

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

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Thoughts from Montaigne. Selected By Constance Countess de la Warr, With an Introduction and a Biographical Study by Michel de Montaigne

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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

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**FOREWORD BY
EGERTON CASTLE**



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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-

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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.

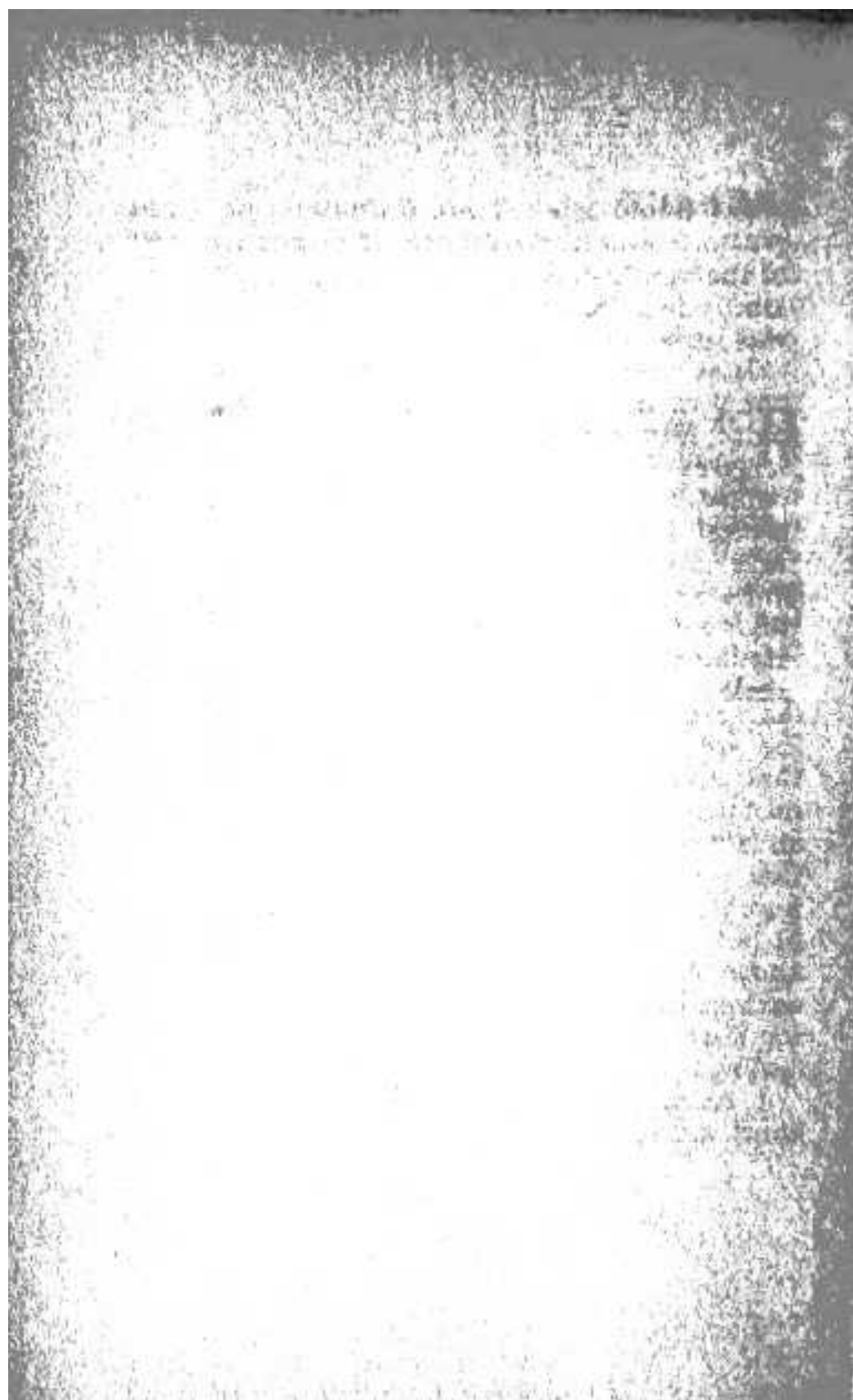
But when a lady asks, it is our misfortune—it is our privilege—to be unable to say nay. And, stay; here do I perceive a graceful retreat. I am not after all the blatant crier-up of a great man, entrapping the listener into the tedium of
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a twice-told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



PREFACE

MONTAIGNE, the great essayist and Preface
philosopher, is comparatively so little known, so seldom studied, by the English reading public, that I have interested myself in selecting and translating extracts from his work which strike me as giving the truest insight into the character and feelings of that wonderful man.

Knowing that many people have been deterred from a study of Montaigne by the voluminous character of his essays, that others have been alarmed by the mistaken idea that his teachings are of an atheistical character, it seems to me that this little work may have its use. I humbly offer it to the public. May it inspire in those who read it a desire to know Montaigne in his entirety—may such as have been led to distrust him see for themselves how unfounded is such a feeling!

I have prefaced the extracts with a short account of his career; also with a