



The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld **(Francois La Rochefoucauld 1613-1680)**

Temperance, and Man in Success and Failure

17. The temperate manner we find among the fortunate comes from the calm with which success in life endows them.
18. A temperate manner comes about through fear of arousing the envy and scorn those people deserve who get drunk on good fortune; it is an empty display of strength of character; further, temperateness in men at the height of their careers is a desire to seem greater than their luck.
19. We all have strength enough to endure the misfortunes of others.
20. The steadfastness of the wise is only the art of locking their agitation inside them.
21. The condemned man sometimes affects a firmness and scorn of death which are in reality but the fear of staring it in the face; and which are to his mind what the bandage is to his eyes.
22. Philosophy triumphs with ease over misfortunes past and to come, but present misfortunes triumph over it.
23. Few of us have a real conception of death; we tend to meet it not with resolution but stupidly and conventionally, and most of us die because we know no way to keep from dying.
24. When great men give in to persistent ill fortune, they reveal that they held out earlier through ambitions, not strength of character, and that, except for their enormous vanity, heroes are like the rest of us.
25. It takes greater character to carry off good fortune than bad.
26. We cannot look squarely at either death or the sun.
27. We can often be vain of our passions, even the guiltiest ones; but envy is so sneaking and shameful that we never dare confess it.
28. Jealousy is somehow just and reasonable, since it seeks to retain what we have or imagine we have; but envy is a monster which cannot endure the good fortune of others.
29. Our evil-doing arouses less hate and persecution than our good qualities.
30. Our resources exceed our will-power, and it is often to justify ourselves beforehand that we imagine certain objectives are impossible.
31. If we had no faults, we should not take such pleasure in calling attention to other people's.
32. Jealousy feeds on doubts and turns violent or quite extinct as soon as doubt becomes certainty.





Love

68. It is difficult to define love: In the soul, it is a thirst of mastery; in the mind, a harmony of thought; in the body, nothing but a delicately hidden desire to possess, after many mysteries, whatsoever one loves.
69. If a pure love, untarnished by our other passions, exists, it exists at the bottom of our hearts unknown even to ourselves.
70. No disguise can long conceal love where it exists, or long feign it where it is lacking.
71. Few people, when they love no longer, but feel shame for having loved.
72. Judged by most of its reactions, love is closer to hatred than to friendship.
73. There is but a single form of love, but it has a thousand imitations.
75. Love, like fire, must constantly leap and dart; when it can neither hope nor fear, it dies.
76. True love is like seeing ghosts: we all talk about it, but few of us have ever seen one.

Conversation, Flattery

37. We speak very little when vanity does not prompt us to speak.
38. We would rather run ourselves down than not speak of ourselves at all.
39. One reason why so few people are intelligent and attractive in conversations is that almost everybody thinks of what he wants to say instead of how to answer properly what has been said to him. Even the cleverest and most tactful people think it enough to wear an attentive expression, while revealing no real interest in what is being said, and a show of haste to get back to what they want to say. To strive hard to please yourself is a poor way of pleasing or persuading others, and to listen and answer well is one of the greatest achievements you can boast in conversation.
140. A man of wit would often be at a disadvantage without an audience of dolts.
141. We often boast of not being bored by solitude because we are too conceited to want to find ourselves poor company.
142. As it is the mark of great minds to convey much in few words, so small minds are skilled at talking at length and saying little.
143. We exaggerate the good qualities of others out of regard for our own feelings, not their merits; for we wish to attract praise while seeming to bestow it.
144. We dislike to bestow praise, and we never do it without a selfish motive. Praise is a clever, delicate and masked form of flattery which differently satisfies the recipient and the donor: The one accepts it as a reward of merit, the other bestows it to prove how fair-minded he is, and how discerning.
145. We often choose barbed praise as a way of showing up, in these we are praising, faults we could not otherwise point out.

