

THOUGHTS FROM MONTAIGNE

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Thoughts from Montaigne by Michel de Montaigne & Constance Countess De La Warr

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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE & CONSTANCE COUNTESS DE LA WARR

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FROM € € €
MONTAIGNE**



Michel de Montaigne.

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THOUGHTS
FROM
MONTAIGNE
SELECTED BY
CONSTANCE COUNTESS
DE LA WARR WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND A
BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY



FOREWORD BY
EGERTON CASTLE



MCMV. • L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY • BOSTON

FOREWORD

IT has, nowadays, become a fashion in ^{Fore-}publishing to introduce the greater ^{word} and some of the lesser men of the past to the present world through the medium of a sort of gentleman-usher or literary groom-of-the-chamber, who shall inform the reader of their exact title to consideration. In the case of the lesser men, the small fry of letters, the office is useful. Nay, the reading public will often put up with the society of a comparatively dull fellow for the sake of the attributes of an elegant and witty attendant. Again, it may be a pretty courtesy enough in the case of a shy daughter of the moorlands, such as Charlotte Brontë, or of a modest, unassertive maiden lady, such as Jane Austen ; but the giants, one would think, might well be left to pursue their way unaided. It seems, however, as if even so familiar a genius as a Scott, a Thackeray, or a Dickens cannot make a friendly call in a new coat but he must be pre-

Fore-sented afresh by some busy chamberlain
word of the pen.

And here am I, asked to introduce a man whom three centuries have pronounced one of the very best companions in the world, . . . What a sentence of humorous moralising might not the situation have suggested to that genial exponent of the everlasting discrepancies of life's circumstances !

What, indeed, can the literary herald most enamoured of his office proclaim, now, of Montaigne, that will not sound brazen impudence? Who wants to be taught to love the man or to taste the philosopher; to know him deliciously human, yet incomparably far-seeing?

I vow I find myself—to change the simile—induced into an office as futile, perhaps as irritating, as that of the watchman of old braying to a world that has eyes to see and ears to hear, that the moon shines overhead and the church clock has struck the hour.

But when a lady asks, it is our misfortune—it is our privilege—to be unable to say nay. And, stay; here do I perceive a graceful retreat. I am not after all the blatant crier-up of a great man, entrapping the listener into the tedium of
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a twice-told tale : I am (infinitely more Fore-
word gracious situation) usher to a fair admirer of the kindly Renaissance sage—sage and kindly in a day when benevolent wisdom was little known.

It is she who introduces him here—I but give her my hand across the threshold. With the generosity of her sex, she forgives him his poor opinion of it : indeed, after woman's pretty way of forgiving, she will not admit the offence. And she would fain that others should know and love him as she does, fain bring this "classic" within reach even of sister-students as yet too young to reach the shelf where stands, in many volumes, the entire wisdom of Montaigne.

EGERTON CASTLE.

September 1904.

