

13. If we would live happily we must likewise take care that we be *no busy bodies*. For such people are very unacceptable to others and uneasy to themselves. They have a great deal to do, when in truth they do nothing but trouble themselves and the neighbourhood. This is Antonious's rule, "Do not trouble thyself about other men's matters, unless it be for the common benefit." For example, saith he, do not still be fancying what such a person is doing, and why he doth this or that, and what he designs and contrives with such like things. This is but to wander from one's self, and to forsake the custody of his own soul. Therefore avoid these superfluous thoughts, which belong not unto thee. For upon this depends as Seneca hath observed, that *terribilimum vitium*, most foul and odious vice of listening after, and inquisitiveness into, the secrets of others; desiring to know much, even those things which are neither safely told nor safely heard. A man that would live in peace, should be so far from this busy prying humour, that he should not let his secret thoughts run this way; but rather accustom himself (as the aforesaid great emperor and philosopher speaks) always to employ his mind, that if any other person be so curious as to demand of him what he was thinking of, he may not be afraid to tell him. By this means, saith he, it will appear that all things in thee are simple and good-natured, sociable, and void of

envy, emulation, suspicion, impurity, or any such like thing, which should put thee to the blush. Such a man ought to be ranked among the best and the happiest; being *ιερευς τις*, a priest and minister of God, who uses, with due respect, that divine image, which is within him.

14. And to make our lives still the less burthensome, we must *not be too stiff and rigid in the form and manner of our life*; nor too peremptorily resolved in things that are not absolutely good or evil. We shall but disorder ourselves the more by keeping too strictly to our own orders in indifferent things. We must be easy and yielding if we would be happy; and not stick too pertinaciously, no not to our own determinations and appointments. We must comply with occasions, provided lightness do not move us to it; for that is as great an enemy to peace as the other. All pertinaciousness and obstinate adherence to our own set forms of life, is *anxious* and miserable; because accidents will always contend with us, and struggle against us, and still be wresting something from us. And levity is as grievous, if not more; because it hath no certain bounds, nor can contain and rest itself in any thing. Both are very contrary to tranquillity, to be able to alter nothing, and to endure nothing.

*To be concluded in our next.*

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