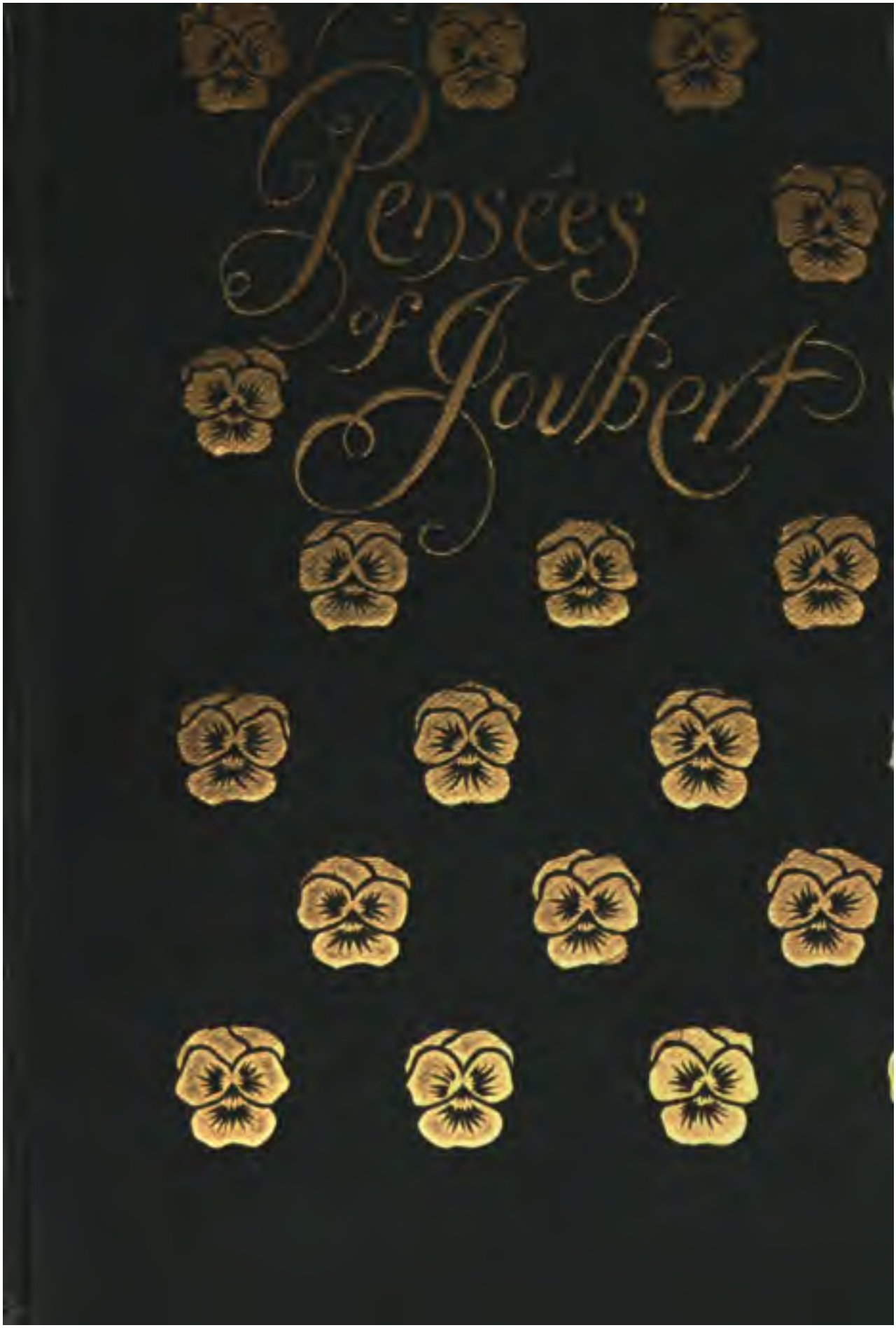
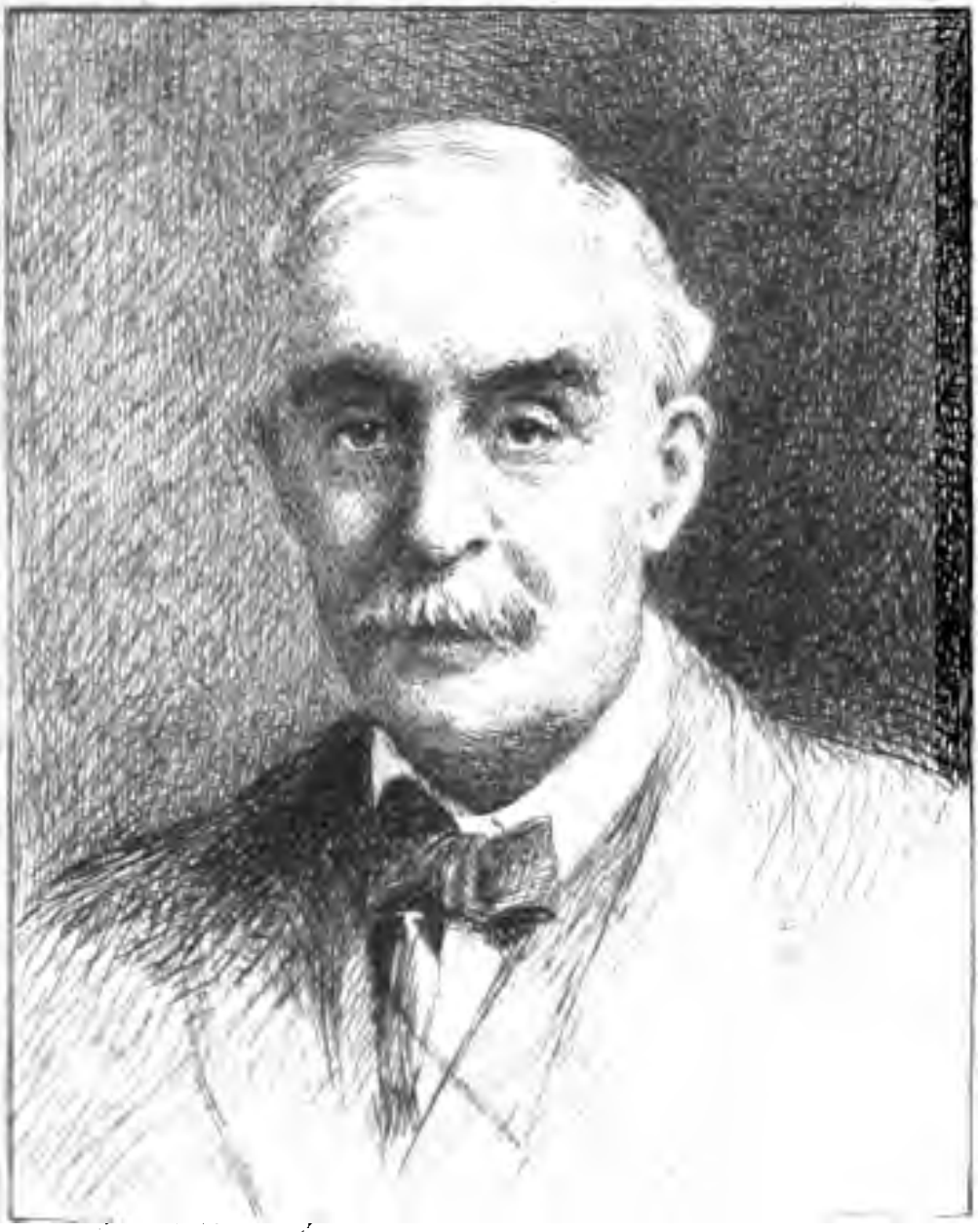
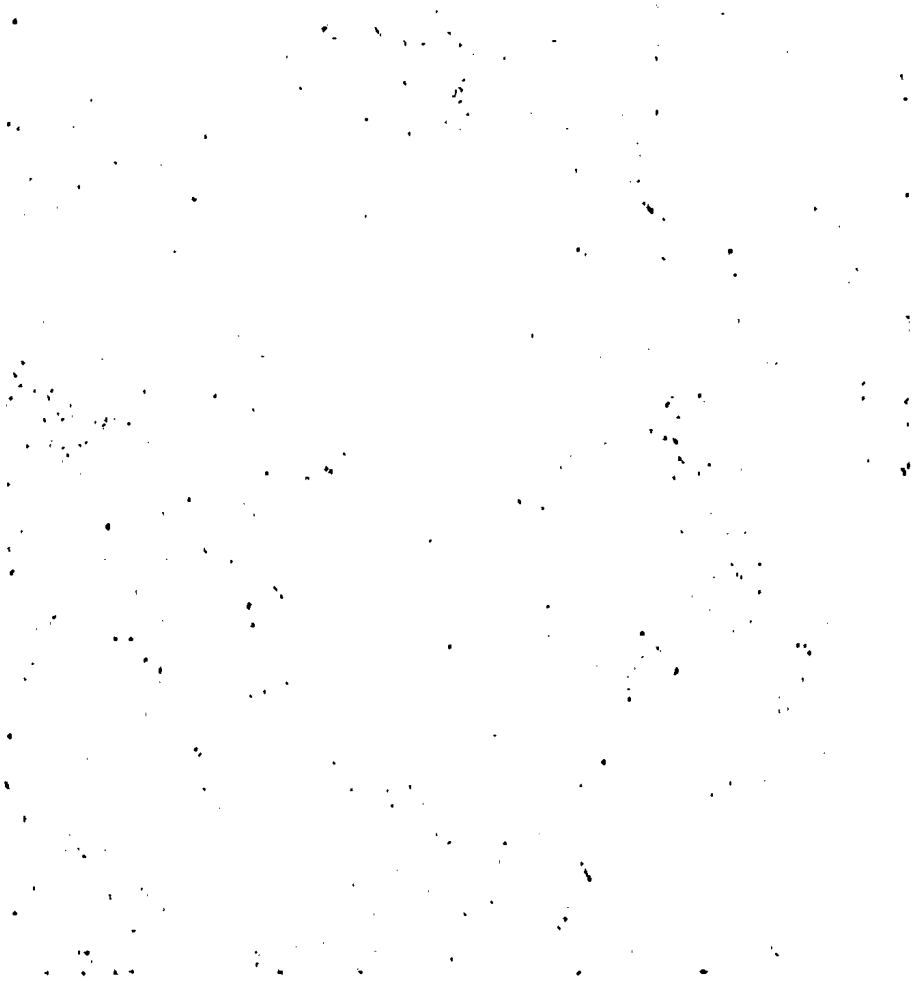

Pensées
of Joubert



NHM Bickford del et sc
1938

PENSÉES OF JOUBERT

JOSEPH JOUBERT



PENSÉES OF JOUBERT

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

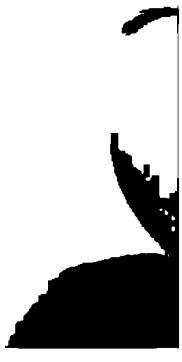
BY

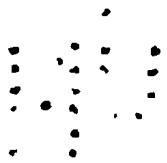
HENRY ATTWELL

KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF THE
OAK CROWN, ETC.

WITH PORTRAIT

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD
1896





Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO,
At the Ballantyne Press

TO

MY DAUGHTERS

H. A.

*

NOTE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE original French is omitted from this Second Edition. The book has been reduced in size in the hope that it may be welcomed as a pocket companion.

The portrait from the only existing likeness of Joubert was kindly furnished by M. Louis de Raynal.*

* See page xviii.

Mr. RUSKIN, in a letter to Professor ATTWELL, says :—

"*These* 'Pensées' *are out and out the wisest and most precious things for this time I've ever seen in print.*"

PREFACE

JOSEPH JOUBERT was born at Montignac in Périgord in 1754. At fourteen years of age he left his home, a thoughtful and sensitive boy, for Toulouse, there to begin the studies that were to prepare him for the legal profession. But the classical authors to which the book-shops of a large town gave him easy access had a far greater attraction for his imaginative nature than codes and pandects; and his literary tastes having been remarked by the *Fathers of the Christian Doctrine*, who were at that time the directors of the college of Toulouse, they induced him to join their body, without, however, requiring him to take the vows of the order. He remained with the good fathers until his twenty-second year, dividing his time, as was the wont of the younger Doctrinaires,

between study and teaching. Finding his health unequal to his zeal, he reluctantly left Toulouse for Montignac, and devoted himself in quiet to Greek and Latin literature.

Joubert was still quite a young man when, possessed of a modest independence, he took up his abode in Paris, where, readily gaining admission into literary circles, he made the acquaintance of Marmontel, La Harpe, d'Alembert, and Diderot.

He seems to have been for a time carried along by the tide of revolutionary ideas and manners. Diderot, with whom he became intimate, gained a powerful influence over him; but the charm was short-lived, and it is not a little remarkable that in his detached notes Joubert rarely alludes to this *Sturm und Drang* period. He writes somewhere, "My discoveries —and who has not made his discoveries?— have brought me back to my prejudices." And again, "My heart is lodged in a spot that has been traversed by the passions. I have known them all."

It was at this time that he formed the friend-

ship with Fontanes that was to be life-long and unbroken. They were of about the same age; there was much in common in their tastes and sentiments; and, above all, both were ardent admirers of that antiquity which had nourished their youth. But while Fontanes adorned his compositions with the graces of the ancient poets, Joubert sat as a learner at the feet of the philosophers. "Both," writes Joubert's biographer, M. Paul de Raynal, "stimulated by curiosity and emulation, were contending in the same lists; but they were able to cheer and encourage each other; for their goals were different, and there was no risk of collision in their career."

It was in the *salon* of Madame de Beaumont, a rendezvous of men of literary and political mark, that Joubert became intimate with Chénier, Chênedollé, and Molé. It was he who introduced Fontanes into that delightful circle, and later, Chateaubriand, who was destined soon to become the god of the temple, but was then a poor young author, better known in England, from whence he had just

returned, than in his native country. Madame de Beaumont herself (daughter of Louis XVI.'s unfortunate minister Montmorin), a woman of highly cultivated head and heart, was to Joubert something more than a friend; she was at once his muse and his audience. Her sympathy inspired his efforts, and her good sense and refined taste were the test he applied to the thoughts which, he tells us, cost him so much to express.

The circle was broken up, sadly too soon, by the death of Madame de Beaumont: "a peaceful society," so Joubert describes it, "into which none of those pretensions penetrated that tend to disunite men; where good-fellowship and self-respect were happily blended; a society which found an earnest occupation in admiring whatever was excellent, and in directing its thoughts upon worthy and beautiful objects,—a peaceful society whose members will never be gathered together again, unless to interchange memories of her who formed it, and was its bond of union."

The blank was, however, to be partly filled.

In the *salon* of Madame de Vintimille still lingered that spirit of conversation which did not long survive the eighteenth century. There Joubert enjoyed the intercourse of not a few eminent men, and kept alive old friendships.

But the companionship to which his time was chiefly devoted he found on the shelves of his library. "In this library," writes M. de Raynal, "a great part of M. Joubert's life was spent. As soon as the restoration of order enabled him to return to Paris, he took up his abode in a house belonging to relations of his wife, near what is now the Passage Delorme. At the very top of the house he arranged a room where was to be found the wished for 'plenty of sky and little earth.' Here an asylum was prepared for his reveries; here a temple was raised to his beloved authors. Few modern writers were admitted; but the age of Louis XIV., of Augustus, and of Pericles were well represented. Ecclesiastical history, travels, and metaphysics occupied a large space, and room was made for the fairy tales and naïve and wonderful histories in which he loved to find

diversion. Neither Voltaire nor J. J. Rousseau, nor the other writers of the philosophical school, were to be found there; but there were all sorts of editions of Plato, Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, and Plutarch, together with a goodly show of those old tomes in which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries collected the scattered débris of Greek and Roman antiquity, and those bibliographical curiosities that had the double recommendation of rarity and originality. His passion was not that of a bibliophile who, miser-like, heaps up treasures he cannot enjoy: he read everything; and most of the volumes of his library show vestiges of the passage of his thought, little signs whose meaning I have studied in vain, crosses, triangles, flowers, thyrses, hands, suns, &c.—true hieroglyphics, understood by him alone, and of which he has borne away the key. His excellent memory, however, could hardly have needed such help. He forgot nothing; nothing, at least, that he had read. The mere sight of a book, a glance at its binding or title, sufficed to awaken all his memories, and to renew his first impressions. Between him

and his books there was a constant intercourse, a sort of intellectual current that was rarely interrupted. In his reading he let nothing escape him, treasuring what was excellent, and remembering resentfully what was harmful. He was very scrupulous in the choice of the volumes to be admitted to his sanctum; careful to surround himself with friendly authors only, and avoiding the intrusion of such as he believed to be injurious."

Joubert naturally became the centre of a circle composed in a large measure of those who had known him as the *arbiter elegantiarum* of Madame de Beaumont's *salon*. But the charms of his conversation were so great that his friends found Madame de Vintimille's soirées far too short. His bed, from which for a considerable period he seldom rose before three o'clock in the afternoon, was frequently surrounded by fascinated listeners; but these receptions, although a source of pleasure to him at the time, told upon his delicate constitution. The watchful care of an excellent wife, and prolonged visits to the country, were not enough to ward

off the climax that had long threatened him. He foresaw its approach. A few weeks before his death, with the little gold pencil-case that for so many years had always been at hand to jot down passing thoughts, he made his last entry in his journal—

"22 Mars, 1824. Le vrai, le beau, le juste, le saint !"

In 1838, fifteen years after Joubert's death, his widow confided to Chateaubriand the task of editing for private circulation a small volume of *Pensées*, to be culled from the numerous papers which her husband, who had published nothing during his life-time, had left in her keeping.

That the task was a grateful one, Chateaubriand's eloquent preface to the little octavo volume amply proves ; but the effect of its publication, if publication it can be called, could hardly have been anticipated by him. The book caused quite a sensation in the literary circles of Paris. It was eagerly borrowed, copied in manuscript, and read in the *salons*, while

reviews, notably an article in the *Revue des deux Mondes* by Sainte-Beuve, extended its reputation, and promised a hearty reception to a new and enlarged instalment of the *Pensées.*

The delicate and difficult work of preparing a complete edition of Joubert's writings was undertaken by his nephew, M. Paul de Raynal. The labour of selecting and comparing the short compositions stored in the more than two hundred small manuscript-books that had served for memoranda of reflections, analyses of readings, passing incidents, &c., and of deciphering and arranging a treasure-heap of notes of thoughts and impressions, the accumulation of a life-time, that had been pencilled down in bed, in the study, during walks and drives, was achieved with no less judgment than assiduity. To the *Pensées et Maximes* was added a collection of letters, addressed for the most part to Fontanes, Madame de Beaumont, Madame de Vintimille, and Molé,—charming letters, of which M. de Sacy says, "they have the rare merit of being at once perfectly natural and very carefully written."

This second edition—really, as we have seen, the first—was published in 1842, and prefaced by a notice of Joubert's life and works, a biographical sketch, of which the most recent editor of Joubert justly remarks that its delicacy of thought and grace of style render it worthy of the book to which it served as an introduction.

But the editor's work was not yet completed. Additional letters and Pensées, the former addressed chiefly to the poet Chênedollé, were brought to light, and embraced in a new edition published, in 1850, by M. Arnaud Joubert, brother of our author, and father-in-law of M. Paul de Raynal, who had died in 1845. In 1862, M. Louis de Raynal, now President of the Cour de Cassation, edited in a still more convenient form the Pensées and Correspondence upon which his brother had bestowed so much labour. In this edition the Pensées occupy the first volume, prefaced by the notice of Joubert's life and writings referred to above, and followed by several interesting *Testimonia* in the form of reviews from the pens of Chateaubriand,

Sainte-Beuve, de Sacy, and others, extracts from which will be found at the end of these introductory notes. The second volume is devoted to the Letters, an analytical table of contents, alphabetically arranged, conveniently supplementing the work.

An interesting article on modern Pensée-writers, contributed by Mr. Ludlow, in 1852, to *Macmillan's Magazine*, introduced the name of Joubert to English readers; but although the writer says that "to glance over Joubert's Pensées is like uncovering a tray of diamonds," a remark which is illustrated by a choice sprinkling of gems, no further instalment of the treasures has appeared, save the extracts that adorn Mr. Matthew Arnold's paper on "Joubert," in "Essays in Criticism." Nor is a complete translation presented in the following pages; for many of the Pensées could only be appreciated by those who possess such a knowledge of the French language and literature, as would render a translation a hindrance rather than a help. A large proportion, however, of these gems of thought are of general and permanent

interest; and greatly as those selected have been dimmed by the hand of the translator, he hopes that their beauty and truth have not been so obscured that the contents of this small casket, filled from the larger "tray," will be unacceptable to the English reader.

M. SAINTE-BEUVE.

Picture to yourself a Diderot with an antique purity and a Pythagorean chastity,—"a Plato with the heart of a La Fontaine," as M. Chateaubriand calls his friend.

"Inspire, but don't write," says Le Brun to women. "This," adds M. Joubert, "is what should be urged upon the professors of the present day. But they *will* write, and will not resemble the Muses." Ah well! he followed his own counsel; he resembled the Muses. Among his friends he was audience, orchestra, and conductor.

. . . . . .

No book would better crown than that of M. Joubert the French series which, beginning with La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, was continued by Pascal, La Bruyère, and Vauvenargues, connecting itself, through devious paths, with Montaigne.

M. DE SACY.

I do not think that books, however full of wit, can convey it to witless folk. A dullard may safely read La Bruyère through and through, and he will be just as dense at the end of his reading as at the beginning. Certain books, however, have a strange illusory influence upon the reader. He makes their clever, delicate, and deep thoughts his own; and he feels his appreciation honours him; he is well content to have thought so delicately, to have met with a word or phrase which expresses a striking idea so accurately and happily that he easily attributes to himself his share in the merit of the invention and execution; and if he has not really enlarged his understanding by the time he lays the book down, he has at least had the pleasure of feeling himself possessed of a large share while he had it in his hand. Now it is long, if I mistake not, since a book has appeared that has been better calculated than the *Pensées* of M. Joubert to cause such a sensation, such a flattering illusion, as I refer to.

. . . . . .

There is no need for me to say that the strictest sense of morality, the liveliest love of the good and true, and an indescribably pure feeling for virtue and honesty, will be found to breathe in the slightest lines that have fallen from M. Joubert. The simplicity of his heart is felt even where his intellect takes its most daring flights.

His imagination strains itself in the pursuit of truths that elude the human grasp; his conscience is always calm, and his anger rises against those only who do harm designedly, and who mistake obstinately.

I will only add that the following passage of La Bruyère is the best *résumé* I can offer of my opinion upon the *Pensées* of M. Joubert: "When what you read elevates your mind and fills you with noble aspirations, look for no other rule by which to judge the book: it is good, and is the work of a master-hand."

M. GERUZEZ.

Among so many and various maxims and thoughts, our individual taste inclines us to dwell upon those which bear upon the art of writing. Here M. Joubert shows surpassing skill; and the passages M. de Raynal has placed under this head may be compared to La Bruyère's chapter on *Les ouvrages de l'esprit.* No one has given more thought to literary style, no one has employed more sagacity in the discovery of the secret of that art which polishes thought.

. . . . . .

We do but glean, and this somewhat clumsily, where it would be easy to gather in an abundant harvest; for in his literary thoughts M. Joubert's criticism is generally consummate.

M. POITOU.

From many points of view, doubtless, Joubert appears before us as a literary Sybarite; but there was in him something better than this. He was not one of those men who seek in literature but the refined delights of imagination and taste,—learned Epicureans who, like his friend Fontanes, are only jealous about form while they are indifferent to substance; who are more intent upon the elegance of their words and the harmony of their periods than upon the search after truth and the honour due to principles. His was a serious mind, a generous and ardent soul, enamoured of truth and virtue, and even more of beauty and perfection in art: or, rather, devoted to the beautiful, because the beautiful is the glory of the true and the ornament of the good.

. . . . . .

That Sybarite is also a philosopher, that amateur of a fine style is an eager searcher after truth, whose meditations have had the widest range, who has examined the most difficult problems of the human intellect, who has devoured Plato, Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Leibnitz, and Kant; who has formed very precise and very just ideas upon all the great questions that agitate the world,—upon religion, metaphysics, politics, education: a man, in short, who thinks and who can make others think. The last note, the last line, he wrote

some days before his death in the journal of his thoughts, *Le vrai, le beau, le juste, le saint*, might have served for his motto. It represented his true ideal.

Joubert was for a time seduced by the philosophy of the eighteenth century,—that century which was, as M. Guizot writes, "the most tempting and captivating of all ages, for it promised at once to satisfy all the greatness and all the weakness of humanity." But just as he soon lost all taste for Diderot's declamatory rhetoric, so did he speedily turn from a philosophy which could not long satisfy either his heart or his head. He had had a Christian education, and was so fortunate as to find intact, after the errors of his youth, the faith of his early years. But while his lofty intellect had made him feel the emptiness of the systems in vogue, his just and substantial good sense saved him from the violence and excesses of reaction. What I so much love in Joubert is the moderation that never abandons him. However certainly he may have right on his side, he is never unmeasured in asserting it. One may say of him what Tacitus said of Agricola: *Retinuit, quod difficillimum, ex sapientiâ modum.* We do not see him, after having marched in the ranks of the philosophers, insult his old masters, and, like La Harpe, pass from philosophical fanaticism to religious fanaticism. We do not see him, like so many of the doughty champions of Catholicism of a later time, contemn reason in order to defend the faith, and proscribe philosophy, with a view to averting its abuse. A disciple of Descartes, of Leibnitz, and of

Bossuet, an enlightened Christian, but at the same time an independent thinker, he preserved of that eighteenth century, with which he joined issue on so many points, a respect for reason, a taste for higher speculation,—in a word, the reverence for and practice of philosophy.

He can well bear comparison with the most illustrious of our French moralists. He is not a painter of characters and a profound observer of the world, like La Bruyère. He lived in himself more than in the world; he studied man more than men. The errors of his youth did not drive him to despair. He did not, like Pascal, seek in his creed a refuge against mental agitation, casting reason—for the better confirmation of his faith—bleeding and chained at the foot of the cross. Reason is with him no object of implacable hatred and resentment; his faith is tolerant, because it is calm and serene. Picture to yourself, rather, a Christian Vauvenargues. In Joubert there was the same generosity, the same natural elevation of thought, the same love and enthusiasm for whatever is good and beautiful, the same delicacy of feeling, and the same grace, carrying with it an indescribable stamp of austerity. Like Vauvenargues, he has "much taste, because he has much soul." But his more highly cultivated intellect, ripened by reflection and study, has a larger horizon; his criticism is firmer, and his judgment more sure.

Joubert is a writer one cannot read without profit. He elevates the reader in spite of himself, bearing him into those serene regions from which one returns calmed

and strengthened. His book is one of those which, without becoming popular, will grow daily in the esteem of the refined and thoughtful. The time is not far off when it will be found in the library of every man of taste, among those moralists in whom our literature is so rich. Its place will be between Vauvenargues and Nicole, not far from Pascal, and side by side with La Bruyère.

THOUGHTS AND MAXIMS

Fully to understand a grand and beautiful thought requires, perhaps, as much time as to conceive it.—JOUBERT.

CONTENTS

THE AUTHOR PAINTED BY HIMSELF

1.

I HAVE given my flowers and my fruit. I am now no more than an echoing trunk. But whoever sits under my shade and gives ear to me, grows in wisdom.

2.

I have a very loving head, and a headstrong heart. Whatever I admire is dear to me; and to nothing that is dear to me can I become indifferent.

3.

For prudence that is not moral I have little love. I have had a poor opinion of the lion ever since I have known that his advances are crooked.

4.

When my friends are one-eyed, I look at their side face.

5.

Of the two, I prefer those who render vice lovable to those who degrade virtue.

6.

I do not call reason that brutal reason which crushes with its weight what is holy and sacred; that malignant reason which delights in the errors it succeeds in discovering; that unfeeling and scornful reason which insults credulity.

7.

It is my province to sow, but not to build and found.

8.

I am like an Æolian harp, that gives out certain fine tones, but executes no air. No constant wind has ever blown over me.

9.

I resemble the poplar, that tree which even when old still looks young.

10.

That part of my head which is destined to take in things that are not clear is very narrow.

11.

If ever a man was tormented by the accursed ambition of putting a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and that phrase into a word, I am that man.

12.

It will be said that I speak with subtlety. This is sometimes the sole means of penetrating that the intellect has in its power; and this may arise either from the nature of the truth to which it would attain, or from that of the opinions or of the ignorance through which it is reduced painfully to open for itself a way.

13.

It is not my periods that I polish, but my ideas. I pause until the drop of light of which I stand in need is formed, and falls from my pen.

14.

I would fain coin wisdom,—mould it, I mean, into *maxims*, *proverbs*, *sentences*, that can easily be retained

4.

When my friends are one-eyed, I look at their side face.

5.

Of the two, I prefer those who render vice lovable to those who degrade virtue.

6.

I do not call reason that brutal reason which crushes with its weight what is holy and sacred ; that malignant reason which delights in the errors it succeeds in discovering ; that unfeeling and scornful reason which insults credulity.

7.

It is my province to sow, but not to build and found.

8.

I am like an Æolian harp, that gives out certain fine tones, but executes no air. No constant wind has ever blown over me.

9.

I resemble the poplar, that tree which even when old still looks young.

10.

That part of my head which is destined to take in things that are not clear is very narrow.

11.

If ever a man was tormented by the accursed ambition of putting a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and that phrase into a word, I am that man.

12.

It will be said that I speak with subtlety. This is sometimes the sole means of penetrating that the intellect has in its power; and this may arise either from the nature of the truth to which it would attain, or from that of the opinions or of the ignorance through which it is reduced painfully to open for itself a way.

13.

It is not my periods that I polish, but my ideas. I pause until the drop of light of which I stand in need is formed, and falls from my pen.

14.

I would fain coin wisdom,—mould it, I mean, into *maxims*, *proverbs*, *sentences*, that can easily be retained

and transmitted. Would that I could decry as base money, and banish from the language of men, the words by which they cheat and are cheated!

15.

My ideas! It is the house in which to lodge them that costs me so much to build.

OF PIETY AND RELIGION

16.

GOD is known to us through piety; the only modification of our soul by which He comes within our reach and can show Himself to us.

17.

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

18.

Meseems that in the far-off future of another life, those will be happiest who are able to recall no moment of their past existence without pleasure. There, as here, our memories will be an important part of our possessions, whether good or evil.

19.

Piety is a kind of modesty. It makes us turn aside our thoughts, as modesty makes us cast down our eyes, in the presence of whatever is forbidden.

20.

Piety is the sole means of escape from the drought which the labour of reflection inevitably carries into the fountain-heads of our feelings.

21.

Women need a tender rather than a reasoned-out piety; that of men should be stern rather than tender.

22.

The just, the beautiful, the good, the wise, is that which is in conformity with the ideas that God has of the just, the beautiful, the wise, and the good. Take God from the higher philosophy, and nothing clear is left. He is its light and its sun. He it is who illumines all. *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*

23.

Piety is not a religion, although it is the soul of all religions. The having pious inclinations only, is not having a religion, any more than to be philanthropic is to have a fatherland. One cannot be said to have a fatherland and to be the citizen of a country unless one determines to observe and defend certain laws, to obey certain magistrates, and to adopt certain ways of being and doing.

OF RELIGION

24.

RELIGION is neither a theology nor a theosophy; it is more than that, it is a discipline, a law, a yoke, an indissoluble engagement.

25.

Religion must be loved as a kind of country and nursing-mother. It was religion that nourished our virtues, that showed us heaven, that taught us to walk in the path of duty.

26.

To one man religion is his literature and his science; to another, his delight and his duty.

27.

Superstition is the only religion of which base souls are capable.

28.

Which is more mis-shapen, religion without virtue, or virtues without religion?

29.

Offer to God this prayer: O Being, without end and without beginning, Thou art the Best that can be conceived by man. As a ray of light is contained in whatever shines, so does a ray of Thy goodness sparkle in every form of virtue. Whatever we can love, whatever is lovely, presents to us a part of Thy essence, a manifestation of Thyself. All earthly beauty is but the shadow cast by heavenly beauty. Make us as like to Thee as is possible to our gross nature, that we may so far participate in Thy happiness as life allows.

30.

Virtue must be asked at any cost, and with importunity; prosperity, timidly, and with resignation. To ask is to receive, when true riches are sought.

31.

Religion is a fire which example keeps alive, and which goes out if not communicated.

32.

Why is even a bad preacher listened to with pleasure by pious folk? It is because he speaks to them of what they love. But you who explain religion to the

men of this century, and speak to them of what they have, perhaps, once loved, or what they would fain love, should bear in mind that they are not yet enamoured of your subject, and you should take care to speak well.

33.

The Bible is to religion what the Iliad is to poetry.

34.

When humility does not accompany devotion, devotion inevitably becomes pride.

OF MAN

OF THE HUMAN FACULTIES

35.

THE voice is a human sound which nothing inanimate can perfectly imitate. It has an authority and an insinuating property which writing lacks. It is not merely so much air, but air modulated by us, impregnated with our warmth, and, as it were, enveloped by the vapour of our atmosphere, some emanation of which accompanies it, giving it a certain configuration and certain virtues calculated to act upon the mind. Speech is but the incorporation of thought.

36.

Man, when among his fellow-men, is endowed with the faculty of inventing a language, just as the beaver, wherever he finds water and trees, shows himself possessed of the building faculty. The need of speech is not less inherent in the one than is that of building in the other. Man invents languages, not with the

uniformity with which the beaver, subject to the fixed and limited nature of his instinct, constructs his house, but with the variety possible to intelligence. The invention of languages is thus a natural occupation, common to all, and, in some measure, committed to all. As to its exercise, it must not be imagined that to invent a few words is a very difficult affair; it is what children even can do, and the human race has begun everywhere like them. Now, a few words would suffice for an isolated family that knew but its wants and its dwelling. The idioms, too, of inventors are at first made up of a few words only; their successors adding new words to the old ones. To give names to things is no harder than to picture them. Thus, the languages of savages are no whit more wonderful than the maps of their countries they sketch on deer-skins. Drawing is speaking to the eye, talking is painting to the ear. There is a great distance between the scrawl of a North American Indian and a picture by David, and between the first idioms of rustics and the language of Cicero; just as the distance is great between a canoe hollowed by fire out of the trunk of a tree, and a decked ship; or, again, between a Scythian settlement and the city of Constantine. To bend a bow, to string it, and adjust an arrow, are as complicated and as difficult operations as to construct a phrase: and yet the bow and arrow

are to be found everywhere; in every inhabited island there are boats; wherever there are forests, hunting is pursued with weapons and far-reaching missiles. Wherever men congregate, words are used. Man is born with the faculty of speech. Who gives it him? He who gives the bird its song.

37.

The words first invented are the bare names of things; those expressive of action follow; then come the affectives; those which express simple acts of the intellect come last.

38.

In considering the mechanism of speech, one may regard the language of man as the cord which of itself projects the adjusted shaft. Speech is in fact a discharged arrow.

39.

There is in the soul a taste for the good, just as there is in the body an appetite for enjoyment.

40.

The mind is the atmosphere of the soul.

41.

What we call *soul* in man is invariable; but what we call *mind* is not the same either at every age, in every situation, or at every hour. The mind is something mobile, whose direction is changed by whatever winds set in.

42.

Imagination is the eye of the soul.

43.

I call imagination the faculty which renders sensible that which is intellectual, which incorporates mind; in a word, the faculty by which light is thrown upon what is of itself invisible, without altering its nature.

44.

Fancy, an animal faculty, is very different from imagination, which is intellectual. The former is passive; but the latter is active and creative. Children, the weak-minded, and the timid are full of fancy. Men and women of intellect, of great intellect, are alone possessed of great imagination.

OF THE NATURE OF INTELLECTS

45.

IT is the nature of intellects, their natural light, and not their degree of strength, which is as changeable as health, that constitutes their value, their quality, their excellence.

46.

We measure minds by their stature; it were better to make their beauty the standard of their worth.

47.

There are some minds which, although of a superior order, are under-rated through want of a recognised standard by which to measure them. They are like a precious metal for which there is no test.

48.

Nature has made two sorts of excellent intellects; one kind to produce beautiful thoughts or actions, the other to admire them.

49.

Some men have only their full mental vigour when they are in good spirits; others only when they are sad.

50.

Just as there are some men who have more memory than judgment, so are there some who have, so to say, more thoughts than intellect; and hence they can neither harness nor guide them. Others have not enough thoughts for their intellect, which wearies itself to death unless enlivened by trifles. Others, again, there are who have too many thoughts for their age and health; and their thoughts are their torment.

51.

Reason is a bee, and we only ask of it its produce; its usefulness stands it in the stead of beauty. But wit is but a butterfly; and wit that is unattractive is like a butterfly without colour,—it causes no pleasure.

52.

There are hollow, sonorous minds, in which thoughts echo as in an instrument. There are others that are solid and flat, on which the harmonious thought produces no other effect than the blow of a hammer.

53.

He who has imagination without learning has wings and no feet.

54.

Mental duplicity arises from duplicity of heart; it comes from secretly setting one's own opinion in the place of truth. A false mind is false in everything, just as a cross eye always looks askant. But one may err once,—nay, a hundred times—without being double-minded. There can never be mental duplicity where there is sincerity.

55.

There is in some minds a nucleus of error which attracts and assimilates everything to itself.

56.

Some persons there are who, intellectually, are reasonable enough, but whose life is quite irrational; and there are, on the other hand, those whose life is rational and whose minds are devoid of reason.

57.

Give to cold, heavy minds subtle and delicate doctrines, and you will see how strangely they will abuse

them. Cast upon a mind which is naturally dark a few rays of living light, and you will see how it will cloud them. Its darkness will become all the more palpable; night will be succeeded by chaos.

58.

A hard intellect is a hammer that can do nothing but crush. Hardness of intellect is sometimes no less harmful and hateful than hardness of heart.

59.

There are minds that resemble those convex or concave mirrors which represent objects just as they receive them, but which never receive them as they really are.

OF THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE SOUL

60.

THE passions must be purified. They may all become innocent if well directed and controlled. Hatred itself may be a praiseworthy emotion if provoked in us by a lively love of good. Whatever

OF THE NATURE OF INTELLECTS

45.

IT is the nature of intellects, their natural light, and not their degree of strength, which is as changeable as health, that constitutes their value, their quality, their excellence.

46.

We measure minds by their stature; it were better to make their beauty the standard of their worth.

47.

There are some minds which, although of a superior order, are under-rated through want of a recognised standard by which to measure them. They are like a precious metal for which there is no test.

48.

Nature has made two sorts of excellent intellects; one kind to produce beautiful thoughts or actions, the other to admire them.

49.

Some men have only their full mental vigour when they are in good spirits; others only when they are sad.

50.

Just as there are some men who have more memory than judgment, so are there some who have, so to say, more thoughts than intellect; and hence they can neither harness nor guide them. Others have not enough thoughts for their intellect, which wearies itself to death unless enlivened by trifles. Others, again, there are who have too many thoughts for their age and health; and their thoughts are their torment.

51.

Reason is a bee, and we only ask of it its produce; its usefulness stands it in the stead of beauty. But wit is but a butterfly; and wit that is unattractive is like a butterfly without colour,—it causes no pleasure.

52.

There are hollow, sonorous minds, in which thoughts echo as in an instrument. There are others that are solid and flat, on which the harmonious thought produces no other effect than the blow of a hammer.

OF THE NATURE OF INTELLECTS

45.

IT is the nature of intellects, their natural light, and not their degree of strength, which is as changeable as health, that constitutes their value, their quality, their excellence.

46.

We measure minds by their stature; it were better to make their beauty the standard of their worth.

47.

There are some minds which, although of a superior order, are under-rated through want of a recognised standard by which to measure them. They are like a precious metal for which there is no test.

48.

Nature has made two sorts of excellent intellects; one kind to produce beautiful thoughts or actions, the other to admire them.

49.

Some men have only their full mental vigour when they are in good spirits; others only when they are sad.

50.

Just as there are some men who have more memory than judgment, so are there some who have, so to say, more thoughts than intellect; and hence they can neither harness nor guide them. Others have not enough thoughts for their intellect, which wearies itself to death unless enlivened by trifles. Others, again, there are who have too many thoughts for their age and health; and their thoughts are their torment.

51.

Reason is a bee, and we only ask of it its produce; its usefulness stands it in the stead of beauty. But wit is but a butterfly; and wit that is unattractive is like a butterfly without colour,—it causes no pleasure.

52.

There are hollow, sonorous minds, in which thoughts echo as in an instrument. There are others that are solid and flat, on which the harmonious thought produces no other effect than the blow of a hammer.

81.

A certain modest reserve should be observed under misfortune. It arises out of a praiseworthy repugnance, natural to all persons of good breeding, to expose what is disagreeable and distasteful,—a feeling which should be carefully respected in ourselves and others. There are men whose good deeds do violence to suffering; and there are others who, by their lamentations and behaviour, prostitute, in a manner, their misery to every one they meet. The poor man should have the modesty of young maidens who never speak of their sex or their infirmities, unless with restraint, in secret, and of necessity.

82.

Need we speak of the necessity for modesty? What the membrane that envelops it is to the young bird, what the calyx is to the flower, what heaven is to earth, is modesty to our virtues. Without this protecting shield they could not burst into life; their place of shelter would be violated, the germ laid bare, and the brood lost.

We are none of us devoid of modesty; but it is not always of the same nature. This delicate covering is of various textures. It is dispensed to us all, but not with equal bounty. With some, it is very coarsely woven; with others it is a mere shred. In those only

who have in them the germs of every perfection is modesty perfect and sufficient, connecting itself by countless threads with all the points to which their existence tends.

But we do not preserve it for ever. As with beauty, sad accidents may deprive us of it; and it will diminish and fade away of itself when no longer needed, or when its object is attained. Modesty[1] lasts as long as there is any hidden particle that has not yet become substantial and solidified, and until our organs have been made susceptible of adopting and retaining eternal impressions. But when the soft seeds of our solid qualities are fully developed; when our first kindly inclinations have produced in us solid goodness,—or when our natural goodness has become unchangeable; when, nourished by chaste ideas, our mind has developed itself, and can preserve that equilibrium we call reason,—or when our reason is formed; when our moral rectitude has acquired that indestructibility we call character,—or when the germ of character has fully expanded; when, finally, (the secret principle of no kind of depravity being any longer able to intro-

---

1 "Pudeur" is not satisfactorily rendered by "modesty." *Bashfulness* would more nearly represent the author's meaning, were not this word suggestive of *mauvaise honte;* but for the inconvenience of repetition, *modest reserve* would perhaps here best translate "pudeur."

duce itself into us against our will, or to injure us without our knowledge) our defence is in ourselves,—then the man is finished, the veil falls, and the network is unravelled.

But this is not all; modesty impresses upon us its vestiges, and leaves with us its ægis. We lose its mechanism, but we preserve its virtue. There still lingers with us a shadow of the envelope,—I mean the blush that suffuses and clothes us, as if to hide the stain of insult, or to foil the excessive and sudden pleasure to which praise might give rise.

83.

One period of life is alone suited to receive the seeds of religion. They cannot grow on a soil that the passions have ravaged, or that they have dried up and hardened.

OF THE DIFFERENT PERIODS OF LIFE

84.

WHEN children play, they perform all the movements necessary to persuade themselves that their fictions are realities. Toys are images which

put external objects within their reach, by proportioning them to their age, their stature, and their strength.

85.

The early and the latter part of human life are the best, or, at least, the most worthy of respect; the one is the age of innocence, the other of reason.

86.

Two ages of life should have no sex: the child and the old man should be as modest as women.

87.

Old age takes from the man of intellect no qualities save those that are useless to wisdom.

88.

It would seem that for certain productions of the mind the winter of the body is the autumn of the soul.

89.

The residue of human wisdom purified by old age is, perhaps, the best thing we possess.

90.

Politeness smoothes wrinkles.

91.

There is about neat and clean clothing a sort of youthfulness in which it is well for old age to envelop itself.

92.

The life of most men and women is made up of a little vanity and a little sensual gratification.

93.

Living requires but little life ; doing requires much.

94.

We must treat our life as we do our writings : we must attune and harmonise the beginning, the middle, and the end. In doing this many erasures are necessary.

95.

In the case of valetudinarians, old age does not overwhelm the intellect by the sudden ruin of their whole strength, as with other men. They retain to the end the same languor ; but they also retain their ardour and vivacity. Being accustomed to depend but little upon their body, they, for the most part, preserve a healthy mind in a weakly frame. Time changes them but little ; it does but affect their duration.

96.

The poetry to which Socrates used to say the gods had warned him to apply himself before he died, is the poetry not of Homer, but of Plato,—the immaterial, celestial poetry which ravishes the soul and lulls the senses. It should be cultivated in captivity, in infirmity, in old age. It is the joy of the dying.

OF THE FAMILY AND THE HOUSE

97.

FEW men are worthy of being heads of families, and few families are equal to having a head.

98.

One ought not to choose for a wife a woman whom one would not choose for a friend, were she a man.

99.

Nothing confers so much honour upon a wife as her patience; and nothing so little as the patience of her husband.

100.

One can, with dignity, be wife and widow but once.

101.

The table is a kind of altar which should be decked on high days and holidays.

OF CONVERSATION

102.

THEY who are models to society are exempted from being its tools.

103.

Only just the right quantum of wit should be put into a book; in conversation a little excess is allowable.

104.

It is never the opinions of other people that displease us; but the wish they sometimes have to subject us to their opinions against our will.

105.

Contradiction only vexes us because it disturbs our quiet possession of some opinion or superiority. This is why it troubles the weak more than the strong, and the sickly more than the healthy.

106.

We may convince others by our arguments; but we can only persuade them by their own.

107.

A reason is often good, not because it is conclusive, but because it is dramatic,—because it has the stamp of him who urges it, and is drawn from his own resources. For there are arguments *ex homine* as well as *ad hominem.*

108.

Frankness is a natural quality; constant veracity is a virtue.

109.

One can only explain one's-self frankly when one hopes to be understood; and one can only hope to be understood by those who are partly of our way of thinking.

110.

We should be able to enter into other people's ideas and to withdraw from them again; just as we should know how to relinquish our own ideas, and again resume them.

111.

What can one possibly introduce into a mind that is full, and full of itself?

112.

We should always keep open and free a corner of our head in which to make room for the opinions of our friends. Let us have heart and head hospitality.

113.

There are conversations in which neither the soul nor the body takes any part. I speak of those conversations in which people neither draw what they say from their hearts nor from their mother-wit, in which there is neither freedom nor liveliness, nor openness, nor fun; in which one finds neither movement nor repose, nor entertainment, nor ease,—no relaxation, no matter for meditation; in a word, in which nothing has been given and nothing received, and where there is no real interchange of thought.

114.

Genuine *bons mots* surprise those from whose lips they fall, no less than they do those who listen to

them; they crop up in our minds in spite of ourselves, or, at least, intuitively,—as is the case with all inspirations.

115.

It is better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle it without debate.

116.

One man likes to say what he knows, another what he thinks.

117.

In the interchange of thought use no coin but gold and silver.

118.

To turn into ridicule what is not ridiculous, is, in some sort, to turn good into evil.

119.

Evil-speaking is malignity's balm.

OF POLITENESS AND BEHAVIOUR

120.

POLITENESS is the flower of humanity. He who is not polite enough is not human enough.

121.

Politeness is a sort of guard which covers the rough edges of our character, and prevents their wounding others. We should never throw it off, even in our conflicts with coarse people.

122.

There is good grace and a sort of urbanity in treating men at the onset with esteem and confidence. This, at any rate, proves that one has lived in good society with others and with one's-self.

123.

Gravity is but the rind of wisdom; but it is a preservative rind.

124.

What a wonderfully small matter suffices to hinder a verse, a poem, a picture, a feature, a face, an address,

a word, an accent, a gesture, from touching the heart!

125.

Just as politeness imitates kindness, so does grace imitate modesty.

126.

Strength is natural; but grace is the growth of habit. This charming quality requires practice if it is to become lasting.

127.

Manners are an art. Some are perfect, some commendable, some faulty; but there are none that are of no moment. How comes it that we have no precepts by which to teach them, or, at least, no rule whereby to judge them, as we judge sculpture and music? A science of manners would be more important to the virtue and happiness of men than one would suppose. If virtue leads to good manners, so do they in their turn lead to virtue. Manners are an essential part of ethics. We should, therefore, adopt on every occasion graceful, simple, suitable manners in our strivings after sublime wisdom.

OF WISDOM, VIRTUE, AND MORALITY

128.

WISDOM is a science by means of which we discern what things are and what are not good for the soul. It is the science of sciences, for it alone can estimate true value, just worth, right practice, what is dangerous and what useful.

129.

Consult the ancients, listen to the aged. He is far from wise who has but his own wisdom, and but indifferently learned who possesses but his own knowledge.

130.

Illusion and wisdom combined are the charm of life and art.

131.

Virtue is the health of the soul. It gives a flavour to the smallest leaves of life.

132.

Virtue when a matter of expediency and calculation is the virtue of vice.

133.

Necessity may render a doubtful act innocent, but it cannot make it praiseworthy.

134.

He is not harmless who harms himself.

135.

There is no virtue which appears small when enacted on a large stage.

136.

The morality of some folks is all in a piece; it is a stuff out of which they never shape themselves a garment.

137.

A maxim is the exact and noble expression of an important and unquestionable truth. Good maxims are the germs of all excellence. When firmly impressed on the memory they nourish the will.

138.

Maxims are to the intellect what laws are to actions; they do not enlighten, but they guide and direct; and, although themselves blind, are protective. They are like the clue in the labyrinth, or the compass in the night.

139.

There are many decisions in which the judgment takes no part. We decide without evidence and with precipitation in order to bring to an end an inquiry which wearies and vexes us, or to settle a tormenting uncertainty. In such cases our will, and not our intellect, decides.

140.

To think what we do not feel is to lie to one's-self. Whatever we think should be thought by our whole being, soul and body.

141.

When we act, we must conform to rules; and in passing judgment, we must take exceptions into consideration.

142.

Men must either be the slaves of duty or of force.

OF ORDER AND CHANCE

143.

ORDER is the co-ordination of the means to the end, of the parts to the whole, of the whole to its destination, of action to duty, of a work to its model, of recompense to merit.

144.

Order is to arrangement what the soul is to the body, and what mind is to matter. Arrangement without order is a body without a soul.

145.

All are born to observe good order, few to establish it.

146.

It is impossible to sing and dance correctly without gratification, so agreeable to our nature is the observance of every true rhythm. Moral order is no less rhythmical and harmonious; so that it is impossible to live well without secret and intense delight.

147.

Chance generally favours the prudent.

148.

Success serves men as a pedestal. It makes them seem greater, when not measured by reflection.

149.

If Fortune wishes to make a man estimable, she gives him virtues; if she wishes to make him esteemed, she gives him success.

OF TRUTH AND ERROR

150.

THERE are inferior truths, which minister to life and its operations; intermediate truths, which exercise the mind and afford it some satisfaction; and, lastly, higher truths, which enlighten the soul, nourish it, and constitute its happiness. The intermediate truths should always link the inferior with the superior.

151.

Our luminous moments are moments of happiness. When the mind is clear, all is sunshine.

152.

What is true by lamplight is not always true by sunlight.

153.

Every truth has two faces, every rule two surfaces, every precept two applications.

154.

Clearness in an opinion is the visible manifestation of truth; its utility is the palpable manifestation.

155.

When we have knocked in vain at the door of certain opinions, we must try to reach them by the window.

156.

The joy which is caused by truth and noble thoughts shows itself in the words by which they are expressed.

157.

He who throws light upon a question gilds and beautifies truth.

158.

Truth takes the stamp of the souls it enters. It is rigorous and rough in arid souls, but tempers and softens itself in loving natures.

OF ERROR

159.

WE should not give the name of error to what simply misleads, but to dogmas and doctrines which deceive us as to the existence or nature of any fundamental principle.

160.

When credulity comes from the heart it does no harm to the intellect.

161.

Those who never retract their opinions love themselves more than they love truth.

162.

There are some things that man can only know vaguely. About these, men of great intellect are content to entertain but vague notions. But this does not satisfy vulgar minds. Naturally and necessarily overwhelmed with ignorance, they, in their childish vexation, will bear with it in no form. The only way

of quieting them, is to offer them, or allow them to forge for themselves, fixed and definite ideas upon matters in which all precision is erroneous. These commonplace intellects have no wings. They cannot support themselves where there is nothing but space. They must have resting-places, fables, falsehoods, idols.

163.

To explain the moral by the physical world is not always safe; for often in viewing the latter we take appearances for realities, and our conjectures for facts: and thus we run the risk, by applying to one world the false dimensions we give to the other, of embracing two errors instead of one.

164.

It is even easier to be mistaken about the true than the beautiful.

165.

The simple-hearted and sincere never do more than half deceive themselves.

OF PHILOSOPHY

OF METAPHYSICS, OF ABSTRACTIONS, OF LOGIC, AND OF SYSTEMS

166.

I, *WHENCE, whither, why, how?* These questions cover all philosophy,—existence, origin, place, end, and means.

167.

The two philosophies, that which treats of body and that which treats of mind, are both of them good, useful, and necessary. Matter must be studied by the senses and with material experience, just as mind must be studied by the inner sight, and by its own experience. Reason and imagination, patience and enthusiasm, reflection and sentiment,—these are instruments the use of which is equally essential in our researches. To attain to truth, the soul needs all its tact and sagacity, its taste and memory, its feet and wings.

OF METAPHYSICS

168.

PHILOSOPHY should search out errors in order to combat them: this is its one business. But as truth resembles error, and as they are often intermingled, there are some truths which philosophy has killed.

169.

Do not confuse what is spiritual with what is abstract; and bear in mind that philosophy has a muse, and ought not to serve merely as reason's laboratory.

170.

Just as poetry is sometimes more philosophical than philosophy, metaphysics are, naturally, even more poetical than poetry.

171.

In metaphysical questions, clearness must decide; and in moral and practical questions, utility. As soon as one can affirm, *It is profitable to the human race*, what has to be done has been proved. In like manner, when one has arrived at a distinct conception, one has found what has to be believed.

172.

Religion is the sole metaphysics that the masses are capable of understanding and adopting.

173.

Whoever does not feel what distinction should be made between the words *the beautiful* and *beauty*, *the true* and *truth*, *the ideal* and *the abstract*, is a bad metaphysician.

174.

Beware, in metaphysical writings, of words which it has been impossible to introduce into common parlance, and which are only suited to forming a language by itself.

OF LOGIC

175.

WHEN a line of reasoning attacks universal instinct and practice, it may be difficult to refute, but it is undoubtedly misleading. Although we may be unable to controvert it, it must not on that account be the less resolutely withstood.

176.

In its operations, the starting-point of logic is a definition, that of metaphysics, an idea. The one aims at conviction, the other at clearness and assent. The one is judicial, the other demonstrative. The former, like arithmetic, does but employ in its operations a kind of calculation; the latter is essentially persuasive, expository,—the soul takes part in it. They differ as an axiom differs from an idea, or a principle from a notion.

177.

Logic is to grammar what the sense of words is to their sound.

178.

To test a principle by its consequences is allowed by good logic and enjoined by sound reason.

179.

The sophist contents himself with appearances, the dialectician with proofs; the philosopher seeks to know through examination and evidence.

180.

A system is often nothing more than a new error which one does not know how to refute because it had not hitherto existed, and which one has not had time to prepare to combat.

181.

Systems are but artificial constructions, fabrics which interest me little. I examine what natural treasure they contain, and take heed of that alone. There are some, however, who only care about the casket; they know its dimensions, and whether it is made of sandal-wood, or aloe, or mahogany, or walnut. Silk-worms require for their spinning bits of wood placed in a certain manner; and we must let them have what they want. But our concern is with the silk, not with the planning of the cocoon.

182.

If systems are cobwebs, they should at least be made of silken threads.

OF SPACE, TIME, AND LIGHT

183.

SPACE is the stature of God.

184.

The ideas of eternity and space have in them something divine which is not possessed by pure duration and simple extension.

185.

Space is to place what eternity is to time.

186.

Reflection is to colours what echo is to sounds.

187.

Real and false diamonds have the same facets, the same transparency. But in the light of the real there is a freedom and a joy not to be found in the false. Nothing is beautiful but *the true*.

188.

Light is the soul of the diamond.

189.

The sound of the drum dissipates thought; hence it is that this instrument is eminently military.

190.

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

191.

I am no lover of evergreen trees. There is something gloomy in their verdure, cold in their shade, sharp, dry, and prickly in their leaves. And as they lose nothing, and have nothing to fear, they seem to me to be devoid of sensitiveness, and so interest me but little.

192.

I imagine reptiles to be the most wary of animals, and that what notions they have are for the most part clear and exact,—much ignorance and little error.

OF GOVERNMENTS

193.

STATESMANSHIP is the art of understanding and leading the masses, or the majority. Its glory is to lead them, not where they want to go, but where they ought to go.

194.

In those governments which obey a numerical superiority, it is a static or arithmetical dignity — a gross or quantitative preponderance — that judges human affairs.

195.

The punishment of bad princes is to be thought worse than they really are.

196.

Every legitimate authority should respect its extent and its limits.

197.

Forms of government become established of themselves. They shape themselves, they are not created. We may give them strength and consistency, but we cannot call them into being. Let us rest assured that the form of government can never be a matter of choice: it is almost always a matter of necessity.

198.

One of the surest ways of killing a tree is to lay bare its roots. It is the same with institutions. We must not be too ready to disinter the origin of those we wish to preserve. All beginnings are small.

199.

Imitate time. It destroys slowly. It undermines, wears, loosens, separates. It does not uproot.

200.

Governments! War, peace, the public weal,—these are your concerns. You are established in order that private individuals may be freed from these heavy cares. In a well-ordered State those only need be anxious about public affairs whose business it is to

direct them. A sheltering tree is their emblem. It is, truly, of the first importance that, if private persons are to be relieved from these anxieties, the government should be efficient,—that is to say, that its parts should be so harmonised that its functions may be easily performed, and its permanence ensured. A people constantly in unrest is always busied in building: its shelter is but a tent,—it is encamped, not established.

201.

How many weak shoulders have craved heavy burdens!

OF LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND LAWS

202.

WHAT do the wise and good—those who live under the sway of reason and who are the slaves of duty—gain by liberty?[1] It may well be that what the wise and good never allow themselves should be conceded to no one.

203.

Justice is truth in action.

204.

There are some acts of justice which corrupt those who perform them.

205.

Laws are often mere notice-boards, set up in out-of-the-way places where no one can read them. If you wish to keep people off a road, close it with a barrier

[1] Hardly "liberty"; still less "freedom": "license"?

that stops the most heedless man at the very entrance. It is better to make trespass impossible than to forbid it.

206.

Causes may be pleaded, but not laws. To plead the laws publicly is to lay bare their germ. Their source should be sacred, and therefore hidden; and you expose it to the open air, to the broad daylight! When laws arise out of discussion, they no longer come from above, nor from the sanctuary of the conscience; and their origin lays them open to cavil.

207.

Those whose opinion is of great authority should be placed in the temple of the wise, not on the bench of debate. Their office should be to decide, not to deliberate. Their voices should proclaim the law, and not count as votes. As they have no peers, they should not be drafted into the ranks.

OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MANNERS [1]

208.

MANNERS are made up of customs and habits. Customs constitute public manners, habits form those of individuals. If the public manners are good, those of the individual are of small moment, for they are punished and checked by the reproach they entail. But when public manners are bad, they are censured and sometimes corrected by the good manners of individuals, which become of extreme importance. Acting as a sort of protest against the age, they are the safeguard of principles. They preserve the sacred fire, and transmit its flame to the next generation.

209.

Public manners are a path which successive generations find ready beaten before them along the journey

[1] "Mœurs" (mores), which may sometimes be translated "morals," is perhaps here better rendered by "manners"—if we understand thereby the "manners" that "maketh man."

of life. Where there are no manners there is no road: every one is then obliged to make his own; and instead of reaching his goal, exhausts himself in searching for a route.

210.

Poetical manners suit isolated individuals; patriarchal manners, the family; grave manners, the public man; saintly manners, the priest, the old and infirm, and the Christian. Poetical manners belong to the age of gold; patriarchal manners to the Bible; grave and severe manners to history; saintly and religious manners to legendary lore. If, then, we would know whatever is worthy of imitation, we must make legends a part of our study and observation. What is marvellous in the saints is not their miracles but their conduct. Do as you will about believing their miracles; but give credence to their conduct, for nothing is better attested.

211.

The business of history is to form a right estimate of men; of politics, to provide for the needs of mind and body; of morals, self-perfection; of literature, to delight and adorn the mind by the lights, colours, and figures of language; of religion, the love of

heaven;—in all things our concern being to know and ameliorate whatever affects our inner life. Seek then to find out in the history of men what is and what is not true; in politics, what is and what is not useful; in morals, what is and what is not just; in literature, what is and what is not beautiful; in religious matters, what is and what is not pious;—in all things, what ennobles and what debases.

212.

Times are to us like places: we live in both; we are environed by both; they touch us, and enfold us, and always, more or less, make their mark upon us. Unwholesome places and corrupt times infect us with their contagion.

213.

We are all of us more or less echoes, repeating involuntarily the virtues, the defects, the movements and the characters of those among whom we live.

214.

We have received the world as an inheritance which not only has no one of us a right to damage, but which it is the duty of each generation to leave to posterity in an improved condition.

215.

In the uneducated classes the women are more estimable than the men; in the higher class we find that the men are the superiors. This is because men more readily grow rich in acquired virtues, and women in native virtues.

216.

The virtuous and judicious public is the only true public. Its suffrages alone should count, its judgments alone should become law.

217.

The nations who have lost virtue and true knowledge can never recover them. No one, save the truly wise, is willing to turn back, even to regain the right road.

218.

Hereditary nobility is due to the presumption that we shall do well because our fathers have done well.

219.

To flatter the populace during political tempests, is to tell the waves to control the ship, and the pilot to yield to the current.

OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIONS

220.

IN France people seem to love the arts for the sake of criticizing them, far rather than for the pleasure they afford.

221.

Bonaparte's wisdom was in his thoughts, and his madness in his passions.

222.

The English are brought up to respect serious things; the French are taught the habit of making light of them.

223.

In England the parliament is king, and the king a minister; but an hereditary, permanent, inviolable minister. As a monarch he is mutilated, one-eyed, one-armed, and halt; but revered.

224.

Pride is the dominant characteristic of the Spanish people. Even in their passion for gold there is more

pride than greed. It is the brilliancy of the metal, its purity, its grandeur, and, so to say, its glory, that render it so dear to them. They regard it as the prince of metals; and account themselves as the noble nation *par excellence*, and alone worthy to possess it. Hence their pitiless treatment of the Indians from whom they tore this sovereign substance, which seemed to them a captive in the hands of a naked people.

225.

Polite in manners, barbarous in conduct; weak through ignorance, presumptuous through success; naturally deficient, but possessed of borrowed excellence; inheritors of vices of a thousand years' standing, and which will never be got rid of, because they are vices of race, of habit, and of climate; a people whose virtues are but of to-day, and which cannot last because they are the result of culture, and are not innate; —in a word, a people who have been made what they cannot really *be*, and who are condemned to relapse into what they were: such are the Russians.

226.

In the flattery of the Orientals there is more admiration than fear.

227.

The trades of nations may be characteristically assorted as follows:—The Spaniard is a jeweller, a goldsmith, a lapidary; the Englishman, a manufacturer; the German, a paper-merchant; the Dutchman, a victualler; and the Frenchman a *marchand de modes*. In navigation, the first is brave, the second skilful, the third learned, the fourth industrious, and the fifth venturesome. Give a ship a Spanish captain, an English pilot, a German mate, and Dutch sailors: the Frenchman will only stir on his own account. Propose a conquest to the first, enterprise to the second, discovery to the third, profit to the fourth, and dashing success to the fifth. The first seeks splendid voyages, the second important voyages, the third useful voyages, and the fifth rapid voyages. The first embarks in order to set out; the second, to act; the third, to see; the fourth, to gain; and the fifth, to reach his destination. The sea is a highway to the Spaniard, a place of business to the Englishman, a studio to the German, a means of transport to the Dutchman, and a post-chaise to the Frenchman.

OF ANTIQUITY

228.

THREE things attached the ancients to their native soil—namely, their temples, their tombs, and their ancestry. The two great ties that bound them to their government were custom and antiquity. With the moderns, everything has been changed by the love of novelty. The ancients said, *our ancestors*, we speak of *posterity*. We have no such love of the fatherland—the country and the laws of our fathers—as they had; we love rather the laws and the land of our children; it is the magic of the future, not of the past, that charms us.

229.

Many words have changed their meaning. The word *liberty*, for instance, had at its root the same sense, with the ancients, as *dominion*. "I wish to be free," meant with them, "I wish to govern or administer the affairs of the state;" with us it means, "I wish to be independent." *Liberty*, which with

us has a moral sense, had with them an altogether political signification.

230.

One day, a daughter of Aristotle, Pythias by name, was asked what colour pleased her most. She replied, "The colour with which modesty suffuses the face of simple, inoffensive men."

231.

Contempt for private wrongs was one of the features of ancient morals.

232.

Among the Greeks, and chiefly among the Athenians, we find *the beautiful* in things civil and literary; among the Romans, in morals and politics; among the Jews, in religious and home life; among other nations, the imitation of these three modes of the beautiful.

233.

Meseems it is much harder to be a modern than an ancient.

234.

Strength grows out of exercise, exercise out of obstacles. Hence it was that in the ancient republics —where work was the business of slaves—the citizens,

that they might not be enervated by ease, introduced wrestling, the cestus, and pugilism. And hence, too, the Greeks, to whom the past was a *tabula rasa*, invented their versification, their dialectics, their rhetoric,—fetters, these, to reason, wit, and speech, through the discipline of which wit was to become elastic, reason incisive, and style perfect.

235.

The Greeks loved to speak their language, to feel it flow under their pen or from their lips. It charmed them. For their language was an easy language, and its elegant constructions were familiar. The people spoke it with the same purity as the literati. It is this that explains the frequent allusions to popular proverbs in the most polished writers. Plato is full of them. Now, it is these allusions that give to style its magic, and to the mind, which they amuse, relax, and enliven, its diversions. In France, we have said of maxims that they are the proverbs of honest folk. In Athens, the maxims of the well-bred and the proverbs of the common people were one and the same thing.

236.

Rhythm expresses itself by cadences, harmony by sounds. It was by means of cadences, and not by

sounds, by rhythm and not by harmony, that the accents and measures of long and short syllables produced their effects in the language of the Greeks and Romans.

237.

There is a roughness about the Latin writers. A noble and refined moderation distinguishes the Greeks, and especially the Athenians.

238.

The ears of those haughty Romans were dull. Before they could be induced to listen to the voice of the charmer, much blandishment was necessary. This explains the oratorical style we meet with in even their gravest historians. The Greeks, on the contrary, were endowed with perfect organs,—organs that were easily attuned and readily touched. A graceful thought pleased them when clothed in no matter how simple a garb; and in descriptions simple truth satisfied them. They gave special heed to the maxim *ne quid nimis*. Their best literature is marked by choiceness and lucidity of thought, by well-selected words that delight through their natural harmony, and by that sobriety which allows no disturbing influence to retard an impression. It is only in those Greek writers that were spoiled by Roman manners

that we meet with that superfluity of language which is so opposed to purity of style. No oratorical expression is ever found in their best historians; and in their great orators eloquence is more nearly allied to history than in their best story-tellers history is allied to eloquence.

239.

The ancients insisted that in every literary composition, even in a speech, there must be a left side and a right,—a side from whence the movement issued, another that was to be its goal, and from whence it returned by a course which embraced the whole subject, and traversed every point.

240.

The intellect of the ancients had much less movement and more dignity than ours. Hence the moderation of their speeches and the excellence of their taste.

241.

A pathetic, lofty, harmonious style, adapted to the eloquence of the tribune, was as easy to a Greek or Roman as a witty, polished, sprightly, playful, pleasing style is to a Frenchman. With us the genius of social life prevails, with them the genius of public life had the ascendency. They were taught public

speaking in their childhood, and practised the art from their youth. We learn to speak to individuals. They had a language that abounded in figures of speech and in solemn words; ours abounds in words with double faces, and in ingenious turns. It was easy to them to deliver lengthy, grave, and touching discourses: we have a facility for talking long and pleasantly. The letters of Cicero are extremely short, and contain very little that is attractive. His orations, on the contrary, offer an inexhaustible source of delight; in these his thought is always varied and fertile, and never seems wearied. It would have been as difficult for Cicero to write a letter like Voltaire, as for Voltaire to compose a Ciceronian oration. It would even have cost a clever Roman a great effort to write a letter like those which Caraccioli attributes to Clement XIV. A Roman lady — Veturia, the mother of Coriolanus, for instance—would never have succeeded in writing a note that would pass as a fair imitation of one of Madame de Sévigné's *billets:* possibly, however, a flower-woman of Athens might have accomplished the task. Every language, it has been well said, has its own stamp; but, as with all other national treasures, the wealth of each language depends upon the way in which men employ it.

OF THE AGE

242.

CIVILIZATION! A great word mis-used, the proper acceptation of which is *that which makes men civil, good citizens.* Civilization, then, is achieved through religion, modesty, benevolence, justice; *un*-civilization, the return to barbarism, results from an over-reaching spirit, from irreligion, shamelessness, impudence, general ambition, greed of gain: all these disunite men, and do but attach us to ourselves.

243.

We live in an age in which superfluous ideas abound and essential ideas are lacking.

244.

To make our inclinations the rule of our judgment, and our fancies the motive power of our actions, is a frightful habit of the age.

245.

In these times gain is not only a matter of greed, but of ambition.

246.

The philosopher, among the Greeks, was the metaphysician; in France he is what is called a reformer, —a man who aspires to make his own reason, and never that of others, his guide; who erects in his mind a tribunal to which he summons whatever other men respect, and who prefers his private opinion and his self-imposed code of morality to established laws and usages.

247.

To be capable of respect is well-nigh as rare at the present day as to be worthy of it.

248.

To the liberal ideas of the age must be opposed the moral ideas of all ages.

249.

If you call effete whatever is ancient; if you wither with a name which carries with it the notion of decadence and a sense of contempt whatever has been consecrated and strengthened by time, you profane and weaken it. The decadence is of your own bringing about.

250.

The great drawback in new books is that they prevent our reading older ones.

251.

The ancients were eloquent because they addressed people who were at once ignorant and eager to know. But what hope is there of persuading and teaching men who think they know everything? We speak to armed critics rather than to considerate listeners.

252.

Our fathers judged books by their taste, their conscience, and their reason. We judge them by the emotions they excite in us. Is this book likely to be harmful or useful? Is it calculated to improve the mind, or to corrupt it? Will it do good or harm? These were the great questions which men were wont to ask themselves. We ask, will the book please?

253.

The style of most writers of our time is good for business and for controversy; but it goes no farther. It is civil, not literary.

254.

Abstraction is too habitual with us, and too easy. We satisfy our minds with words, which, like a kind of paper money, have a conventional value, but no solidity. This is why there is so little gold in our style and in our books.

255.

During the last century the second-rate writers expressed themselves too slowly. The opposite is the case now-a-days. Some speak in an undertone; others too fast; others seem to express themselves in too trivial terms. Our style has more firmness, but less grace; our expressions are more concise, but less agreeable. We articulate, so to say, too distinctly.

256.

In the present day our literary masonry is well done, but our architecture is poor.

257.

The earliest poets and authors made fools wise. Modern authors try to make wise men fools.

258.

One of the evils of our literature is that our learned men have little wit, while our brilliant writers are not learned.

259.

How many of the learned are science-forgers—laborious, ardent, indefatigable Cyclops—who have but one eye!

OF EDUCATION

260.

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

261.

Children have more need of models than of critics.

262.

Let us bear well in mind that education does not consist merely in adorning the memory and enlightening the understanding. Its main business should be to direct the will.

263.

Neither in metaphysics, nor in logic, nor in ethics, must we consign to the head what should be lodged in the heart or the conscience. Treat love to parents as a sentiment or a precept: never turn it into a thesis, a bare demonstration.

264.

Children must be rendered reasonable, but not reasoners. The first thing to teach them is that it is reasonable for them to obey, and unreasonable for them to dispute. Otherwise education would spend itself in bandying argument, and everything would be lost if the teacher were not a clever caviller.

265.

Place before children nothing but what is simple, lest you spoil their taste; and nothing that is not innocent, lest you spoil their heart.

266.

The guidance of our mind is of more importance than its progress.

267.

Let us leave to each one his measure of intellect, his character, and his temperament, seeking only to improve them. Nothing is more becoming to the mind than its own natural manner; from this proceeds its ease, its grace, and all its powers, whether real or apparent. All constraint injures it; to force its springs, destroys it. We all carry about us indices of our destiny: these must not be effaced, but watched,

if our career is not to be a miserable failure. Those who are born delicate must live delicate, but healthy; those who are born robust must live robust, but temperate; those who have a lively wit should look after their wings, and those who are not thus gifted should watch their steps.

268.

Give children no literature that is not simple. Taste has never been corrupted by simplicity.

269.

The exclusive preference given in education to mathematics is open to grave objections. Mathematics make the mind mathematically exact, while literature makes it morally exact. Mathematics will teach a man to build a bridge; the humanities will teach him to live.

270.

School-books should be the fruit of long experience —the work of the emeritus teacher.

OF THE FINE ARTS

271.

FAR from consigning the arts to the list of useful superfluities, we should class them among the most precious and important possessions of human society. But for the arts, the most exalted intellects would be quite unable to make known to us the greater part of their conceptions. Without them a man, however perfect and just, could experience but a part of the pleasures of which his excellence renders him susceptible, and of the happiness to which nature destines him. There are emotions so delicate and objects so ravishing that they can only be expressed through colours and sounds. The arts should be regarded as a sort of language by itself, as a unique means of communication between the inhabitants of a superior sphere and ourselves.

272.

An imitation should be composed of images alone. If the poet bids us listen to a man moved by passion, he should put into his mouth such words only as would

be used by a man so influenced. If the painter colours an object, he too must use colours which are images of the real colours. A musician, in like manner, should employ the images of the sounds he would represent, and not the sounds themselves. The same law should be observed by the actor in the choice of his tones and gestures. This is the great rule, the first rule, the only rule. All the best artists have felt and followed it, although it has never yet been propounded. It is self-evident, as are all the principles that arise from the essence of things, and this enables me to state it the more confidently.

273.

The Beautiful! is beauty seen with the eye of the soul.

274.

A work of art should be a being, and not an arbitrary *thing*. It should have its proportions, its character, and its nature; a beginning, a middle, accessories, and an end. We should be able to see in it a body with its members, a statue,—in short, a personality.

275.

Beautiful lines are the foundation of all beauty. In some of the arts they must be visible, as in

architecture, which delights in adorning them. But in others, in statuary for instance, they should be carefully disguised. In painting, they are always sufficiently veiled by colour. Nature conceals them, buries them, covers them, in living things, which, to be beautiful, should show them but little: for the skeleton is in the lines, and the life is in the features.

276.

The youth of art is handsome, its manhood pompous, its old age rich, but overcharged with ornaments which disfigure it and hasten its decay. We must constantly strive to bring back art to its manhood, or, better still, to its youth.

277.

Just as we give a pedestal to a statue, so should we give one to an edifice, and especially to a temple, which ought, as it were, to be placed on an altar.

278.

There is in the Apollo Belvidere something that may be compared to the attitude of an orator who has just launched an invective.

279.

In painting the moral side of Nature, what the artist has most to beware of is exaggeration; while in painting its physical side, what he has to fear most is weakness.

280.

When the painter wishes to represent an event, he cannot place before us too great a number of personages; but he cannot employ too few when he wishes to portray an emotion.

281.

Light is so beautiful a thing that with well-nigh it alone Rembrandt has produced admirable pictures. His conceptions of light and shade are superlatively powerful and attractive. What he treats is often common-place; and yet one cannot look at his works without gravity and respect. The sight of them lets a light into the soul which charms and satisfies it. They produce upon the imagination a sensation analogous to what would be caused by the purest rays of daylight falling for the first time upon the delighted eyes of a man who had long been shut up in a gloomy abode. In his beautiful figures, his Rabbi, for instance, the light, it is true, is not the chief object

that occupies the imagination, but nevertheless it is the principal means employed by the artist to render his subject striking. It is light that portrays those features, that hair, that beard, those wrinkles and furrows that Time has traced. What Rembrandt has done with his chiaroscuro Rubens has accomplished with his flesh tints. Rubens was a master of colour, Rembrandt of light. Whatever Rubens places before us is showy; Rembrandt's work is all luminous. Rubens is splendid, Rembrandt magical; and if they do not always charm the soul, the eye at least owes to them its most brilliant illusions.

282.

The object of the player's art is simply to represent. He should appear to be half shadow, half reality. His tears, his cries, his language, his gestures, should seem half feigned and half true. In really good acting we should be able to believe that what we hear and see is of our own imagining; it should seem to us a charming dream.

283.

Our dancers ennoble what is coarse; but they degrade what is heroic.

284.

Every modulated sound is not a song, and every voice that executes a beautiful air does not sing. Singing should enchant. But to produce this effect there must be a quality of soul and voice which is by no means common, even with great singers.

OF POETRY

285.

PLATO taught that all created things are the outcome of one mould, which is in the mind of God, and which he calls *idea*. The idea is to the image what the cause is to the result. Now, according to this philosopher, all things being but an expression of the idea, an image being but a representation of things, and words in their turn but an expression of the image, poets, proud as they are of their art, give us in their works but copies of the copy of a copy, and consequently, something infinitely imperfect, because infinitely remote from and unlike the true model. Plato condemned poetry, and his reproaches were worthy of it and of himself. But I would defend it, and, following his teaching, turn it to the praise and honour of that poetry which he proscribed. I hold, *pace* Plato, that all around us is perishable and defective save the forms which bear the impress of *idea*. Now what does the poet do? He pours upon material forms rays of light which so purge and clarify them that we are able to discern the universe as it

exists in the thought of God himself. He extracts from all things their heavenly qualities only. His painting is not the copy of a copy, but a cast from the archetype,—a hollow cast, if I may so express myself, which is easily carried about, which the memory readily retains, and which rests in the depths of the soul to delight it in its moments of leisure.

286.

Nothing which does not transport is poetry. The lyre is a winged instrument.

287.

The poet must be not only the Phidias and the Dædalus of his verses; he must be also the Prometheus: with form and movement he must also give them life.

288.

The poets have a hundred times more good sense than the philosophers. In seeking for the beautiful they meet with more truths than the philosophers find in their researches after the true.

289.

Poets are even more inspired by the images of objects than by the presence of the objects themselves.

290.

In a poem there should be not only the poetry of images, but also the poetry of ideas.

291.

All good verses are like impromptus made at leisure.

292.

Each word of the poet gives so clear a sound, and presents so finished a sense, that the charmed attention can readily detach itself to pass on to the following words, in which a new pleasure awaits it,—the surprise of suddenly seeing vulgar words beautified, worn-out words restored to their pristine freshness, and obscure words made radiant with light.

293.

The poet should not cross at a foot-pace an interval he can clear with a bound.

294.

In ordinary language, words serve to recall things; but when language is really poetical, things always serve to recall words.

295.

In the poetical style, each word tells upon the ear like a sound from a well-tuned lyre, always leaving after it a great number of undulations.

296.

The poet's subject should present to his genius a kind of fantastic resort which he can expand and contract at pleasure. Places that are too real, and persons that are too historical, imprison his mind, and cramp its movements.

297.

Poetry is to be found nowhere unless we carry it within us.

298.

Words become luminous when the poet's finger has passed over them its phosphorescence.

OF STYLE

299.

WHEN languages are once formed, facility of expression is of itself injurious to the working of the mind, for there is no obstacle to check it, to render it circumspect, and to compel a choice of thoughts. In languages that are still new, such choice is entailed through the delay to which the mind is subjected while turning over the leaves of memory in its search for the right word. In this case, the greatest attention is indispensable to the writer.

300.

In reading a book one does not like to meet with words which are not current in spoken language, words which distract the attention, not through their beauty but through their singularity. But we tolerate them, we even enjoy them, in an old author, for there they are a literary record, showing the birth of the language, while in a modern author they do but exhibit its corruption.

301.

There are hosts of words in common use which carry with them but a half sense. They are only serviceable in commonplace talk, and their currency is like that of halfpence in trade. They should not be displayed in set phrases, whether in a speech or a writing, and on no account should they be admitted into verse, for this would be to commit the fault of a composer who introduced into his music sounds that were not tones, or tones that were not notes.

302.

Before employing a fine word, find a place for it.

303.

Liquid, flowing words are the choicest and the best, if language is regarded as music. But when it is considered as a picture, then there are rough words which are very telling,—they make their mark.

304.

Words, like glass, darken whatever they do not help us to see.

305.

Every perfectly appropriate expression strikes a chord in the mind; and if the mind is satisfied, it cares little whether the ear be pleased.

306.

It would be strange if style in order to be beautiful should need to be somewhat obscure, that it should be not quite without its clouds. And yet, perhaps, this is true when the obscurity arises out of the very excellence of the language, from the choice of words which are not commonplace and vulgar. Certain it is that the beautiful invariably possesses a visible and a hidden beauty. And it is certain that no style is so beautiful as that which presents to the attentive reader a half-hidden meaning.

307.

Ideas never lack words: it is the words that lack ideas. As soon as an idea is fully perfected, the word discovers and presents itself, and clothes the idea.

308.

There are writings and styles in which the words are so placed that they may be ticked off one by one.

In other compositions they must be taken in the lump, by weight, and by the sackful.

309.

With some writers the style grows out of the thoughts; with others the thoughts grow out of the style.

310.

La Bruyère says that our thoughts must be derived from our judgment. True, but for their expression we must appeal to our humour and imagination.

311.

The art of saying well what one thinks, is different from the faculty of thinking. The latter may be very deep and lofty and far-reaching, while the former is altogether wanting. The gift of expression is not the same as that of conception: the first makes great writers, the second great minds. And, further, there are those who, while fully endowed with both qualities, cannot always give them play, and often find that the one acts without the other. How many people have a pen and no ink! How many others have pen and ink but no paper,—no matter upon which to exercise their style!

312.

Thoughts there are that need no embodying, no form, no expression. It is enough to hint at them vaguely: a word, and they are heard and seen.

313.

There are many ideas which avail nothing in our converse with other men, but of which we feel the excellence in our private meditations. They are like those treasured things that are not marketable, but which we esteem ourselves fortunate to possess.

314.

Every author has his dictionary and his manner. He is fond of words of a certain tone and colour and form, of certain turns he gives his style, of a characteristic phraseology which has become customary to him. He has, in a measure, his own grammar, and pronunciation and *genre*, his own foibles and oddities.

315.

One often recognizes an excellent author, no matter what his subject, by the cadence of his periods and the play of his style; just as one may tell a well-bred man by his gait, no matter where one meets him.

316.

All styles are good if only they are employed with taste. There are countless expressions which are faults in some writers and beauties in others.

317.

There are some styles that are pleasant to the eye, melodious to the ear, and smooth to the touch; but scentless and tasteless.

318.

A temperate style is alone classical.

319.

A serious urbanity is the characteristic of the academic style: it alone is suited to a literary man addressing lettered readers.

320.

The true mark of the epistolary style is cheerfulness and urbanity.

321.

Authors there are who begin by jingling their style, that people may say of them that they have a store of gold.

322.

Figures of speech and comparisons are necessary in order to double the impression that ideas are to make on the mind, by giving them at once a physical and an intellectual force.

323.

Polish and finish are to style what varnish is to pictures; they preserve it, make it durable,—give it a sort of immortality.

OF THE

QUALITIES OF AUTHORS AND OF LITERARY COMPOSITIONS

324.

BUFFON says that genius is but an aptitude for taking pains. Aptitude for long, unwearying attention is, indeed, the genius of observation; but there is another genius, that of invention, which is a lively, ready, and perpetual power of penetration.

325.

Mind controlling matter, reason swaying the passions, and taste mastering energy,—these are the characteristics of the beautiful.

326.

The beautiful is the most useful to art; but the sublime is the most helpful to morals, for it elevates the mind.

327.

Strength is not energy; some writers have more muscles than talent.

328.

Whatever brilliant thing passes before the eyes without giving them time to rest upon it, dazzles. The lightning flash, to be supportable, must be followed by shade.

329.

It is good and beautiful that thoughts irradiate; but they should rarely glitter. It is best that they shine.

330.

There are some thoughts that are luminous of themselves; others there are that owe their lustre to the place they occupy: to remove them would be to extinguish them.

331.

Some writers create artificial shadows in order that what is superficial may appear deep, and to give brilliancy to the feeble lights in their work.

332.

Real depth is the result of concentrated ideas.

333.

When a work has been completed, one thing, and that no small matter, remains to be done,—to pass over the surface a varnish of ease, a pleasing atmosphere which will spare the reader all sense of the trouble the author has taken.

334.

Sagacity sees everything in a moment; but exactitude requires years before it can express everything.

335.

Genius begins great works; labour alone finishes them.

336.

The mind must rest as well as work. To write too much ruins it; to leave off writing rusts it.

337.

Ignorance, which in behaviour mitigates a fault, is, in literature, a capital offence.

338.

Nothing is thoroughly well known until after it has been long learned.

339.

Young writers give their minds much exercise and little food.

340.

He who executes whatever he can perform, runs the risk of exposing the limits of his ability. We must not go to the full tether of our talents, of our strength, or of our expenditure.

341.

The fine sentiments and beautiful ideas we wish to display effectively in our writings should be very familiar to us, in order that the reader may perceive in their expression the ease and charm that habit begets.

342.

A work of art must not have the appearance of a reality, but of an idea. For our ideas are always nobler, more beautiful, and better able to touch the soul, than the objects they represent,—when, indeed, they represent them well.

343.

The mind conceives with pain, but brings forth with joy.

344.

Three things are necessary to the producing of a good book: talent, art, and a practised hand,—in other words, nature, industry, and habit.

345.

An ordinary book needs but a subject: but a noble work must contain a germ which develops itself in the mind, like a plant. There are no great compositions which have not been, at least, long pondered over, if not long worked at.

346.

There is in the *lucidus ordo* of Horace something sidereal. Our dry method is rather an *ordo ligneus vel ferreus;* everything in it is held together by staples and mortises.

347.

The best thoughts of some writers appear to me to have occupied no more space in their minds than on their paper. In their ideas I see only luminous points surrounded by darkness,—no vibration, nothing that moves freely in a space larger than itself.

348.

In the minds of some authors there is neither grouping, nor drapery, nor outline. Their books present a plane surface over which the words roll.

349.

In the process of composition one hardly knows just what one wishes to say until one has said it. The word, indeed, completes the idea, gives it existence, and brings it to light,—*in lucem prodit.*

350.

The end of a book should always call to mind its beginning.

351.

The last word should be the last word. It is like a finishing touch given to colour; there is nothing more to add. But what precaution is needed in order not to put the last word first!

352.

All eloquence should have its rise in emotion; and all emotion naturally gives rise to eloquence.

353.

The orator is busied with his subject, the elocutionist with his *rôle;* one works, the other performs. The first is a person unfolding to us grand ideas; the second, a personage dealing in fine words.

354.

We can only persuade men as they wish. So, then, in order to dissuade them, all that has to be done is to lead them to believe that what they wish is not actually what they think they wish.

355.

A good literary judgment is a faculty that attains its full growth very slowly.

356.

History needs distance, perspective. Facts and events which are too well attested, cease, in some sort, to be malleable.

357.

The comic element is derived from the serious side of the actor; the pathetic element from the patience or repose of the personage who claims our sympathy.

There is, therefore, no true comedy where there is no gravity, and no pathos without moderation. He who provokes laughter must forget that he is laughable; and he who weeps must either be unaware of his tears or restrain them.

358.

The pleasure of comedy lies in laughter; that of tragedy in tears. But the laughter must be agreeable, and the tears comely, if they are to honour the poet. In other words, tragedy and comedy must make us laugh and weep decently. Nothing that forces a laugh or compels a tear is commendable.

359.

Comedy should abstain from exhibiting what is odious.

360.

In order to be dramatically noble, the man stricken by misfortune should have suffered long. Such was Œdipus. We must discover in his features the destiny that awaits him; just as we foresee the sacrifice in the very arrangement of the flowers that crown the victim. Niobe should retain the trace, and, as it were, the beauty, of her past happiness.

361.

It does not suffice so to write as to catch and hold the reader's attention : it has also to be satisfied.

362.

In all kinds of works of taste and of genius the form is the essential part ; the substance is only an accessory.

363.

That cannot be called polite literature which affords no pleasure, and is ill at ease. Criticism, even, should not be without its charms. When quite devoid of all amenities it is no longer literary.

364.

Critical hacks cannot recognize and appreciate rough diamonds and gold in bars. They are shop-keepers, and their literary knowledge does not extend beyond current coin. Their criticism has its weights and scales, but it has neither crucible nor test.

365.

Certain critics resemble pretty nearly those people who whenever they would laugh show ugly teeth.

366.

Taste is the literary conscience of the soul.

367.

How many people have a good ear for literature but sing out of tune!

368.

When a nation gives birth to a man who is able to produce a great thought, another is born who is able to understand and admire it.

369.

When we call to mind a beautiful verse, or apt remark, or well-turned phrase, we see it before us, and the eye seems to follow it in space. But a commonplace passage does not detach itself from the book in which we have read it, and it is there that the memory sees it when cited.

370.

That which astonishes, astonishes once; but whatever is admirable becomes more and more admired.

371.

Perfection fully satisfies at the first glance; but it always leaves some beauty, some delight, some merit, to discover.

372.

Beautiful works do not intoxicate; but they enchant.

373.

It is not the opinions of authors and what in their teaching may be termed assertions, that instruct and nourish the mind. There is, in reading great authors, an invisible and hidden essence—a nameless something, a fluid, a salt, a subtle principle—which is more nourishing than all the rest.

374.

In order to read with fruit, the attention must be rendered so firm that it sees ideas just as the eye sees bodies.

375.

Few books can please us throughout life. For some we lose all liking as we grow in age, wisdom, or good sense.

376.

Mediocrity is excellent to the eyes of mediocre people.

377.

"It is thine to admire, not to know." Such a lot is a still greater happiness than that of the man who can at once know and admire. A knowledge that excludes admiration is a bad knowledge; it substitutes memory for sight, and inverts everything. He who becomes so purely an anatomist that he ceases to be a man, sees in the noblest stride or the most graceful step but a play of the muscles, like some organ-builder who, in listening to the sweetest music, should hear but the rattle of the key-board.

378.

The mind naturally abstains from judging what it does not understand. Vanity urges it to pass an opinion when otherwise it would keep silence.

379.

Fully to understand a grand and beautiful thought requires, perhaps, as much time as to conceive it.

380.

There is nothing in the world worse than an indifferent book that has all the appearance of excellence.

381.

Really learned men and true poets become such more through pleasure than through labour. Their studies are urged and checked, not by their ambition, but by their genius.

382.

The productions of some minds do not come from their own soil, but from the dressing with which it has been covered.

383.

National literature begins with fables and ends with novels.

384.

It is not enough for a book to be good; it must be the work of a good author. We must see in it not only its own beauties, but also the excellence of the master's hand. It is always the idea of the workman

that causes admiration. The traces of his work, the impression of his special skill, give the book, when in other respects carefully finished, an additional attraction. Talent ought so to treat whatever it handles, and so to place its works before us, that it may be able, without affectation, to reflect itself in them: *Simul denique eluceant opus et artifex.*

385.

Prodigality of words and thoughts betrays a foolish mind. It is not abundance, but excellence, that makes a style rich. Literary economy marks the great writer. Without good order and sobriety there is no wisdom; and where there is no wisdom there is no grandeur.

386.

Beware of expatiating too much upon what is quite clear. Those useless and interminable explanations do but present the uniform whiteness of a long wall, and are no less wearisome. A man is not an architect because he has built a great wall; and a man may write a big book without being an author. To write a book is one thing, to write a "work" another. A "work" is the product of art; but a

book can be made with ink and paper. A "work" may be completed in two pages, and ten folio volumes may embrace nothing but a book.

387.

Excel, and you will live!

LITERARY JUDGMENTS

388.

LOOK in Plato for forms and ideas only. These are what he himself sought. In him there is more light than objects, more form than matter. We must inhale his spirit, rather than feed upon his substance.

389.

When Plato's dialectic flags, it is revived by the spirit of poetry that pervades it.

390.

Aristotle placed the dialogues of Plato among epic poems. He was right; and Marmontel, who differs from him, mistook the nature and character of the dialogues, and misunderstood Aristotle.

391.

Plato, Xenophon, and the other writers of the school of Socrates, have the flight of birds. They

make long and wide circuits; they sweep round and round the spot upon which they intend to rest, keeping it constantly in view, until, at last, they alight. In picturing to one's-self the course of those birds that delight in winging their way upward and downward, wheeling and hovering in their flight, an idea may be formed of what I have called the *evolutions* of the thought and style of the writers of the Socratic school.

392.

Aristotle revised all the rules, and, in every science, added new truths to the known truths. His book is an ocean of doctrines, and may be regarded as the encyclopædia of antiquity. Knowledge flowed from him as from a fountain-head to succeeding ages. If all other books were to disappear and his writings chanced to be preserved, the human intellect would suffer no irreparable loss, except that of Plato.

393.

Homer wrote to be sung, Sophocles to be declaimed, Herodotus to be recited, and Xenophon to be read. From these different destinies of their works, there sprang, necessarily, a multitude of differences in their style.

394.

Xenophon wrote with a swan's quill, Plato with pen of gold, and Thucydides with a brazen stylus.

395.

It would seem that Ennius wrote late in life; Sallust, rarely; Pliny the Younger, early and often; Thucydides, late and rarely.

396.

Terence was an African; and yet he seems to have been brought up by the Athenian graces. Attic honey is on his lips: one might readily believe his birthplace to have been Mount Hymettus.

397.

In philosophy, Cicero is a sort of moon. The light of his teaching is very soft, but it is a borrowed light, an altogether Greek light, that the Roman writer has toned down and weakened.

398.

Cicero's erudition displays more taste and discernment than true criticism.

399.

There are a thousand ways of preparing and seasoning language. Cicero loved them all.

400.

Horace pleases the intellect, but he does not charm the taste. Virgil satisfies the taste no less than the reflective faculty. It is as delightful to remember his verses as to read them.

401.

In Horace there is not an expression, hardly, so to say, a word, that Virgil would have used, so different are their styles.

402.

I regard the "Lives of Illustrious Men" as one of the most precious monuments antiquity has left us. There we have placed before us the noblest specimens of humanity, and the example of the best deeds men have wrought. All ancient wisdom is to be found there. For the author I have not the same esteem as for his compilation. He had a thousand praiseworthy qualities (he who would neither have his old slaves sold nor the animals that had been injured in his

service); but we cannot commend the timidity which allowed him to hesitate between the opinions of the philosophers without having the courage either to oppose or to support them, and which gives him that respect for all celebrated men which is due only to the just and virtuous. He sheds a gentle light even upon crime.

403.

The style of Tacitus, although less beautiful, less rich in agreeable colouring and variety of expression than that of Cicero, is, perhaps, the more perfect of the two; for all his words are carefully treated, they have their exact weight and measure and number. Now, whatever is supremely perfect is perfect as a whole, and perfect in its parts.

404.

We must not look in Tacitus for the orator and the writer only, but for the painter,—the inimitable painter of deeds and thoughts.

405.

The style of Saint Jerome shines like ebony.

406.

Most of the *pensées* of Pascal upon laws, manners, and customs, are Montaigne's *pensées* remodelled.

407.

Behind the thoughts of Pascal we see the attitude of that firm and passionless intellect. This it is that makes him so imposing.

408.

Nicole is a Pascal without style. It is not what he says, but what he thinks, that is sublime: he is not sublime through the natural elevation of his mind, but through that of his doctrines. We must not look in them for form, but for matter; and this is exquisite. In reading him there must be a practical aim.

409.

Fénelon can pray, but he cannot instruct. As a philosopher he is almost divine, and as a theologian almost ignorant.

410.

M. de Beausset expresses himself charmingly when he says of Fénelon: "He loved men better than he

knew them." It is impossible to praise more wittily what one blames, impossible better so to blame as to commend.

411.

The plan of Massillon's sermons is insignificant; but their bas-reliefs are superb.

412.

Bacon applied his imagination to physical science, as Plato had applied his to metaphysics. Bacon was as resolute and daring in establishing conjectures and in evoking experience as Plato was magnificent in displaying his hypotheses. Plato, however, gives his ideas *as* ideas; but Bacon gives his as facts, and so leads us farther astray in physics than does the Athenian in metaphysics. Witness his "History of Life and Death." Both were, nevertheless, grand and noble intellects. Each of them opened a great path in literature, Bacon with a light and firm stride, Plato with wide-spread wings.

413.

In the system of Descartes, everything is so closely packed that thought itself cannot find light and space. One is always tempted to call out, like people in the pit of a theatre, "Air, air! We are being stifled!"

414.

Locke's book is imperfect. The subject is not there in its entirety, because the author's mind had not fully grasped it beforehand. He devotes himself to little clusters of details which he divides and subdivides *ad infinitum*. He quits the trunk for the limbs; and so his work displays too much ramification.

415.

Locke almost always shows himself to be an inventive logician, but a bad metaphysician, an anti-metaphysician. Not only was he no metaphysician, but he was devoid of the metaphysical faculty. He was a good questioner, and groped his way well; but he lacked light. He was a blind man who made excellent use of his stick.

416.

Malebranche devised a method by which to avoid errors, and he is constantly falling into them himself. One might say of him, adopting his own way of speaking, that his understanding had injured his imagination. Busied upon the truths of his much loved natural science, he is determined to make it the basis of his ethics. All his explanations are

those of a materialist, although his sentiments and doctrines were opposed to materialism.

417.

Malebranche seems to me to have understood the human brain better than the human mind.

418.

Leibnitz did not dwell long enough upon the truths he discovered. He passed on too soon and too fast in his search for new truths. He had the easy flight that enables one to observe from a distance, but which prevents close inspection.

419.

Condillac abounds in half truths; so that the mind can neither refuse to listen to him nor give him its entire attention. It is just this that makes him wearisome. He makes one feel ill at ease, and worried. Thought seems, with him, always placed in a false position.

420.

Kant seems to have made for himself an irksome language. And as it was irksome to him to construct,

it is no less so to listen to. Hence, no doubt, it comes that he has often taken his *modus operandi* for the matter itself. He thought he was constructing ideas when he was only putting together words. His phrases and conclusions have something about them so opaque that he could hardly fail to believe there was something solid in them. They deceive him more than we are deceived by our transparent frivolities. He suggests an inquiry *into the errors the mind imposes upon itself as a consequence of the nature of the language it uses.*

421.

Balzac, one of our greatest writers, and in the order of time the first among the good, is useful to read and meditate, and excellent to admire. His defects and his qualities are equally calculated to instruct and guide. He often oversteps the mark, but he leads to it: the reader has but to halt there, although the author may be speeding too far.

422.

The lively phraseology of Montesquieu was the result of long meditation. His words, as light as wings, bear on them grave reflections.

423.

Voltaire retained throughout the whole of his life, in his intercourse with the world, and in business transactions, the deep impression he had received from the minds of his first teachers. With the impetuosity of a poet, and the polish of a courtier, he could be as cunning and insinuating as a Jesuit. No one ever observed more carefully, and with more art and calculation, the famous maxim he has so often laughed at, *Be all things to all men.* He was even more eager to please than to domineer, and found more pleasure in the play of his seductions than of his power. He was especially careful to keep on good terms with literary men, and only treated as enemies those whom he had not been able to win over.

424.

Voltaire's judgment was correct, his imagination rich, his intellect active, his taste keen, and his moral sense ruined.

425.

It is impossible for Voltaire to satisfy, and impossible for him not to please.

426.

Voltaire, like the ape, has charming movements and hideous features. One always sees at the end of a clever hand an ugly face.

427.

That oratorical authority of which the ancients speak, is pre-eminent in Bossuet; next to him in Pascal, in La Bruyère, in J. J. Rousseau: never in Voltaire.

428.

The style of Rousseau makes an impression upon the soul that may be compared to the touch of a beautiful woman. There is something of the woman in his style.

429.

D'Alembert's style reminds one of drawings of geometrical figures.

430.

Diderot and the philosophers of his school drew their learning from their heads, and their reasoning from their passions or their humour.

431.

Condorcet, it is true, utters nothing but commonplaces. But he delivers himself of them as if he had thought them out carefully; and it is just this that distinguishes him.

432.

In the style of Bernardin de Saint Pierre there is a prism that wearies the eye. When we have been reading him long, we are delighted to see the grass and trees less highly coloured than in his writings. His "Harmonies" make us love the discords he has banished from the earth, and which are to be found at every step. His music is, it is true, to be found in nature; but fortunately it is rare. If the real world offered such melodies as these gentlemen discover everywhere, we should live in a state of ecstatic languor, and drowse ourselves to death.

433.

For thirty years Petrarch adored not the person but the image of Laura. So much easier is it to preserve our sentiments and ideas than our sensations! Hence the fidelity of the knights of old.

434.

The tales of Boccaccio lack the *dic mihi, musa.* He adds nothing to what he has been told, and his inventions are never extended beyond the area traced by his memory. His narrative ends where the popular story ends; he respects it as he would respect truth itself.

435.

Tasso's art shows the profound thinker; and would be doing good service to literature to examine his prose works and his literary principles. The thinker shows himself, moreover, in his verses: their form is sententious. His poetical style does not resemble so much that of the old poets as of the old sages.

436.

There is in the letters of Voiture this inconvenience, that we see in them his mask rather than his face. This makes them at first all the more amusing, but it renders their interest far less lasting. Very agreeable and very clever he certainly is, but he bears some resemblance to those portraits which wear an eternal smile.

437.

Racine and Boileau are not fountain-heads. Their merit lies in the judgment with which they choose their words. Their books are the imitations of books; their souls imitate souls. Racine is the Virgil of the unlettered.

438.

Molière is coolly comic. He provokes laughter without joining in it. Herein lies his excellence.

INDEX

INDEX