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# Of Benefits

Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Translated by Sir Roger L'Estrange

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# Introduction

Of Benefits, in the form presented here, is Sir Roger L'Estrange's seventeenth-century English compilation of Seneca's teaching about giving, receiving, gratitude and ingratitude. It was published in 1678 within Seneca's *Morals by Way of Abstract*. Its twenty chapters condense and rearrange ideas drawn principally from Seneca's seven-book Latin work *De Beneficiis*. It should therefore be read as a historical Senecan compilation rather than as a complete, book-for-book translation of the ancient treatise.

The word benefit has a broader meaning here than a financial advantage. It refers to a voluntary good office performed for another person: assistance, protection, counsel, education, forgiveness, opportunity or any other act by which one person deliberately promotes another's welfare. For Seneca, these exchanges are central to social life. Families, friendships, communities and political relationships depend upon people being willing to help without reducing every act to a commercial bargain.

The opening chapters distinguish the outward object from the benefit itself. Money, property or influence may carry an act, but they do not determine its moral worth. The true benefit lies in the giver's benevolent intention, practical judgement and manner of giving. A modest gift offered at the right moment and with sincere concern may be more valuable than a costly gift bestowed carelessly, proudly or for advantage.

Judgement matters because generosity can be misdirected. One must consider what is useful, to whom it is suited, when it should be given and whether it will assist virtue or encourage harm. Seneca does not praise indiscriminate giving. Goodwill must be joined to attention, proportion and knowledge of the recipient. The giver should neither humiliate the receiver nor make an exhibition of generosity.

This emphasis upon intention also changes how benefits are measured. Their value cannot be calculated simply by price. The giver's circumstances, effort and risk matter, as do the receiver's need and the consequences of the act. A person with little may give greatly; someone with immense wealth may give very little in moral terms. Because circumstances differ, gratitude cannot be governed by the arithmetic of exchange.

Several chapters challenge rigid social hierarchy. A son may surpass the benefit of birth by preserving or ennobling a parent's life. A servant may benefit a master when courage, loyalty or sacrifice goes beyond required service. L'Estrange's examples retain the unequal institutions of the ancient and early modern worlds, yet

the philosophical principle is significant: moral agency belongs to the person, not to rank. Character can reverse the apparent direction of obligation.

The work repeatedly warns benefactors against hidden aims. A gift given for profit, reputation, control or future repayment is closer to an investment than a benefit. The giver should choose well, act willingly and then release possession of the deed. Repeated reminders, public claims and reproaches corrupt generosity by converting gratitude into enforced debt.

The receiver nevertheless has serious responsibilities. A benefit should be accepted with warmth, remembered accurately and acknowledged without delay. Gratitude begins in the disposition of the mind, even before an equal return is possible. To receive grudgingly, pretend not to notice or postpone thanks in order to avoid obligation is already a moral failure.

Repayment does not require reproducing the same material value. Sometimes loyalty, testimony, service or sincere readiness to help is the fitting return. A grateful person may remain materially unable to repay yet possess the virtue of gratitude. Conversely, someone may discharge an outward debt while retaining an unwilling and resentful mind. Seneca is interested in the relationship of goodwill, not merely the settlement of accounts.

The later chapters distinguish gratitude from flattering, fashionable or self-interested displays. People often thank wealth and status rather than character, pursue those who can confer further advantages and neglect quiet benefactors. True gratitude remains attached to the original goodwill even when fortune changes and no further reward can be expected.

Ingratitude is treated as widespread and destructive, but Seneca resists turning it into a legal offence. Benefits vary too much in intention, context and value for courts to measure them justly. Legal enforcement would also destroy their voluntary character. If gratitude were produced by fear of punishment, it would cease to be a virtue.

The absence of legal enforcement places greater responsibility upon character. Benefactors must accept the risk of disappointment without allowing one ungrateful person to end all generosity. Receivers must judge themselves where no external tribunal can compel an honest return. Social trust survives through freely chosen fidelity rather than constant contracts and threats.

Of Benefits finally presents generosity as a practice of freedom. The giver is free from calculation and possessiveness; the receiver is free from denial and resentment; both participate in a continuing circulation of goodwill. The work asks not only what people exchange, but what kind of people they become through giving and receiving.

# I.

## OF BENEFITS IN GENERAL.

It is, perhaps, one of the most pernicious errors of a rash and inconsiderate life, the common ignorance of the world in the matter of exchanging benefits. And this arises from a mistake, partly in the person that we would oblige, and partly in the thing itself. To begin with the latter: "A benefit is a good office, done with intention and judgment;" that is to say, with a due regard to all the circumstances of what, how, why, when, where, to whom, how much, and the like; or otherwise: "It is a voluntary and benevolent action that delights the giver in the comfort it brings to the receiver." It will be hard to draw this subject, either into method or compass: the one, because of the infinite variety and complication of cases; the other, by reason of the large extent of it: for the whole business (almost) of mankind in society falls under this head; the duties of kings and subjects, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, natives and strangers, high and low, rich and poor, strong and weak, friends and enemies.

The very meditation of it breeds good blood and generous thoughts; and instructs us in honor, humanity, friendship, piety, gratitude, prudence, and justice. In short, the art and skill of conferring benefits is, of all human duties, the most absolutely necessary to the well-being, both of reasonable nature, and of every individual; as the very cement of all communities, and the blessing of particulars. He that does good to another man does good also to himself; not only in the consequence, but in the very act of doing it; for the conscience of well-doing is an ample reward. Of benefits in general, there are several sorts; as necessary, profitable, and delightful. Some things there are, without which we cannot live; others without which we ought not to live; and some, again, without which we will not live.

In the first rank are those which deliver us from capital dangers, or apprehensions of death: and the favor is rated according to the hazard; for the greater the extremity, the greater seems the obligation. The next is a case wherein we may indeed live, but we had better die; as in the question of liberty, modesty, and a good conscience. In the third place, follow those things which custom, use, affinity, and acquaintance, have made dear to us; as husbands, wives, children, friends, etc., which an honest man will preserve at his utmost peril. Of things profitable there is a large field, as money, honor, etc., to which might be added, matters of superfluity and pleasure. But we shall open a way to the circumstances of a benefit by some previous and more general deliberations upon the thing itself.

## II.

### SEVERAL SORTS OF BENEFITS.

We shall divide benefits into absolute and vulgar; the one appertaining to good life, the other is only matter of commerce. The former are the more excellent, because they can never be made void; whereas all material benefits are tossed back and forward, and change their master. There are some offices that look like benefits, but are only desirable conveniences, as wealth, etc., and these a wicked man may receive from a good, or a good man from an evil. Others, again, that bear the face of injuries, which are only benefits ill taken; as cutting, lancing, burning, under the hand of a surgeon. The greatest benefits of all are those of good education, which we receive from our parents, either in the state of ignorance or perverseness; as, their care and tenderness in our infancy; their discipline in our childhood, to keep us to our duties by fear; and, if fair means will not do, their proceeding afterwards to severity and punishment, without which we should never have come to good.

There are matters of great value, many times, that are but of small price; as instructions from a tutor, medicine from a physician, etc. And there are small matters again, which are of great consideration to us: the gift is small, and the consequence great; as a cup of cold water in a time of need may save a man's life. Some things are of great moment to the giver, others to the receiver: one man gives me a house; another snatches me out when it is falling upon my head; one gives me an estate; another takes me out of the fire, or casts me out a rope when I am sinking. Some good offices we do to friends, others to strangers; but those are the noblest that we do without pre-desert. There is an obligation of bounty, and an obligation of charity; this in case of necessity, and that in point of convenience.

Some benefits are common, others are personal; as if a prince (out of pure grace) grant a privilege to a city, the obligation lies upon the community, and only upon every individual as a part of the whole; but if it be done particularly for my sake, then am I singly the debtor for it. The cherishing of strangers is one of the duties of hospitality, and exercises itself in the relief and protection of the distressed. There are benefits of good counsel, reputation, life, fortune, liberty, health, nay, and of superfluity and pleasure. One man obliges me out of his pocket; another gives me matter of ornament and curiosity; a third, consolation. To say nothing of negative benefits; for there are that reckon it an obligation if they do a body no hurt; and place it to account, as if they saved a man, when they do not undo him.

To shut up all in one word; as benevolence is the most sociable of all virtues, so it is of the largest extent; for there is not any man, either so great or so little, but he is yet capable of giving and of receiving benefits.

### III.

#### A SON MAY OBLIGE HIS FATHER, AND A SERVANT HIS MASTER.

The question is (in the first place) whether it may not be possible for a father to owe more to a son, in other respects, than the son owes to his father for his being? That many sons are both greater and better than their fathers, there is no question; as there are many other things that derive their beings from others, which yet are far greater than their original. Is not the tree larger than the seed? the river than the fountain? The foundation of all things lies hid, and the superstructure obscures it. If I owe all to my father, because he gives me life, I may owe as much to a physician that saved his life; for if my father had not been cured, I had never been begotten: or, if I stand indebted for all that I am to my beginning, my acknowledgment must run back to the very original of all human beings.

My father gave me the benefit of life: which he had never done, if his father had not first given it to him. He gave me life, not knowing to whom; and when I was in a condition neither to feel death nor to fear it. That is the great benefit, to give life to one that knows how to use it, and that is capable of the apprehension of death. It is true, that without a father I could never have had a being; and so, without a nurse, that being had never been improved: but I do not therefore owe my virtue either to my nativity or to her that gave me suck. The generation of me was the last part of the benefit: for to live is common with brutes; but to live well is the main business; and that virtue is all my own, saving what I drew from my education.

It does not follow that the first benefit must be the greatest, because without the first the greatest could never have been. The father gives life to the son but once; but if the son save the father's life often, though he do but his duty, it is yet a greater benefit. And again, the benefit that a man receives is the greater, the more he needs it; but the living has more need of life than he that is not yet born; so that the father receives a greater benefit in the continuance of his life than the son in the beginning of it. What if a son deliver his father from the rack; or, which is more, lay himself down in his place? The giving of him a being was but the office of a father; a simple act, a benefit given at a venture: beside that, he had a participant in it, and a regard to his family.

He gave only a single life, and he received a happy one. My mother brought me into the world naked, exposed, and void of reason; but my reputation and my fortune are advanced by my virtue. Scipio (as yet in his minority) rescued his father in a battle with Hannibal, and afterward from the practices and persecution of a powerful faction; covering him with consulary honors, and the spoils of public enemies. He made himself as eminent for his moderation as for his piety and military knowledge: he was the defender and the establisher of his country: he left the empire without a

competitor, and made himself as well the ornament of Rome as the security of it: and did not Scipio, in all this, more than requite his father barely for begetting of him?

Whether did Anchises more for Æneas, in dandling the child in his arms; or Æneas for his father, when he carried him upon his back through the flames of Troy, and made his name famous to future ages among the founders of the Roman Empire? T. Manlius was the son of a sour and imperious father, who banished him his house as a blockhead, and a scandal to the family. This Manlius, hearing that his father's life was in question, and a day set for his trial, went to the tribune that was concerned in his cause, and discoursed with him about it: the tribune told him the appointed time, and withal (as an obligation upon the young man) that his cruelty to his son would be part of his accusation.

Manlius, upon this, takes the tribune aside, and presenting a poniard to his breast, "Swear," says he, "that you will let this cause fall, or you shall have this dagger in the heart of you; and now it is at your choice which way you will deliver my father." The tribune swore and kept his word, and made a fair report of the whole matter to the council. He that makes himself famous by his eloquence, justice, or arms, illustrates his extraction, let it be never so mean; and gives inestimable reputation to his parents. We should never have heard of Sophroniscus, but for his son Socrates; nor for Aristo and Gryllus, if it had not been for Xenophon and Plato. This is not to discountenance the veneration we owe to parents; nor to make children the worse, but the better; and to stir up generous emulations: for, in contests of good offices, both parties are happy; as well the vanquished as those that overcome.

It is the only honorable dispute that can arise betwixt a father and son, which of the two shall have the better of the other in the point of benefits. In the question betwixt a master and a servant, we must distinguish betwixt benefits, duties, and actions ministerial. By benefits, we understand those good offices that we receive from strangers, which are voluntary, and may be forborne without blame. Duties are the parts of a son and wife, and incumbent upon kindred and relations. Offices ministerial belong to the part of a servant. Now, since it is the mind, and not the condition of a person, that prints the value upon the benefit, a servant may oblige his master, and so may a subject his sovereign, or a common soldier his general, by doing more than he is expressly bound to do.

Some things there are, which the law neither commands nor forbids; and here the servant is free. It would be very hard for a servant to be chastised for doing less than his duty, and not thanked for it when he does more. His body, it is true, is his master's, but his mind is his own: and there are many commands which a servant ought no more to obey than a master to impose. There is no man so great, but he may both need the help and service, and stand in fear of the power and unkindness, even of the meanest of mortals. One servant kills his master; another saves him, nay, preserves his master's life, perhaps, with the loss of his own: he exposes himself to

torment and death; he stands firm against all threats and batteries: which is not only a benefit in a servant, but much the greater for his being so.

When Domitius was besieged in Corfinium, and the place brought to great extremity, he pressed his servant so earnestly to poison him, that at last he was prevailed upon to give him a potion; which, it seems, was an innocent opiate, and Domitius outlived it: Cæsar took the town, and gave Domitius his life, but it was his servant that gave it him first. There was another town besieged, and when it was upon the last pinch, two servants made their escape, and went over to the enemy: upon the Romans entering the town, and in the heat of the soldiers' fury, these two fellows ran directly home, took their mistress out of her house, and drove her before them, telling every body how barbarously she had used them formerly, and that they would now have their revenge; when they had her without the gates, they kept her close till the danger was over; by which means they gave their mistress her life, and she gave them their freedom.

This was not the action of a servile mind, to do so glorious a thing, under an appearance of so great a villainy; for if they had not passed for deserters and parricides, they could not have gained their end. With one instance more (and that a very brave one) I shall conclude this chapter. In the civil wars of Rome, a party coming to search for a person of quality that was proscribed, a servant put on his master's clothes, and delivered himself up to the soldiers as the master of the house; he was taken into custody, and put to death, without discovering the mistake. What could be more glorious, than for a servant to die for his master, in that age, when there were not many servants that would not betray their masters?

So generous a tenderness in a public cruelty; so invincible a faith in a general corruption; what could be more glorious, I say, than so exalted a virtue, as rather to choose death for the reward of his fidelity, than the greatest advantages he might otherwise have had for the violation of it?

## IV.

IT IS THE INTENTION, NOT THE MATTER, THAT MAKES THE BENEFIT.

The good-will of the benefactor is the fountain of all benefits; nay it is the benefit itself, or, at least, the stamp that makes it valuable and current. Some there are, I know, that take the matter for the benefit, and tax the obligation by weight and measure. When anything is given them, they presently cast it up; "What may such a house be worth? such an office? such an estate?" as if that were the benefit which is only the sign and mark of it: for the obligation rests in the mind, not in the matter; and all those advantages which we see, handle, or hold in actual possession by the courtesy of another, are but several modes or ways of explaining and putting the good-will in execution. There needs no great subtlety to prove, that both benefits and injuries receive their value from the intention, when even brutes themselves are able to decide this question.

Tread upon a dog by chance, or put him to pain upon the dressing of a wound; the one he passes by as an accident; and the other, in his fashion, he acknowledges as a kindness: but, offer to strike at him, though you do him no hurt at all, he flies yet in the face of you, even for the mischief that you barely meant him. It is further to be observed, that all benefits are good; and (like the distributions of Providence) made up of wisdom and bounty; whereas the gift itself is neither good nor bad, but may indifferently be applied, either to the one or to the other. The benefit is immortal, the gift perishable: for the benefit itself continues when we have no longer either the use or the matter of it. He that is dead was alive; he that has lost his eyes, did see; and, whatsoever is done, cannot be rendered undone.

My friend (for instance) is taken by pirates; I redeem him; and after that he falls into other pirates' hands; his obligation to me is the same still as if he had preserved his freedom. And so, if I save a man from any misfortune, and he falls into another; if I give him a sum of money, which is afterwards taken away by thieves; it comes to the same case. Fortune may deprive us of the matter of a benefit, but the benefit itself remains inviolable. If the benefit resided in the matter, that which is good for one man would be so for another; whereas many times the very same thing, given to several persons, work contrary effects, even to the difference of life or death; and that which is one body's cure proves another body's poison. Beside that, the timing of it alters the value; and a crust of bread, upon a pinch, is a greater present than an imperial crown.

What is more familiar than in a battle to shoot at an enemy and kill a friend? or, instead of a friend, to save an enemy? But yet this disappointment, in the event, does not at all operate upon the intention. What if a man cures me of a wen with a stroke that was designed to cut off my head? or, with a malicious blow upon my stomach,

breaks an imposthume? or, what if he saves my life with a draught that was prepared to poison me? The providence of the issue does not at all discharge the obliquity of the intent. And the same reason holds good even in religion itself.

It is not the incense, or the offering, that is acceptable to God, but the purity and devotion of the worshipper: neither is the bare will, without action, sufficient, that is, where we have the means of acting; for, in that case, it signifies as little to wish well, without well-doing, as to do good without willing it. There must be effect as well as intention, to make me owe a benefit; but, to will against it, does wholly discharge it. In fine, the conscience alone is the judge, both of benefits and injuries. It does not follow now, because the benefit rests in the good-will, that therefore the good-will should be always a benefit; for if it be not accompanied with government and discretion, those offices, which we call benefits, are but the works of passion, or of chance; and many times, the greatest of all injuries.

One man does me good by mistake; another ignorantly; a third upon force: but none of these cases do I take to be an obligation; for they were neither directed to me, nor was there any kindness of intention; we do not thank the seas for the advantages we receive by navigation; or the rivers with supplying us with fish and flowing of our grounds; we do not thank the trees either for their fruits or shades, or the winds for a fair gale; and what is the difference betwixt a reasonable creature that does not know and an inanimate that cannot? A good horse saves one man's life; a good suit of arms another's; and a man, perhaps, that never intended it, saves a third. Where is the difference now betwixt the obligation of one and of the other?

A man falls into a river, and the fright cures him of the ague; we may call this a kind of lucky mischance, but not a remedy. And so it is with the good we receive, either without, or beside, or contrary to intention. It is the mind, and not the event, that distinguishes a benefit from an injury.

## V.

THERE MUST BE JUDGMENT IN A BENEFIT, AS WELL AS MATTER AND INTENTION; AND ESPECIALLY IN THE CHOICE OF THE PERSON.

As it is the will that designs the benefit, and the matter that conveys it, so it is the judgment that perfects it; which depends upon so many critical niceties, that the least error, either in the person, the matter, the manner, the quality, the quantity, the time, or the place, spoils all. The consideration of the person is a main point: for we are to give by choice, and not by hazard. My inclination bids me oblige one man; I am bound in duty and justice to serve another; here it is a charity, there it is pity; and elsewhere, perhaps, encouragement. There are some that want, to whom I would not give; because, if I did, they would want still. To one man I would barely offer a benefit; but I would press it upon another.

To say the truth, we do not employ any more profit than that which we bestow; and it is not to our friends, our acquaintances or countrymen, nor to this or that condition of men, that we are to restrain our bounties; but wheresoever there is a man, there is a place and occasion for a benefit. We give to some that are good already; to others, in hope to make them so: but we must do all with discretion; for we are as well answerable for what we give as for what we receive; nay, the misplacing of a benefit is worse than the not receiving of it; for the one is another man's fault; but the other is mine. The error of the giver does oft-times excuse the ingratitude of the receiver: for a favor ill-placed is rather a profusion than a benefit.

It is the most shameful of losses, an inconsiderate bounty. I will choose a man of integrity, sincere, considerate, grateful, temperate, well-natured, neither covetous nor sordid: and when I have obliged such a man, though not worth a groat in the world, I have gained my end. If we give only to receive, we lose the fairest objects of our charity: the absent, the sick, the captive, and the needy. When we oblige those that can never pay us again in kind, as a stranger upon his last farewell, or a necessitous person upon his death-bed, we make Providence our debtor, and rejoice in the conscience even of a fruitless benefit.

So long as we are affected with passions, and distracted with hopes and fears, and (the most unmanly of vices) with our pleasures, we are incompetent judges where to place our bounties: but when death presents itself, and that we come to our last will and testament, we leave our fortunes to the most worthy. He that gives nothing, but in hopes of receiving, must die intestate. It is the honesty of another man's mind that moves the kindness of mine; and I would sooner oblige a grateful man than an ungrateful: but this shall not hinder me from doing good also to a person that is known to be ungrateful: only with this difference, that I will serve the one in all extremities with my life and fortune, and the other no farther than stands with my

convenience. But what shall I do, you will say, to know whether a man will be grateful or not?

I will follow probability, and hope the best. He that sows is not sure to reap; nor the seaman to reach his port; nor the soldier to win the field: he that weds is not sure his wife shall be honest, or his children dutiful: but shall we therefore neither sow, sail, bear arms, nor marry? Nay, if I knew a man to be incurably thankless, I would yet be so kind as to put him in his way, or let him light a candle at mine, or draw water at my well; which may stand him perhaps in great stead, and yet not be reckoned as a benefit from me; for I do it carelessly, and not for his sake, but my own; as an office of humanity, without any choice or kindness.

# VI.

## THE MATTER OF OBLIGATIONS, WITH ITS CIRCUMSTANCES.

Next to the choice of the person follows that of the matter; wherein a regard must be had to time, place, proportion, quality; and to the very nicks of opportunity and humor. One man values his peace above his honor, another his honor above his safety; and not a few there are that (provided they may save their bodies) never care what becomes of their souls. So that good offices depend much upon construction. Some take themselves to be obliged, when they are not; others will not believe it, when they are; and some again take obligations and injuries, the one for the other. For our better direction, let it be noted, "That a benefit is a common tie betwixt the giver and receiver, with respect to both:" wherefore it must be accommodated to the rules of discretion; for all things have their bounds and measures, and so must liberality among the rest; that it be neither too much for the one nor too little for the other; the excess being every jot as bad as the defect.

Alexander bestowed a city upon one of his favorites; who modestly excusing himself, "That it was too much for him to receive." "Well, but," says Alexander, "it is not too much for me to give." A haughty certainly, and an imprudent speech; for that which was not fit for the one to take could not be fit for the other to give. It passes in the world for greatness of mind to be perpetually giving and loading of people with bounties; but it is one thing to know how to give, and another thing not to know how to keep. Give me a heart that is easy and open, but I will have no holes in it; let it be bountiful with judgment, but I will have nothing run out of it I know not how. How much greater was he that refused the city than the other that offered it?

Some men throw away their money as if they were angry with it, which is the error commonly of weak minds and large fortunes. No man esteems of anything that comes to him by chance; but when it is governed by reason, it brings credit both to the giver and receiver; whereas those favors are, in some sort, scandalous, that make a man ashamed of his patron. It is a matter of great prudence, for the benefactor to suit the benefit to the condition of the receiver: who must be either his superior, his inferior, or his equal; and that which would be the highest obligation imaginable to the one, would perhaps be as great a mockery and affront to the other; as a plate of broken meat (for the purpose) to a rich man were an indignity, which to a poor man is a charity.

The benefits of princes and of great men, are honors, offices, monies, profitable commissions, countenance, and protection: the poor man has nothing to present but good-will, good advice, faith, industry, the service and hazard of his person, an early apple, peradventure, or some other cheap curiosity: equals indeed may correspond in kind; but whatsoever the present be, or to whomsoever we offer it, this general

rule must be observed, that we always design the good and satisfaction of the receiver, and never grant anything to his detriment. It is not for a man to say, I was overcome by importunity; for when the fever is off, we detest the man that was prevailed upon to our destruction. I will no more undo a man with his will, than forbear saving him against it. It is a benefit in some cases to grant, and in others to deny; so that we are rather to consider the advantage than the desire of the petitioner.

For we may in a passion earnestly beg for (and take it ill to be denied too) that very thing, which, upon second thoughts, we may come to curse, as the occasion of a most pernicious bounty. Never give anything that shall turn to mischief, infamy, or shame. I will consider another man's want or safety; but so as not to forget my own; unless in the case of a very excellent person, and then I shall not much heed what becomes of myself. There is no giving of water to a man in a fever; or putting a sword into a madman's hand. He that lends a man money to carry him to a bawdy-house, or a weapon for his revenge, makes himself a partaker of his crime.

He that would make an acceptable present, will pitch upon something that is desired, sought for, and hard to be found; that which he sees nowhere else, and which few have; or at least not in that place or season; something that may be always in his eye, and mind him of his benefactor. If it be lasting and durable, so much the better; as plate, rather than money; statues than apparel; for it will serve as a monitor to mind the receiver of the obligation, which the presenter cannot so handsomely do. However, let it not be improper, as arms to a woman, books to a clown, toys to a philosopher: I will not give to any man that which he cannot receive, as if I threw a ball to a man without hands; but I will make a return, though he cannot receive it; for my business is not to oblige him, but to free myself: nor anything that may reproach a man of his vice or infirmity; as false dice to a cheat; spectacles to a man that is blind.

Let it not be unseasonable neither; as a furred gown in summer, an umbrella in winter. It enhances the value of the present, if it was never given to him by anybody else, nor by me to any other; for that which we give to everybody is welcome to nobody. The particularity does much, but yet the same thing may receive a different estimate from several persons; for there are ways of marking and recommending it in such a manner, that if the same good office be done to twenty people, every one of them shall reckon himself peculiarly obliged as a cunning whore, if she has a thousand sweethearts, will persuade every one of them she loves him best. But this is rather the artifice of conversation than the virtue of it. The citizens of Megara send ambassadors to Alexander in the height of his glory, to offer him, as a compliment, the freedom of their city.

Upon Alexander's smiling at the proposal, they told him, that it was a present which they had never made but to Hercules and himself. Whereupon Alexander treated

them kindly, and accepted of it; not for the presenters' sake, but because they had joined him with Hercules; now unreasonably soever; for Hercules conquered nothing for himself, but made his business to vindicate and to protect the miserable, without any private interest or design; but this intemperate young man (whose virtue was nothing else but a successful temerity) was trained up from his youth in the trade of violence; the common enemy of mankind, as well of his friends as of his foes, and one that valued himself upon being terrible to all mortals: never considering, that the dullest creatures are as dangerous and as dreadful, as the fiercest; for the poison of a toad, or the tooth of a snake, will do a man's business, as sure as the paw of a tiger.

## VII.

### THE MANNER OF OBLIGING.

There is not any benefit so glorious in itself, but it may yet be exceedingly sweetened and improved by the manner of conferring it. The virtue, I know, rests in the intent, the profit in the judicious application of the matter; but the beauty and ornament of an obligation lies in the manner of it; and it is then perfect when the dignity of the office is accompanied with all the charms and delicacies of humanity, good-nature, and address; and with dispatch too; for he that puts a man off from time to time, was never right at heart. In the first place, whatsoever we give, let us do it frankly: a kind benefactor makes a man happy as soon as he can, and as much as he can. There should be no delay in a benefit but the modesty of the receiver.

If we cannot foresee the request, let us, however, immediately grant it, and by no means suffer the repeating of it. It is so grievous a thing to say, I BEG; the very word puts a man out of countenance; and it is a double kindness to do the thing, and save an honest man the confusion of a blush. It comes too late that comes for the asking: for nothing costs us so dear as that we purchase with our prayers: it is all we give, even for heaven itself; and even there too, where our petitions are at the fairest, we choose rather to present them in secret ejaculations than by word of mouth. That is the lasting and the acceptable benefit that meets the receiver half-way. The rule is, we are to give, as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.

Nay, if there should be occasion for delay, let us, however, not seem to deliberate; for demurring is next door to denying; and so long as we suspend, so long are we unwilling. It is a court-humor to keep people upon the tenters; their injuries are quick and sudden, but their benefits are slow. Great ministers love to rack men with attendance, and account it an ostentation of their power to hold their suitors in hand, and to have many witnesses of their interest. A benefit should be made acceptable by all possible means, even to the end that the receiver, who is never to forget it, may bear it in his mind with satisfaction. There must be no mixture of sourness, severity, contumely, or reproof, with our obligations; nay, in case there should be any occasion for so much as an admonition, let it be referred to another time.

We are a great deal apter to remember injuries than benefits; and it is enough to forgive an obligation that has the nature of an offence. There are some that spoil a good office after it is done and others, in the very instant of doing it. There be so much entreaty and importunity; nay, if we do but suspect a petitioner, we put on a sour face; look another way; pretend haste, company, business; talk of other matters, and keep him off with artificial delays, let his necessities be never so

pressing; and when we are put to it at last, it comes so hard from us that it is rather extorted than obtained; and not so properly the giving of a bounty, as the quitting of a man's hold upon the tug, when another is too strong for him; so that this is but doing one kindness for me, and another for himself: he gives for his own quiet, after he has tormented me with difficulties and delays.

The manner of saying or of doing any thing, goes a great way in the value of the thing itself. It was well said of him that called a good office, that was done harshly, and with an ill will, a stony piece of bread; it is necessary for him that is hungry to receive it, but it almost chokes a man in the going down. There must be no pride, arrogance of looks, or tumor of words, in the bestowing of benefits; no insolence of behavior, but a modesty of mind, and a diligent care to catch at occasions and prevent necessities. A pause, an unkind tone, word, look, or action, destroys the grace of a courtesy. It corrupts a bounty, when it is accompanied with state, haughtiness, and elation of mind, in the giving of it. Some have a trick of shifting off a suitor with a point of wit, or a cavil.

As in the case of the Cynic that begged a talent of Antigonus: "That is too much," says he, "for a Cynic to ask;" and when he fell to a penny, "That is too little," says he, "for a prince to give." He might have found a way to have compounded this controversy, by giving him a penny as to a Cynic and a talent as from a prince. Whatsoever we bestow, let it be done with a frank and cheerful countenance: a man must not give with his hand, and deny with his looks. He that gives quickly, gives willingly. We are likewise to accompany good deeds with good words, and say, (for the purpose,) "Why should you make such a matter of this? why did not you come to me sooner? why would you make use of any body else?"

I take it ill that you should bring me a recommendation; pray let there be no more of this, but when you have occasion hereafter, come to me upon your own account." That is the glorious bounty, when the receiver can say to himself; "What a blessed day has this been to me! never was any thing done so generously, so tenderly, with so good a grace. What is it I would not do to serve this man? A thousand times as much another way could not have given me this satisfaction." In such a case, let the benefit be never so considerable, the manner of conferring it is yet the noblest part. Where there is harshness of language, countenance, or behavior, a man had better be without it. A flat denial is infinitely before a vexatious delay: as a quick death is a mercy, compared with a lingering torment.

But to be put to waitings and intercessions, after a promise is passed, is a cruelty intolerable. It is troublesome to stay long for a benefit, let it be never so great; and he that holds me needlessly in pain, loses two precious things, time, and the proof of friendship. Nay, the very hint of a man's want comes many times too late. "If I had money," said Socrates, "I would buy me a cloak." They that knew he wanted one

should have prevented the very intimation of that want. It is not the value of the present, but the benevolence of the mind, that we are to consider.

“He gave me but a little, but it was generously and frankly done; it was a little out of a little: he gave it me without asking; he pressed it upon me; he watched the opportunity of doing it, and took it as an obligation upon himself.” On the other side, many benefits are great in show, but little or nothing perhaps in effect, when they come hard, slow, or at unawares. That which is given with pride and ostentation, is rather an ambition than a bounty. Some favors are to be conferred in public, others in private. In public the rewards of great actions; as honors, charges, or whatsoever else gives a man reputation in the world; but the good offices we do for a man in want, distress, or under reproach, these should be known only to those that have the benefit of them.

Nay, not to them neither, if we can handsomely conceal it from whence the favor came; for the secrecy, in many cases, is a main part of the benefit. There was a good man that had a friend, who was both poor and sick, and ashamed to own his condition: he privately conveyed a bag of money under his pillow, that he might seem rather to find than receive it. Provided I know that I give it, no matter for his knowing from whence it comes that receives it. Many a man stands in need of help that has not the face to confess it: if the discovery may give offence, let it lie concealed; he that gives to be seen would never relieve a man in the dark.

It would be too tedious to run through all the niceties that may occur upon this subject; but, in two words, he must be a wise, a friendly, and a well-bred man, that perfectly acquits himself in the art and duty of obliging: for all his actions must be squared according to the measures of civility, good-nature and discretion.

## VIII.

### THE DIFFERENCE AND VALUE OF BENEFITS.

We have already spoken of benefits in general; the matter and the intention, together with the manner of conferring them. It follows now, in course, to say something of the value of them; which is rated, either by the good they do us, or by the inconvenience they save us, and has no other standard than that of a judicious regard to circumstance and occasion. Suppose I save a man from drowning, the advantage of life is all one to him, from what hand soever it comes, or by what means; but yet there may be a vast difference in the obligation. I may do it with hazard, or with security, with trouble, or with ease; willingly, or by compulsion; upon intercession, or without it: I may have a prospect of vain-glory or profit: I may do it in kindness to another, or an hundred by-ends to myself; and every point does exceedingly vary the case.

Two persons may part with the same sum of money, and yet not the same benefit: the one had it of his own, and it was but a little out of a great deal; the other borrowed it, and bestowed upon me that which he wanted for himself. Two boys were sent out to fetch a certain person to their master: the one of them hunts up and down, and comes home again weary, without finding him; the other falls to play with his companions at the wheel of Fortune, sees him by chance passing by, delivers him his errand, and brings him. He that found him by chance deserves to be punished; and he that sought for him, and missed him, to be rewarded for his good-will. In some cases we value the thing, in others the labor and attendance.

What can be more precious than good manners, good letters, life, and health? and yet we pay our physicians and tutors only for their service in the professions. If we buy things cheap, it matters not, so long as it is a bargain: it is no obligation from the seller, if nobody else will give him more for it. What would not a man give to be set ashore in a tempest? for a house in a wilderness? a shelter in a storm? a fire, or a bit of meat, when a man is pinched with hunger or cold? a defence against thieves, and a thousand other matters of moment, that cost but little? And yet we know that the skipper has but his freight for our passage; and the carpenters and bricklayers do their work by the day.

Those are many times the greatest obligations in truth, which in vulgar opinions are the smallest: as comfort to the sick, poor captives; good counsel, keeping of people from wickedness, etc. Wherefore we should reckon ourselves to owe most for the noblest benefits. If the physician adds care and friendship to the duty of his calling, and the tutor to the common method of his business, I am to esteem them as the nearest of my relations: for to watch with me, to be troubled for me, and to put off all other patients for my sake, is a particular kindness: and so it is in my tutor, if he

takes more pains with me than with the rest of my fellows. It is not enough, in this case, to pay the one his fees, and the other his salary; but I am indebted to them over and above for their friendship.

The meanest of mechanics, if he does his work with industry and care, it is an usual thing to cast in something by way of reward more than the bare agreement: and shall we deal worse with the preservers of our lives, and the reformers of our manners? He that gives me himself (if he be worth taking) gives the greatest benefit: and this is the present which Æschines, a poor disciple of Socrates, made to his master, and as a matter of great consideration: "Others may have given you much," says he, "but I am the only man that has left nothing to himself." "This gift," says Socrates, "you shall never repent of; for I will take care to return it better than I found it." So that a brave mind can never want matter for liberality in the meanest condition; for Nature has been so kind to us, that where we have nothing of Fortune's, we may bestow something of our own.

It falls out often, that a benefit is followed with an injury; let which will be foremost, it is with the latter as with one writing upon another; it does in a great measure hide the former, and keep it from appearing, but it does not quite take it away. We may in some cases divide them, and both requite the one, and revenge the other; or otherwise compare them, to know whether I am creditor or debtor. You have obliged me in my servant, but wounded me in my brother; you have saved my son, but have destroyed my father; in this instance, I will allow as much as piety, and justice, and good nature, will bear; but I am not willing to set an injury against a benefit.

I would have some respect to the time; the obligation came first; and then, perhaps, the one was designed, the other against his will; under these considerations I would amplify the benefit, and lessen the injury; and extinguish the one with the other; nay, I would pardon the injury even without the benefit, but much more after it. Not that a man can be bound by one benefit to suffer all sorts of injuries; for there are some cases wherein we lie under no obligation for a benefit; because a greater injury absolves it: as, for example, a man helps me out of a law-suit, and afterwards commits a rape upon my daughter; where the following impiety cancels the antecedent obligation. A man lends me a little money, and then sets my house on fire; the debtor is here turned creditor, when the injury outweighs the benefit.

Nay, if a man does but so much as repent the good office done, and grow sour and insolent upon it, and upbraid me with it; if he did it only for his own sake, or for any other reason than for mine, I am in some degree, more or less, acquitted of the obligation. I am not at all beholden to him that makes me the instrument of his own advantage. He that does me good for his own sake, I will do him good for mine. Suppose a man makes suit for a place, and cannot obtain it, but upon the ransom of ten slaves out of the galleys. If there be ten, and no more, they owe him nothing for

their redemption; but they are indebted to him for the choice, where he might have taken ten others as well as these.

Put the case again, that by an act of grace so many prisoners are to be released, their names to be drawn by lot, and mine happens to come out among the rest: one part of my obligation is to him that put me in a capacity of freedom, and the other is to Providence for my being one of that number. The greatest benefits of all have no witnesses, but lie concealed in the conscience. There is a great difference betwixt a common obligation and a particular; he that lends my country money, obliges me only as a part of the whole. Plato crossed the river, and the ferry-man would take no money of him: he reflected upon it as honor done to himself; and told him, "That Plato was in debt." But Plato, when he found it to be no more than he did for others, recalled his words, "For," says he, "Plato will owe nothing in particular for a benefit in common; what I owe with others, I will pay with others." Some will have it that the necessity of wishing a man well is some abatement to the obligation in the doing of him a good office.

But I say, on the contrary, that it is the greater; because the good-will cannot be changed. It is one thing to say, that a man could not but do me this or that civility, because he was forced to do it; and another thing, that he could not quit the good-will of doing it. In the former case, I am a debtor to him that imposeth the force, in the other to himself. The unchangeable good-will is an indispensable obligation: and, to say, that nature cannot go out of her course, does not discharge us of what we owe to Providence. Shall he be said to will, that may change his mind the next moment? and shall we question the will of the Almighty, whose nature admits no change?

Must the stars quit their stations, and fall foul one upon another? must the sun stand still in the middle of his course, and heaven and earth drop into confusion? must a devouring fire seize upon the universe; the harmony of the creation be dissolved; and the whole frame of nature swallowed up in a dark abyss; and will nothing less than this serve to convince the world of their audacious and impertinent follies? It is not to say, that these heavenly bodies are not made for us; for in part they are so; and we are the better for their virtues and motions, whether we will or not; though, undoubtedly, the principal cause is the unalterable law of God. Providence is not moved by anything from without; but the Divine will is an everlasting law, an immutable decree; and the impossibility of variation proceeds from God's purpose of preserving; for he never repents of his first counsels.

It is not with our heavenly as with our earthly father. God thought of us and provided for us, before he made us: (for unto him all future events are present.) Man was not the work of chance; his mind carries him above the slight of fortune, and naturally aspires to the contemplation of heaven and divine mysteries. How desperate a

frenzy is it now to undervalue, nay, to condemn and to disclaim these divine blessings, without which we are utterly incapable of enjoying any other!

## IX.

### AN HONEST MAN CANNOT BE OUTDONE IN COURTESY.

It passes in the world for a generous and magnificent saying, that “it is a shame for a man to be outdone in courtesy;” and it is worth the while to examine, both the truth of it, and the mistake. First, there can be no shame in a virtuous emulation; and, secondly, there can be no victory without crossing the cudgels, and yielding the cause. One man may have the advantage of strength, of means, of fortune; and this will undoubtedly operate upon the events of good purposes, but yet without any diminution to the virtue. The good will may be the same in both, and yet one may have the heels of the other; for it is not in a good office as in a course, where he wins the plate that comes first to the post: and even there also, chance has many times a great hand in the success.

Where the contest is about benefits; and that the one has not only a good will, but matter to work upon, and a power to put that good intent in execution; and the other has barely a good-will, without either the means, or the occasion, of a requital; if he does but affectionately wish it, and endeavor it, the latter is no more overcome in courtesy than he is in courage that dies with his sword in his hand, and his face to the enemy, and without shrinking maintains his station: for where fortune is partial, it is enough that the good-will is equal. There are two errors in this proposition: first, to imply that a good man may be overcome; and then to imagine that anything shameful can befall him. The Spartans prohibited all those exercises where the victory was declared by the confession of the contendant.

The 300 Fabii were never said to be conquered, but slain; nor Regulus to be overcome, though he was taken prisoner by the Carthaginians. The mind may stand firm under the greatest malice and iniquity of fortune; and yet the giver and receiver continue upon equal terms: as we reckon it a drawn battle, when two combatants are parted, though the one has lost more blood than the other. He that knows how to owe a courtesy, and heartily wishes that he could requite it, is invincible; so that every man may be as grateful as he pleases. It is your happiness to give, it is my fortune that I can only receive. What advantage now has your chance over my virtue?

But there are some men that have philosophized themselves almost out of the sense of human affections; as Diogenes, that walked naked and unconcerned through the middle of Alexander’s treasures, and was, as well in other men’s opinions as in his own, even above Alexander himself, who at that time had the whole world at his feet: for there was more that the one scorned to take than that the other had it in his power to give: and it is a greater generosity for a beggar to refuse money than for a prince to bestow it. This is a remarkable instance of an immovable mind, and there

is hardly any contending with it; but a man is never the less valiant for being worsted by an invulnerable enemy; nor the fire one jot the weaker for not consuming an incombustible body; nor a sword ever a whit the worse for not cleaving a rock that is impenetrable; neither is a grateful mind overcome for want of an answerable fortune.

No matter for the inequality of the things given and received, so long as, in point of good affection, the two parties stand upon the same level. It is no shame not to overtake a man, if we follow him as fast as we can. That tumor of a man, the vain-glorious Alexander, was used to make his boast, that never any man went beyond him in benefits; and yet he lived to see a poor fellow in a tub, to whom there was nothing that he could give, and from whom there was nothing that he could take away. Nor is it always necessary for a poor man to fly to the sanctuary of an invincible mind to quit scores with the bounties of a plentiful fortune; but it does often fall out, that the returns which he cannot make in kind are more than supplied in dignity and value.

Archelaus, a king of Macedon, invited Socrates to his palace: but he excused himself, as unwilling to receive greater benefits than he was able to requite. This perhaps was not pride in Socrates, but craft; for he was afraid of being forced to accept of something which might possibly have been unworthy of him; beside, that he was a man of liberty, and loath to make himself a voluntary slave. The truth of it is, that Archelaus had more need of Socrates than Socrates of Archelaus; for he wanted a man to teach him the art of life and death, and the skill of government, and to read the book of Nature to him, and show him the light at noon-day: he wanted a man that, when the sun was in an eclipse, and he had locked himself up in all the horror and despair imaginable; he wanted a man, I say, to deliver him from his apprehensions, and to expound the prodigy to him, by telling him, that there was no more in it than only that the moon was got betwixt the sun and the earth, and all would be well again presently.

Let the world judge now, whether Archelaus' bounty, or Socrates' philosophy, would have been the greater present: he does not understand the value of wisdom and friendship that does not know a wise friend to be the noblest of presents. A rarity scarce to be found, not only in a family, but in an age; and nowhere more wanted than where there seems to be the greatest store. The greater a man is, the more need he has of him; and the more difficulty there is both of finding and of knowing him. Nor is it to be said, that "I cannot requite such a benefactor because I am poor, and have it not;" I can give good counsel; a conversation wherein he may take both delight and profit; freedom of discourse, without flattery; kind attention, where he deliberates; and faith inviolable where he trusts; I may bring him to a love and knowledge of truth; deliver him from the errors of his credulity, and teach him to distinguish betwixt friends and parasites.

## X.

### THE QUESTION DISCUSSED, WHETHER OR NOT A MAN MAY GIVE OR RETURN A BENEFIT TO HIMSELF?

There are many cases, wherein a man speaks of himself as of another. As, for example, "I may thank myself for this; I am angry at myself; I hate myself for that." And this way of speaking has raised a dispute among the Stoics, "whether or not a man may give or return a benefit to himself?" For, say they, if I may hurt myself, I may oblige myself; and that which were a benefit to another body, why is it not so to myself? And why am I not as criminal in being ungrateful to myself as if I were so to another body? And the case is the same in flattery and several other vices; as, on the other side, it is a point of great reputation for a man to command himself. Plato thanked Socrates for what he had learned of him; and why might not Socrates as well thank Plato for that which he had taught him?

"That which you want," says Plato, "borrow it of yourself." And why may not I as well give to myself as lend? If I may be angry with myself, I may thank myself; and if I chide myself, I may as well commend myself, and do myself good as well as hurt; there is the same reason of contraries: it is a common thing to say, "Such a man hath done himself an injury." If an injury, why not a benefit? But I say, that no man can be a debtor to himself; for the benefit must naturally precede the acknowledgment; and a debtor can no more be without a creditor than a husband without a wife. Somebody must give, that somebody may receive; and it is neither giving nor receiving, the passing of a thing from one hand to the other.

What if a man should be ungrateful in the case? there is nothing lost; for he that gives it has it: and he that gives and he that receives are one and the same person. Now, properly speaking, no man can be said to bestow any thing upon himself, for he obeys his nature, that prompts every man to do himself all the good he can. Shall I call him liberal, that gives to himself; or good-natured, that pardons himself; or pitiful, that is affected with his own misfortunes? That which were bounty, clemency, compassion, to another, to myself is nature. A benefit is a voluntary thing; but to do good to myself is a thing necessary. Was ever any man commended for getting out of a ditch, or for helping himself against thieves?

Or what if I should allow, that a man might confer a benefit upon himself; yet he cannot owe it, for he returns it in the same instant that he receives it. No man gives, owes, or makes a return, but to another. How can one man do that to which two parties are requisite in so many respects? Giving and receiving must go backward and forward betwixt two persons. If a man give to himself, he may sell to himself; but to sell is to alienate a thing, and to translate the right of it to another; now, to make a man both the giver and the receiver is to unite two contraries. That is a

benefit, which, when it is given, may possibly not be requited; but he that gives to himself, must necessarily receive what he gives; beside, that all benefits are given for the receiver's sake, but that which a man does for himself, is for the sake of the giver.

This is one of those subtleties, which, though hardly worth a man's while, yet it is not labor absolutely lost neither. There is more of trick and artifice in it than solidity; and yet there is matter of diversion too; enough perhaps to pass away a winter's evening, and keep a man waking that is heavy-headed.

# XI.

## HOW FAR ONE MAN MAY BE OBLIGED FOR A BENEFIT DONE TO ANOTHER.

The question now before us requires distinction and caution. For though it be both natural and generous to wish well to my friend's friend, yet a second-hand benefit does not bind me any further than to a second-hand gratitude: so that I may receive great satisfaction and advantage from a good office done to my friend, and yet lie under no obligation myself; or, if any man thinks otherwise, I must ask him, in the first place, Where it begins? and, How it extends? that it may not be boundless. Suppose a man obliges the son, does that obligation work upon the father? and why not upon the uncle too? the brother? the wife? the sister? the mother? nay, upon all that have any kindness for him? and upon all the lovers of his friends? and upon all that love them too? and so in infinitum.

In this case we must have recourse, as is said heretofore, to the intention of the benefactor, and fix the obligation upon him unto whom the kindness was directed. If a man manures my ground, keeps my house from burning or falling, it is a benefit to me, for I am the better for it, and my house and land are insensible. But if he save the life of my son, the benefit is to my son; it is a joy and a comfort to me, but no obligation. I am as much concerned as I ought to be in the health, the felicity, and the welfare of my son, as happy in the enjoyment of him; and I should be as unhappy as is possible in his loss; but it does not follow that I must of necessity lie under an obligation for being either happier or less miserable, by another body's means.

There are some benefits, which although conferred upon one man, may yet work upon others; as a sum of money may be given to a poor man for his own sake, which in the consequence proves the relief of his whole family; but still the immediate receiver is the debtor for it; for the question is not, to whom it comes afterward to be transferred, but who is the principal? and upon whom it was first bestowed? My son's life is as dear to me as my own; and in saving him you preserve me too: in this case I will acknowledge myself obliged to you, that is to say, in my son's name; for in my own, and in strictness, I am not; but I am content to make myself a voluntary debtor. What if he had borrowed money? my paying of it does not at all make it my debt.

It would put me to the blush perhaps to have him taken in bed with another man's wife; but that does not make me an adulterer. It is a wonderful delight and satisfaction that I receive in his safety; but still this good is not a benefit. A man may be the better for an animal, a plant, a stone; but there must be a will, an intention, to make it an obligation. You save the son without so much as knowing the father, nay, without so much as thinking of him; and, perhaps you would have done the same thing even if you had hated him.

But without any further alteration of dialogue, the conclusion is this; if you meant him the kindness, he is answerable for it, and I may enjoy the fruit of it without being obliged by it: but if it was done for my sake, then I am accountable; or howsoever, upon any occasion, I am ready to do you all the kind offices imaginable; not as the return of a benefit, but as the earnest of a friendship; which you are not to challenge neither, but to entertain as an act of honor and of justice, rather than of gratitude. If a man find the body of my dead father in a desert, and give it a burial; if he did it as to my father, I am beholden to him: but if the body was unknown to him, and that he would have done the same thing for any other body, I am no farther concerned in it than as a piece of public humanity.

There are, moreover, some cases wherein an unworthy person may be obliged and for the sake of others: and the sottish extract of an ancient nobility may be preferred before a better man that is but of yesterday's standing. And it is but reasonable to pay a reverence even to the memory of eminent virtues. He that is not illustrious in himself, may yet be reputed so in the right of his ancestors: and there is a gratitude to be entailed upon the offspring of famous progenitors. Was it not for the father's sake that Cicero the son was made counsel? and was it not the eminence of one Pompey that raised and dignified the rest of his family? How came Caligula to be emperor of the world? a man so cruel, that he spilt blood as greedily as if he were to drink it; the empire was not given to himself, but to his father Germanicus.

A brave man deserved that for him, which he could never have challenged upon his own merit. What was it that preferred Fabius Persicus, (whose very mouth was the uncleanest part about him,) what was it but the 300 of that family that so generously opposed the enemy for the safety of the commonwealth? Nay, Providence itself is gracious to the wicked posterity of an honorable race. The counsels of heaven are guided by wisdom, mercy, and justice. Some men are made kings of their proper virtues, without any respect to their predecessors: others for their ancestors' sakes, whose virtues, though neglected in their lives, come to be afterward rewarded in their issues. And it is but equity, that our gratitude should extend as far as the influence of their heroical actions and examples.

## XII.

### THE BENEFACTOR MUST HAVE NO BY-ENDS.

We come now to the main point of the matter in question: that is to say, whether or not it be a thing desirable in itself, the giving and receiving of benefits? There is a sect of philosophers that accounts nothing valuable but what is profitable, and so makes all virtue mercenary; an unmanly mistake to imagine, that the hope of gain, or fear of loss, should make a man either the more or less honest. As who should say, "What will I get by it, and I will be an honest man?" Whereas, on the contrary, honesty is a thing in itself to be purchased at any rate. It is not for a body to say, "It will be a charge, a hazard, I shall give offence," etc. My business is to do what I ought to do: all other considerations are foreign to the office.

Whensoever my duty calls me, it is my part to attend, without scrupulizing upon forms or difficulties. Shall I see an honest man oppressed at the bar, and not assist him, for fear of a court faction? or not second him upon the highway against thieves, for fear of a broken head? and choose rather to sit still, the quiet spectator of fraud and violence? Why will men be just, temperate, generous, brave, but because it carries along with it fame and a good conscience? and for the same reason, and no other, (to apply it to the subject in hand,) let a man also be bountiful. The school of Epicurus, I am sure, will never swallow this doctrine: (that effeminate tribe of lazy and voluptuous philosophers;) they will tell you, that virtue is but the servant and vassal of pleasure.

"No," says Epicurus, "I am not for pleasure neither without virtue." But, why then for pleasure, say I, before virtue? Not that the stress of the controversy lies upon the order only; for the power of it, as well as the dignity, is now under debate. It is the office of virtue to superintend, to lead, and to govern; but the parts you have assigned it, are to submit, to follow, and to be under command. But this, you will say, is nothing to the purpose, so long as both sides are agreed, that there can be no happiness without virtue: "Take away that," says Epicurus, "and I am as little a friend to pleasure as you." The pinch, in short, is this, whether virtue itself be the supreme good or the only cause of it?

It is not the inverting of the order that will clear this point; (though it is a very preposterous error, to set that first which should be last.) It does not half so much offend me; ranging of pleasure before virtue, as the very comparing of them; and the bringing of the two opposites, and professed enemies, into any sort of competition. The drift of this discourse is, to support the cause of benefits; and to prove, that it is a mean and dishonorable thing to give for any other end than for giving's sake. He that gives for gain, profit, or any by-end, destroys the very intent of bounty; for it falls only upon those that do not want, and perverts the charitable inclinations of

princes and of great men, who cannot reasonably propound to themselves any such end.

What does the sun get by travelling about the universe; by visiting and comforting all the quarters of the earth? Is the whole creation made and ordered for the good of mankind, and every particular man only for the good of himself? There passes not an hour of our lives, wherein we do not enjoy the blessings of Providence, without measure and without intermission. And what design can the Almighty have upon us, who is in himself full, safe, and inviolable? If he should give only for his own sake, what would become of poor mortals, that have nothing to return him at best but dutiful acknowledgments? It is putting out of a benefit to interest only to bestow where we may place it to advantage. Let us be liberal then, after the example of our great Creator, and give to others with the same consideration that he gives to us.

Epicurus's answer will be to this, that God gives no benefits at all, but turns his back upon the world; and without any concern for us, leaves Nature to take her course: and whether he does anything himself, or nothing, he takes no notice, however, either of the good or of the ill that is done here below. If there were not an ordering and an over-ruling Providence, how comes it (say I, on the other side) that the universality of mankind should ever have so unanimously agreed in the madness of worshipping a power that can neither hear nor help us? Some blessings are freely given us; others upon our prayers are granted us; and every day brings forth instances of great and of seasonable mercies.

There never was yet any man so insensible as not to feel, see, and understand, a Deity in the ordinary methods of nature, though many have been so obstinately ungrateful as not to confess it; nor is any man so wretched as not to be a partaker in that divine bounty. Some benefits, it is true, may appear to be unequally divided; but it is no small matter yet that we possess in common: and which Nature has bestowed upon us in her very self. If God be not bountiful, whence is it that we have all that we pretend to? That which we give, and that which we deny, that which we lay up, and that which we squander away? Those innumerable delights for the entertainment of our eyes, our ears, and our understandings? nay, that copious matter even for luxury itself?

For care is taken, not only for our necessities, but also for our pleasures, and for the gratifying of all our senses and appetites. So many pleasant groves; fruitful and salutary plants; so many fair rivers that serve us, both for recreation, plenty, and commerce: vicissitudes of seasons; varieties of food, by nature made ready to our hands, and the whole creation itself subjected to mankind for health, medicine and dominion. We can be thankful to a friend for a few acres, or a little money: and yet for the freedom and command of the whole earth, and for the great benefits of our being, as life, health, and reason, we look upon ourselves as under no obligation.

If a man bestows upon us a house that is delicately beautified with paintings, statues, gildings, and marble, we make a mighty business of it, and yet it lies at the mercy of a puff of wind, the snuff of a candle, and a hundred other accidents, to lay it in the dust. And is it nothing now to sleep under the canopy of heaven, where we have the globe of the earth for our place of repose, and the glories of the heavens for our spectacle? How comes it that we should so much value what we have, and yet at the same time be so unthankful for it? Whence is it that we have our breath, the comforts of light and of heat, the very blood that runs in our veins? the cattle that feed us, and the fruits of the earth that feed them?

Whence have we the growth of our bodies, the succession of our ages, and the faculties of our minds? so many veins of metals, quarries of marble, etc. The seed of everything is in itself, and it is the blessing of God that raises it out of the dark into act and motion. To say nothing of the charming varieties of music, beautiful objects, delicious provisions for the palate, exquisite perfumes, which are cast in, over and above, to the common necessities of our being. All this, says Epicurus, we are to ascribe to Nature. And why not to God, I beseech ye? as if they were not both of them one and the same power, working in the whole, and in every part of it.

Or, if you call him the Almighty Jupiter; the Thunderer; the Creator and Preserver of us all: it comes to the same issue; some will express him under the notion of Fate; which is only a connexion of causes, and himself the uppermost and original, upon which all the rest depend. The Stoics represent the several functions of the Almighty Power under several appellations. When they speak of him as the father and the fountain of all beings, they call him Bacchus: and under the name of Hercules, they denote him to be indefatigable and invincible; and in the contemplation of him in the reason, order, proportion, and wisdom of his proceedings, they call him Mercury; so that which way soever they look, and under what name soever they couch their meaning, they never fail of finding him; for he is everywhere, and fills his own work.

If a man should borrow money of Seneca, and say that he owes it to Amnæus or Lucius, he may change the name but not his creditor; for let him take which of the three names he pleases, he is still a debtor to the same person. As justice, integrity, prudence, frugality, fortitude, are all of them goods of one and the same mind, so that whichsoever of them pleases us, we cannot distinctly say that it is this or that, but the mind. But, not to carry this digression too far; that which God himself does, we are sure is well done; and we are no less sure, that for whatsoever he gives, he neither wants, expects, nor receives, anything in return; so that the end of a benefit ought to be the advantage of the receiver; and that must be our scope without any by-regard to ourselves.

It is objected to us, the singular caution we prescribe in the choice of the person: for it were a madness, we say, for a husbandman to sow the sand: which, if true, say they, you have an eye upon profit, as well in giving as in plowing and sowing. And

then they say again, that if the conferring of a benefit were desirable in itself, it would have no dependence upon the choice of a man; for let us give it when, how, or wheresoever we please, it would be still a benefit. This does not at all affect our assertion; for the person, the matter, the manner, and the time, are circumstances absolutely necessary to the reason of the action: there must be a right judgment in all respects to make it a benefit.

It is my duty to be true to a trust, and yet there may be a time or a place, wherein I would make little difference betwixt the renouncing of it and the delivering of it up; and the same rule holds in benefits; I will neither render the one, nor bestow the other, to the damage of the receiver. A wicked man will run all risks to do an injury, and to compass his revenge; and shall not an honest man venture as far to do a good office? All benefits must be gratuitous. A merchant sells me the corn that keeps me and my family from starving; but he sold it for his interests, as well as I bought it for mine; and so I owe him nothing for it.

He that gives for profit, gives to himself; as a physician or a lawyer, gives counsel for a fee, and only makes use of me for his own ends; as a grazier fats his cattle to bring them to a better market. This is more properly the driving of a trade than the cultivating of a generous commerce. This for that, is rather a truck than a benefit; and he deserves to be cozened that gives any thing in hope of a return. And in truth, what end should a man honorably propound? not profit; sure that is vulgar and mechanic; and he that does not condemn it can never be grateful. And then for glory, it is a mighty matter indeed for a man to boast of doing his duty.

We are to give, if it were only to avoid not giving; if any thing comes of it, it is clear gain; and, at worst, there is nothing lost; beside, that one benefit well placed makes amends for a thousand miscarriages. It is not that I would exclude the benefactor neither for being himself the better for a good office he does for another. Some there are that do us good only for their own sakes; others for ours; and some again for both. He that does it for me in common with himself, if he had a prospect upon both in the doing it, I am obliged to him for it; and glad with all my heart that he had a share in it. Nay, I were ungrateful and unjust if I should not rejoice, that what was beneficial to me might be so likewise to himself.

To pass now to the matter of gratitude and ingratitude. There never was any man yet so wicked as not to approve of the one, and detest the other; as the two things in the whole world, the one to be the most abominated, the other the most esteemed. The very story of an ungrateful action puts us out of all patience, and gives us a loathing for the author of it. "That inhuman villain," we cry, "to do so horrid a thing;" not, "that inconsiderate fool for omitting so profitable a virtue;" which plainly shows the sense we naturally have, both of the one and of the other, and that we are led to it by a common impulse of reason and of conscience. Epicurus fancies God to be without power, and without arms; above fear himself, and as little to be feared.

He places him betwixt the orbs, solitary and idle, out of the reach of mortals, and neither hearing our prayers nor minding our concerns; and allows him only such a veneration and respect as we pay to our parents. If a man should ask him now, why any reverence at all, if we have no obligation to him, or rather, why that greater reverence to his fortuitous atoms? his answer would be, that it was for their majesty and their admirable nature, and not out of any hope or expectation from them. So that by his proper confession, a thing may be desirable for its own worth. But, says he, gratitude is a virtue that has commonly profit annexed to it. And where is the virtue, say I, that has not? but still the virtue is to be valued for itself, and not for the profit that attends it.

There is no question, but gratitude for benefits received is the ready way to procure more; and in requiting one friend we encourage many: but these accessions fall in by the by; and if I were sure that the doing of good offices would be my ruin, I would yet pursue them. He that visits the sick, in hope of a legacy, let him be never so friendly in all other cases, I look upon him in this to be no better than a raven, that watches a weak sheep only to peck out the eyes of it. We never give with so much judgment or care, as when we consider the honesty of the action, without any regard to the profit of it; for our understandings are corrupted by fear, hope, and pleasure.

## XIII.

THERE ARE MANY CASES WHEREIN A MAN MAY BE MINDED OF A BENEFIT, BUT IT IS VERY RARELY TO BE CHALLENGED, AND NEVER TO BE UPBRAIDED.

If the world were wise, and as honest as it should be, there would be no need of caution or precept how to behave ourselves in our several stations and duties; for both the giver and the receiver would do what they ought to do on their own accord: the one would be bountiful, and the other grateful, and the only way of minding a man of one good turn would be the following of it with another. But as the case stands, we must take other measures, and consult the best we can, the common ease and relief of mankind. As there are several sorts of ungrateful men, so there must be several ways of dealing with them, either by artifice, counsel, admonition, or reproof, according to the humor of the person, and the degree of the offence: provided always, that as well in the reminding a man of a benefit, as in the bestowing of it, the good of the receiver be the principal thing intended.

There is a curable ingratitude, and an incurable; there is a slothful, a neglectful, a proud, a dissembling, a disclaiming, a heedless, a forgetful, and a malicious ingratitude; and the application must be suited to the matter we have to work upon. A gentle nature may be reclaimed by authority, advice, or reprehension; a father, a husband, a friend may do good in the case. There are a sort of lazy and sluggish people, that live as if they were asleep, and must be lugged and pinched to wake them. These men are betwixt grateful and ungrateful; they will neither deny an obligation nor return it, and only want quickening. I will do all I can to hinder any man from ill-doing, but especially a friend; and yet more especially from doing ill to me.

I will rub up his memory with new benefits: if that will not serve, I will proceed to good counsel, and from thence to rebuke: if all fails, I will look upon him as a desperate debtor, and even let him alone in his ingratitude, without making him my enemy: for no necessity shall ever make me spend time in wrangling with any man upon that point. Assiduity of obligation strikes upon the conscience as well as the memory, and pursues an ungrateful man till he becomes grateful: if one good office will not do it, try a second, and then a third. No man can be so thankless, but either shame, occasion, or example, will, at some time or other, prevail upon him. The very beasts themselves, even lions and tigers, are gained by good usage: beside, that one obligation does naturally draw on another; and a man would not willingly leave his own work imperfect.

“I have helped him thus far, and I will even go through with it now.” So that, over and above the delight and the virtue of obliging, one good turn is a shouting-horn to another. This, of all hints, is perhaps the most effectual, as well as the most

generous. In some cases it must be carried more home: as in that of Julius Cæsar, who, as he was hearing a cause, the defendant finding himself pinched; "Sir," says he, "do not you remember a strain you got in your ankle when you commanded in Spain; and that a soldier lent you his cloak for a cushion, upon the top of a craggy rock, under the shade of a little tree, in the heat of the day?" "I remember it perfectly well," says Cæsar, "and that when I was ready to choke with thirst, an honest fellow fetched me a draught of water in his helmet." "But that man, and that helmet," says the soldier, "does Cæsar think that he could not know them again, if he saw them?" "The man, perchance, I might," says Cæsar, somewhat offended, "but not the helmet.

But what is the story to my business? you are none of the man." "Pardon me, Sir," says the soldier, "I am that very man; but Cæsar may well forget me: for I have been trepanned since, and lost an eye at the battle of Munda, where that helmet too had the honor to be cleft with a Spanish blade." Cæsar took it as it was intended: and it was an honorable and a prudent way of refreshing his memory. But this would not have gone down so well with Tiberius: for when an old acquaintance of his began his address to him with, "You remember, Cæsar." "No," says Cæsar, (cutting him short,) "I do not remember what I WAS." Now, with him, it was better to be forgotten than remembered; for an old friend was as bad as an informer.

It is a common thing for men to hate the authors of their preferment, as the witnesses of their mean original. There are some people well enough disposed to be grateful, but they cannot hit upon it without a prompter; they are a little like school-boys that have treacherous memories; it is but helping them here and there with a word, when they stick, and they will go through with their lesson; they must be taught to be thankful, and it is a fair step, if we can but bring them to be willing, and only offer at it. Some benefits we have neglected; some we are not willing to remember. He is ungrateful that disowns an obligation, and so is he that disassembles it, or to his power does not requite it; but the worst of all is he that forgets it.

Conscience, or occasion, may revive the rest; but here the very memory of it is lost. Those eyes that cannot endure the light are weak, but those are stark blind that cannot see it. I do not love to hear people say, "Alas! poor man, he has forgotten it," as if that were the excuse of ingratitude, which is the very cause of it: for if he were not ungrateful, he would not be forgetful, and lay that out of the way which should be always uppermost and in sight. He that thinks as he ought to do, of requiting a benefit, is in no danger of forgetting it. There are, indeed, some benefits so great that they can never slip the memory; but those which are less in value, and more in number, do commonly escape us.

We are apt enough to acknowledge that "such a man has been the making of us;" so long as we are in possession of the advantage he has brought us; but new appetites deface old kindnesses, and we carry our prospect forward to something more,

without considering what we have obtained already. All that is past we give for lost; so that we are only intent upon the future. When a benefit is once out of sight, or out of use, it is buried. It is the freak of many people, they cannot do a good office but they are presently boasting of it, drunk or sober: and about it goes into all companies what wonderful things they have done for this man, and what for the other. A foolish and a dangerous vanity, of a doubtful friend to make a certain enemy.

For these reproaches and contempts will set everybody's tongue a walking; and people will conclude that these things would never be, if there were not something very extraordinary in the bottom of it. When it comes to that once, there is not any calumny but fastens more or less, nor any falsehood so incredible, but in some part or other of it, shall pass for a truth. Our great mistake is this, we are still inclined to make the most of what we give, and the least of what we receive; whereas we should do the clean contrary. "It might have been more, but he had a great many to oblige. It was as much as he could well spare; but he will make it up some other time," etc.

Nay, we should be so far from making publication of our bounties, as not to hear them so much as mentioned without sweetening the matter: as, "Alas, I owe him a great deal more than that comes to. If it were in my power to serve him, I should be very glad of it." And this, too, not with the figure of a compliment, but with all humanity and truth. There was a man of quality, that in the triumviral proscription, was saved by one of Cæsar's friends, who would be still twitting him with it; who it was that preserved him, and telling him over and over, "you had gone to pot, friend, but for me." "Pr'ythee," says the proscribed, "let me hear no more of this, or even leave me as you found me: I am thankful enough of myself to acknowledge that I owe you my life, but it is death to have it rung in my ears perpetually as a reproach; it looks as if you had only saved me to carry me about for a spectacle.

I would fain forget the misfortune that I was once a prisoner, without being led in triumph every day of my life." Oh! the pride and folly of a great fortune, that turns benefits into injuries! that delights in excesses, and disgraces every thing it does! Who would receive any thing from it upon these terms? the higher it raises us, the more sordid it makes us. Whatsoever it gives it corrupts. What is there in it that should thus puff us up? by what magic is it that we are so transformed, that we do no longer know ourselves? Is it impossible for greatness to be liberal without insolence? The benefits that we receive from our superiors are then welcome when they come with an open hand, and a clear brow; without either contumely or state; and so as to prevent our necessities.

The benefit is never the greater for the making of a bustle and a noise about it: but the benefactor is much the less for the ostentation of his good deeds; which makes that odious to us, which would otherwise be delightful. Tiberius had gotten a trick, when any man begged money of him, to refer him to the senate, where all the

petitioners were to deliver up the names of their creditors. His end perhaps was, to deter men from asking, by exposing the condition of their fortunes to an examination. But it was, however, a benefit turned unto a reprehension, and he made a reproach of a bounty. But it is not enough yet to forbear the casting of a benefit in a man's teeth; for there are some that will not allow it to be so much as challenged.

For an ill man, say they, will not make a return, though it be demanded, and a good man will do it of himself: and then the asking of it seems to turn it into a debt. It is a kind of injury to be too quick with the former: for to call upon him too soon reproaches him, as if he would not have done it otherwise. Nor would I recall a benefit from any man so as to force it, but only to receive it. If I let him quite alone, I make myself guilty of his ingratitude: and undo him for want of plain dealing. A father reclaims a disobedient son, a wife reclaims a dissolute husband; and one friend excites the languishing kindness of another. How many men are lost for want of being touched to the quick?

So long as I am not pressed, I will rather desire a favor, than so much as mention a requital; but if my country, my family, or my liberty, be at stake, my zeal and indignation shall overrule my modesty, and the world shall then understand that I have done all I could, not to stand in need of an ungrateful man. And in conclusion the necessity of receiving a benefit shall overcome the shame of recalling it. Nor is it only allowable upon some exigents to put the receiver in mind of a good turn, but it is many times for the common advantage of both parties.

## XIV.

### HOW FAR TO OBLIGE OR REQUITE A WICKED MAN.

There are some benefits whereof a wicked man is wholly incapable; of which hereafter. There are others, which are bestowed upon him, not for his own sake, but for secondary reasons; and of these we have spoken in part already. There are, moreover, certain common offices of humanity, which are only allowed him as he is a man, and without any regard either to vice or virtue. To pass over the first point; the second must be handled with care and distinction, and not without some seeming exceptions to the general rule; as first, here is no choice or intention in the case, but it is a good office done him for some by-interest, or by chance. Secondly, There is no judgment in it neither, for it is to a wicked man. But to shorten the matter: without these circumstances it is not properly a benefit; or at least not to him; for it looks another way.

I rescue a friend from thieves, and the other escapes for company. I discharge a debt for a friend, and the other comes off too: for they were both in a bond. The third is of a great latitude, and varies according to the degree of generosity on the one side, and of wickedness on the other. Some benefactors will supererogate, and do more than they are bound to do; and some men are so lewd, that it is dangerous to do them any sort of good; no, not so much as by way of return or requital. If the benefactor's bounty must extend to the bad as well as the good; put the case, that I promise a good office to an ungrateful man; we are first to distinguish (as I said before) betwixt a common benefit and a personal; betwixt what is given for merit and what for company.

Secondly, Whether or not we know the person to be ungrateful, and can reasonably conclude, that this vice is incurable. Thirdly, A consideration must be had of the promise, how far that may oblige us. The two first points are cleared both in one: we cannot justify any particular kindness for one that we conclude to be a hopelessly wicked man: so that the force of the promise is in the single point in question. In the promise of a good office to a wicked or ungrateful man, I am to blame if I did it knowingly; and I am to blame nevertheless, if I did it otherwise: but I must yet make it good, (under due qualifications,) because I promised it; that is to say, matters continuing in the same state, for no man is answerable for accidents.

I will sup at such a place though it be cold; I will rise at such an hour though I be sleepy; but if it prove tempestuous, or that I fall sick of a fever, I will neither do the one nor the other. I promise to second a friend in a quarrel, or to plead his cause; and when I come into the field, or into the court, it proves to be against my father or my brother: I promise to go a journey with him, but there is no traveling upon the road for robbing; my child is fallen sick; or my wife is in labor: these circumstances

are sufficient to discharge me; for a promise against law or duty is void in its own nature.

The counsels of a wise man are certain, but events are uncertain: and yet if I have passed a rash promise, I will in some degree punish the temerity of making it with the damage of keeping it, unless it turn very much to my shame or detriment, and then I will be my own confessor in the point, and rather be once guilty of denying, than always of giving. It is not with a benefit as with a debt—it is one thing to trust an ill paymaster, and another thing to oblige an unworthy person—the one is an ill man, and the other only an ill husband. There was a valiant fellow in the army, that Philip of Macedon took particular notice of, and he gave him several considerable marks of the kindness he had for him.

This soldier put to sea and was cast away upon a coast where a charitable neighbor took him up half dead, carried him to the house, and there, at his own charge maintained and provided for him thirty days, until he was perfectly recovered, and, after all, furnished him over and above, with a viaticum at parting. The soldier told him the mighty matters that he would do for him in return, so soon as he should have the honor once again to see his master. To court he goes, tells Philip of the wreck, but not a syllable of his preserver, and begs the estate of this very man that kept him alive. It was with Philip as it was with many other princes, they give they know not what, especially in a time of war. He granted the soldier his request, contemplating at the same time, the impossibility of satisfying so many ravenous appetites as he had to please.

When the good man came to be turned out of all, he was not so mealy-mouthed as to thank his majesty for not giving away his person too as well as his fortune; but in a bold, frank letter to Philip, made a just report of the whole story. The king was so incensed at the abuse, that he immediately commanded the right owner to be restored to his estate, and the unthankful guest and soldier to be stigmatized for an example to others. Should Philip now have kept this promise? First, he owed the soldier nothing. Secondly, it would have been injurious and impious; and, lastly, a precedent of dangerous consequence to human society; for it would have been little less than an interdiction of fire and water to the miserable, to have inflicted such a penalty upon relieving them; so that there must be always some tacit exception or reserve: if I can, if I may; or, if matters continue as they were.

If it should be my fortune to receive a benefit from one that afterwards betrays his country, I should still reckon myself obliged to him for such a requital as might stand with my public duty; I would not furnish him with arms, nor with money or credit, or levy or pay soldiers; but I should not stick to gratify him at my own expense with such curiosities as might please him one way without doing mischief another. I would not do any thing that might contribute to the support or advantage of his party. But what should I do now in the case of a benefactor, that should afterwards

become not only mine and my country's enemy, but the common enemy of mankind! I would here distinguish betwixt the wickedness of a man and the cruelty of a beast—betwixt a limited or a particular passion and a sanguinary rage that extends to the hazard and destruction of human society.

In the former case I would quit scores, that I might have no more to do with him; but if he comes once to delight in blood, and to act outrages with greediness—to study and invent torments, and to take pleasure in them—the law of reasonable nature has discharged me of such a debt. But this is an impiety so rare that it might pass for a portent, and be reckoned among comets and monsters. Let us therefore restrain our discourse to such men as we detest without horror; such men as we see every day in courts, camps, and upon the seats of justice; to such wicked men I will return what I have received, without making any advantage of their unrighteousness. It does not divert the Almighty from being still gracious, though we proceed daily in the abuse of his bounties.

How many there are that enjoy the comfort of the light that do not deserve it; that wish they had never been born! and yet Nature goes quietly on with her work, and allows them a being, even in despite of their unthankfulness. Such a knave, we cry, was better used than I: and the same complaint we extend to Providence itself. How many wicked men have good crops, when better than themselves have their fruits blasted! Such a man, we say, has treated me very ill. Why, what should we do, but that very thing which is done by God himself? that is to say, give to the ignorant, and persevere to the wicked. All our ingratitude, we see, does not turn Providence from pouring down of benefits, even upon those that question whence they come.

The wisdom of Heaven does all things with a regard to the good of the universe, and the blessings of nature are granted in common, to the worst as well as to the best of men; for they live promiscuously together; and it is God's will, that the wicked shall rather fare the better for the good, than that the good shall fare the worse for the wicked. It is true that a wise prince will confer peculiar honors only upon the worthy; but in the dealing of a public dole, there is no respect had to the manners of the man; but a thief or traitor shall put in for a share as well as an honest man. If a good man and a wicked man sail both in the same bottom, it is impossible that the same wind which favors the one should cross the other.

The common benefits of laws, privileges, communities, letters, and medicines, are permitted to the bad as well as to the good; and no man ever yet suppressed a sovereign remedy for fear a wicked man might be cured with it. Cities are built for both sorts, and the same remedy works upon both alike. In these cases, we are to set an estimate upon the persons: there is a great difference betwixt the choosing of a man and the not excluding him: the law is open to the rebellious as well as to the obedient: there are some benefits which, if they were not allowed to all, could not be enjoyed by any. The sun was never made for me, but for the comfort of the world,

and for the providential order of the seasons; and yet I am not without my private obligation also.

To conclude, he that will oblige the wicked and the ungrateful, must resolve to oblige nobody; for in some sort or another we are all of us wicked, we are all of us ungrateful, every man of us. We have been discoursing all this while how far a wicked man may be obliged, and the Stoics tell us at last, that he cannot be obliged at all. For they make him incapable of any good, and consequently of any benefit. But he has this advantage, that if he cannot be obliged, he cannot be ungrateful: for if he cannot receive, he is not bound to return. On the other side, a good man and an ungrateful, are a contradiction: so that at this rate there is no such thing as ingratitude in nature. They compare a wicked man's mind to a vitiated stomach; he corrupts whatever he receives, and the best nourishment turns to the disease.

But taking this for granted, a wicked man may yet so far be obliged as to pass for ungrateful, if he does not requite what he receives: for though it be not a perfect benefit, yet he receives something like it. There are goods of the mind, the body, and of fortune. Of the first sort, fools and wicked men are wholly incapable; to the rest they may be admitted. But why should I call any man ungrateful, you will say, for not restoring that which I deny to be a benefit? I answer, that if the receiver take it for a benefit, and fails of a return, it is ingratitude in him: for that which goes for an obligation among wicked men, is an obligation upon them: and they may pay one another in their own coin; the money is current, whether it be gold or leather, when it comes once to be authorized.

Nay, Cleanthes carries it farther; he that is wanting, says he, to a kind office, though it be no benefit, would have done the same thing if it had been one; and is as guilty as a thief is, that has set his booty, and is already armed and mounted with a purpose to seize it, though he has not yet drawn blood. Wickedness is formed in the heart; and the matter of fact is only the discovery and the execution of it. Now, though a wicked man cannot either receive or bestow a benefit, because he wants the will of doing good, and for that he is no longer wicked, when virtue has taken possession of him; yet we commonly call it one, as we call a man illiterate that is not learned, and naked that is not well clad; not but that the one can read, and the other is covered.

## XV.

### A GENERAL VIEW OF THE PARTS AND DUTIES OF THE BENEFACTOR.

The three main points in the question of benefits are, first, a judicious choice in the object; secondly, in the matter of our benevolence; and thirdly, a grateful felicity in the manner of expressing it. But there are also incumbent upon the benefactor other considerations, which will deserve a place in this discourse. It is not enough to do one good turn, and to do it with a good grace too, unless we follow it with more, and without either upbraiding or repining. It is a common shift, to charge that upon the ingratitude of the receiver, which, in truth, is most commonly the levity and indiscretion of the giver; for all circumstances must be duly weighed to consummate the action. Some there are that we find ungrateful; but what with our forwardness, change of humor and reproaches, there are more that we make so.

And this is the business: we give with design, and most to those that are able to give most again. We give to the covetous, and to the ambitious; to those that can never be thankful, (for their desires are insatiable,) and to those that will not. He that is a tribune would be prætor; the prætor, a consul; never reflecting upon what he was, but only looking forward to what he would be. People are still computing, Must I lose this or that benefit? If it be lost, the fault lies in the ill bestowing of it; for rightly placed, it is as good as consecrated; if we be deceived in another, let us not be deceived in ourselves too. A charitable man will mend the matter: and say to himself, Perhaps he has forgot it, perchance he could not, perhaps he will yet requite it.

A patient creditor will, of an ill paymaster, in time make a good one; an obstinate goodness overcomes an ill disposition, as a barren soil is made fruitful by care and tillage. But let a man be never so ungrateful or inhuman, he shall never destroy the satisfaction of my having done a good office. But what if others will be wicked? does it follow that we must be so too? If others will be ungrateful, must we therefore be inhuman? To give and to lose, is nothing; but to lose and to give still, is the part of a great mind. And the others in effect is the greater loss; for the one does but lose his benefit, and the other loses himself. The light shines upon the profane and sacrilegious as well as upon the righteous. How many disappointments do we meet with in our wives and children, and yet we couple still?

He that has lost one battle hazards another. The mariner puts to sea again after a wreck. An illustrious mind does not propose the profit of a good office, but the duty. If the world be wicked, we should yet persevere in well-doing, even among evil men. I had rather never receive a kindness than never bestow one: not to return a benefit is the greater sin, but not to confer it is the earlier. We cannot propose to ourselves a more glorious example than that of the Almighty, who neither needs nor expects anything from us; and yet he is continually showering down and distributing his

mercies and his grace among us, not only for our necessities, but also for our delights; as fruits and seasons, rain and sunshine, veins of water and of metal; and all this to the wicked as well as to the good, and without any other end than the common benefit of the receivers.

With what face then can we be mercenary one to another, that have received all things from Divine Providence gratis? It is a common saying, "I gave such or such a man so much money: I would I had thrown it into the sea;" and yet the merchant trades again after a piracy, and the banker ventures afresh after a bad security. He that will do no good offices after a disappointment, must stand still, and do just nothing at all. The plow goes on after a barren year: and while the ashes are yet warm, we raise a new house upon the ruins of a former. What obligations can be greater than those which children receive from their parents? and yet should we give them over in their infancy, it were all to no purpose. Benefits, like grain, must be followed from the seed to the harvest.

I will not so much as leave any place for ingratitude. I will pursue, and I will encompass the receiver with benefits; so that let him look which way he will, his benefactor shall be still in his eye, even when he would avoid his own memory: and then I will remit to one man because he calls for it; to another, because he does not; to a third, because he is wicked; and to a fourth, because he is the contrary. I will cast away a good turn upon a bad man, and I will requite a good one; the one because it is my duty, and the other that I may not be in debt. I do not love to hear any man complain that he has met with a thankless man. If he has met but with one, he has either been very fortunate or very careful.

And yet care is not sufficient: for there is no way to escape the hazard of losing a benefit but the not bestowing of it, and to neglect a duty to myself for fear another should abuse it. It is another's fault if he be ungrateful, but it is mine if I do not give. To find one thankful man, I will oblige a great many that are not so. The business of mankind would be at a stand, if we should do nothing for fear of miscarriages in matters of certain event. I will try and believe all things, before I give any man over, and do all that is possible that I may not lose a good office and a friend together. What do I know but he may misunderstand the obligation? business may have put it out of his head, or taken him off from it: he may have slipt his opportunity.

I will say, in excuse of human weakness, that one man's memory is not sufficient for all things; it is but a limited capacity, so as to hold only so much, and no more: and when it is once full, it must let out part of what it had to take in anything beside; and the last benefit ever sits closest to us. In our youth we forget the obligations of our infancy, and when we are men we forget those of our youth. If nothing will prevail, let him keep what he has and welcome; but let him have a care of returning evil for good, and making it dangerous for a man to do his duty. I would no more give a

benefit for such a man, than I would lend money to a beggarly spendthrift; or deposit any in the hands of a known knight of the post.

However the case stands, an ungrateful person is never the better for a reproach; if he be already hardened in his wickedness, he gives no heed to it; and if he be not, it turns a doubtful modesty into an incorrigible impudence: beside that, he watches for all ill words to pick a quarrel with them. As the benefactor is not to upbraid a benefit, so neither to delay it: the one is tiresome, and the other odious. We must not hold men in hand, as physicians and surgeons do their patients, and keep them longer in fear and pain than needs, only to magnify the cure. A generous man gives easily, and receives as he gives, but never exacts. He rejoices in the return, and judges favorably of it whatever it be, and contents himself with bare thanks for a requital.

It is a harder matter with some to get the benefit after it is promised than the first promise of it, there must be so many friends made in the case. One must be desired to solicit another; and he must be entreated to move a third; and a fourth must be at last besought to receive it; so that the author, upon the upshot, has the least share in the obligation. It is then welcome when it comes free, and without deduction; and no man either to intercept or hinder, or to detain it. And let it be of such a quality too, that it be not only delightful in the receiving, but after it is received; which it will certainly be, if we do but observe this rule, never to do any thing for another which we would not honestly desire for ourselves.

## XVI.

### HOW THE RECEIVER OUGHT TO BEHAVE HIMSELF.

There are certain rules in common betwixt the giver and the receiver. We must do both cheerfully, that the giver may receive the fruit of his benefit in the very act of bestowing it. It is a just ground of satisfaction to see a friend pleased; but it is much more to make him so. The intention of the one is to be suited to the intention of the other; and there must be an emulation betwixt them, whether shall oblige most. Let the one say, that he has received a benefit, and let the other persuade himself that he has not returned it. Let the one say, I am paid, and the other, I am yet in your debt; let the benefactor acquit the receiver, and the receiver bind himself. The frankness of the discharge heightens the obligation. It is in conversation as in a tennis-court; benefits are to be tossed like balls; the longer the rest, the better are the gamesters.

The giver, in some respect, has the odds, because (as in a race) he starts first, and the other must use great diligence to overtake him. The return must be larger than the first obligation to come up to it; and it is a kind of ingratitude not to render it with interest. In a matter of money, it is a common thing to pay a debt out of course, and before it be due; but we account ourselves to owe nothing for a good office; whereas the benefit increases by delay. So insensible are we of the most important affair of human life! That man were doubtless in a miserable condition, that could neither see, nor hear, nor taste, nor feel, nor smell; but how much more unhappy is he then that, wanting a sense of benefits, loses the greatest comfort in nature in the bliss of giving and receiving them?

He that takes a benefit as it is meant is in the right; for the benefactor has then his end, and his only end, when the receiver is grateful. The more glorious part, in appearance, is that of the giver; but the receiver has undoubtedly the harder game to play in many regards. There are some from whom I would not accept of a benefit; that is to say, from those upon whom I would not bestow one. For why should I not scorn to receive a benefit where I am ashamed to own it? and I would yet be more tender too, where I receive, than where I give; for it is no torment to be in debt where a man has no mind to pay; as it is the greatest delight imaginable to be engaged by a friend, whom I should yet have a kindness for; if I were never so much disobliged.

It is a pain to an honest and a generous mind to lie under a duty of affection against inclination. I do not speak here of wise men, that love to do what they ought to do; that have their passions at command; that prescribe laws to themselves, and keep them when they have done; but of men in a state of imperfection, that may have a good will perhaps to be honest, and yet be overborne by the contumacy of their

affections. We must therefore have a care to whom we become obliged; and I would be much stricter yet in the choice of a creditor for benefits than for money. In the one case, it is but paying what I had, and the debt is discharged; in the other, I do not only owe more, but when I have paid that, I am still in arrear: and this law is the very foundation of friendship.

I will suppose myself a prisoner; and a notorious villain offers to lay down a good sum of money for my redemption. First, Shall I make use of this money or not? Secondly, If I do, what return shall I make him for it? To the first point, I will take it; but only as a debt; not as a benefit, that shall ever tie me to a friendship with him; and, secondly, my acknowledgment shall be only correspondent to such an obligation. It is a school question, whether or not Brutus, that thought Cæsar not fit to live, (and put himself at the head of a conspiracy against him,) could honestly have received his life from Cæsar, if he had fallen into Cæsar's power, without examining what reason moved him to that action? How great a man soever he was in other cases, without dispute he was extremely out in this, and below the dignity of his profession.

For a Stoic to fear the name of a king, when yet monarchy is the best state of government; or there to hope for liberty, where so great rewards are propounded, both for tyrants and their slaves; for him to imagine ever to bring the laws to their former state, where so many thousand lives had been lost in the contest, not so much whether they should serve or not, but who should be their master: he was strangely mistaken, in the nature and reason of things, to fancy, that when Julius was gone, somebody else would not start up in his place, when there was yet a Tarquin found, after so many kings that were destroyed, either by sword or thunder: and yet the resolution is, that he might have received it, but not as a benefit; for at that rate I owe my life to every man that does not take it away.

Græcinus Julius (whom Caligula put to death out of a pure malice to his virtue) had a considerable sum of money sent him from Fabius Persicus (a man of great and infamous example) as a contribution towards the expense of plays and other public entertainments; but Julius would not receive it; and some of his friends that had an eye more upon the present than the presenter, asked him, with some freedom, what he meant by refusing it? "Why," says he, "do you think that I will take money where I would not take so much as a glass of wine?" After this Rebilus (a man of the same stamp) sent him a greater sum upon the same score. "You must excuse me," says he to the messenger, "for I would not take any thing of Persicus neither." To match this scruple of receiving money with another of keeping it; and the sum not above three pence, or a groat at most.

There was a certain Pythagorean that contracted with a cobbler for a pair of shoes, and some three or four days after, going to pay him his money, the shop was shut up; and when he had knocked a great while at the door, "Friend," says a fellow, "you

may hammer your heart out there, for the man that you look for is dead. And when our friends are dead, we hear no more news of them; but yours, that are to live again, will shift well enough," (alluding to Pythagora's transmigration). Upon this the philosopher went away, with his money chinking in his hand, and well enough content to save it: at last, his conscience took check at it; and, upon reflection, "Though the man be dead," says he, "to others, he is alive to thee; pay him what thou owest him:" and so he went back presently, and thrust it into his shop through the chink of the door.

Whatever we owe, it is our part to find where to pay it, and to do it without asking too; for whether the creditor be good or bad, the debt is still the same. If a benefit be forced upon me, as from a tyrant, or a superior, where it may be dangerous to refuse, this is rather obeying than receiving, where the necessity destroys the choice. The way to know what I have a mind to do, is to leave me at liberty whether I will do it or not; but it is yet a benefit, if a man does me good in spite of my teeth; as it is none, if I do any man good against my will. A man may both hate and yet receive a benefit at the same time; the money is never the worse, because a fool that is not read in coins refuses to take it.

If the thing be good for the receiver, and so intended, no matter how ill it is taken. Nay, the receiver may be obliged, and not know it; but there can be no benefit which is unknown to the giver. Neither will I, upon any terms, receive a benefit from a worthy person that may do him a mischief: it is the part of an enemy to save himself by doing another man harm. But whatever we do, let us be sure always to keep a grateful mind. It is not enough to say, what requital shall a poor man offer to a prince; or a slave to his patron; when it is the glory of gratitude that it depends only upon the good will? Suppose a man defends my fame; delivers me from beggary; saves my life; or gives me liberty, that is more than life; how shall I be grateful to that man?

I will receive, cherish, and rejoice in the benefit. Take it kindly, and it is required: not that the debt itself is discharged, but it is nevertheless a discharge of the conscience. I will yet distinguish betwixt the debtor that becomes insolvent by expenses upon whores and dice, and another that is undone by fire or thieves; nor do I take this gratitude for a payment, but there is no danger, I presume, of being arrested for such a debt. In the return of benefits let us be ready and cheerful but not pressing. There is as much greatness of mind in the owing of a good turn as in doing of it; and we must no more force a requital out of season than be wanting in it.

He that precipitates a return, does as good as say, "I am weary of being in this man's debt:" not but that the hastening of a requital, as a good office, is a commendable disposition, but it is another thing to do it as a discharge; for it looks like casting off a heavy and a troublesome burden. It is for the benefactor to say when he will receive it; no matter for the opinion of the world, so long as I gratify my own

conscience; for I cannot be mistaken in myself, but another may. He that is over solicitous to return a benefit, thinks the other so likewise to receive it. If he had rather we should keep it, why should we refuse, and presume to dispose of his treasure, who may call it in, or let it lie out, at his choice?

It is as much a fault to receive what I ought not, as not to give what I ought; for the giver has the privilege of choosing his own time of receiving. Some are too proud in the conferring of benefits; others, in the receiving of them; which is, to say the truth, intolerable. The same rule serves both sides, as in the case of a father and a son; a husband and a wife; one friend or acquaintance and another, where the duties are known and common. There are some that will not receive a benefit but in private, nor thank you for it but in your ear, or in a corner; there must be nothing under hand and seal, no brokers, notaries, or witnesses, in the case: that is not so much a scruple of modesty as a kind of denying the obligation, and only a less hardened ingratitude.

Some receive benefits so coldly and indifferently, that a man would think the obligation lay on the other side: as who should say, "Well, since you will needs have it so, I am content to take it." Some again so carelessly, as if they hardly knew of any such thing, whereas we should rather aggravate the matter: "You cannot imagine how many you have obliged in this act: there never was so great, so kind, so seasonable a courtesy." Furnius never gained so much upon Augustus as by a speech, upon the getting of his father's pardon for siding with Antony: "This grace," says he, "is the only injury that ever Cæsar did me: for it has put me upon a necessity of living and dying ungrateful." It is safer to affront some people than to oblige them; for the better a man deserves, the worse they will speak of him: as if the possessing of open hatred to their benefactors were an argument that they lie under no obligation.

Some people are so sour and ill-natured, that they take it for an affront to have an obligation or a return offered them, to the discouragement both of bounty and gratitude together. The not doing, and the not receiving, of benefits, are equally a mistake. He that refuses a new one, seems to be offended at an old one: and yet sometimes I would neither return a benefit, no, nor so much as receive it, if I might.

## XVII.

### OF GRATITUDE.

He that preaches gratitude, pleads the cause both of God and man; for without it we can neither be sociable nor religious. There is a strange delight in the very purpose and contemplation of it, as well as in the action; when I can say to myself, "I love my benefactor; what is there in this world that I would not do to oblige and serve him?" Where I have not the means of a requital, the very meditation of it is sufficient. A man is nevertheless an artist for not having his tools about him; or a musician, because he wants his fiddle: nor is he the less brave because his hands are bound; or the worse pilot for being upon dry ground. If I have only will to be grateful, I am so.

Let me be upon the wheel, or under the hand of the executioner; let me be burnt limb by limb, and my whole body dropping in the flames, a good conscience supports me in all extremes; nay, it is comfortable even in death itself; for when we come to approach that point, what care do we take to summon and call to mind all our benefactors, and the good offices they have done us, that we leave the world fair, and set our minds in order? Without gratitude, we can neither have security, peace, nor reputation: and it is not therefore the less desirable, because it draws many adventitious benefits along with it.

Suppose the sun, the moon, and the stars, had no other business than only to pass over our heads, without any effect upon our minds or bodies; without any regard to our health, fruits, or seasons; a man could hardly lift up his eyes towards the heavens without wonder and veneration, to see so many millions of radiant lights, and to observe their courses and revolutions, even without any respect to the common good of the universe. But when we come to consider that Providence and Nature are still at work when we sleep, with the admirable force and operation of their influences and motions, we cannot then but acknowledge their ornament to be the least part of their value; and that they are more to be esteemed for their virtues than for their splendor. Their main end and use is matter of life and necessity, though they may seem to us more considerable for their majesty and beauty.

And so it is with gratitude; we love it rather for secondary ends, than for itself. No man can be grateful without contemning those things that put the common people out of their wits. We must go into banishment; lay down our lives; beggar and expose ourselves to reproaches; nay, it is often seen, that loyalty suffers the punishment due to rebellion, and that treason receives the rewards of fidelity. As the benefits of it are many and great, so are the hazards; which is the case more or less of all other virtues: and it were hard, if this, above the rest, should be both painful and fruitless: so that though we may go currently on with it in a smooth way, we must yet prepare and resolve (if need be) to force our passage to it, even if the way

were covered with thorns and serpents; and fall back, fall edge, we must be grateful still: grateful for the virtue's sake, and grateful over and above upon the point of interest; for it preserves old friends, and gains new ones.

It is not our business to fish for one benefit with another; and by bestowing a little to get more; or to oblige for any sort of expedience, but because I ought to do it, and because I love it, and that to such a degree, that if I could not be grateful without appearing the contrary, if I could not return a benefit without being suspected of doing an injury; in despite of infamy itself, I would yet be grateful. No man is greater in my esteem than he that ventures the fame to preserve the conscience of an honest man; the one is but imaginary, the other solid and inestimable. I cannot call him grateful, who in the instant of returning one benefit has his eye upon another. He that is grateful for profit or fear, is like a woman that is honest only upon the score of reputation.

As gratitude is a necessary and a glorious, so it is also an obvious, a cheap, and an easy virtue; so obvious, that wheresoever there is a life there is a place for it—so cheap that the covetous man may be grateful without expense—and so easy that the sluggard may be so, likewise, without labor. And yet it is not without its niceties too; for there may be a time, a place or occasion wherein I ought not to return a benefit; nay, wherein I may better disown it than deliver it. Let it be understood, by the way, that it is one thing to be grateful for a good office, and another thing to return it—the good will is enough in one case, being as much as the one side demands and the other promises; but the effect is requisite in the other.

The physician that has done his best is acquitted though the patient dies, and so is the advocate, though the client may lose his cause. The general of an army, though the battle be lost, is yet worthy of commendation, if he has discharged all the parts of a prudent commander; in this case, the one acquits himself, though the other be never the better for it. He is a grateful man that is always willing and ready: and he that seeks for all means and occasions of requiting a benefit, though without attaining his end, does a great deal more than the man that, without any trouble, makes an immediate return.

Suppose my friend a prisoner, and that I have sold my estate for his ransom; I put to sea in foul weather, and upon a coast that is pestered with pirates; my friend happens to be redeemed before I come to the place; my gratitude is as much to be esteemed as if he had been a prisoner; and if I had been taken and robbed myself, it would still have been the same case. Nay, there is a gratitude in the very countenance; for an honest man bears his conscience in his face, and propounds the requital of a good turn in the very moment of receiving it; he is cheerful and confident; and, in the possession of a true friendship, delivered from all anxiety. There is this difference betwixt a thankful man and an unthankful, the one is always pleased in the good he has done, and the other only once in what he has received.

There must be a benignity in the estimation even of the smallest offices; and such a modesty as appears to be obliged in whatsoever it gives. As it is indeed a very great benefit, the opportunity of doing a good office to a worthy man. He that attends to the present, and remembers what is past, shall never be ungrateful. But who shall judge in the case? for a man may be grateful without making a return, and ungrateful with it. Our best way is to help every thing by a fair interpretation; and wheresoever there is a doubt, to allow it the most favorable construction; for he that is exceptionous at words, or looks, has a mind to pick a quarrel.

For my own part, when I come to cast up my account, and know what I owe, and to whom, though I make my return sooner to some, and later to others, as occasion or fortune will give me leave, yet I will be just to all: I will be grateful to God, to man, to those that have obliged me: nay, even to those that have obliged my friends. I am bound in honor and in conscience to be thankful for what I have received; and if it be not yet full, it is some pleasure still that I may hope for more. For the requital of a favor there must be virtue, occasion, means, and fortune. It is a common thing to screw up justice to the pitch of an injury. A man may be over-righteous; and why not over-grateful too?

There is a mischievous excess, that borders so close upon ingratitude, that it is no easy matter to distinguish the one from the other: but, in regard that there is good-will in the bottom of it, (however distempered, for it is effectually but kindness out of the wits,) we shall discourse it under the title of Gratitude mistaken.

## XVIII.

### GRATITUDE MISTAKEN.

To refuse a good office, not so much because we do not need it, as because we would not be indebted for it, is a kind of fantastical ingratitude, and somewhat akin to that nicety of humor, on the other side, of being over-grateful; only it lies another way, and seems to be the more pardonable ingratitude of the two. Some people take it for a great instance of their good-will to be wishing their benefactors such or such a mischief; only, forsooth, that they themselves may be the happy instruments of their release. These men do like extravagant lovers, that take it for a great proof of their affection to wish one another banished, beggared, or diseased, that they might have the opportunity of interposing to their relief. What difference is there betwixt such wishing and cursing? such an affection and a mortal hatred?

The intent is good, you will say, but this is a misapplication of it. Let such a one fall into my power, or into the hands of his enemies, his creditors, or the common people, and no mortal be able to rescue him but myself: let his life, his liberty, and his reputation, lie all at stake, and no creature but myself in condition to succor him; and why all this, but because he has obliged me, and I would requite him? If this be gratitude to propound jails, shackles, slavery, war, beggary, to the man that you would requite, what would you do where you are ungrateful? This way of proceeding, over and above that it is impious in itself, is likewise over-hasty and unseasonable: for he that goes too fast is as much to blame as he that does not move at all, (to say nothing of the injustice,) for if I had never been obliged, I should never have wished it.

There are seasons wherein a benefit is neither to be received nor requited. To press a return upon me when I do not desire it, is unmannerly; but it is worse to force me to desire it. How rigorous would he be to exact a requital; who is thus eager to return it! To wish a man in distress that I may relieve him, is first to wish him miserable: to wish that he may stand in need of anybody, is against him; and to wish that he may stand in need of me, is for myself: so that my business is not so much a charity to my friend as the cancelling of a bond; nay, it is half-way the wish of an enemy. It is barbarous to wish a man in chains, slavery, or want, only to bring him out again: let me rather wish him powerful and happy, and myself indebted to him!

By nature we are prone to mercy, humanity compassion; may we be excited to be more so by the number of the grateful! may their number increase, and may we have no need of trying them! It is not for an honest man to make way to a good office by a crime: as if a pilot should pray for a tempest, that he might prove his skill: or a general wish his army routed, that he may show himself a great commander in recovering the day. It is throwing a man into a river to take him out again. It is an

obligation, I confess, to cure a wound or a disease; but to make that wound or disease on purpose to cure it, is a most perverse ingratitude. It is barbarous even to an enemy, much more to a friend; for it is not so much to do him a kindness, as to put him in need of it.

Of the two, let me rather be a scar than a wound; and yet it would be better to have it neither. Rome had been little beholden to Scipio if he had prolonged the Punic war that he might have the finishing of it at last, or to the Decii for dying for their country, if they had first brought it to the last extremity of needing their devotion. It may be a good contemplation, but it is a lewd wish. Æneas had never been surnamed the Pious, if he had wished the ruin of his country, only that he might have the honor of taking his father out of the fire. It is the scandal of a physician to make work, and irritate a disease, and to torment his patient, for the reputation of his cure.

If a man should openly imprecate poverty, captivity, fear, or danger, upon a person that he has been obliged to, would not the whole world condemn him for it? And what is the difference, but the one is only a private wish, and the other a public declaration? Rutilius was told in his exile, that, for his comfort, there would be ere-long a civil war, that would bring all the banished men home again. "God forbid," says he, "for I had rather my country should blush for my banishment than mourn for my return." How much more honorable it is to owe cheerfully, than to pay dishonestly? It is the wish of an enemy to take a town that he may preserve it, and to be victorious that he may forgive; but the mercy comes after the cruelty; beside that it is an injury both to God and man; for the man must be first afflicted by Heaven to be relieved by me.

So that we impose the cruelty upon God, and take the compassion to ourselves; and at the best, it is but a curse that makes way for a blessing; the bare wish is an injury; and if it does not take effect, it is because Heaven has not heard our prayers; or if they should succeed, the fear itself is a torment; and it is much more desirable to have a firm and unshaken security. It is friendly to wish it in your power to oblige me, if ever I chance to need it; but it is unkind to wish me miserable that I may need it. How much more pious is it, and humane, to wish that I may never want the occasion of obliging, nor the means of doing it; nor ever have reason to repent of what I have done?

# XIX.

## OF INGRATITUDE.

Ingratitude is of all the crimes, that which we are to account the most venial in others, and the most unpardonable in ourselves. It is impious to the highest degree; for it makes us fight against our children and our altars. There are, there ever were, and there ever will be criminals of all sorts, as murderers, tyrants, thieves, adulterers, traitors, robbers and sacrilegious persons; but there is hardly any notorious crime without a mixture of ingratitude. It disunites mankind, and breaks the very pillars of society; and yet so far is this prodigious wickedness from being any wonder to us, that even thankfulness itself were much the greater of the two; for men are deterred from it by labor, expense, laziness, business; or else diverted from it by lust, envy, ambition, pride, levity, rashness, fear; nay, by the very shame of confessing what they have received.

And the unthankful man has nothing to say for himself all this while, for there needs neither pains or fortune for the discharge of his duty, beside the inward anxiety and torment when a man's conscience makes him afraid of his own thoughts. To speak against the ungrateful is to rail against mankind, for even those that complain are guilty: nor do I speak only of those that do not live up to the strict rule of virtue; but mankind itself is degenerated and lost. We live unthankfully in this world, and we go struggling and murmuring out of it, dissatisfied with our lot, whereas we should be grateful for the blessings we have enjoyed, and account that sufficient which Providence has provided for us; a little more time may make our lives longer but not happier, and whensoever it is the pleasure of God to call us, we must obey; and yet all this while we go on quarreling at the world for what we find in ourselves, and we are yet more unthankful to Heaven than we are to one another.

What benefit can be great now to that man that despises the bounties of his Maker? We would be as strong as elephants, as swift as bucks, as light as birds—and we complain that we have not the sagacity of dogs, the sight of eagles, the long life of ravens—nay, that we are not immortal, and endued with the knowledge of things to come: nay, we take it ill that we are not gods upon earth, never considering the advantages of our condition, or the benignity of Providence in the comforts that we enjoy. We subdue the strongest of creatures and overtake the fleetest—we reclaim the fiercest and outwit the craftiest. We are within one degree of heaven itself, and yet we are not satisfied. Since there is not any one creature which we had rather be, we take it ill that we cannot draw the united excellencies of all other creatures into ourselves.

Why are we not rather thankful to that goodness which has subjected the whole creation to our use and service? The principal causes of ingratitude are pride and

self-conceit, avarice, envy, etc. It is a familiar exclamation, "It is true he did this or that for me, but it came so late, and it was so little, I had even as good have been without it—if he had not given it to me, he must have given it to somebody else—it was nothing out of his pocket." Nay, we are so ungrateful, that he that gives us all we have, if he leaves any thing to himself, we reckon that he does us an injury. It cost Julius Cæsar his life by the disappointment of his insatiable companions; and yet he reserved nothing of all that he got to himself but the liberty of disposing of it.

There is no benefit so large but malignity will still lessen it; none so narrow, which a good interpretation will not enlarge. No man shall ever be grateful that views a benefit on the wrong side, or takes a good office by the wrong handle. The avaricious man is naturally ungrateful, for he never thinks he has enough, but, without considering what he has, only minds what he covets. Some pretend want of power to make a competent return, and you shall find in others a kind of graceless modesty, that makes a man ashamed of requiting an obligation, because it is a confession that he has received one. Not to return one good office for another is inhuman; but to return evil for good is diabolical. There are too many even of this sort, who, the more they owe, the more they hate.

There is nothing more dangerous than to oblige those people; for when they are conscious of not paying the debt, they wish the creditor out of the way. It is a mortal hatred, that which arises from the shame of an abused benefit. When we are on the asking side, what a deal of cringing there is, and profession! "Well, I shall never forget this favor, it will be an eternal obligation to me." But within a while the note is changed, and we hear no more words of it, until, by little and little, it is all quite forgotten. So long as we stand in need of a benefit, there is nothing dearer to us; nor anything cheaper, when we have received it.

And yet a man may as well refuse to deliver up a sum of money that is left him in trust without a suit, as not to return a good office without asking; and when we have no value any farther for the benefit, we do commonly care as little for the author. People follow their interest: one man is grateful for his convenience, and another man is ungrateful for the same reason. Some are ungrateful to their own country, and their country no less ungrateful to others; so that the complaint of ingratitude reaches all men. Doth not the son wish for the death of his father, the husband for that of his wife, etc. But who can look for gratitude in an age of so many gaping and craving appetites, where all people take, and none give?

In an age of license to all sorts of vanity and wickedness, as lust, gluttony, avarice, envy, ambition, sloth, insolence, levity, contumacy, fear, rashness, private discords and public evils, extravagant and groundless wishes, vain confidences, sickly affections, shameless impieties, rapine authorized, and the violation of all things, sacred and profane: obligations are pursued with sword and poison; benefits are turned into crimes, and that blood most seditiously spilt for which every honest man

should expose his own. Those that should be the preservers of their country are the destroyers of it; and it is a matter of dignity to trample upon the government: the sword gives the law, and mercenaries take up arms against their masters. Among these turbulent and unruly motions, what hope is there of finding honesty or good faith, which is the quietest of all virtues?

There is no more lively image of human life than that of a conquered city; there is neither mercy, modesty, nor religion; and if we forget our lives, we may well forget our benefits. The world abounds with examples of ungrateful persons, and no less with those of ungrateful governments. Was not Catiline ungrateful? whose malice aimed, not only at the mastering of his country, but at the total destruction of it, by calling in an inveterate and vindictive enemy from beyond the Alps, to wreak their long-thirsted-for revenge, and to sacrifice the lives of as many noble Romans as might serve to answer and appease the ghosts of the slaughtered Gauls? Was not Marius ungrateful, that, from a common soldier, being raised up to a consul, not only gave the world for civil bloodshed and massacres, but was himself the sign of the execution; and every man he met in the streets, to whom he did not stretch out his right hand, was murdered?

And was not Sylla ungrateful too? that when he had waded up to the gates in human blood, carried the outrage into the city, and there most barbarously cut two entire legions to pieces in a corner, not only after the victory, but most perfidiously after quarter given them? Good God! that ever any man should not only escape with impunity, but receive a reward for so horrid a villainy! Was not Pompey ungrateful too? who, after three consulships, three triumphs, and so many honors, usurped before his time, split the commonwealth into three parts, and brought it to such a pass, that there was no hope of safety but by slavery only; forsooth, to abate the envy of his power, he took other partners with him into the government, as if that which was not lawful for any one might have been allowable for more; dividing and distributing the provinces, and breaking all into a triumvirate, reserving still two parts of the three in his own family.

And was not Cæsar ungrateful also, though to give him his due, he was a man of his word; merciful in his victories, and never killed any man but with his sword in his hand? Let us therefore forgive one another. Only one word more now for the shame of ungrateful Governments. Was not Camillus banished? Scipio dismissed? and Cicero exiled and plundered? But, what is all this to those who are so mad, and to dispute even the goodness of Heaven, which gives us all, and expects nothing again, but continues giving to the most unthankful and complaining?

## XX.

### THERE CAN BE NO LAW AGAINST INGRATITUDE.

Ingratitude is so dangerous to itself, and so detestable to other people, that nature, one would think, had sufficiently provided against it, without need of any other law. For every ungrateful man is his own enemy, and it seems superfluous to compel a man to be kind to himself, and to follow in his own inclinations. This, of all wickedness imaginable, is certainly the vice which does the most divide and distract human nature. Without the exercise and the commerce of mutual offices, we can be neither happy nor safe for it is only society that secures us: take us one by one, and we are a prey even to brutes as well as to one another. Nature has brought us into the world naked and unarmed; we have not the teeth or the paws of lions or bears to make ourselves terrible; but by the two blessings of reason and union, we secure and defend ourselves against violence and fortune.

This it is that makes man the master of all other creatures, who otherwise were scarce a match for the weakest of them. This it is that comforts us in sickness, in age, in misery, in pains, and in the worst of calamities. Take away this combination, and mankind is dissociated, and falls to pieces. It is true, that there is no law established against this abominable vice; but we cannot say yet that it escapes unpunished, for a public hatred is certainly the greatest of all penalties; over and above that we lose the most valuable blessings of life, in the not bestowing and receiving of benefits. If ingratitude were to be punished by a law, it would discredit the obligation; for a benefit to be given, not lent: and if we have no return at all, there is no just cause of complaint: for gratitude were no virtue, if there were any danger in being ungrateful.

There are halters, I know, hooks and gibbets, provided for homicide poison, sacrilege, and rebellion; but ingratitude (here upon earth) is only punished in the schools; all farther pains and inflictions being wholly remitted to divine justice. And, if a man may judge of the conscience by the countenance the ungrateful man is never without a canker at his heart; his mind an aspect is sad and solicitous; whereas the other is always cheerful and serene. As there are no laws extant against ingratitude, so is it utterly impossible to contrive any, that in all circumstances shall reach it. If it were actionable, there would not be courts enough in the whole world to try the causes in.

There can be no setting a day for the requiting of benefits as for the payment of money, nor any estimate upon the benefits themselves; but the whole matter rests in the conscience of both parties: and then there are so many degrees of it, that the same rule will never serve all. Beside that, to proportion it as the benefit is greater or less, will be both impracticable and without reason. One good turn saves my life;

another, my freedom, or peradventure my very soul. How shall any law now suit a punishment to an ingratitude under these differing degrees? It must not be said in benefits as in bonds, Pay what you owe. How shall a man pay life, health, credit, security, in kind? There can be no set rule to bound that infinite variety of cases, which are more properly the subject of humanity and religion than of law and public justice.

There would be disputes also about the benefit itself, which must totally depend upon the courtesy of the judge; for no law imaginable can set it forth. One man gives me an estate; another only lends me a sword, and that sword preserves my life. Nay, the very same thing, several ways done, changes the quality of the obligation. A word, a tone, a look, makes a great alteration in the case. How shall we judge then, and determine a matter which does not depend upon the fact itself, but upon the force and intention of it? Some things are reputed benefits, not for their value, but because we desire them: and there are offices of as much greater value, that we do not reckon upon at all.

If ingratitude were liable to a law, we must never give but before witnesses, which would overthrow the dignity of the benefit: and then the punishment must either be equal where the crimes are unequal, or else it must be unrighteous, so that blood must answer for blood. He that is ungrateful for my saving his life must forfeit his own. And what can be more inhuman than that benefits should conclude in sanguinary events? A man saves my life, and I am ungrateful for it. Shall I be punished in my purse? that is too little; if it be less than the benefit, it is unjust, and it must be capital to be made equal to it. There are, moreover, certain privileges granted to parents, that can never be reduced to a common rule. Their injuries may be cognizable, but not their benefits.

The diversity of cases is too large and intricate to be brought within the prospect of a law: so that it is much more equitable to punish none than to punish all alike. What if a man follows a good office with an injury; whether or no shall this quit scores? or who shall compare them, and weigh the one against the other? There is another thing yet which perhaps we do not dream of: not one man upon the face of the earth would escape, and yet every man would expect to be his judge. Once again, we are all of us ungrateful; and the number does not only take away the shame, but gives authority and protection to the wickedness.

It is thought reasonable by some, that there should be a law against ingratitude; for, say they, it is common for one city to upbraid another, and to claim that of posterity which was bestowed upon their ancestors; but this is only clamor without reason. It is objected by others, as a discouragement to good offices, if men shall not be made answerable for them; but I say, on the other side, that no man would accept of a benefit upon those terms. He that gives is prompted to it by a goodness of mind, and the generosity of the action is lessened by the caution: for it is his desire that the

receiver should please himself, and owe no more than he thinks fit. But what if this might occasion fewer benefits, so long as they would be franker? nor is there any hurt in putting a check upon rashness and profusion.

In answer to this; men will be careful enough when they oblige without a law: nor is it possible for a judge ever to set us right in it; or indeed, anything else, but the faith of the receiver. The honor of a benefit is this way preserved, which is otherwise profaned, when it comes to the mercenary, and made matter of contention. We are even forward enough of ourselves to wrangle, without necessary provocations. It would be well, I think, if moneys might pass upon the same conditions with other benefits, and the payment remitted to the conscience, without formalizing upon bills and securities: but human wisdom has rather advised with convenience than virtue; and chosen rather to force honesty than expect it.

For every paltry sum of money there must be bonds, witnesses, counterparts, powers, etc., which is no other than a shameful confession of fraud and wickedness, when more credit is given to our seals than to our minds; and caution taken lest he that has received the money should deny it. Were it not better now to be deceived by some than to suspect all? what is the difference, at this rate, betwixt the benefactor and the usurer, save only that in the benefactor's case there is nobody stands bound?

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