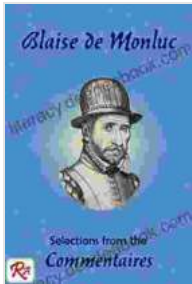


# Selections From Charles Cotton's Translation Of The Commentaires Chosen By Evans



## Blaise de Monluc: Selections from Charles Cotton's translation of the Commentaires chosen by A. W. Evans

by David J. Holcombe

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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File size : 6323 KB  
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Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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Michel de Montaigne, a 16th-century French philosopher and essayist, is renowned for his profound insights into the human condition. His seminal work, "Essais," has been translated into numerous languages, captivating readers for centuries. Among the most notable translations is that of Charles Cotton, an English poet and writer. In 1685, Cotton published his translation of Montaigne's "Essais," which has since gained recognition for its elegance and accessibility.

This article aims to explore a selection of essays from Cotton's translation, chosen by Evans. These essays delve into fundamental philosophical themes, inviting us to question our beliefs, explore our inner selves, and reflect on the complexities of human existence.

## **The Nature of Man**

In the essay titled "Of the Inconstancy of Our Actions," Montaigne examines the inconsistencies and contradictions within human behavior. He argues that our actions are often motivated by external factors rather than our true nature, leading to a state of flux and uncertainty. Montaigne writes:

> "We turn and wind, and change and shift from one thing to another, so that what we like to-day, we hate to-morrow: and presently after we return to our first choice: which diversity and inconstancy is more manifest in those humours which are not purely natural."

This passage highlights Montaigne's skepticism towards the notion of a fixed human nature. He suggests that our actions are often governed by whims, desires, and the influence of our surroundings, rather than any inherent essence.

## **The Power of Doubt**

Montaigne's skepticism extends beyond our actions to encompass our beliefs and knowledge. In the essay "Apology for Raimond Sebond," he argues that human reason is limited and fallible, and that we should embrace doubt as a means of understanding the world. Montaigne writes:

> "He that would believe nothing but what he can conceive, would fall short very much of believing; for we can conceive very little of what we see; and yet less of what we do not see."

By questioning our assumptions and challenging established truths, Montaigne encourages us to be open-minded and receptive to new

perspectives. He suggests that doubt can lead to a deeper understanding of our own limitations and the complexities of the world around us.

## **The Importance of Self-Knowledge**

Central to Montaigne's philosophy is the importance of self-knowledge. He believed that true wisdom lies in understanding our own strengths, weaknesses, and desires. In the essay "Of Solitude," Montaigne writes:

> "The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself."

Montaigne argues that by spending time alone, reflecting on our thoughts and actions, we can gain a deeper understanding of who we truly are. This process of self-examination allows us to make conscious choices and live in accordance with our values.

## **The Complexity of Human Relationships**

Montaigne also explores the complexities of human relationships in his essay "Of Friendship." He writes about the importance of finding a true friend, someone with whom we can share our innermost thoughts and feelings. Montaigne writes:

> "There is no one thing so necessary to man's life as friendship."

However, Montaigne also recognizes the challenges and pitfalls of relationships. He warns against forming superficial bonds and emphasizes the importance of being honest and genuine with those we love.

## **Legacy and Significance**

Charles Cotton's translation of Montaigne's "Essais" has had a profound impact on English literature and philosophy. Cotton's eloquent prose captures the essence of Montaigne's thought, making his ideas accessible to a wider audience. The selected essays discussed in this article provide a glimpse into the depth and breadth of Montaigne's philosophical musings.

Through his exploration of the nature of man, the power of doubt, the importance of self-knowledge, and the complexity of human relationships, Montaigne offers us a timeless perspective on the human condition. His essays continue to resonate with readers today, inspiring us to question our assumptions, embrace uncertainty, and strive for a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Selections from Charles Cotton's translation of Montaigne's "Commentaires" chosen by Evans offer a rich and insightful exploration of Montaigne's philosophical thought. These essays challenge our assumptions, invite us to embrace doubt, and encourage us to seek a deeper understanding of our own nature and the complexities of human existence. Montaigne's timeless wisdom continues to inspire and provoke, reminding us of the importance of skepticism, self-knowledge, and the pursuit of meaningful human connections.



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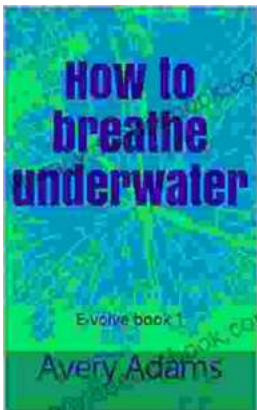
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