



The Complete Essays and Letters, Revised Edition (With Active Table of Contents)

Michel de Montaigne

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ESSAYS:

This book of Montaigne the world has endorsed, by translating it into all tongues, and printing seventy-five editions of it in Europe; and that, too, a circulation somewhat chosen, namely, among courtiers, soldiers, princes, men of the world, and men of wit and generosity.

LETTERS:

The five-and-thirty letters here given (inclusively of the Memorial of 1583) represent all that are known to exist. In 1842 only ten appear to have been recovered. The earlier letters are generally signed Michel de Montaigne, although in 1568 the Essayist had already succeeded to the family estates. The later letters bear the signature Montaigne. The object in printing this correspondence was in principal measure to illustrate the active and practical side of the character of the writer. It is to be predicated of the composition, orthography, and punctuation that they betray a tendency to haste and a negligent and incompact arrangement of sentences, as well as an indifference to the choice of expressions. We perceive that the letter to du Prat had been preceded by at least one other. But the family has not preserved it or them. It should be added that the latest French Variorum gives only thirty letters, and that search has been unsuccessfully made in many probable directions, here and abroad, for others evidently once in existence. In the 39th chapter of the First Book of the Essays, Montaigne has entered at considerable length into the art of letter-writing and into his views on some of the aspects of the question, and we need not wonder or complain that the practical statesman and the philosophical theorist are not always unanimous or consistent.



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