misfortune, to be beautiful and interesting, must come from heaven, or at least from above. Here it strikes from below, it comes from too near; the sufferers have it in their blood.

Tragedy paints misfortune; but of a fine tone and fibre; calamities of another age, another world; sorrows that have little weight, little body, and last but a moment; griefs that interest the heart. Here, misfortune is present with us, it lasts for ever; it is made of iron rudely wrought; it strikes horror.

Catastrophe is all very well; but nobody likes to hear of torture. In these days we read only of the martyrs of love, some stretched on the rack of desire, others torn with remorse, all possessed by some passion that eats out their heart. In spite of all the fine qualities that are labelled and paraded before us, it is most true to say that we are looking rather at vulgar people than melancholy events. And so we give them little pity, and what we do give them is of the wrong kind.

Some have said 'Human life is a black cloth wherein are woven a few white threads'; and others, 'It is a white cloth wherein are woven a few black threads.'

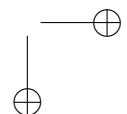
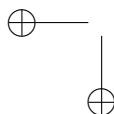


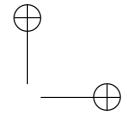
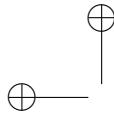


But in these novels human life is a red and black cloth, evil interwoven with evil: nothing else.

Imagine a land that devours its own children, a starless heaven where only lightnings play, a parched earth where no dew falls, a horizon of brass round which the names of the most beautiful things go angrily echoing with a hollow and mournful sound – there is the land of the novelist. I have noticed that in these books one of the loveliest words of the language – the word happiness – rings as if it were spoken under vaults infernal; and the word pleasure is only frightful. A false and sickly sentiment breathes from every page. Youth appears as an age of fire consumed by its own flame; beauty as a victim destined only to the knife; suffering never ceases, madness is perpetual, and virtue itself, whether by what it experiences, or by the feelings that it inspires, is never without a stain. There is not a heroine in these books that might not reasonably be called a soiled and trodden rose.

I have seen the cells of the Salpêtrière and the furies of the Revolution, and I seem always by a dim combination of ideas to discern behind these monstrous scenes the bedgowns of madwomen and the great cloak of Marat.... There are some books which naturally and inevitably produce the effect of being worse than they are, as some naturally and inevitably appear to be better than they are; the latter because they suggest ideas of beauty, goodness, perfection, which become, as it were, part of them; the former because they carry



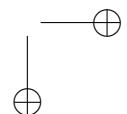
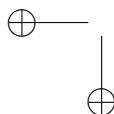


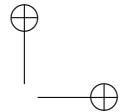
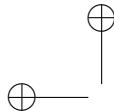
us into regions where dwell all the ugly ideas, and those also cling to them inseparably.

Fiction has no business to exist unless it is more beautiful than reality. Certainly the monstrosities of fiction may be found in the booksellers' shops; you may buy them there for a certain number of francs, and you talk of them for a certain number of days; but they have no place in literature, because in literature the one aim of art is the beautiful: once lose sight of that, and you have the mere frightful reality.\*

How strange that women should have turned their backs on seemliness and beauty, and that women writers should have been the first to overstep these rules! There is, however, a literary moral sense, and it is more severe than any other, because it lays down the rules of taste – a faculty more delicate than chastity itself.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





#### THE AUTHOR, DRAWN BY HIMSELF

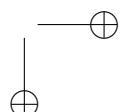
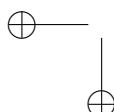
I find it hard to leave Paris, because I must part from my friends; and the country, because I must part from myself.

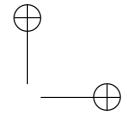
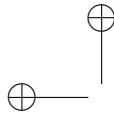
I have a loving head and an obstinate heart! All that I admire is dear to me, and to nothing that is dear to me can I ever become indifferent.

In many ways I am like the butterfly; I love the light and burn away my life in the flame; also I need, for the spreading of my wings, that my world should be sunny, and that my soul should feel surrounded, and as though penetrated by a balmy temperature – called indulgence; I have a shivery nature and mind.

I need that favourable eyes should shine upon me. Of me it is true to say: 'He that pleases is king, he that no longer pleases is nothing.' I go where I can give pleasure, at least as willingly as where I can obtain it.

There is no high breeding without a touch of scorn for others. I, myself, find it impossible to scorn a stranger.





The turns of phrase that express confidence are familiar to me, but not those that express familiarity.

When I break the windows, I want people to be inclined to reward me for it.

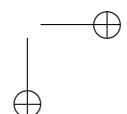
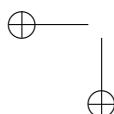
The trouble of a dispute is out of all proportion to its utility. All contention deafens the mind, and when others are deaf, I am dumb.

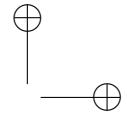
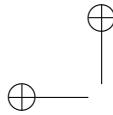
I will not allow the name of reason to that brutal kind of reason that crushes holy and sacred things with its weight; to that malignant reason that rejoices over the errors that it lays bare; to that unfeeling and scornful reason which insults faith.

My discoveries – and every one has made some – have brought me back to my prejudices.

But, after all, what is my art? By what name can it be distinguished from other arts? What end has it in view? What does it produce? And what is my intention and desire in practising it? Is it to write in general, and be sure of being read – the sole ambition of so many writers? Is that all I wish for? Do I only accumulate knowledge, or have I ideas of a kind that can be easily classified, of a definite nature, character, merit and usefulness? This I must examine attentively, at length, and until I know the answer.

I shall have dreamed of the beautiful, as others say they dream of happiness. But mine is the better dream, for even death, and the prospect of death, far from





troubling the continuity, only prolongs the vista of my dream. No absence and no loss can irremediably interrupt this dream that mingles itself with all our night-watches, and all our hours of calm, and gains strength from every meditation. I can sow, but I cannot build or found.\*

As for my intelligence, heaven has only allowed a few sunbeams to shine through me, and for eloquence has given me but a few apt words. I have only strength to lift myself up; and my virtue is but a kind of incorruptibility.

I am like Montaigne, unfit for sustained discourse.

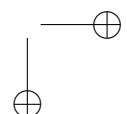
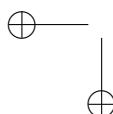
I am like an *Æolian* harp, that can sound a few beautiful notes but cannot play an air. No constant wind has ever breathed upon me.

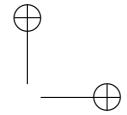
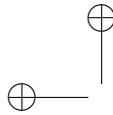
I pass my life in chasing thoughts like butterflies, reckoning as good those which are like the common run, and the rest merely as my own.

My spirit loves to travel through open spaces, and to play in waves of light, where it can see nothing, but where it is penetrated with joy and brightness. And what am I? – A mote in a sunbeam!

Madame Victorine de Chatenay said of me that I have the appearance of a soul that has accidentally encountered a body, and accommodates herself to it as best she may. There is some truth in the saying.

\*Matthew Arnold's translation.





Oh! how hard it is to be at the same time ingenious and wise! For long, I have lacked either the ideas that suited my gift, or the language that suited my ideas. I have for a long time endured the torment of a fecundity that cannot come to the birth.

I like philosophy, and above all metaphysics, to be neither quadruped nor biped; I like them to be winged, and singing.

You aim at truth through poetry, and I reach poetry through truth.

One may have tact very early in life and taste very late; this is what has happened to me.

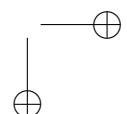
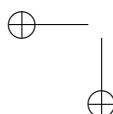
Ah! if I could express myself in music, dancing or painting, as I do in speech, how many ideas I should have, that now I have not, and how many feelings that will remain for ever unknown to me!

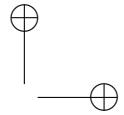
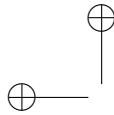
In giving light – I burn myself away.

I can only do good work slowly, and with extreme fatigue. Behind my weakness there is strength; the weakness is in the instrument. Behind many people's strength there is weakness – and this weakness is in the heart, in the reason, in the lack of frank good-will.

I have wished to do without words and have disdained them: words avenge themselves by their difficulty.

If there be a man tormented by the cursed ambition to put a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and that phrase into a word, I am that man.





Some things with me are born in so finished a state, that I cannot refrain from finishing the rest to match them. I know too well what I am going to say before I write.

Verse sustains the attention by beguiling the ear. Prose has not this help; but could she not have it? I am experimenting; but I think not.

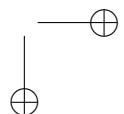
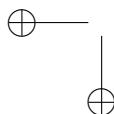
I should wish to gain all my effects by the meaning of my words, as you gain yours by their sound; by their selection, as you do by their multitude; by their very isolation, as you do by their harmony; desiring nevertheless that they should harmonise, but with a natural and fitting harmony, not by mere skill of combination and sequence.

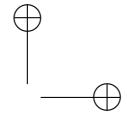
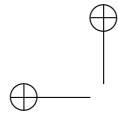
I like to see two truths at once. Every just comparison achieves this for the mind.

I have always an image to render, an image and a thought – two things for one, and double work for me.

I do not polish my phrase, but my idea. I wait, until the drop of light that I need is formed, and drops from my pen.

I long to make wisdom current coin, that is to say to stamp it into maxims, proverbs, sentences, easy to retain, and to hand on. Oh! that I might discredit, and banish from the language of men, like debased coin, the words that they misuse, and that deceive them!





I long to blend a choicer meaning with the common meaning of words, or to make the choice meaning common.

I needed age to learn what I wished to know, and now I ought to have youth to give good expression to my knowledge.

Most men are accountable for their actions; but it will be my thoughts of which I shall have to render an account – they are to me the foundation, not only of my work, but of my life.

My thoughts! – It is the building a house for them that troubles me.

The silk-worm spins her cocoons and I spin mine; but the world will not unwind them. As God wills!

