



SECOND COPY,  
1859.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BJ221 Copyright No. \_\_\_\_\_

Shelf S8

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





Between Heathenism and  
Christianity



# Between Heathenism and Christianity:

Being a Translation of Seneca's *De Providentia*, and Plutarch's  
*De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, together with Notes, Ad-  
ditional Extracts from these writers and Two  
Essays on Graeco-Roman Life in the  
First Century after Christ.

BY

CHARLES W. SUPER, Ph. D., LL. D.,

*Ex-President of the Ohio University, and Professor of Greek, ibidem; trans-  
lator of Weil's Order of Words, and author of a  
History of the German Language.*

“He who distrusts the light of reason will be the first to follow a more  
luminous guide; and if with an ardent love for truth he has sought her in  
vain through the ways of this life, he will but turn with the more hope to  
that better world where all is simple, true, and everlasting: for there is no  
parallax at the zenith; it is only near our troubled horizon that objects deceive  
us into vague and erroneous calculations.”

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

Chicago .. New York .. Toronto

1899

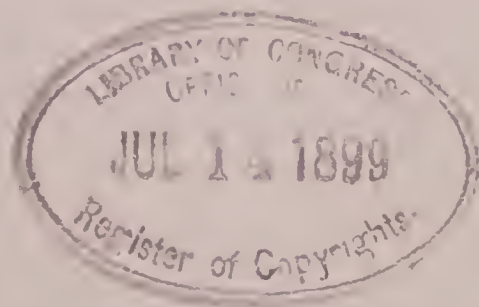
L

BJ221  
-58

38470

*Copyrighted 1899, by Fleming H. Revell Company*

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.



28010  
Apr. 24.99.



## PREFACE.

It is admitted by students of history of every shade of belief that the origin of Christianity and its rapid spread over the ancient world is the most remarkable fact in the recorded annals of the human race. When we remember that it was, from the first, more or less closely identified with the despised religion of the despised Jews; that largely for this reason it had to make its way against a united front, presented by the learned and intelligent in the whole gentile world, while the Jews themselves almost unanimously repudiated it; that the most efficiently organized government that had existed until then, was indifferent or hostile; that it set before the heathen world a condition of society in which all current economic ideas were transformed, and that it demanded a complete renunciation of its time-honored creeds, we may well ask in amazement, "How came these things to pass?"

Second in order among the great facts of ancient history is the growth of the Roman Empire. Here we see a people at first occupying a few square miles of territory, compelled for nearly fifteen generations to exert themselves to the utmost to keep their enemies at bay, suddenly bursting the barriers that confined them and in less than half this time bringing under their scepter almost the whole of the then known

## Preface

world. Rome's conquests have been exceeded in rapidity, but they have never been equalled in permanence.

The triumphs of Christianity and those of Roman arms stand in a certain relation to each other, notwithstanding the fact that the latter were gained with material, the former with spiritual, weapons. When the conquests of the one were ended, the other began. When material forces had spent themselves, men began to turn, reluctantly indeed, to spiritual agencies and undertook to subdue the powers of darkness that had so long held sway in the human breast. While the arms of Rome were engaged in overcoming the martial opposition of her enemies, Greece was occupied with the effort to subjugate the passions of men by the weapons of the intellect. By the time Roman conquests had reached their limits it had been demonstrated that Greece, too, could go no farther. But Greece did not fail because there were no more worlds to conquer: it was because men had learned that her weapons were powerless to compass the end in view. "He that ruleth his own spirit is mightier than he that taketh a city," was the lesson that the best of the Greek philosophers strove to impress upon men, but strove in vain.

It will always remain a matter of interest to study the intellectual sphere in which the old doctrines and the new faith conflict. What was the best that Greek thought had to offer to the world, and for what reasons did the world reject it?

## Preface

In the following pages I have attempted to put before my readers a solution of some of the problems to which this question gives rise. No one will deny that Seneca stood on the threshold of Christianity, while in the opinion of many he had already passed within; yet all will admit that, at best, he fell far short of the standard Christianity sets up for its converts. Plutarch is not claimed by Christians, but he exemplifies many of their virtues, and commends many of the precepts they endeavored to put in practice. These two men best represent the strong and the weak points of characters formed under the stimulus of earnest effort to lead upright lives and to discharge faithfully their duties to themselves, their fellow men, and the higher power that controlled their destinies. I have selected a typical work from the writings of both as a nucleus around which to group such reflections and facts as seem best fitted to illustrate the environment in which they lived and the intellectual inheritance to which they had fallen heir, while I have allowed each to speak for himself on one of the profoundest problems that has ever engaged the serious attention of man.

Surely, it cannot be a merely accidental coincidence that a Greek at Delphi, a Roman in his adopted city, a Jew in Alexandria, and another Jew in Palestine, who had been converted to Christianity and had adopted the profession of a traveling evangelist, should at the same time, yet almost or quite independently of each other, maintain the doctrine of a

## Preface

divine Providence or preach a gospel that recognized it as a fundamental dogma. The treatise of Philo, though no longer extant in the original Greek, is more extensive than the tracts here brought together. The three united in a single volume would make a remarkable trinity in the history of human thought. The feeling was evidently widespread, both consciously and unconsciously, that God had never before been so near to men, though but a few had learned that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among them, full of grace and truth.

C. W. S.

*Athens, O., Thanksgiving Day, 1898.*

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
PREFACE . . . . .	5
LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL WORKS USED OR CONSULTED ON SENECA . . . . .	10
SENECA: HIS CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT . . . . .	11
LIST OF SENECA'S EXTANT WORKS . . . . .	60
SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SENECA . . . . .	63
CONCERNING PROVIDENCE . . . . .	75
NOTES . . . . .	104
PLUTARCH AND THE GREECE OF HIS AGE . . . . .	108
LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL WORKS USED OR CONSULTED IN THE STUDY OF PLUTARCH . . . . .	160
CONCERNING THE DELAY OF THE DEITY IN PUNISHING THE WICKED . . . . .	162
NOTES . . . . .	214
APPENDIX. LIST OF PLUTARCH'S WORKS . . . . .	218

## THE PRINCIPAL WORKS USED OR CONSULTED ON SENECA.

The following are the principal works used or consulted in preparing the matter relating to Seneca:

- Oeuvres complètes de Sénèque. Par Charpentier et Lemaistre. 4 tomes. Paris, 1885.*  
*Oeuvres complètes de Sénèque. Publiées sous la direction de M. Nisard. Paris, 1877.*  
*L. Annaeus Seneca des Philosophen Werke übersetzt von Pauly und Moser. Stuttgart, 1828-32.*  
*Christliche Klänge aus den griechischen und römischen Klassikern. Von R. Schneider. Leipzig, 1877.*  
*Lucius Annaeus Seneca und das Christenthum. Von Michael Baumgarten. Rostock, 1895.*  
*La Religion romaine. Par Gaston Boissier, 2 tomes. Paris. 1892.*  
*History of the Romans under the Empire. By Charles Merivale 7 vols. New York, 1863-5.*  
*L. Annaei Senecae opera quae supersunt. Ed. Frid. Haase. Voll. I, II, III. Lipsiae, 1871-62-53.*

The two Paris editions have the Latin text and the French translation on the same page. Both translations are characteristically French, and consequently very smooth and agreeable to read. But they preserve few of the salient features of the original, and render the thoughts rather than the style of Seneca. To the translation is accorded the place of honor both in type and position. The German version holds very close to the text and errs, perhaps, somewhat at the other extreme as compared with the French. The work of Baumgarten is thorough and painstaking. It is not endorsing all the author's views to say that it is the best recent book on Seneca and his times.

## SENECA: HIS CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca, surnamed the Philosopher to distinguish him from his father the Rhetorician, was born in Corduba,<sup>1</sup> in Spain, about 4 B. C.—authorities differ by several years as to the precise date. When quite young he was brought to Rome by his father. He devoted himself with great zeal and brilliant success to rhetorical and philosophical studies. In the reign of Claudius he attained the office of quaestor and subsequently rose to the rank of senator. In the year 41 he was banished to the island of Corsica on a charge that is admitted to have been false, but the nature of which is not clearly understood.

In this barren and inhospitable island he was compelled to remain eight years. He was then recalled to Rome and entrusted with the education of the young Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, who afterwards became emperor of Rome, and notorious as the monster Nero. For five years after his accession to the principate, the young emperor treated his former

---

<sup>1</sup> It is a noteworthy fact that many of Rome's great men were Spaniards, while many others were not natives of the city. Among the former were the emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Anoninus and Marcus Aurelius. The two Senecas, Lucan, Martial and Quintillian were also Spaniards. Vespasian was born at Reate; Livy, in Padua; Horace, at Venusia; Virgil, in Mantua; Cicero, at Arpinum; the emperor Claudius, at Lugdunum; the two Plinys, at Comum, etc.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

teacher with much deference, consulted him on all important matters, and seems to have been largely guided by his advice. He also testified his regard for him by raising him to the rank of consul. In course of time, however, the feelings and conduct of the prince underwent a change. The possession of unlimited power by a character that was both weak and vain; the adulation of the conscienceless favorites with whom he surrounded himself; the intrigues or cabals to whom the high morality of the philosopher was a standing rebuke; and the naturally vicious temper of Nero, all conspired to prepare the way for the downfall of Seneca. When the conspiracy of Calpurnius Piso against the monarch was discovered, the charge of participation, or at least of criminal knowledge, was brought against Seneca, and he was condemned to die. Allowed to choose the means of ending his life, he caused a vein to be opened and thus slowly bled to death. It was his destiny to be compelled to take his departure from this world in the way he had so often commended to others; indeed it is probable that his reiterated encomiums upon suicide as an effectual remedy against the ills of this life, was not without its influence upon his executioners. They probably wanted to give him the opportunity to prove by his works the sincerity of his faith.

During the closing scene he told his disconsolate friends that the only bequest he was permitted to leave to them was the example of an honorable life;



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

and this he besought them to keep in faithful remembrance. He implored his weeping wife to restrain the expression of her grief, and bade her seek in the recollection of the life and virtues of her husband a solace for her loss.

It was the fortune of Seneca not only to be well born, but also to be well brought up and carefully educated. That he appreciated the high worth of his mother is evident from the words, "best of mothers," with which he addressed her in the *Consolation to Helvia*. His father, though wealthy, was a man of rigid morality, of temperate habits, of great industry, and possessed very unusual literary attainments. His older brother, better known as Junius Gallio from the name of the family into which he was adopted, was for some time procounsul of Achaia, in which capacity he is mentioned in the *Acts*, xviii, 12-17. Seneca's younger brother was the father of Lucan, the well-known author of the poem, *Pharsalia*. Both his mother and his aunt,—he was an especial favorite of the latter—were not only women of exalted character, but they had acquired an intellectual culture that was very uncommon for their sex in their day.

Our authorities for a life of Seneca and for an estimate of his character are fairly ample and have been variously interpreted. Nothing can be gained by taking up the controversy anew. To some of his contemporaries even, he was more or less of an enigma. Others, again, regarded him as a time-server,

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

a hypocrite, a man whose professions were belied by his actions. Still others,—and they are largely in the majority—are more lenient in their judgment; though they cannot exculpate him from inconsistencies, they excuse them by pointing to the extremely difficult position in which he was placed during the greater part of his life. He has strong partisans who are attracted and charmed by the sublime sentiments scattered so profusely through his writings; his enemies, in forming their opinions, lay the chief stress on what they regard as the inexcusable deeds of his life. It is too late to add anything to the evidence either pro or contra. All that it is proposed to do in this essay is to place before the reader a picture of the man, mainly from his own writings, as the chief exponent of the highest philosophy reached by the ancient world before this philosophy was supplanted by the new religion that was destined to take its place in the thought of mankind. Seneca was next to Cicero, or rather along with Cicero, the most distinguished Roman philosopher; but as a philosopher he has received the far greater share of attention. Both were Romans at heart; both were earnestly engaged in the search for the supreme good; both were guilty of conduct inconsistent with their professions; both tried and tried in vain to combine a life devoted to reflection with with an active career in the service of the state; and both failed. But Seneca not only had a higher ideal than Cicero; he also came nearer attaining it.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

He was less vain, less hungry for public honors and applause, and attached less importance to mere outward display. As a thinker Seneca has more originality than Cicero, is less dependent upon books, knows better the motives that underlie human conduct. Both were essentially Roman in their views of life, and it is only by keeping this in mind that we are able to explain, if not to excuse, the lack of harmony between what they said and what they did; between what they preached and what they practised. Like that of Cicero, Seneca's was no adamant soul, no unyielding barrier against which the vices of his time beat in vain. He had the Roman liking for what is practical. He tried to be a statesman and was somewhat of a courtier when to be a courtier and an upright man was impossible. He was no Socrates to whom virtue, the fundamentally and intrinsically right, was more important than anything else, than all else, even abstention from the political turmoil of his time.

When a long and acrimonious strife is carried on over a man it is evidence that he is no ordinary person. This has been the fate of Seneca in an eminent degree. During the Middle Ages, and even after their close, a great deal of attention was paid to his reputed correspondence with St. Paul. The National Library in Paris contains more than sixty MSS. of this pseudo-correspondence. That he was claimed as a Christian need surprise no one. The poet Virgil shared a similar fate; yet there is far less in the

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

writings of Virgil to mark him a Christian, or rather as a writer who was in a sense divinely inspired, than there is in Seneca to stamp him as a man who had accepted the new faith. The rise and persistence of such a literature is not an anomaly in the history of thought. It is not out of harmony with the spirit of an age when the church was supreme in everything; when all questions were viewed from the theological standpoint, and when every means were employed to gain support for the existing ecclesiastical organization. It was honestly believed that the practice or profession of a high morality, except under the sanction and guidance of the church, was impossible. It was taken as a matter of course, that a good man, one who eloquently preached righteousness, who seemed to be conscious of a struggle within himself between the flesh<sup>1</sup> and the spirit, must have been enlightened from on high. Given the internal evidence of Seneca's own writings, it was not difficult to supply the complementary external testimony.

This all-embracing and all-absorbing power of the church lasted about a thousand years and ended with the Reformation, though it had begun to decline some two centuries earlier. For this condition of things the Roman empire had prepared the way. It was the prototype to which, in part unconsciously and in part consciously, ecclesiastical authority was

---

<sup>1</sup>Seneca is generally regarded as the first Roman writer who used *caro*, flesh, as distinct from, and opposed to, spirit.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

made to conform. Notwithstanding the fact that the Gospel was first widely proclaimed in Greek lands and the body of its doctrine formulated in the Greek tongue, when the church began to aspire to universal dominion it naturally assumed the garb of Roman secular authority. The Eastern Empire was regarded as an offshoot from, rather than as a continuation of, the empire that had so long ruled the world from the great city on the banks of the Tiber. The natural consequence was that the Latin language in time supplanted the Greek, and ecclesiastical thought flowed in the channels worn by the political thought that had preceded it. The struggle in later times for the supremacy of the state as against the church was merely the effort to return to a condition of things that had existed before the establishment of the church. The Greeks were not less patriotic than the Romans. The state occupied just as prominent a place in their minds as it did in the minds of the Romans. But it was their misfortune to appear upon the scene of history, broken up into a large number of small polities of nearly equal strength, and the Greek mind never got beyond the particularism thus inherited. It was their fundamental concept of government. Rome represented a more advanced type of political development than Greece, and if it had been permitted to work out its own salvation without external interference,—for the city at its worst was hardly more corrupt than many a modern capital—it might be in existence to-day. The Roman empire

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

endured so long because it was upheld by the patriotism of its citizens. This was often narrowly selfish, and frequently grossly unjust to foreigners, but it was effectual in maintaining the supremacy of Rome against all attempts from within or without to subvert it. The Romans that were drawn toward philosophy pursued it in a half-hearted manner because the state occupied the first place in their minds. To serve the state was the ultimate goal of their ambition. The emperors, even the most corrupt, still represented the government and as such received the homage of good men. If we keep this fact in mind we shall be able to understand the bravery and devotion to duty of many of the officers and even soldiers in the imperial forces. More or less out of reach of the contaminating influences that were so powerful in the capital, they performed the services expected of them as became Romans.

Long, long afterward, and when Rome was nominally a Christian city, a German monk left its walls as he was returning to his northern home, a far less zealous churchman than he had entered it. Strange coincidence! The city that had become the head of a spiritual empire was no less corrupt and corrupting than it had been as the head of a temporal empire. More than sixteen centuries of experience, some of it of the bitterest kind, had wrought no perceptible change. The Christian followed in the footsteps of the heathen.

For us who have been brought up in the belief that

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

morality and right and justice have a claim to our services for their own sake, without accessory support and under all circumstances, the devotion of the Roman to his government, even the most unworthy, is not easy to understand. Rome owed her greatness more to the bravery of her citizens in war than to any other cause. To this virtue they always accorded the foremost place, and to those who displayed it, the highest honors the state could bestow.

But Seneca was a man of peace. This fact had without doubt something to do in producing the unfavorable estimate some of his contemporaries formed of him. Tacitus, too, was not a military man; yet he looks with a certain disdain upon those who devoted themselves to the arts of peace rather than to the profession of arms. He regards with less favor the man who has wisely administered a province than him who had extended the boundaries of the empire.

We naturally incline to the opinion that no man who respected himself could accept service under such a ruler as Nero, or Caligula, or Domitian, unless it were in the hope that he might mitigate a ferocious temper or avert calamity from personal friends. And yet, many tyrants since the dissolution of the Roman empire have been served by honorable men; and they have usually requited their services in the same way, with exile, or confiscation of goods, or an ignominious death.

The readiness with which many of the best Romans

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

resorted to self-destruction as a release from misfortune strikes us with surprise. Suicide is often mentioned in the writings of Seneca, and always with approval. It is not hard to understand this attitude of mind if we recollect the relation the Roman regarded as existing between himself and the state. The government was in a sense a part of himself, and an essential part. To the Greek there was still something worth living for after the loss of country and citizenship. He could devote himself to literature, or philosophy, or to some more ignoble means of gaining a livelihood. To the Roman such a thing was well-nigh impossible, especially if he was a member of one of the ruling families. Exile, exclusion from service in the state, was to him the end of every thing. Many Romans of whom one would have expected better things are inconsolable so long as they are compelled to live away from the capital with no certain prospect of return. Need we wonder that to many others life was no longer worth living, and that they freely put an end to it with their own hand. Often the best men sought surcease of sorrow in this unnatural way. Those in whom the moral sense was weak, plunged recklessly into debauchery and sensual gratification. Literature, too, was corrupted to minister to their corrupt tastes. We know little of the life of the average Roman citizen; but there is sufficient evidence within reach of the modern reader to prove that the ruling class had few redeeming traits. The downward tendency is plainly discernible in the last



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

days of the Republic. Julius and Augustus Cæsar were men of depraved appetites and low morals. Their talents as military captains and administrators, their patronage of letters, and their tastes as literary men, have somewhat put their moral delinquencies into the background. There is no doubt that the example of these and such men, accelerated the evil propensities to which the Roman people were only too prone. When the lowest depth of moral degradation was reached, as in the declining years of Seneca, crime and debauchery held high carnival in the imperial household. There was no wickedness so flagrant, no species of immorality so bestial, no deed so horrible, that men shrank from it. For, had they not more than once the example of the prince himself? It is sometimes charitably said that Nero was insane. There are men who think it too degrading to human nature to hold it responsible for his crimes and indecencies. Yet Nero's excesses were the natural results of unlimited power in irresponsible hands, when the hands were servants of a heart that was thoroughly corrupt, and a character that was weak, and vain as it was weak. The same things have often been repeated within the last eighteen hundred years; but never was vice so rampant and so unblushing, on such a large scale, as it was in Rome in the days of Seneca.

We must not believe, however, that there was no decency, no regard for morality, no love of culture, to be found in the Roman empire even in its worst

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

estate. There were always groups and coteries of noble men and women who kept themselves free from the prevailing corruption. There was always a saving remnant that remained uncontaminated. Quintillian was the center of such a group, and what he was in Rome, Plutarch was in another part of the empire, for they were almost exactly contemporaries. The belief in God, in the immortality of the human soul, and in man's personal responsibility to a higher power, kept some, perhaps many, who were not directly under the degrading influence of the court, or who had the moral strength to resist it, from deviating very far from the path of rectitude. There were slaves of whom better things could be said than of their masters. But what were these among so many?

Seneca and other writers of his time frequently express contempt for those men who professed to be philosophers, and whose lives brought only disgrace upon the fair name of philosophy. He does not seem to be aware that, in a measure at least, he is recording an unfavorable verdict upon himself. Does he think that his abstemiousness, his untiring industry, his devotion to study ought to cover his shortcomings? It looks so. He commends solitude, yet always remained in the noonday of publicity. He inveighs against riches, yet was the possessor of vast estates, and was not above lending money at usurious rates of interest. He teaches men to bear with fortitude the inevitable ills of life, and ends by commending suicide as a final resort. Compared with Socrates,

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

to cite but a single name, Seneca was a very unworthy exponent of practical philosophy. The former took philosophy seriously, so seriously that he not only wanted to live for it but was willing to die for it. He kept aloof from politics because he felt that a public career would interfere with a duty he owed to a higher power. He, too, believed in a Providence, but with him this belief amounted to a conviction. All his reported words and deeds testify to this, while Seneca acts and writes as if trying to convince himself quite as much as others. Socrates had an abiding faith in a personal God who not only watched over his life, but cared for him in death. Duty was to him a thing of such supreme importance that he never hesitated to perform it, no matter what the consequences to himself might be. Socrates taught nothing he did not himself practice; Seneca, much. Socrates feared neither God nor man; Seneca was afraid of both. Socrates expected nothing of others that he did not exact of himself; Seneca sets up a higher standard of morals than he, under all circumstances, attained. His precepts are better than his practice. His fatal mistake lay in trying to do two things that have always been found incompatible: to be a successful politician and an upright man. There were others besides Socrates, before the days of Seneca, in whose life and character philosophy had had more consistent exponents and faithful devotees than in him. But when they found that philosophy and a career in the service of the state were incompatible

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

and reciprocally exclusive, they unhesitatingly gave up the latter. Seneca can always admire high ideals, but he cannot always imitate them. He is fascinated when he gazes on the lofty heights to which virtue had sometimes attained, and he often makes heroic efforts to follow after; but he is only now and then successful. It is no wonder, then, that Socrates had even in his lifetime many ardent admirers and enthusiastic disciples that remained true to his memory, while Seneca had none.

Canon Farrar is mistaken when he calls Seneca a "seeker after God." God was in no man's thoughts oftener than in his. Nor has any uninspired writer given utterance to a larger number of noble sentiments and lofty precepts than he. It is easy to extract from his writings a complete code of morals, a breviary of human conduct, that would differ but little from that contained in the New Testament. He is a conspicuous example of the heathen of whom Paul says, they are without excuse. But while Seneca is not a seeker after God he can with justice be called a seeker after Christ. He is an earnest inquirer after the peace that passeth understanding; after that serene confidence that sustained the greatest and the least of the Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs no less. He lacks that Christian enthusiasm that comes only through faith in a living Christ and in His atonement.

Seneca now and then caught a glimpse of that universal kingdom which the company of believers ex-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

pected would one day be established upon the earth. He says, "No one can lead a happy life who thinks only of himself and turns everything to his own use. If you would live for yourself, you must live for others. This bond of fellowship must be diligently and sacredly guarded,—the bond that unites us all to all and shows to us that there is a right common to all nations which ought to be the more sacredly cherished because it leads to that intimate friendship of which we were speaking."

It is hard to see how he could write the following striking passage without thinking of himself; for, though guiltless of some of the vices he condemns, there are others of which he cannot be acquitted. After defining philosophy as nothing else than the right way of living, or the science of living honorably, or the art of passing a good life, and denouncing the fraudulent professors of it, he proceeds: "Many of the philosophers are of this description, eloquent to their own condemnation; for if you hear them arguing against avarice, against lust and ambition, you would think they were making a public disclosure of their own character, so entirely do the censures which they utter in public flow back upon themselves; so that it is right to regard them in no other light than as physicians whose advertisements contain medicine, but their medicine-chests, poison. Some are not ashamed of their vices; but they invent defenses for their own baseness, so that they may even appear to sin with honor."

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

To the same effect is the testimony of Nepos: "So far am I from thinking that philosophy is the teacher of life and the completer of happiness, that I consider that none have greater need of teachers of living than many who are engaged in the discussion of this subject. For I see that a great part of those who give most elaborate precepts in their school respecting modesty and self-restraint, live at the same time in the unrestrained desires of all lusts."

Both Seneca and Plutarch are firmly convinced that man is the arbiter of his own happiness; but the former found great difficulty in making a practical application of the doctrine to his own case. Notwithstanding the sorry spectacle presented to the world by many professed philosophers, neither lost faith in philosophy. It was the court of last resort. For the man to whom philosophy will not bring happiness there is no happiness in this world. To the importance and benign influence of this culture of mind, Seneca reverts again and again. He contends that "He who frequents the school of a philosopher ought every day to carry away with him something that will be to his profit: he ought to return home a wiser man. And he will so return, for such is the power of philosophy that it not only benefits those who devote themselves to it, but even those who talk about it." "You must change yourself, not your abode. You may cross the sea, or as our Virgil says, 'Lands and cities may vanish from sight, yet wherever you go your vices will follow you.' When a certain per-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

son made the same complaint to Socrates that you make, he answered, 'Why are you surprised that your travels do you no good, when you take yourself with you everywhere?' If we could look into the mind of a good man, what a beautiful vision, what purity, we should behold beaming forth from its placid depths! Here justice, there fortitude; here self-control, there prudence. Besides these, sobriety, continence, frankness and kindness, and (who would believe it?) humaneness, that rare trait in man, shed their luster over him."

Though Seneca's life was full of contradictions and inconsistencies when measured by the standard of his own writings, it would be unjust to charge him with hypocrisy. He was, within certain limits, a man of moods; a man in whose mind conflicting desires were continually striving for the mastery. It seems to have been a hard matter for him to attain settled convictions on a number of important questions. Even the immortality of the soul, a subject upon which he has much to say, and which to Plutarch is an incontestable dogma, is to Seneca hardly more than a hope. His mind matured early and there is almost no evidence of development or change of views or of style in his writings. He was such a man as nature made him, and he was on the whole pretty well satisfied with the product. Though he now and then seems to be conscious of a certain lack of constancy, and on the point of confessing his sins, he generally ends by excusing them or by trying to show that they

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

are venial. Yet the fact that he at times acknowledges a kind of moral weakness is perhaps the chief reason why Seneca has been so often claimed as a Christian, while no such claim has ever been made for Plutarch who sees no defects either in himself or his doctrine.

The chief problem of philosophy has at all times been, how to make the judgment supreme in all matters that present themselves before the mind and how to make the will carry out the decisions of the critical faculty. When the poet says, "Video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor," he is thinking of this irrepressible conflict. Paul himself was not a stranger to it, for he exclaims in a moment of self-abasement when writing to Seneca's fellow citizens, "The good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice." He, too, finds within himself a "law," a fact of human experience, that the flesh wars against the spirit; that the appetencies are hard to reconcile with the judgment. Seneca's own writings furnish abundant evidence that many who professed to be philosophers used their intellects solely, or chiefly, in devising means for gratifying their desires. To men of his way of thinking the Epicureans were a constant object of attack; yet the Epicureans were generally consistent from their point of view and in accordance with the postulates of their system. The all-important question with every man who is in the habit of giving an account to himself of his life is how to get the most out of it,—how to formulate a system of complete living. If the individual is the



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

goal, considered solely from the standpoint of his earthly life, it is evident that he will act differently in the same circumstances from him whose aim is the good of society considered as an undying entity, or the happiness of the individual regarded as an immortal soul. The disagreements of philosophers have always hinged on these fundamental problems and it is strange that so little note has been made of them. It is too often taken for granted that the mere use of the reasoning faculties, that is, philosophy *per se*, and without reference to the highest good, is able to make men as nearly perfect as they can become in this life, both as individuals and as members of the community. It was the conviction that philosophy had run its course; that it was "played out,"—to use a phrase more expressive than elegant—that made so many of the best men, in the first Christian centuries, turn from it and seek refuge in Christianity. They had become weary of the ceaseless and acrimonious discussions of the different philosophical schools. Disgusted with contradictions and inconsistencies, they turned to the Gospel as offering a solution of problems at which so many acute thinkers had labored for centuries in vain.

It has often been remarked that the Roman world had grown old. Every experiment had been tried, every theory had been suggested that might lead to complete living; all had ended in failure and disappointment for those who had the good of their fellow men at heart. He who would perform a successful

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

experiment in physics or chemistry must see to it that all the necessary conditions have been provided. If this is not done, no amount of care in manipulation will bring about the desired result. The mere presence of the proper ingredients, however pure, will not insure success. So in society, the existence and vitality of social forces will avail the reformer in no wise unless he knows how to put a motive force into men's minds and hearts that will induce them to aid him in bringing about the changes he proposes. Some good men have been made so by a noble system of philosophy, to the practical exemplification of which they have devoted their lives. Both Greece and Rome furnished not a few such. On the other hand there have been many bad men who were made so by following the tenets of a vicious philosophy.

There are two reasons why Seneca has, for more than eighteen hundred years, engaged the attention of thinking men. No doubt the most important is his extraordinary ability. The world will not willingly forget the words of a great man, nor suffer his life to pass into oblivion. It clings to thoughts and deeds that are worthy to survive. Seneca not only had something to say that men wanted to hear, but he knew how to say it in such a way that they were glad to listen. Great as has been the evil in the world at all times it has never lacked many men who felt that they were made for something better than the daily concerns that occupied their time and labor. In their better moments they found pleasure in listen-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

ing to the voices that spoke to them of something more abiding than the fleeting affairs of this transitory life.

Seneca, too, was intensely human. He frequently furnishes evidence of extraordinary mental strength while now and then he sinks down in sheer exhaustion. His mind ranges freely along the whole scale of mental experiences; and though he dwell, longest on the higher parts, he does not always do so. The record of such an experience has an attraction for many men. They see in it a counterpart of their own struggles, and are rarely without hope that its triumphs may be an earnest of their own.

The scholar in politics is a character of whom we hear a good deal, but as a matter of fact, scholarship, in the true sense of the word, and successful politics, as the world understands success, are a combination that has rarely been made. Again, an ecclesiastical statesman, strictly speaking, is an equally rare phenomenon and has been since the days of the supremacy of the Romish church. The greater the success of the ecclesiastic in statecraft, the farther he departed from the prescriptions of the church, or at least of the Gospel. How often has the experience of Wolsey been anticipated or repeated; and many men, both laics and priests, have felt the truth of Shakespeare's thoughts, if they have not expressed them in his words:

“Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my king, he would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

We still hope to find a place for the scholar in politics, but we have given up the search so far as the ecclesiastic is concerned. Yet in Seneca we have a man who had mastered all the knowledge of his time; who was by no means an unsuccessful preacher of righteousness, and who, nevertheless, was a successful courtier and statesman during part of his life. He might have been both to the ending of his days in peace, had it not been his fate to serve one of the worst rulers that ever lived. The secret of his undying fame then is his ability and his whilom position at the court that ruled the greatest empire of the world. It is probable that the cause of his exile, at an age when he had as yet not written very much, so far as we know, was his prominence in a way that was distasteful to the emperor Claudius. While there was nothing in his past life or present conduct to justify putting him to death, his removal from Rome seemed desirable to the reigning monarch and his most influential advisers. But even in exile Seneca was not a man calmly to permit his enemies to forget him; nor would his friends suffer him to be forgotten.

Notwithstanding his sudden elevation to a position of great importance in the empire, he seems never to have lost sight of the fact that he was standing on the edge of a precipice from which he might be thrust at any moment, and that he still had need of all the consolation his philosophy could afford. Bois-sier rightly says, "Though praetor and consul he re-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

mained not the less a sage who gives instruction to his age; while he was governing the Romans he preached virtue to them." And he might have added, "to himself," for it is evident from many passages in his works that he had himself in view no less than others. He strove to fortify his own soul against temptations by giving expression to the tenets of his philosophy, just as men find relief in sorrow by recording the thoughts that pass through their minds. We may be certain, too, that to his contemporaries his speech often sounded bolder and freer than to us with our inadequate knowledge of the inner life of the Roman court-circle, and accustomed as we are to the freedom of criticism to which all our public characters, not excepting sovereigns, are subject. They doubtless saw in many of his pithy sayings, allusions, whether always intentional or not, does not matter, to occurrences to which we no longer have the key. And we may be sure that he was not without an abundance of enemies and detractors. A few of these have left themselves on record for us. There were, doubtless, also many persons who were wont to sneer at the man who professed to find the highest good in a contemplative life; in devotion to an ideal that differed so widely from the reality in which he lived; and who could yet maintain his influence at a court of which little that was good could be said. Every society contains a certain number of members who regard all who endeavor to lead a better life than they themselves do, or whose ideals are higher than their

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

own, as offering a sort of personal challenge or directing a rebuke at them which they must needs resent. Seneca was himself conscious that his life and professions were sometimes irreconcilable. He says: "To the student who professes his wish and hope to rise to a loftier grade of virtue, I would answer that this is my wish also, but I dare not hope it. I am pre-occupied with vices. All I require of myself is, not to be equal to the best, but only to be better than the bad."

On the much-debated question of Seneca's responsibility for the vices of Nero, Merivale is probably right in saying that he must soon have become aware that it was impossible to make even a reasonably virtuous man out of his pupil. Under such circumstances it was natural for him to conclude that the best thing to be done was to allow the youth to indulge in private vices in order to keep him from injuring others. The morality he impressed upon Nero, the modern writer sums up in these words: "Be courteous and moderate; shun cruelty and rapine; abstain from blood; compensate yourself with the pleasures of youth without compunction; amuse yourself, but hurt no man." This principle was a dangerous one, as we now know; but it is easy to be wise after the event. A philosopher ought to have known that it is never safe to make a compromise with vice. Our philosopher did not know it, or, knowing it, was willing to take the risk.

It is doubtless some of his detractors that he has in

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

mind in his defense of riches. He can see no harm in large possessions when they have been honestly, or at least lawfully, acquired and are properly used. It may help us to understand his attitude in this matter if we compare it with that of some of the ministers of our own day, and with some of the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the past. Seneca's philosophy did not come to him as a divine command. It was the fruit of his own cogitation in the search for the supreme good. But there are men in our day, as there have always been, who are not only members of the church but preachers of the Gospel, who are both rich themselves and apologists of the rich. Yet they profess to be followers of the Son of God; of Him who taught that it is exceedingly difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Seneca did not profess to seek this kingdom. His search was after the kingdom of earthly felicity, and he could not see why riches should be an obstacle to his entering it.

Seneca was a good exemplar of the truth of a saying quoted by Xenophon in his *Memorabilia* of Socrates to the effect that even an upright man is sometimes good, sometimes bad. His writings convey the impression that their author is always under stress. The philosophical composure of which he has much to say, is an aspiration and a hope, not a fruition. When he speaks of the passions he sees them in their intensity. He seems to regard all men as either very good or very bad, and finds the latter class to include the great body of mankind. He fails to realize that the ma-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

majority belong to neither extreme. The theater on which he saw the game of life played probably never had its counterpart in the world. He stands at one extreme and Plutarch at the other, just as the social circle in which each moved and knew best is the antipode of the other. Both looked too intently and exclusively upon the merely external. Though Plutarch judges the average man more correctly, neither possessed sufficient penetration of intellect to fathom all the passions that dominate or agitate the soul. Plutarch was most familiar with the man who is concerned with the ordinary affairs of life; Seneca knew best the corrupt crowd that sought to ingratiate itself into the favor of those who controlled the destinies of all about them, and, in a measure, of the entire world. Both were much in the public eye, but the public was a widely different one. Plutarch sought to make an impression by the arts of persuasion alone; Seneca, by all the arts that are within the power of a resourceful intellect. How much he was in the public eye is evident from the statement of Tacitus that his last words were written down and at once made public. His friends no less than his enemies desired this: his enemies, because they were eagerly watching for a final opportunity to prove that this famous preacher of an exalted philosophy would, after all, prove to be nothing more than a maker of fine phrases when the crucial test came; his friends, in order to furnish indubitable evidence that he had been true to his teachings to the end.



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

It is a noteworthy fact that should always be kept in mind in the study of the writings of the ancients, and the career of their statesmen, that there existed no universal conscience to which men could appeal. Even the separate states were without any considerable party among their citizens who shared the conviction that there exist eternal principles of justice that demand the recognition of rights for all living beings, for slaves as well as for brutes, whether they are in position to enforce these rights or not. There was an interminable struggle of class with class, each striving to wrest from the other the privileges they withheld as long as they could, and finally granted only so far as they could no longer be withheld. The political economy of the ancients did not concern itself with making the public burdens bear as lightly as possible on each member of the body politic, and compelling even the most refractory to contribute their share; the problem was almost invariably how to raise the largest amount of public revenue. Only a part,—often but a small part, especially under the later republic—found its way into the imperial fisc. Most of it flowed into the coffers of the farmers of the revenue, and for this reason their representatives, the publicans or tax-gatherers, were so thoroughly detested. Their relation to the citizens was entirely different from the modern officers of the government who perform the same functions. Every privilege or alleviation granted by the governing class was usually wrung from it by force

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

or threats on the part of the subject. Generally speaking, the empire was more lenient than the republic because the emperors needed the support of the mass of their subjects against the turbulent and avaricious nobility. The spirit of altruism that is such a powerful force in our day is of very modern growth. It was introduced into the world by Christianity, but its development was not rapid. Sociology as a scientific term is but little older than the present generation; nor does the study of political economy as a science extend far into the last century. That remarkable people, the Jews, have from time immemorial recognized the claims of a brother in the faith, upon every other, for aid and sympathy. Their voluntary contributions for the maintenance of the temple at Jerusalem and its ritual, no matter how widely scattered they might be, is the earliest indication of a spirit of altruism, the recognition of an obligation that was coextensive with the faith. The Jews, however, made but a faint impression upon the thought of antiquity. This is evident from the way they are treated by Greek writers without exception. They were perhaps never more numerous or more influential than during the last two or three centuries B. C. and the first century after Christ, until the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet Plutarch, who was the most widely read man of his time, and who might easily have obtained his knowledge of their doctrines almost at first hand from the Septuagint, does not show in a single line that he ever thought this knowledge worth the

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

trouble. When he mentions the Jews it is only to disparage them, and to betray the grossest ignorance of their religion and their nationality. The same is true of Seneca and the other Roman writers. Tacitus, who professes to give an account of their origin and of some of the tenets of their religion, shamefully misrepresents both, while he holds the people up to the scorn of his countrymen. So little are the most intelligent men often aware of the occult forces at work in the world, and so ready are they to pour contempt upon everything that does not accord with their preconceived opinions!

The early Christians, as is well known, were reluctant to believe that the new doctrines were intended for Gentiles as well as Jews. Both the New Testament and some of the church fathers testify to this fact. Merivale makes it clear that Tertullian believed that Christianity must always, to some extent, stand apart from the ordinary march of events, and that the true faith could only be held by a chosen few. He does not intend his words to be understood in their spiritual significance, that many are called but few chosen, and he makes this plain by adding that the Roman emperors might themselves have been Christians, if governments could become Christian; in other words "mankind in general were equally incapable of moral renovation and spiritual conversion."

Though Seneca was, during almost his whole life in the public eye and lived amid the toil and turbulence

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

of the busiest city in the world, he professed a distaste for crowds. He tries to dissuade those who value their peace of mind, but especially those who are truly devoted to philosophy, from seeking popular applause. He loves to be the center of a circle of choice spirits, to associate on intimate terms with men of like aims and tastes with his own. It is almost exclusively against the vices of the rich and the great that he declaims. Only in "good society" is he at home; in fact he seems to know no other, has nothing in common with any other. He is profoundly ignorant, with Plutarch, of the fact that society cannot be reformed from the top or from within. Yet the refinements of luxury are hateful to him, and from boyhood to the end of his days he lived a frugal life.

How easy it is for Seneca to talk, to express himself in words whether with tongue or pen, becomes evident not only from a glance at the subjects upon which he writes, some of which are of the same tenor with those discussed by his equally fluent predecessor, Cicero, but from his own direct testimony. At the beginning of the Fifth Book on Benefits he tells his readers that he has virtually exhausted the subject. Yet he runs on through three more Books, apparently for no other reason than because he finds pleasure in discussing every question that has the remotest connection with the main theme. The result is that the portion which he considers irrelevant is almost as long as the treatise proper.

I have once or twice in the present essay, touched

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

upon the most prominent feature of the Roman character, but the phenomenon is so important, contributes so much to a proper estimate of the career of Seneca, and goes so far toward reconciling the apparent or real inconsistencies between his life and his doctrines, between his words and his deeds, that it is necessary to dwell upon the point at greater length. The Romans were, above everything else, men of the world; men who laid the greatest possible stress on practical activity in the service of the state; men who were wholly out of their sphere when this outlet for their energies was closed to them. Greece gave birth to many individuals who lived entirely, or at least chiefly, in the realm of their thoughts; or as Jean Paul says of the Germans, the air was their domain. The precincts of abstract speculation lay in a region never entered by a Roman. A few trod the outer courts under the guidance of Greeks, but not one ever penetrated farther. The Romans had no literature of their own, no music, no pictorial or plastic arts, no architecture. Though so long under the intellectual tutelage of Greece, their taste was not refined, nor was a genuine love of culture inherent in the nation. It saw no use for these things because they were not practical; could not be employed in the service of the government. The occasional efforts of the emperors and of some of the leading families to elevate the national taste produced but meager results. Such being the case, what was there for the average Roman to do when he had become rich, or

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

had no public duty to perform, and wanted to "have a good time"? There is abundant evidence within our reach to enable us to answer this question. He plunged headlong into debaucheries so shameful that the modern pen shrinks from describing them, and the mind from contemplating them. Fortunes were sometimes spent on a single banquet. The Roman baths ministered equally to luxury and licentiousness. In short, it seems as if all the ingenuity of the empire had at times been exerted to the utmost to devise new methods of sensual gratification.

But he could not indulge incessantly in bacchanalian orgies; the jaded body needed some relaxative that could be found neither in sleep nor in such business that could not be delegated to a subordinate. There he regaled himself with the sight of blood. The huge structures erected for the gladiatorial combats testify to the Roman passion for these cruel sports. Every living creature that could be induced to fight was exhibited in the arena where men and women took equal delight in the bloody spectacle. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, sets forth in graphic colors the pomp and circumstance with which these horrible exhibitions were given. I cannot do better than to transcribe his words: "The gladiatorial games form, indeed, the one feature of Roman society which to a modern mind is almost inconceivable in its atrocity. That not only men, but women, in an advanced period of civilization—men

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

and women who not only professed, but very frequently acted upon, a high code of morals—should have made the carnage of men their habitual amusement; that all this should have continued for centuries, with scarcely a protest, is one of the most startling facts in moral history. It is, however, perfectly normal, and in no degree inconsistent with the doctrine of natural moral perceptions, while it opens out fields of ethical enquiry of a very deep, though painful interest.”

“The mere desire for novelty impelled the people to every excess or refinement of barbarity. The simple combat became at last insipid, and every variety of atrocity was devised to stimulate the flagging interest. At one time a bear and a bull, chained together, rolled in fierce contest along the sand; at another, criminals dressed in the skins of wild beasts, were thrown to bulls, which were maddened by red-hot irons, or by darts tipped with burning pitch. Four hundred bears were killed in a single day under Caligula; three hundred on another day under Claudius. Under Nero, four hundred tigers fought with bulls and elephants; four hundred bears and three hundred lions were slaughtered by his soldiers. In a single day, at the dedication of the Colosseum by Titus, five thousand animals perished. Under Trajan, the games continued for one hundred and twenty-three successive days. Lions, tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, giraffes, bulls, stags, even crocodiles and serpents, were employed to give novelty

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

to the spectacle. Nor was any form of human suffering wanting. The first Gordian, when edile, gave twelve spectacles, in each of which from one hundred and fifty to five hundred pair of gladiators appeared. Eight hundred pair fought at the triumph of Aurelian. Ten thousand men fought during the games of Trajan. Nero illumined his gardens during the night by Christians burning in their pitchy shirts. Under Domitian, an army of feeble dwarfs was compelled to fight, and more than once female gladiators descended to perish in the arena."

"So intense was the craving for blood, that a prince was less unpopular if he neglected the distribution of corn than if he neglected the games; and Nero himself, on account of his munificence in this respect, was probably the sovereign who was most beloved by the Roman multitude."

"It is well for us to look steadily on such facts as these. They display more vividly than any mere philosophical disquisition the abyss of depravity into which it is possible for human nature to sink. They furnish us with striking proofs of the reality of the moral progress we have attained, and they enable us in some degree to estimate the regenerating influence that Christianity has exercised in the world. For the destruction of the gladiatorial games is all its work. Philosophers, indeed, might deplore them, gentle natures might shrink from their contagion, but to the multitude they possessed a fascination which nothing but the new religion could overcome."



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

How deeply the virulent poison of inhumanity and the insatiable thirst for blood had infected the Roman people is further evident, not only from the means employed to make these sanguinary spectacles as fascinating as possible, but also from the impress they made upon the current phraseology. Lecky says further: "No pageant has ever combined more powerful elements of attraction. The magnificent circus, the gorgeous dresses of the assembled court, the contagion of a passionate enthusiasm thrilling almost visibly through the mighty throng, the breathless silence of expectation, the wild cheers bursting simultaneously from eighty thousand tongues, and echoing to the farthest outskirts of the city, the rapid alternations of the fray, the deeds of splendid courage that were manifested, were all well fitted to entrance the imagination. The crimes and servitude of the gladiator were for a time forgotten in the blaze of glory that surrounded him. Representing to the highest degree that courage which the Romans deemed the first of virtues, the cynosure of countless eyes, the chief object of conversation in the metropolis of the universe, destined, if victorious, to be immortalized in the mosaic and the sculpture, he not unfrequently rose to heroic grandeur. . . . Beautiful eyes, trembling with passion, looked down upon the fight, and the noblest ladies of Rome, even the empress herself, had been known to crave the victor's love. We read of gladiators lamenting that the games occurred so seldom, complaining bitterly

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

if they were not permitted to descend into the arena, scorning to fight except with the most powerful antagonists, laughing aloud at their wounds when dressed, and at last, when prostrate in the dust, calmly turning their throats to the sword of the conqueror. The enthusiasm that gathered round them was so intense that special laws were found necessary, and were sometime insufficient, to prevent patricians from enlisting in their ranks, while the tranquil courage with which they never failed to die, supplied the philosopher with his most striking examples. The severe continence that was required before the combat, contrasting vividly with the licentiousness of Roman life, had even invested them with something of a moral dignity; and it is a singularly suggestive fact, that, of all pagan characters, the gladiator was selected by the fathers as the closest approximation to a Christian model. St. Augustine tells us how one of his friends, being drawn to the spectacle, endeavored by closing his eyes to guard against a fascination that he knew to be sinful. A sudden cry caused him to break his resolution, and he never could withdraw his gaze again."

The Roman people clung with amazing tenacity to this gruesome sport. Nero instituted, in a private way, games after the Grecian model, and Hadrian made a similar effort on a larger scale; but the public took little interest in them while sturdy Romans protested against these Hellenic corruptions.

I have dwelt somewhat at length on this singular

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

institution, both because it was peculiar to ancient Rome and because, above everything else, it throws light on the character of its populace. It is true that men of kindly natures like Virgil and Cicero condemned these atrocious pastimes, or at least took no pleasure in them, but their influence produced no effect on public opinion. Nothing that Seneca has written is more to his credit than the vigorous language he employs in denunciation of the gladiatorial combats.

A life devoted to study and speculation was to a Roman citizen impossible. Cicero, who did more than any of his countrymen to naturalize Greek philosophy on Roman soil through the medium of the Latin language, was a practical statesman. When forced to retire from the service of the state he longed to return to its labors, notwithstanding the dangers to be incurred. Livy and Virgil devoted their lives almost exclusively to the glorification of the past in extolling the heroes by whose toil, endurance, and self-sacrifice, the Rome of their day had become what it was. Though in a sense living in retirement, their thoughts were none the less upon the state; their time and talents not the less devoted to its service. To a Roman the state embodied almost everything worth living for; asceticism was impossible for him. Even when not actively engaged in public affairs he found pleasure in observing, at close range, the machinery of government in action. He longed to live and move in the strife and turmoil

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

of the capital. We need not wonder that Ovid, in exile, was ready to submit with cheerful alacrity to any moral indignity, and to humiliate himself in the dust before his emperor, would he but permit him to return to the city which his spirit had never left. Seneca's conduct, when in banishment, was even less to his credit than that of Ovid, inasmuch as he professed to be governed by far higher principles. He thought he was a philosopher, yet when compelled to live in Corsica where he had all his time to devote to study and meditation, he was wretched in the extreme; belittled himself by the most degrading exhibition of servility; did not scruple to stoop to the most shameful falsehoods and the most disgusting flattery in order to bring about his recall. His encomium on solitude, and his aversion to crowds, if they are anything more than mere theory, are the result of larger experience and of deeper insight into the human heart. Yet it is hardly open to doubt that he could have gone into voluntary retirement at any period of his life, except perhaps near its close.

It has been said of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, that his mind was more Greek than Roman. While it is true that he loved philosophy, and studied it daily, he did so in the belief that in this way he could the better prepare his mind and heart to perform the duties which his exalted station imposed upon him. He seems never to have seriously entertained the thought that it was in his power at all times to lay down his official burdens in order to follow his natu-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

ral inclinations. His highest ideal of virtue was to cultivate and strengthen his sense of duty; but this duty was primarily political.

There is little doubt that the conspicuous place occupied by the state in the mind of every Roman citizen prepared the way for the deification of the emperors, a form of adulation that in the course of time wrought untold mischief, and led to the most abject servility on the part of men of whom one would have expected better things. Baumgarten devotes many pages to a discussion of this curious feature of Roman politics. In the nature of the case this deification had no regard whatever to the personal character of the sovereign. It elevated him to the skies, solely as the personification of the largest possible power entrusted to a mortal. When in the course of time all the functions of the government were concentrated in the hands of a single individual, it was natural that he should become an object of worship, at least in a sense, even during his lifetime, and as a matter of course placed among the gods at his death. We shall find this transition easy if we consider further the character of the gods of antiquity. They were not distinguished from mortals by higher attributes, but only by the possession of greater power. A god, in the popular estimation, was not necessarily any better than a man—he was only stronger. His good-will was to be gained and his ill-will averted by precisely the same means that were employed in the case of men.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

The Roman gods were, in a far larger measure than those of the Greeks, personifications of abstract qualities. There was thus a wide scope for projecting into their character the salient traits of the worshiper.

The gods, then, being an abstraction, and the state being the mightiest visible representation of human power, it required no great effort of the imagination to regard its head as divine, in the sense which the Romans attached to the term. The unthinking multitude naturally fell in with the ideas of their leaders, and even the better class of men rarely protested because they considered the ceremony of little moment, or because protests would have been unavailing.

Strangely, too, the belief in fate, in an inevitable destiny, did much to paralyze the free action of many of the bravest men. The fate of the republic, the destiny of the Roman people, regarded as an immutable law of nature, the utter insignificance of the individual either expressed or implied, are ideas that figure prominently in the literature of ancient Rome. It has been truly said that Rome attained its greatness without great men. Almost from its remotest beginnings it was like an organism in which each separate cell, though incapable of life by itself, performs its function as part of a whole and contributes to its life and growth. In this case the cell, as we may designate each individual moral entity, though conscious in a sense of a life apart, was powerless to modify the whole organism.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

To what extent the Roman emperors took their apotheosis seriously we have scant means of knowing. It is well established that a few of them regarded it as a huge joke. But it is beyond question that on the great mass of the people it had a most deleterious effect. How could it be otherwise, when some of them reached the lowest depths of degradation to which human nature could sink? When the monarch in his official capacity was recognized not only as the political and military head of the government but also its divine head, it is easy to imagine what the effect of such a recognition must be upon the average Roman, in contracting his spiritual outlook. As long as the gods were mere abstract qualities, or even to some extent personal beings like those of the Greeks, there was a sort of indistinctness in which they were veiled that did not invite imitation. But a deified emperor was, or had been, a creature of flesh and blood; no matter what he might do, there would be many ready to tread in his footsteps, so far as they could. The pernicious influence of the ancient mythology engaged the attention of thoughtful men from the remotest times. How much worse, then, would this influence be when the vilest that tradition reported of the gods was actually done by men in flesh and blood. "Like priest, like people," is a true saying even when both priest and people are pagans.

Aside from the restraints of religion, there is, in modern times, in all civilized countries, a certain re-

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

straining influence exercised by public opinion that keeps the rich, who are inclined to a lax personal morality, within reasonable bounds. But so far as we can discover, the inhibitive force of public opinion in Rome upon the individual in the matter of ethics was very slight, especially under the empire. It is plain then where a debauched public sentiment placed no check upon any form of vice from without, and but few individuals yielded to moral restraints from within, the condition of society was such that it could hardly have been worse.

We are sometimes inclined to wonder that so few protests were made by enlightened Romans against the deification of the emperors. The explanation may be found in the prevailing rationalism of the age. To the majority of those men one religion was just as good as another, and all religions were but forms of superstition. The persecutions directed against the early Christians were urged on the general ground that the failure to follow the multitude was a mark of treason against the government, and for this reason the best men were naturally the instigators. To perform the religious functions enjoined by the state was regarded as a mark of loyalty; to refuse, the badge of disloyalty. It is not necessary to go back to ancient Rome and to heathen religions to find parallels for treating the externals of worship as matters of indifference, or for requiring the subject, under penalties, to conform to the creed of the sovereign.



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

When we come to speak of the relation of Seneca to Christianity, but especially of his conversion by St. Paul, a thesis laboriously defended by more than one modern writer, we cannot do better than to transcribe a passage from Merivale setting forth clearly the courses that led men into a very natural error. After calling attention to the fact that both Seneca and Paul were moral reformers, he proceeds: "There is so much in their principles, so much even in their language, which agrees together, so that one has been thought, though it must be allowed without adequate reason, to have borrowed directly from the other. But the philosopher, be it remembered, discoursed to a large and not inattentive audience, and surely the soil was not all unfruitful on which this seed was scattered, when he proclaimed that *God dwells not in temples of wood or stone, nor wants the ministration of human hands; that He has no delight in the blood of victims; that He is near to all His creatures; that His spirit resides in men's hearts; that all men are truly His offspring; that we are members of one body, which is God or nature; that men must believe in God before they can approach Him; that the true service of God is to be like unto Him; that all men have sinned, and none performed all the works of the law; that God is no respecter of nations, ranks, or conditions, but all, barbarian and Roman, bond and free, are alike under His all-seeing providence.* St. Paul enjoined submission and obedience even to the tyranny of

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

Nero, and Seneca fosters no ideas subversive of political subjection. Endurance is the paramount virtue of the Stoic. To forms of government the wise man was wholly indifferent; they were among the external circumstances above which his spirit soared in serene self-contemplation. We trace in Seneca no yearning for a restoration of political freedom, nor does he ever point to the senate, after the manner of the patriots of the day, as a legitimate check to the autocracy of the despot. The only mode, in his view, of tempering tyranny is to educate the tyrant himself in virtue. His was the self-denial of the Christians, but without their anticipated compensation. It seems impossible to doubt that in his highest flights of rhetoric—and no man ever recommended the unattainable with a finer grace—Seneca must have felt that he was laboring to build up a house without foundations; that his system, as Caius said of his style, was sand without lime. He was surely not unconscious of the inconsistency of his own position, as a public man and a minister, with the theories to which he had wedded himself; and of the impossibility of preserving in it the purity of his character as a philosopher or a man. He was aware that in the existing state of society at Rome, wealth was necessary to men high in station; wealth alone could retain influence, and a poor minister became at once contemptible. Both Cicero and Seneca were men of many weaknesses, and we remark them the more because both were pretenders to unusual

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

strength of character: but while Cicero lapsed into political errors, Seneca cannot be absolved of actual crime. Nevertheless, if we may compare the greatest masters of Roman wisdom together, the Stoic will appear, I think, the more earnest of the two, the more anxious to do his duty for its own sake, the more sensible of the claims of mankind upon him for such precepts of virtuous living as he had to give. In an age of unbelief and compromise, he taught that Truth was positive and Virtue objective. He conceived, what never entered Cicero's mind, the idea of improving his fellow creatures; he had, what Cicero had not, a heart for conversion to Christianity."

Notwithstanding the many points of contact between the doctrines of the New Testament and the teachings of Seneca, no competent judge now holds that he was a Christian. The wonder is that there should ever have arisen any serious controversy on the subject. The very fact that Seneca's faith underwent no change from first to last ought to be decisive. He did not pass through the experience of conversion; he shows no vicissitudes of intellectual or moral growth; he never wavered in his faith in philosophy, and in the power of man to attain the supreme good by mere force of will. Yet Seneca is, to the Christian, unquestionably, the most interesting personality that heathen antiquity has produced. His philosophy and his morality show, in a striking way, that a man may approach very close to the boundary line of Christianity without crossing it; without even

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

knowing what is before him. The best thought of the age clearly proves that Greek philosophy had, in a sense, prepared a few noble minds for the reception of the ethical and altruistic precepts of the Gospel; but it was in no sense the harbinger of its spiritual doctrines.

It remains yet to consider briefly an institution which, while not peculiar to Rome, was, nevertheless, here characterized by some features that were unique in their influences for evil. Slavery rested like a horrible incubus upon the ancient world, though few persons seem to have been aware of it. It placed a curse upon labor and almost prevented the development of the mechanic arts. It seriously impeded the growth of the moral sentiments by the hindrances it placed in the way of free discussion, and by the opportunities it afforded the basely inclined for the gratification of carnal lusts. It placed a large part of the population virtually beyond the range of human sympathy by branding the expression of such sympathy as a symptom of treason. While it did these things everywhere, in Rome it made a people that were naturally coarse and brutal still more so, by placing within the easy reach of every slave-owner helpless objects upon which he could vent his rage, and whose services he could exploit in the most unfeeling manner. A lurid light is thrown on the barbarity of the Romans toward their slaves by an occurrence that took place in the later years of Seneca. A plain statement of the facts is more impressive

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

than many pages of theory. A prefect of the city, Pedanius Secundus by name, was murdered by one of his slaves and the criminal could not be apprehended. According to law, all the bondmen of the murdered man, four hundred in number, were to be put to death. The populace, to their honor be it said, more humane than the senators, raised a tumult of protest against the execution of the sentence. Their sympathy availed nothing; the unhappy victims were led away to die. One of the senators even proposed a decree that all the freedmen belonging to the household of the late prefect should be transported beyond the confines of Italy. But the emperor, and that emperor was Nero, more humane than the optimates, alleged that the laws were already severe enough, and that it would be cruel to add to their severity by fresh enactments. The decree of expulsion was not passed. Yet Tacitus, from whom this narrative is taken, a writer who never tires of lamenting the degeneracy of his age, has not a word of compassion for the unfortunate sufferers, nor a syllable of condemnation for an atrocious law.

Still it must be said that some of the Roman philosophers, especially Cicero and Seneca, lay stress in their writings, upon the universal brotherhood of man. They have much to say about the intrinsic worth of the human soul. While these ideas are largely borrowed from the Greeks, or at least suggested by Greek philosophers, the Romans are singularly eloquent in proclaiming them. But slavery is

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

never attacked by name. It is doubtful whether a passage can be found in any Greek or Roman writer explicitly asserting that it is wrong for one man to hold another in bondage. This may be due to the conviction that such a doctrine would be extremely dangerous among a large servile population, even if the government allowed entire freedom of speech. The New Testament is almost silent about slavery. Its authors did not wish to give utterance to any views that could be used by their enemies as the basis for a charge of disaffection with the "powers that be."

Again, slavery in some form was universal. Servitude was held to be the proper condition of a large part of the human race. No man who lived during the existence of the Roman empire would have ventured to predict the ultimate downfall of slavery. It is interesting to note in this connection that Basil Hall, writing as late as 1828, while admitting everything that could be alleged on the evils of slavery, thought that to do away with it seemed "so completely beyond the reach of any human exertions that I consider the abolition of slavery as one of the most profitless of all possible subjects of discussion."

On the supposition, then, that slavery must continue indefinitely, if it could ever be abolished, it was the duty of the philanthropist to do what he could to ameliorate the condition of the servile class by educating their masters in the principles of a humane philosophy, rather than to incur the risk of making it worse by the suggestion of emancipation.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

If the good man is kind to his beast, he cannot fail to treat kindly his bondman. It does not seem inconsistent with the general tenor of Seneca's writings to assume that he thought the best way to mitigate the condition of the slaves was to indoctrinate their owners with a philosophy that would accord to them kind treatment, rather than to seek to bring about their liberation.

Besides, the slaves themselves were not often conscious of their unfortunate legal status. The best they desired for themselves was that they might fall into the hands of a good master. That such men were not altogether wanting, even among the Romans, is evident from the many instances of rare devotion shown by their slaves.

It is one of the suprising things in the history of mankind that the progress of the anti-slavery sentiment was so rapid when the cause of the slave had obtained a hearing before the bar of public conscience. Slavery had existed from time immemorial. The wrongs it condoned, the evils ertailed upon its victims, attracted but little attention until the close of the last century. Within less than a hundred years after the agitation had begun there was not a slave recognized as such by law in Christendom. The contemplation of this fact may well teach political prophets to be careful in their predictions as to what will or will not happen in the future.

In the foregoing essay I have, for the most part

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

omitted such biographical data as may be found in any encyclopedia, and have confined myself chiefly to a study of the society in which Seneca moved, and to a consideration of some of the leading characteristics of the age in which he lived. Every man should be judged by his times, for no man is uninfluenced by them. It is only men of the strongest character that rise far above the manners and thoughts of their contemporaries. Seneca was not one of these. Though endowed with a penetrating intellect and strong moral convictions he sometimes yielded to temptations against the protest of his better judgment. He compelled his intellect to sanction or at least to excuse conduct that he felt to be unworthy of the philosophy he professed and taught. Yet after making all due allowance for his shortcomings, I am persuaded that one cannot long study his writings and his career without reaching the conviction that among the great men of Rome none towered above him in moral grandeur and but few surpassed him in intellectual stature. If I may be allowed to express a personal opinion I do not hesitate to affirm that in the first thousand years of its history no more interesting and attractive character lived and died in the City of the Seven Hills than the philosopher Seneca.

The following is a list of Seneca's extant works:

*De Providentia*, (On Providence).

*De Constantia Sapiientis*, (On the Constancy of the Sage).

*De Ira*, (On Anger).

*De Vita beata*, (On a happy life).



## Seneca: His Character and Environment

*De Otio*, (On Leisure).

*De Tranquillitate Animi*, (On Peace of Mind).

*De Brevitate Vitae*, (On the Shortness of Life).

*De Beneficiis*, (On Beneficence).

*De Clementia*, (On Clemency).

*Ad Marciam de Consolatione*, (A Letter of Condolence to Marcia).

*Ad Polybium de Consolatione*, (A Letter of Condolence to Polybius).

*Ad Helviam matrem de Consolatione*. (A Letter of Condolence to his mother Helvia).

*Apocolocyntosis*, (Pumpkinification, as it may be translated by a parody on Deification; or we may call it Pumpkinosis to correspond with Apotheosis).

*Epistolae Morales ad Lucilium*, (Letters to Lucilius on the Conduct of Life).

*Quaestiones Naturales*, (Questions relating to Physical Phenomena). This is the only work of the kind belonging to Latin literature. During the Middle Ages it was much used as a text-book.

In the Charpentier-Lemaistre edition the letters to Lucilius fill the first volume and a little more than half of the second. The first Book on Beneficence is in the third volume; the remainder with the Problems in Physics fill the fourth and last. The smaller treatises occupy the rest of the four volumes. A number of Tragedies with Greek titles are also attributed to our Seneca, probably with justice.

## Seneca: His Character and Environment

NOTE:—To translate Seneca adequately is not an easy task. While his meaning is usually plain, the modern reader is not in all cases certain that he clearly apprehends the exact signification of his words when taken separately. He is thus in danger of reading into them ideas that savor more of modern theology than the author intended,—a common fault of interpreters. It has been demonstrated that Seneca knew nothing of the Gospels directly, yet he has often been claimed as a Christian. Evidently, then, there must be a good deal in his writings that can be used to support such a claim. Attention has already been called to his use of *caro*. He seems also to be the first Roman who uses *Providentia* to designate an intelligent guide and guardian of the affairs of the world. There are other terms to which he gives a signification not found in the profane writers of ancient Rome.

But the chief obstacle the translator has to contend against is his diction. This is highly rhetorical and very difficult to transfer into another language, unless the translator has at command all the resources of his mother tongue. Such a wealth of resources, I do not hesitate to confess, is not within my reach. If a translation is to make the same impression on the reader or hearer that is made by the original, it is as important to preserve the peculiarities of a writer's style as to render accurately the meaning of the separate words. While I flatter myself that I have been fairly successful in the interpretation of Seneca's words, I am not equally sanguine as to his diction. I believe, however, that I have in no case strayed very far afield and that the reading of the following pages will convey not only a fairly correct idea of what Seneca thought on many important problems, but also of the manner in which he expressed himself. I hope at some future time, if life and health are vouchsafed to me, to prepare a complete translation of Seneca's moral writings.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SENECA  
TO WHICH PASSAGES MORE OR LESS CLOSELY AKIN  
OCCUR IN THE SCRIPTURES.

FROM THE LETTERS TO LUCILIUS.

A holy spirit dwells within us, the observer and keeper of the evil and the good; it treats us just as it is treated by us.

If you do what is right, let all men know it; if what is wrong, does it matter that no one knows it, since you know it yourself? O what a wretched man you are if you disregard such a witness!

The human mind has come down from the spirit that dwells on high.

Fortune exempts many from punishment; from fear, no one.

It is natural for those who have done wrong to be afraid.

The light is irksome to a bad conscience.

The guilty have sometimes the good fortune not to be found out; never the certainty of it.

Good precepts, if you often reflect upon them, will profit you equally with good examples.

If thou wouldst gain the favor of the gods, be good.

He adequately worships the gods who imitates them.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

It suffices God that he be worshiped and loved; love cannot be mixed with fear.

What thou hast learned, confirm by doing.

A great and holy spirit, it is true, holds converse with us, but it cleaves to its origin.

Let the young reverence and look up to their teachers.

How wisely you live is an important matter: not, how long.

It is not a good thing to live; it is, to live wisely.

He who would live for himself must live for others.

He who has much covets more.

No one is worthy of God save him who contemns riches. ✓

Dare to condemn riches and thus to make thyself worthy of God.

The shortest road to riches is to condemn riches.

Not he who has little but he who covets more is poor.

Thin is the texture of a lie; it is easily seen through if closely examined.

The praise is not in the deed but in the way it is done.

To be master of one's self is the greatest mastery.

One cause of the evils of our time is that we live

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

after the example of others. We are not guided by reason but led astray by custom.

Money never made anybody rich.

Why did God create the world? He is good; a good being feels no aversion to anything that is good. Therefore He made the world as good as possible.  
*Quoted from Plato.*

Some of our time is filched from us, some is stolen outright, some passes unnoticed. But most reprehensible of all things is to lose it by mere negligence; and if you will note carefully, men spend a great part of life in doing evil, the greatest part in doing nothing the whole of it doing something else than they ought. Whom will you name that places any value on time? Who prizes a day? Who realizes that he is dying daily? For we err when we regard death as something in the future; a great part of it has already passed; the portion of our life that is behind us, death holds. Do, therefore, Lucilius, what you write that you are doing, husband every hour; you will be less dependent upon to-morrow if you seize to-day. Everything else belongs to others, time only is ours.

There is a great difference between not wanting to sin and not knowing how.

If thou wouldst get rid of thy vices keep out of bad company.

He worships God who knows Him.

No one commits wrongs for himself alone; he com-

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

municates them to others and is in turn led astray by others.

Our minds are dazzled when they look upon truth.

No virtue remains hidden, and it suffers no damage by having been hidden.

Nature has given to all the fundamental principles and seeds of virtue.

Nature does not make us virtuous; it is an art to become good.

If what you are doing is right, all men may know it.

The reward of all the virtues is in the virtues themselves. The recompense of a good deed is to have done it.

Virtue alone brings lasting and sure happiness.

He errs who thinks the gods intentionally inflict injuries on any one; they cannot do so; they can neither receive nor do injury.

So live with men as if God saw thee; so talk with God as if men heard thee.

God has no need of ministering servants: He Himself ministers to men; is present everywhere and in everything.

The gods extend a helping hand to those who would rise. Do you wonder that man goes to the gods? God comes to men, and what is more, He comes into men. No mind is good without God.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

All men, if they are traced to their first origin, are from the gods.

Every day, every hour, reminds us of our nothingness and, by some fresh admonition, warns those of their frailty who are prone to forget it.

Give heed to each day as if it were your whole life. Nothing will so much enable you to exercise control over yourself in all things as to think often of the uncertainty and brevity of life.

You will grant that the greatest piety toward the gods is a characteristic of a good man; and so whatever may befall him he will bear with equanimity, for he will know that it has happened in harmony with that divine law by which all things are governed.

No one is strong enough to rise by his own strength; every man needs some one to extend a hand, some one to lead him.

✓ So let us live, so let us talk, that our destiny may find us prepared and ready to follow it. Great is the soul that has yielded itself to God; on the other hand, that one is cowardly and degenerate that resists, that finds fault with the order of the world, and is more ready to set the the gods right than itself.

We ought to have before our minds some one whom we revere; some one whose influence makes even our most secret thoughts holier.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

Long is a way by precepts; short and effectual, by examples.

Weaker minds, however, have need of some one to go before who shall say, "This avoid, this do."

The community of which we form a part is very much like an arch built of stone; it would at once fall down if one did not support another.

We are members of an immense body. Nature begat us as kinsmen, since it formed us of the same elements and for the same end.

What is it that draws us in one direction when we would go in another, that urges us on when we want to resist, that strives against our desires and does not permit us to do what we purpose?

If thou wishest to be loved, love!

No one is free that is the slave of his body.

We ought to live in this thought: I was not born for a corner only; my country is this entire world.

The beginning of salvation is the knowledge of sin.  
*Quoted from Epicurus.*

Philosophy sheds its light upon all men.

It is so difficult for us to get well because we do not know that we are sick.

It is the strongest evidence that our mind is directed toward its own improvement when we see faults that we had not before observed.



## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

It is an infirmity of mind not to be able to bear riches.

To live right is in the power of everybody.

The acknowledgement of a fault is the beginning of a better life.

He who does not admit his proneness to do wrong has no desire to be corrected. You must recognize your errors before you can correct them.

The ancients held the first requisite of repentance to be an examination of one's self, especially since without this, life would not be worth living.

There is no vice without some excuse.

You ask me what you should particularly avoid. (I answer,) a crowd. You cannot with safety to yourself mingle in a large company. I must verily confess my own weakness. I never bring back the same character that I took with me; something which I had banished, returns; something else that I had quieted, is aroused. . . . But nothing is so damaging to a good character as to spend much time at public spectacles, for with the pleasure we receive vices the more easily creep in unawares.

It is a large part of goodness to desire to become good.

There is a certain fitness in the feeling of sorrow; this the sage ought to heed, and just as in everything else so in grief there is a proper mean.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

What fate did not give it did not take away.

To obey God is liberty.

No one is out of the reach of the temptation of vice unless he has banished it wholly from his breast; and no one has banished it wholly until he has put wisdom in its stead.

Great is the praise if man is helpful to man. We admonish you to extend a hand to the shipwrecked; to point out the way to the lost; to share your bread with the hungry.

No one ever renders a service to another without also rendering a service to himself.

Often what is given is a small matter; what follows from it, a great one.

When we reason upon the immortality of the soul, we do not regard as of little weight the universal belief of men who either fear or revere the gods of the lower world.

That day which thou darest as if it were thy last is the day of the birth into eternity.

A time will come that shall unite us and bring us into each other's company.

Then shall our soul have reason to rejoice because, freed from this darkness in which it is involved, it shall see the light, no longer with feeble vision, but in all the brightness of day, and it will have returned to its own heaven since it will again occupy the

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

place which belongs to it by right of birth. Its origin calls it on high.

Let another begin a quarrel, but let reconciliation begin with thee.

What else is nature than God and the divine reason that permeates the whole world and all its parts. Whithersoever thou turnest thou wilt see Him before thee; there is no place where He is not; He Himself fills all His work.

Every crime is committed before the deed is done.

The human mind has come down from the spirit that dwells on high.

Believe me, the creator of this vast universe, whoever he may have been, whether it was a god, master of everything, whether it was an incorporeal intelligence able to bring forth the most brilliant marvels, whether it was a divine spirit diffused with equal energy in the smallest and the largest things, whether it was destiny and an immutable concatenation of causes linked together: this sovereign potentate did not wish to leave us dependent upon any one else even in the smallest matters.

Stars shall impinge upon stars and all matter that now delights us with its beautiful order will burn in one huge conflagration.

How often he who refuses pardon to others begs it for himself!

It is base to say one thing and mean another; it

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

is baser to write one thing and mean another.

A wise man will pardon an injury, though it be great, and if he can do it without breach of piety and fidelity, that is, if the whole injury pertains to himself.

As far as thou canst, accuse thyself, try thyself, discharge the office, first of a prosecutor, then of a judge, lastly of an intercessor.

We can never quarrel enough with our vices, which, I beseech thee, persecute perpetually. Cast from thee everything that corrupts the heart; and if thou canst not otherwise get rid of it, spare not the heart itself.

### FROM DE BENEFICIIS.

Nature is not without God nor is God without nature. Both are the same and their functions are the same. So, too, nature, destiny, fortune, are all the names of the same God.

It is the mark of a noble and generous soul to be helpful, to do good; he who confers favors, imitates the gods.

Beneficence always makes haste; what one does willingly one does quickly.

We owe no thanks for a favor that has for a long time adhered to the hands of the giver, as it were; which he seems to have let go with reluctance and which one might almost say had been wrested from him.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

Those favors are most gratifying to us that are deliberately and willingly offered, and in connection with which the only hesitancy is on the part of the recipient.

I do not make the favors I confer a matter of public record.

He who intends to be grateful ought to think about requiting a favor as soon as he receives it.

This is the law of beneficence between two persons: the one should forthwith forget that he has given; the other should never forget that he has received.

You buy from the physician a thing that is above price, life and health; from the teacher of belles-lettres, acquaintance with the liberal arts. Yet it is not the value of these things that you pay for but their pains, because when they are serving us they give up their private business to devote themselves to us.

The sun rises for the evil also.

God has given certain benefactions to all men, and from which none are excluded.

Who is so wretched, so despised, who born to so hard and sorrowful a destiny that he has never perceived the munificence of the gods? Seek out even those who bewail their fate and who are always complaining, you will not find among the entire number one who has not experienced the beneficence of heaven; there is not one for whom there has not flowed

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

something from the most inexhaustable of all fountains.

Add, now, that external circumstances do not coerce the gods, but their sempiternal will is their law. They have established an order of events which they do not change. The gods never repent of their first purpose.

Beneficence consists not in what is done or given, but in the spirit of the doer or giver.

It is a most glorious work to save even the unwilling and refractory.

The door to virtue is closed to no one; it is open to all, admits all; virtue invites everybody, free-born, freedmen, slaves, kings and exiles. It selects neither class nor condition, it seeks the man only.

Nature directs us to do good to all men whether bond or free, free-born or emancipated slaves. Wherever there is a human being, there is a place for beneficence.

He who reasons thus (like Epicurus), does not hear the voices of supplicants and the prayers offered everywhere, in public and private, with hands outstretched toward heaven. This could not be, nor is it possible that all men should have willingly consented to the folly of addressing deaf divinities and powerless gods, if they had not recognized their benefactions, sometimes given spontaneously, sometimes in answer to prayer, always great, timely, averting by their intervention impending disasters.

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

It is easy to form the mind while it is still tender; but it is difficult to root out those vices that have grown up with it.

It is a great thing to know when to speak and when to be silent.

The vices of others we have before our eyes; our own, behind our backs.

Use your ears oftener than your tongue.

Nothing is more out of place in him who is inflicting punishment than anger.

It is not the issue of a thing that ought to be taken into account, but the purpose.

Every crime is committed before the deed is done.

To cupidity nothing is enough; to nature even a little is enough.

Vice takes possession of us unconsciously; virtue is difficult to find, and we need a guide and teacher. Vices are learned without a teacher.

Stars shall impinge upon stars and all matter that now delights us with its beautiful order shall burn in one huge conflagration.

All that is best can neither be given to men nor taken from them.

There are two things, the most precious of all, that attend us whithersoever we turn our steps: common nature and personal virtue. These things are

## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

so, believe me, because they were so willed by the creator of the universe, whether it is that God who controls everything, or incorporeal reason, the artificer of great works, or the divine spirit that pervades equally the greatest and the smallest things.

If the dead have any feeling, the soul of my brother, now set free from a long imprisonment, is at length in the full enjoyment of his freedom and his majority; he beholds with delight the nature of things and looks down upon human affairs from his high abode; but things divine, the causes of which he so long sought out in vain, he now beholds at close range. Why then do I pine away in sorrow for him who is either blessed or not all? To mourn for one who is in bliss is envy; for one who is not, folly.

Borne on high, he soars among beatified spirits, and a sanctified company welcomes him — the Scipios, the Catos, released by the beneficence of death. There thy father devotes himself to his grandson, resplendent in the new light even though in that place all are known to each. He explains to him the motions of the stars around him; not from conjectures, but, versed in the knowledge of all things, he gladly inducts him into the arcana of nature.

If you will believe those who have looked more deeply into the truth, our whole life is a punishment.

For those who sail this sea so stormy, so exposed to every tempest, there is no harbor except death.



## Selections from the Writings of Seneca

He now enjoys a serene and cloudless heaven. From this humble and low abode, he has sped swiftly into that region, wherever it may be, where souls, freed from their chains, are received into the abode of the blest. He now roams about at will, and beholds with supremest delight all that is good in the universe. . . . He has not left us; he has gone before.

DE PROVIDENTIA SIVE QUARE ALIQUA IN-  
COMMUNDA BONIS VIRIS ACCIDANT  
CUM PROVIDENTIA SIT.

NOTE:—This monograph is addressed to the same Lucilius, procurator of Sicily, to whom Seneca also dedicates his letters and his Problems in Physics. The date of composition is not known, but it probably belongs to the later years of the author's life. The opening sentences seem to make it a part of a larger work on ethics, or rather of a theodicy, which was either never completed or has not come down to us. This is a serious loss both to us and to Seneca: to us, because such a work would doubtless have placed before us a complete theory of human conduct as conceived by a man who was thoroughly conversant with the motives that dominate men; to Seneca, because it would in all probability have explained if not justified some of the inconsistencies that have so sadly marred his career. Indeed the fundamental proposition of the essay is inconsistent, since the conclusion does not follow from the premises. For if the patient endurance of tribulation is the supreme test of a good man, how is he justified in avoiding that test, as our author proposes, by taking his own life?

I.

You have asked me, Lucilius, why it is, if the world is governed by a Providence, that so many misfortunes befall good men. To this an answer would more properly be given in a work in which I should undertake to prove that a Providence presides over the affairs of men, and that God dwells among us. But since you deem it best to take a small portion of the whole subject, and to settle this single disputed question, the main proposition meanwhile being left

## De Providentia

untouched, I shall undertake a case of little difficulty: I shall plead the cause of the gods.

2. It is superfluous to show at the present time that so great a work does not stand fast and firm without an overseer; that the regular course of the heavenly bodies is not a fortuitous concourse of atoms; that those objects which chance puts in motion are subject to frequent disturbances and sudden collisions; that this harmonious velocity is under the sway of an eternal law governing everything on land and sea, no less than the brilliant luminaries which shine according to a prearranged plan; that this order is not the result of elements moving about at random, neither can fortuitous aggregations of matter cohere with such art that the immense mass of the earth remains motionless while beholding the rapid gyrations of the heavenly bodies about itself; that the seas poured into the valleys to fructify the soil never feel any increase from rivers; or that enormous vegetation grows from the minutest seeds.

3. Not even those things that appear to be uncertain and without regularity—I mean rains and clouds and the bolts of lightning darting from the clouds, and fires poured from the cleft summits of mountains, and the quakings of the tottering ground, and such other disturbances of the earth about us—are without a rational explanation, unforeseen though they be. These things, too, have their causes, not less those which, when they appear in unexpected places, are regarded as prodigies, such as warm springs among

## De Providentia

the billows or new insular lands rising up in the vast expanse of the sea.

4. Moreover, if one has observed the beach laid bare by the waves of the retiring sea and covered again within a brief space of time, does he believe that the waves have been contracted and drawn inward by a kind of blind restlessness, to burst forth again to seek with a mighty onset their accustomed seats, especially since the waters increase at regular intervals and move according to a fixed day and hour just as the lunar star attracts them more or less, under whose influence the ocean regulates its ebb and flow? However, these questions had better be reserved for their proper place, since you do not deny the existence of a providence, but only bring complaints against it.

5. I wish to reconcile you with the gods since they regard the best men with the most favor. For in the nature of things, what is good can never harm the good. Between good men and the gods a friendship exists, virtue being the bond of amity. Friendship, do I say? nay, more; it is a near relationship and likeness, since the good man differs from God only in time; he is His pupil and imitator, His true offspring, whom his august father, no lenient trainer in the virtues, brings up somewhat rigorously after the manner of stern parents.

6. Accordingly, when you see good men, the favorites of the gods, toiling, sweating, ascending by hard paths, and the bad living in licentious indul-

## De Providentia

gence and growing effeminate in luxury, consider that we too are gratified with the sobriety of our sons, but with the wantonness of our household slaves; that the former gain greater self-control by the sterner discipline, the latter are confirmed in their presumption. The same thing is true in regard to God; He does not support the good man in enervating ease; He tries him, hardens him, prepares him for Himself.

### II.

“Why do the good meet with so many adversities?” (you ask). No evil thing can befall a good man; things in their nature contradictory may not be commingled. Just as so many rivers, so much water falling from the clouds above, so great a number of springs impregnated with mineral substances, do not change the saltness of the sea, do not even dilute it; so the assaults of adversity produce no change in the spirit of a brave man. He remains steadfast, and whatever betides he gains for his colors, for he is stronger than all external circumstances. I do not, it is true, say, that he is insensible to them, but that he triumphs over them, and, moreover, remains calm and serene in spite of obstacles. All untoward events he regards as so much drill. Besides, is there any man who is only an admirer of noble deeds, that is not eager for honest toil, or ready to do his duty with alacrity even in the face of danger? To what industrious man is not inactivity a punishment?

## De Providentia

We see athletes, whose purpose is to develop their bodily strength, matching themselves with the most doughty antagonists, and requiring those who prepare them for a contest to use all their strength against their pupils; they allow themselves to be smitten and buffeted, and if they do not find suitable single antagonists they pit themselves against several at the same time.

3. When virtue has no antagonist it becomes enervated; then only does it appear what its true character is, how strong, how virile it is when patient endurance shows what it can accomplish. You surely know that good men must do the same thing, to the end that they may not fear what is hard or formidable, nor complain about fate. Whatever happens, let the good bear it patiently and turn it to good uses. Not what we bear but how we bear it, is the important thing. Do you not see how differently fathers and mothers show their love for their children? The former want their sons to be aroused early in order that they may betake themselves to their studies; their vacations even they would not have them pass in idleness, and they draw sweat and sometimes even tears from the youths; but mothers want to fondle them on their bosom, keep them in the shade; they would never have them weep, never be sad, never undergo toil.

4. God has a father's feelings toward good men and ardently loves them, and says: "By labors, sorrows, privations, let them be tried in order that they

## De Providentia

may gain real strength." Animals that are being fattened grow languid by their inactivity, and by the weight of their own bodies become incapable not only of work, but of movement. Unalloyed felicity cannot withstand any shock, but a constant struggle against obstacles hardens a man against injuries, and he does not succumb to any disaster, for even if he falls, he fights on his knees.

5. Are you surprised if God, who is a most devoted friend of the good, and who wishes them to attain the highest degree of perfection, assigns them a place in which they are to be disciplined? Verily, I am not surprised that sometimes a desire seizes the the gods to behold great men struggling against some misfortune. To us mortals it at times affords pleasure to see a courageous youth await with the hunting spear, the onset of some wild beast, or if with unblanched cheek he thrusts back the attack of a lion; and the spectacle is agreeable in proportion to the rank of him who exhibits it.

6. These are not the sights that attract the attention of the gods, but childish pastimes and the pleasures of men who have no serious aims. Behold a spectacle worthy of a god who is intensely interested in his work; behold a pair of champions worthy of god, a brave man pitted against adverse fortune, especially if he himself be the challenging party. I do not see, I say, what more agreeable sight on earth Jupiter can look upon, if he turns his attention thither, than to behold Cato, after his party had been

## De Providentia

more than once defeated, standing erect, nevertheless, amid the ruins of the republic.

7. Said he, "Though everything has yielded to the behests of one man; though the lands be guarded by legions and the seas by fleets and the soldiers of Caesar keep watch at our gates, there is a way of escape for Cato. Single-handed will he make a broad way for liberty; this sword, pure and untarnished even in civil strife, shall at length perform a worthy and noble deed; the liberty it could not give to his country, it shall give to Cato. Perform my soul, a deed long meditated, free thyself from earthly concerns!

8. Already Petreius and Juba have turned their swords against each other and lie dead, slain with mutual hands. A brave and glorious covenant to die was that, but one that was unworthy of my greatness; it is as ignoble for Cato to beg for death at the hands of another as (to beg for) life." I am sure the gods looked with keen satisfaction when that hero, the intrepid liberator of himself, takes counsel for the safety of others and provides a way of escape for the fugitives; when he pursues his studies far even into that final night; when he thrusts the sword into his own sacred breast; when he disembowels himself and sets free with his own hand that purest spirit unworthy to be contaminated with a sword.

9. Hence I would fain believe that the thrust was badly directed and the wound not fatal; it was not



## De Providentia

enough for the immortal gods to have beheld Cato once only; his courage was restrained and called back that it might show itself in a more difficult part. For death may be said not so much to have come upon so great a soul as to have been sought by it. Why should they not rejoice to see their favorite pass from life in a way so glorious and memorable? Death deifies those whose departure fills with admiration even those who stand aghast at the manner of it.

### III.

But as I proceed with my discourse, I shall show that not all those things which seem to be evils are such. For the present, I affirm that the conditions you call hard, adverse, and terrible, are in the first place best for those very persons whom they befall; and in the second, for all men, since the gods are more concerned for mankind as a whole than for the individual; and lastly; that they happen either with their approval, or to men who are worthy of them, if without their approval. To these propositions I shall add that such things take place in the fixed order of the world and rightly happen to the good, in virtue of the same law which makes them good. From this point of view I shall then convince you that you never need feel pity for the good man; for though he may be called unfortunate, he never is so.

2. The most difficult of the affirmations I have made seems to be the first, to wit, that it is for our own good these very things happen which we dread

## De Providentia

and shudder at. Is it good for anybody, you say, to be driven into exile, to see his children reduced to want, to bear a wife to the grave, to be disgraced, maimed? If you are surprised that this should result in good to any one, then you will be surprised that persons are sometimes cured by cutting and burning not the less than by hunger and thirst. But if you will reflect that as remedial measures, the bones have to be laid bare or taken out, veins to be extracted, and even members to be amputated, because they cannot be allowed to remain attached to it without detriment to the whole body; you will also admit that some unpleasant things are an advantage to those whom they befall, no less than that some things which are accounted good and are sought after, are an injury to those who find pleasure in them, such as eating and drinking to excess and other things that kill by the gratification they afford.

3. Among the many noteworthy sayings of our friend Demetrius there is one that is fresh in my mind and keeps sounding and ringing in my ears. "There is no being," says he, "more unfortunate than the man who never felt adversity." For he has never had an opportunity to test himself. Though everything may have come to him when he wished it or even before he wished it, the gods have nevertheless not thought well of him. They have adjudged him unworthy of a struggle with adversity lest he be overcome by it, for it avoids all cowards as if saying, Why should I choose such an antagonist? he lays

## De Providentia

down his arms forthwith; there is no need of all my strength against him; he is beaten by a feeble onset; he cannot bear even a look.

4. Let another be selected for the struggle. It is a shame to fight with a man who wants to be beaten. A gladiator regards it as a disgrace to be pitted against an inferior antagonist for he knows there is no glory in overcoming one who is vanquished without danger. Adversity does likewise; it seeks out foemen worthy of their antagonist and passes by some with disdain. It always attacks the doughtiest and boldest for a trial of its strength.

5. It tries Mucius with fire, Fabricius with poverty, Regulus with torture, Socrates with poison, Cato with death. It is misfortune alone that finds noble examples. Is Mucius to be commiserated because he put his hand into an enemy's fire and punished himself for his mistake? because he vanquished with a burned hand a king whom he could not vanquish with it armed? Would he have been happier if he had warmed it in the bosom of a mistress?

6. Is Fabricius to be pitied because he tilled his own field when not engaged in public duties? because he waged war against riches as well as against Pyrrhus? because he ate, by his own fireside, the same roots and herbs that his triumphant old age pulled up on his farm? Can we say that he would have been happier if he had filled his stomach with fish from a far off strand and with exotic birds? or if he had stimulated his jaded and nauseated stomach

## De Providentia

with oysters from the Upper and the Lower sea? or if he had encircled with a huge pile of different fruits, the finest game captured at the cost of many a huntsman's life?

7. Is Rutilius unfortunate because those who condemned him decided a case against themselves for all time to come? because he was more willing to be deprived of his country than to be recalled from exile? because he alone dared to deny anything to the dictator Sulla. and when invited to return, not only refused, but fled farther? "Let those manage affairs," said he, "whom thy good fortune keeps in Rome! Let them look upon the pool of blood in the Forum and the heads of senators floating on the Servilian lake,—for that was the field of carnage of those proscribed by Sulla—and the bands of assassins roaming through the city, and the many thousands of Roman citizens slain in one place after pledges of immunity had been given, yes, because of those very pledges! Let those look upon these things who are not able to endure exile."

8. Shall we say that Sulla is to be congratulated because, when he descends to the Forum, a way is opened for him with the sword? because he allows the heads of men of consular rank to be shown him in public, and paid the price of their slaughter by the hand of the quaestor and from the fisc? And he who did these things is the same man that enacted the Cornelian law! Let us return to Regulus. What injury did his destiny do him by making him, the

## De Providentia

well-known exemplar of good faith, an exemplar of patient endurance? Nails pierce his skin, and whatever way he lays down his weary body he lies on a wound, while his open eyes doom him to perpetual wakefulness.

9. The greater the anguish, the greater will be the glory. Wouldst thou know how little he regretted the high value he set on fortitude? Heal his wounds and send him back to the senate—he will give the same advice (as before). Dost thou think Maecenas happier when a prey to the torments of love and when grieving over the daily repulses of a wayward wife, he courts sleep amid the sound of symphonies softly sounding in the distance? Though he stupify himself with wine, and seek diversion in the murmur of waters, or trick his troubled mind with a thousand pastimes, he lies awake on his bed of down no less than the other on his bed of torture. But for the former there is the solace that he is enduring hardness for a noble purpose, and he can look away from his pain to its cause; the latter, surfeited with pleasures, weighed down by an excess of good fortune, is more tormented by the cause of his sufferings than by the sufferings themselves.

10. Not yet has vice so completely taken possession of the human race as to make it doubtful that the majority, if they had the choice of their lot, would prefer that of Regulus to that of Maecenas. Or, if there should be anybody who had presumption enough to say that he had rather be born a Maecenas

## De Providentia

than a Regulus, the same person, even though he might not openly admit it, would also rather be born a Terentia. Do you pronounce Socrates unfortunate because he drained the executioner's cup as if it had been the draught of immortality, and discoursed about death up to the moment it overtook him? Was his lot an unhappy one because his blood congealed and his vital force stopped by the gradually advancing rigor of death?

11. How much more is he to be envied than those who are served from goblets studded with gems, for whom a male prostitute, accustomed to submit to every kind of abuse, whose virility is gone or at least doubtful, dissolves the snow that floats in a golden chalice? Whatever they drink they vomit up, to their chagrin, and taste again mixed with bile; but he willingly and with joy drains the poisonous draught. For Cato it is sufficient that the unanimous verdict of mankind has raised him to the pinnacle of felicity; him destiny selected as one who was fitted to contend against everything that is to be dreaded.

12. Is the enmity of the powers that be a serious matter? let him be opposed at the same time by Pompey, Caesar, Crassus. Is it hard to bear when one is less honored than worse men? let him be sacrificed for Vatinius. Is it a hard thing to be involved in civil wars? throughout the whole world let him fight for the good cause, equally renowned for his misfortunes as for his bravery. Is it hard to take one's own life? let him do it. What do I wish to

## De Providentia

prove by these things? I would have all men know that those vicissitudes of which Cato was deemed worthy, cannot be regarded as evils.

### IV.

Prosperity comes to ordinary people and to men of mean abilities, but it is the prerogative of a great man to overcome the calamities and terrors that frighten mortals. In truth, to be always happy and to pass one's life without mental anxiety, is to be ignorant of half of man's destiny. Thou art a great man; yet how am I to know it unless fate gives thee an opportunity to show thy worth?

2. Thou didst enter the Olympian games as a contestant; if there was none beside thyself, thou hast the crown, thou hast not the victory. I congratulate thee, not as a brave man, but as one who has gained the consulship or the praetership: thou hast won political honors. I can say the same thing to a good man, unless some more than ordinary emergency has given him an opportunity to show his strength of soul.

3. Unhappy do I adjudge thee, if thou hast never been unhappy; thou hast passed thy life without an adversary. No one knows what thou mightest have done; thou dost not even know it thyself. We need to be tried that we may find out what we are; what a man can do can be ascertained only by trial. For this reason men have sometimes voluntarily encountered obstacles that seemed to evade them and sought

## De Providentia

an opportunity for demonstrating to others the virtue that was passing into oblivion.

4. I assert that great men sometimes rejoice in tribulation like valiant soldiers in battles. I heard Triumphus, a gladiator under Caius Caesar (Caligula) complain because he had so little to do. "How my best days are speeding away," said he! Courage is eager for danger and looks to the end in view, not at what it is likely to encounter, for the reason that what it encounters is part of the glory. Warriors are proud of their wounds; joyfully they point to the blood it was their good fortune to shed. Those who return from the combat unscathed may have been just as brave—it is the wounded man that is the observed of all eyes.

God shows his good will to those whom he would have attain the highest excellence every time he gives them an opportunity to display courage and endurance; this is possible only in some contingency beset with difficulties. You form your opinion of a pilot in a storm; of a soldier, in battle. By what test am I to know how thou wilt bear up against poverty, if thou aboundest in wealth? By what test am I to know how thou wilt bear up under ignominy and disgrace and popular hatred, if thou growest old amid public applause? if a strong and unswerving popular partiality supports thee in all thou doest?

6. How am I to know with what equanimity thou wilt bear the loss of children, if thou seest about thee all those thou hast begotten? I have listened



## De Providentia

to thee when thou wert offering consolation to others; then should I have seen thee when thou wert thyself in need of consolation; when thou wert trying to restrain thyself from sorrowing. Do not, I beseech thee, shrink from these things which the immortal gods send upon thee as stimuli to thy courage. A disaster is an occasion of virtue. Those persons one can rightly call wretched who grow effeminate in superabounding prosperity; whom a dead calm bears along, as it were, in a motionless sea.

7. No matter what befalls them, they are unprepared for it. Hardships bear heaviest on those who have never known them; heavy lies the yoke on the neck that has not felt it. The mere thought of a wound makes the raw recruit turn pale; the veteran looks without blanching upon his own blood because he knows that he has often gained a victory at the price of it. Then it is that God trains and hardens those whom he has chosen, whom he loves and wishes well to; but those whom he seems to treat with indulgence, whom he spares, he keeps tender for the evils to come. For you are mistaken if you conclude that any one is exempt; he who has long basked in the sunshine of fortune will have his turn.

Every one that thinks he is discharged has been placed among the reserves. (You ask) why does God afflict every good man with ill health or sorrow or other misfortune? Because in camp-life the most perilous duties are also laid on the bravest; the

## De Providentia

commander sends picked men to fall upon the enemy from a nocturnal ambushade, or to explore a route, or to carry by assault an outpost. No one of those who go forth says, "The general has a poor opinion of me," but, "He has judged wisely and well," And so let all say who are ordered to undergo what to the coward and the slothful seem to be painful experiences: God has accounted us worthy to be used as examples by which to show how much human nature can endure. Flee from pleasure, from that unmanly felicity in which the active powers of the mind grow torpid, unless something intervenes to recall man's lot, by a sort of perpetual intoxication.

9. Him whom glass windows protect against every breath of air; whose feet are kept warm by fomentations periodically renewed; whose dining-rooms are made always comfortable by heat within the walls and under the floor—such a person, not even a gentle breeze passes over without danger. Though everything that transcends the bounds of moderation is hurtful, the most perilous intemperance is that of good fortune. It excites the brain, awakens idle fancies in the mind, puts dense darkness between the false and the true.

10. Which is better, to bear up under continuous misfortune that incites us to do our best, or to be crushed under unbounded and inexhaustible riches? Death comes gently when the stomach is empty; it is from repletion that men die like beasts. Accord-

## De Providentia

ingly the gods follow the same method with good men that teachers follow with good pupils—they require the hardest labor from those of whom they cherish the highest hopes. Dost thou believe that it is out of hatred for their children that the Lacedaemonians try, by public scourgings, what stuff they are made of? Their own fathers exhort them to bear bravely their flagellations, and ask them, when bleeding and half dead, to proffer unflinchingly their wounds for fresh wounds.

11. Why is it strange if God sends severe trials upon noble spirits? a test of one's courage is never an easy matter. Is it destiny that scourges and lacerates us? let us endure it; 'tis not wanton cruelty, it is a contest; the oftener we enter it, the stronger we shall become. The solidest part of the body, frequent use has made so. We must be subjected to the buffetings of fortune in order that in this way we may become callous to it. Little by little, fortune makes us a match for itself; contempt of dangers results from often braving them. In this way sailors inure their bodies to the sea; the hands of the husbandman are calloused; the arms of the soldier are strong from hurling javelins; the limbs of runners are agile. That part of everybody is the strongest that has exercised the most.

12. The soul acquires the strength to brave misfortune by patient endurance; what it can effect in us thou mayst know, if thou dost but consider what hardship does for those peoples that go about with-

## De Providentia

out clothing and are strong by their very indigence. Consider all the nations over whom the sway of Rome does not extend, I mean the Germans and every nomad tribe along the Danube. Perpetual winter, a severe climate, bear hard upon them, a sterile soil grudgingly supports them, a hut or branches of trees protect them against the rain, they roam over marshes hardened by frost, for food they capture wild beasts.

13. Dost thou think them wretched? No one is wretched when he performs what habit has made second nature to him; for by degrees we find pleasure in doing what we began to do from necessity. These peoples have no houses and no resting place except as weariness finds them from day to day; their food is cheap and obtained only as wanted; their naked bodies are exposed to the terrible extremes of a horrid climate; what thou regardest as a frightful calamity is the whole life of many peoples.

14. Why dost thou wonder that good men are called upon to undergo violent shocks to the end that they may stand the more firmly? A tree does not take deep root, or grow strong, unless it is frequently shaken by the wind; for as a result of violent agitation its fiber is toughened and its roots more firmly set. Those are fragile that grow up in sheltered valleys. It is therefore a boon to good men, as it makes them fearless amid danger, to become familiar with hardships and to bear with equanimity those things that are not ills, except when they are borne with an ill grace.

## De Providentia

### V.

Add, now, that it is best for all that every good man should, so to speak, be always under arms and in action. It is the purpose of God, just as if He were a wise man, to demonstrate that those things which the average man longs for, which he fears, are neither good nor evil; but it will be evident that those things are good that are sent upon good men, and those evil, that fall upon the bad. Blindness would be dreadful, if nobody had lost his sight except those who deserved to have their eyes put out. Accordingly, let Appius and Metellus be deprived of eyesight. Riches are not a good.

2. And so even the procurer Elius is rich in order that money to which men have given a sacred character in temples may also be found in a brothel. In no way is God better able to expose to contempt those things that men covet than by bestowing them upon the vilest and taking them from the worthiest. "But," sayst thou, "it is unjust that a good man should suffer mutilation, or be crucified, or be bound in fetters, while the bad strut proudly at large and live in luxury."

3. What then? is it not also unjust when brave men are required to take up arms, to pass the night in camps and to defend the outposts, though the bandages are still on their wounds, while in the city, eunuchs and debauchees by profession go about in security. What further? is it not unjust that the noblest virgins should be aroused at night to perform

## De Providentia

their sacred duties while impure women are enjoying sound sleep? Toil claims the best men. The senate is often in session during the entire day, when at the same time all the vilest men are either taking their ease in the Campus Martius, or loitering in eating-houses, or wasting their time in idle gossip. It is just so in the world at large—good men toil, sacrifice themselves or are sacrificed, and willingly at that. They are not dragged along by destiny, they follow it and keep pace with it; had they known whither it would lead them, they would have preceded it.

4. I remember also to have heard these encouraging words from that noblest of men, Demetrius. “This one complaint,” said he, “I have to make against you, ye immortal gods: it is that ye did not sooner make known to me your will; for of my own accord I would have come to those things to which I am now summoned. Do you wish to take away my children? For you I have brought them up. Do you wish any portion of my body? Take it. No great thing it is that I am offering you; soon I shall resign it entirely to you. Do you wish my life? Why not? I shall not be slow to give back to you what ye have entrusted to my keeping; ye shall find me willing to give up anything ye ask. Still I should rather have proffered it to you than given it up. What need was there to take what you could have had as a gift. Yet not even now do ye need to constrain me, since that is not taken from a man which he does not try to retain. I am in no sense the victim of constraint or violence,

## De Providentia

nor am I God's slave, but I am in accord with Him, and this all the more cheerfully because I know that everything takes its course in accordance with an immutable law established from all eternity."

5. The fates lead us, and our lot is assigned to us from the very hour of our birth. Cause depends upon cause; an unbroken chain of events links together public and private affairs. We ought therefore to bear with fortitude whatever befalls us because everything takes place, not as we think, by chance, but in its due order. A long time in advance, all our pleasures and our pains have been determined, and although in the great diversity of individual lives, one life may seem to stand apart, it all comes to this: transitory beings ourselves we have entered into a transitory inheritance.

6. Why then does this disquiet us? Why indulge in complaints? it is the law of our existence. Let nature use our bodies, which are its own, as it wishes; let us cheerfully and bravely meet whatever comes, bearing in mind that what we lose is not our property. What is the duty of a good man? To resign himself to his destiny. It is a great consolation to share the fate of the universe. Whatever it be that decrees how we are to live, how to die, it binds even the gods by the same inexorable law; an irresistible current bears along terrestrial and celestial things.

The creator and governor of the universe has indeed prescribed the course of events, but He Himself

## De Providentia

follows them; He obeys always, He commanded but once.

7. "But why was God so unjust in the destinies he prescribed for mortals, as to send upon good men poverty, wounds, and cruel deaths"? The artisan cannot change matter; it is passive. There are some things that cannot be separated from others; they are bound together and indivisible. Sluggish natures and such as are prone to sink into slumber or into a state closely akin to slumber, are conjoined of inert elements; to form a man who is really worthy of the name a more heroic destiny is needed. His path will not be smooth; he must go up-hill and down-hill, be tossed on the waves, and guide his bark through turbid waters; in spite of changing fortune, he must hold on his way.

8. He will meet many obstacles hard to remove or surmount, but he will himself remove them and smooth his path. Gold is tried by fire; brave men by misfortune. Behold to what heights virtue may climb; thou shouldst know that it cannot go by ways that are free from dangers.

Hard is the way at first: though drawn by prancing steeds,  
Slow, up the sky, the shining car proceeds;—  
On land and sea I gaze from heaven's high crest;  
Fear and emotion fill my heaving breast.  
Steep is the downward way, and with tight rein  
I must the ardor of my steeds restrain;  
E'en Tethys, wont to greet me 'neath the waves,  
Fears lest we plunge headlong to wat'ry graves.

9. When the high-spirited youth heard these words he said, "I like the way; I shall ascend it even though



## De Providentia

I fall forthwith in so doing." The sun-god still tries to dissuade him from his rash purpose by exciting his fears:

Hold straight thy course nor turn for aught aside,  
Through Taurus' horns adverse thy coursers guide,  
And Haemon's bow and Leo's searching face.

To this he replied, "Yoke the steeds to the chariot; by the very words which you seek to deter me, you incite me. I long to stand where Sol himself quakes with fear; it is only ignoble and weak souls that journey on safe roads; courage ventures on giddy heights."

### VI.

"But why does God suffer any evil to befall the good"? Verily, He does not suffer it. He wards off from them all evils, crimes and misdeeds and impure thoughts and avaricious designs and unbridled passions and lust after other men's property; He watches over and protects them. Will any one in addition to this demand of God that He shall also bear the luggage of good men (as if He were a slave)! They themselves cast this burden upon God; mere externals they make light of. Democritus threw away his riches, thinking them a fardel upon his noble soul. Why do you wonder that God sometimes suffers that to come upon a good man which he himself desires?

2. "Good men sometimes lose their children." Why not, when they sometimes even put them to

## De Providentia

death? "They are sent into exile." Why not, when they sometimes leave their country, voluntarily, never to return? "They are put to death." Why not, when they sometimes lay violent hands on themselves? "Why do they suffer many hardships?" That they may teach others to suffer patiently; they are born to be examples.

3. Think of God as speaking to them thus: "What right have ye to complain of me, ye who take pleasure in doing right? Other men I have encompassed with seductive pleasures and their torpid souls I have lulled into a long and delusive sleep; gold, silver and ivory I have lavished upon them; yet at heart they are good for nothing. Those men whom you look upon as fortunate, if you regard them, not with respect to what is external but what is concealed, are wretched, unclean, deformed, adorned on the outside after the similitude of their own walls. Their good fortune is not substantial and unalloyed; it is a mere crust and a thin one at that.

4. Accordingly, as long as they are allowed to stand and to show themselves as they wish to appear, they make a brilliant and imposing display; but when something occurs that disarranges their plans and discloses their true character, then it becomes apparent how real and deep their foulness. To you I have given a genuine, an abiding good; the more one turns it about and looks at it from every side, the greater and better it appears. I have given you the strength to condemn what other men fear; to make of little ac-

## De Providentia

count what others long for. You do not shine because of externals; it is the kingdom within you that is your highest good. Thus does the world disdain what is on the outside because happy in the contemplation of itself; within you have I placed all real good; not to need happiness is your happiness."

5. "But many sad occurrences take place, things from which we shrink in terror, and which are hard to bear." "Because I am not able to ward them off from you, I have armed you against all changes of fortune. Endure bravely; in this you may surpass God: He is exempt from suffering, you are superior to it. Contemn poverty; no one lives so poor as he is born. Contemn pain; either it will end or you. Contemn fortune; I have given to it no weapon with which to wound the soul. Contemn death; it either ends your existence or transfers it.

6. Before all things, I took care that no one should keep you here against your will; the way for your departure is open. If you do not want to fight, you can run away. Therefore, with all the restrictions I have placed upon you, I have made nothing easier for you than death. Only look and you will see how short and easy is the way to liberty. I have made the way shorter for those who wish to go out of the world than for those who are entering it; besides, destiny would have had great power over you, if it were as hard for a man to die as to be born.

7. Every moment of time, every place, can teach you how easy it is to quit nature's service and to re-

## De Providentia

turn to her her gift. At the very foot of the altar and amid the solemnities of those who are offering sacrifices for the preservation of life, learn to know death. The huge bodies of bulls drop from the effects of a little wound, and beasts of enormous strength are felled by a blow from a human hand; with a little piece of iron the jointures of the vertabrae are severed, and when the ligature that binds the head and neck is cut asunder, the huge mass falls dead to the ground.

8. The breath does not lurk in some secret hiding place, nor must it necessarily be sought out with the sword; there is no need of piercing the vitals with a deep wound; death is close at hand. I have not designated any particular place for the fatal thrust, it may enter anywhere. What is called death, that time in which the spirit leaves the body, is so brief that its fleetness cannot be perceived. Whether it be a noose that strangles you, or water that suffocates you, or a fall upon the hard earth that dashes the life out of you, or fire drawn in with the breath that cuts off its return—whatever it be, its effect is speedy. Are you not ashamed to fear so long what may be done so quickly?"

---

### NOTES.

A few notes have been added to the translation. They bear chiefly on obscure allusions in Seneca's treatise, as the necessary biographical data may be

## De Providentia

found in almost any encyclopedia. The notes are placed by themselves so as not to interrupt the reader, who may omit them, if he chooses.

### I.

2. It was held by some of the Greek philosophers, notably Epicurus, that the universe was built up by a fortuitous concourse of atoms.

4. Some texts have *quaeris*, you are seeking information.

6. *Vernae* were slaves born in the household of their masters, sometimes his own children by a female slave. The *licentia vernularum* was proverbial in Rome. The *vernae* and *vernulae* were allowed privileges not accorded to slaves obtained by purchase.

### II.

*In suum colorem*, to its colors. The parties represented in the race-course were distinguished by different colors. The significance of the expression is therefore evident. Another less probable explanation of the passage is that the author has reference to the effect of red wine when mixed with liquids of another color.

3. As the holidays in Rome were very numerous much time was lost by those who spent all of them in idleness.

7. Cato, surnamed Uticensis, is here meant. He was the patron saint of the Roman Stoics.

9. The sentence here translated, "For death," etc., may also mean, "For it requires less courage to meet death (once) than to seek it a second time."

### III.

6. The wild boar roasted whole was generally placed on the center of the table. Around it were piled fruits, vegetables, etc.

7. *Tua felicitas*. Sulla called himself FELIX, and in the next section we find this epithet applied to him. The atrocities he committed are familiar to every reader of Roman history.

8. The Cornelian law. The Roman Legal Code was greatly modified under the inspiration of Sulla. The statute here re-

## De Providentia

ferred to, fixed the penalty for homicide and similar crimes. It bore its author's gentile name.

The familiar story of Regulus was accepted as true by the Romans, and, in fact, by the world generally, until recent times. It is interesting as showing the high estimate placed upon patriotism by the Romans from their point of view. Though narrow it was intense and played a conspicuous part in the growth of the Roman state.

9. Maecenas the well-known Premier of the emperor Augustus was passionately attached to his wife Terentia; but her fidelity was more than suspected, a condition of things that led to many quarrels with her husband.

11. The writer refers here to the disgusting practice of the Romans, who, at their feasts, frequently ate and drank to excess, then produced vomiting in order to be able to begin eating and drinking over again.

12. Vatinius was a worthless fellow who defeated Cato in the contest for the praetorship.

### IV.

12. The Romans were wilfully blind as to the climate and soil of Germany. It was a case of "sour grapes." After vainly endeavoring to conquer its inhabitants, they decided that they were not worth the trouble of conquest.

### V.

6. "Whatever it be" etc. The First Cause, about which Seneca is in some doubt, whether it is personal or impersonal, material or immaterial; whether matter exists of necessity or is created. In 4 he uses *mundus* in a personal sense. He is also inconsistent in his attitude toward suicide; for after assuring us in the strongest language, that it is every man's duty to endure whatever Providence or Fate or Destiny or Chance sends upon him, he ends by telling him that if the service is too hard he is at perfect liberty to run away from it. Gréard rightly says, "He confuses God with the world, Providence with destiny; he admits and does not admit the immortality of the soul; he proclaims the freedom of the will, and denies it.

8. 9. Dr. Lodge, (1614) translates the two extracts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as follows:

## De Providentia

“The first which with unwearied steeds I clime,  
Is such a iourney that their ceaseless toyle  
Can scarcely reach before the morrowes prime;  
The next is highest heau’n from whence the soyle  
And spacious seas, I see with dreadfull eye  
And fearfull heart; the next whereto I hie  
Is steep and prone and craues a cunning guide;  
And then dothe Thetis shake herselfe for dread,  
Lest headlong I should fall and downward glide,  
And burie in her waues my golden head.”

“And that thou mayst continue in the way,  
Be carefull lest thy posting steeds doe stray;  
Yet shalt thou pass by Taurus, who will bend  
His hornes to cross thee, whither thou dost tend;  
Th’ Aemonian Archer and the Lion fell  
Shall stay thy course and fright thee where they dwell.”

See also the classical dictionary under Phaethon.

### VI.

6. An inclined plane down which an object may be easily started to roll.

8. The final sentence more literally translated would read, Are you not ashamed? what is so quickly done you fear so long?

## PLUTARCH AND THE GREECE OF HIS AGE.

Ever since I have known enough about Greek literature to form an opinion of my own on its merits, it has been a matter of surprise to me that the authors who flourished in the century or two immediately preceding and succeeding the Christian era, are treated with so much neglect. The histories of Greek literature, whose name is legion, frequently end with Grecian independence; or if they continue the subject some centuries longer, treat the later periods in a half-hearted and perfunctory manner, as if they were deserving of nothing better. While it is true, that in some departments the field is relatively infertile, there are many writers well worth a careful study, and several eminently so. The storm and stress period is over; the centuries of vigorous productions well-nigh past; yet the Greek mind is not dead; the field of authorship still bears many fine ears and occasionally a large sheaf for the careful gleaner. The times that could produce a Polybius, a Plutarch, an Epictetus, an Arrian, a Dion Chrysostomus, a Lucian, to say nothing of Josephus and Philo, together with others, a score or more in number, cannot justly be charged with intellectual stagnation. If the form in which the later writers express their thoughts has no longer the elegance, nor the thoughts themselves the profundity, of their pre-



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

decessors, they are far from being unworthy of painstaking study. If men reflected less, they did more, or were at least active in a larger sphere. Greeks were now to be found in all parts of the civilized world; they still provided its intellectual nourishment; Athens was still its university and it is of the Greeks of these centuries more than of the earlier that Horace could say,

*Graeca capta ferum victorem cepit et artes  
Intulit agresti Latio.*

Greek culture had become so widespread that a sojourn in Athens was no longer necessary for those who were ambitious to learn the language in its purest form. Though this city was still looked upon with a certain filial regard, half a score of rivals had sprung up in three continents that at times seriously threatened its prestige. The centuries that meet at the birth of Christ are the link that unites the golden age of Greek literature with the Renaissance. In them was coined much of the small change of Greek thought, which was by reason of its form the more widely circulated. That much of it was silver, so to speak, only made it the more generally available.

But while the writings of these three or four centuries have suffered greatly from neglect at the hands of the moderns, the language in its narrower sense, except that of the New Testament, has been almost wholly ignored. It needs but a brief examination of the current Greek dictionaries to convince the student that here is an ample field for profitable work.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

Even the great Thesaurus of Stephanus often leaves one sadly in the lurch; besides, it is both too extensive and too expensive for general use. What we need is a careful lexicographical and grammatical study of the individual authors and the presentation of the results in as succinct a form as possible.

It is a pleasure to note the signs of a revival in this quarter—for that it is not a misnomer to speak of a revival will be evident to those who know that the reader of some of the authors above named, together with others, is largely compelled to rely on texts that are more than half a century old, in some cases much more. In this laudable work of rediscovery, Professor Mahaffy in Great Britain, and Professor Krumbacher in Germany, may be regarded as the leaders. The former, by his various works upon the Greeks under Roman sway, and the latter by his masterly *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Litteratur* and his *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* have done more than any two writers in the present century to awaken an interest in a subject that has long been in a comatose condition. The present volume, though bearing upon the general theme, is concerned with but a small portion of it. I have tried to throw a little light upon two authors, in whose writings are many passages that put them in some sort of relation to nascent Christianity. While it is almost absolutely certain that neither Seneca nor Plutarch had any knowledge of the new doctrines first preached in their time, it ought surely to be a matter of interest to every thinking man to note how

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

closely the best that is in the old philosophy approached the new religion; or, to state the case somewhat differently, that the old philosophy and the new religion are in many points identical.

The French have, almost from the beginning of their national literature, been ardent admirers of Plutarch. Amyot reduced some of his precepts to rhyme in order that they might the more readily be taught to children, and regarded his writings as more profitable than any other except the Scriptures. Gui-Patin makes Pliny, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Seneca constitute an entire family,—father, mother, older and younger brother—and thus in a sense represent the whole circle of literature. Rollin copies his *Parallel Lives* almost literally into his *Ancient History*. Rousseau cites him among the few authors that he read in his old age. He is the last consolation of St. Pierre. Laharpe regards him as by nature the most moral man that ever lived; and Joubert calls him the Herodotus of Philosophy, and deems his *Lives* the wisdom of antiquity in its entirety. Montaigne says, “I never settled myself to the reading of any authors but Plutarch and Seneca.” Again, “Plutarch had rather we should applaud his judgment than commend his knowledge, and had rather leave us with an appetite to read more, than glutted with that we have already read. He knew very well that a man may say too much even upon the best subjects, and that Alexandrides did justly reproach him who made very elegant but too long speeches to

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

the Ephori, when he said: ‘O stranger, thou speakest the things thou oughtest to speak, but not after the manner thou shouldst speak them.’” Elsewhere he recurs to the subject with these words, “As to what concerns my other reading that mixes a little more profit with the pleasure and whence I learn how to marshal my opinions, the books that serve me to this purpose are Plutarch and Seneca. Both of them have this great convenience suited to my humor, that the knowledge I there seek is discoursed in some pieces that do not require any great tronble of reading long, of which I am incapable.” In his *Essays*, Montaigne refers to or quotes Plutarch more than two hundred times, and Seneca almost as often. So far as Plutarch’s *Lives* are concerned, the translation published by Jacques Amyot, bishop of Auxerre, in 1559, is still regarded as a masterpiece. This version is of special interest to English-speaking people, because from it Sir Thomas North made his translation, published some twenty years later, and Shakespeare, in turn, took the material for his plays dealing with antique life. Of later English translations, that of the Langhorne is undoubtedly the most popular, though the one known as Dryden’s, albeit he had little to do with it, as revised by A. H. Clough, is much read. That of Stewart and Long is not generally known. There seems to be no English translation of Plutarch’s *Moral Writings* except that made by a number of Oxford scholars some two centuries since and edited by Professor Goodwin. The Ger-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

man version made by Kaltwasser just one hundred years ago, is an excellent piece of work. The Lives have been frequently translated.

About sixty miles northwest of the city of Athens near the road leading from Delphi to Lebadeia, midway between the gulf of Corinth and the northern end of the Euripus, lies to-day the town of Chaeroneia, or rather its modern representative, Capraena. Though never a municipality of much importance, its inhabitants, before the time of Plutarch, had been the spectators of many stirring events. Epaminondas called the plain near it the dancing-plot of Ares, an epithet that was abundantly justified by preceding and succeeding occurrences. Lying in a measure between northern and southern Greece it was rich in historical reminiscences and in traditions. Already known to Homer as Arne, it subsequently witnessed the countless hosts of Dareius and Xerxes pass beneath its walls. Near it Philip of Macedon completely overthrew the allied Thebans and Athenians, B. C. 338. In Plutarch's time the mound erected in honor of the king's soldiers who lost their lives here, was still in a fair state of preservation, and the oak under which Alexander had erected his tent was yet standing. In 279 the Gauls passed over the plain of Chaeroneia leaving desolation in their track. Twenty-eight years later the Boeotians were defeated near the town in a battle with the Aetolians. Still later, by a century and a half, Sulla inflicted a crushing blow on his enemies, for the most part Greeks, under

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

the command of Archelaus, the lieutenant of Mithridates. It was two citizens of Chaeroneia who performed for the Roman general a service similar to that rendered to Xerxes by Ephialtes. In order to leave a memorial of his success he erected a trophy on the summit of an adjacent hill. Another trophy, dating from this time and of special significance to the Chaeroneans, was the statue of Lucius Lucullus, a Roman commander, that stood in their marketplace. They had become involved in a quarrel with their old enemies, the Orchomenians, on the charge of having caused the death of a Roman officer and several of his attendants; but through the interposition of Lucullus had obtained a verdict from the home government in their favor.

But the pen is mightier than the sword. Posterity is not greatly interested in wars and battles in which no great principles are involved; besides, all sanguinary conflicts are of more or less local significance. Hence it is that Chaeroneia is chiefly known, not because of the two hundred thousand men who lost their lives or limbs near it, but as the birthplace and lifelong residence of one of the best-known characters in the literary history of the world. About half a score of years after the crucifixion, this august yet kindly personage, first saw the light in what was, even for Greece, an obscure town, but which he never left for any considerable time, until the day of his death, at a ripe old age. The visible remains of the first great battle fought here in historic times are the

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

fragments of a colossal lion erected to commemorate, not a victory, but the valor of those who fell fighting for their country and for what they believed to be its freedom. There is also a village of some fifty houses, a church, a schoolhouse and a stone seat which its inhabitants fondly imagine to have been the property of their illustrious fellow townsman, and which they eagerly show as such, to the traveler. Small as the village is to-day, it can never have been a place of much importance, a fact that is attested by the scant remains of its ancient theater, one of the smallest in Greece.

In Plutarch's time the chief industry of his native town consisted in its trade in oil and the manufacture of perfumes and unguents from the numerous flowers and herbs that grew in the vicinity. In conformity to ancient usage, this business was chiefly carried on by slaves, while its citizens, having no political affairs to engage their attention, and but little interest in philosophical discussion, gave themselves up largely to gossip and other equally profitless ways of passing time.

Plutarch was descended from one of the most prominent families of his native town. He received an excellent education, according to the standard of his day. He also seems to have given instruction informally and without pay, as he shared the prejudices of his countrymen against receiving compensation for such service. We do not know much of his private life or of his family connections. Living as he did the

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

quiet life of a peaceable man, absorbed in his books and his studies and only appearing in public when his duties as a good citizen called him forth, there was little in his career to attract the attention of a biographer. Almost all that we know about him has to be gleaned from occasional references in his own writings. It has been aptly said of him that the prince of biographers is himself without a biographer. His father's name is not recorded. That of his grandfather was Lamprias. We do not know how many brothers and sisters he had, though he speaks of two brothers with whom he lived on the most amicable terms. Of these, Timon is an interlocutor in the dialogue *De Sera*. His wife's name was Timoxena. By her he had four sons and one daughter. The latter and the oldest son died when quite young.

Plutarch's wife seems to have been an excellent woman and to have shared her husband's views as to the proper conduct of life. She was plain in dress and appearance, averse to show and parade, devoted to her husband, her children, and her household affairs.

Plutarch made some journeys beyond the bounds of his native land; one at least as far as Alexandria in Egypt. He spent some time in Rome where he gave lectures in Greek; for as he himself tells us he never learned the Latin language well. He went thither on public business, and is thought to have visited other parts of Italy on a similar errand. His fame had preceded him to the imperial city where he



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

was already known by reputation to some of the literati, and he embraced the opportunity to enlarge the circle of his acquaintances. Athens he visited a number of times, and Sparta at least once. Yet, notwithstanding his celebrity in his lifetime, and in striking contrast to his fame in modern times, he is not quoted by any extant Roman writer, and but rarely by his own countrymen.

As a patriotic citizen and an admirer of all that was venerable and worthy of preservation in the history no less than in the traditions of Greece, Plutarch felt it incumbent upon him to discharge both civil and religious duties as occasion called him. He was a priest of Apollo to whose worship he was ardently devoted and to whom he frequently refers in his works, among others in the *De Sera*. As a consequence he interested himself greatly in the religious festivals that occurred so frequently in Delphi near by. It is also plain from his writings that he kept open house. People who desired to learn, and all who took life seriously, were always welcome. In some of the young men who came to him for enlightenment, whom, nevertheless, we cannot regard as his pupils except in the Socratic sense, he took a lifelong interest. The choice of many of the subjects discussed in his lectures was probably accidental. They were proposed by persons who visited him, talked over at the time, but afterwards more fully investigated and the results written out. In this way light was thrown upon them both by the oral contributions of an in-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

telligent company and also by the aid of books, of which he had a large collection.\*

Plutarch was a man who strove not only to make others wiser, but also to become wiser himself. His aim was to be a living exemplar of the doctrines he professed and taught. He was a firm believer in plain living and high thinking. He disliked as strongly as he disliked anything the costly and luxurious banquets so much affected by the rich Romans of his day. The little company that so frequently came together under his hospitable roof met, not to eat and drink, but to engage in serious and profitable conversation. The viands were plain—a secondary matter; the chief thing was the discussion. This often turned on the most trivial subjects, for the host seems to have thought with Terence:

“Homo sum, et nihil humani a me alienum puto.”

Practical politics for a Greek of Plutarch's day did not mean serious business, especially for the citizen of a small municipality like Chaeroneia. He had therefore ample time for studying, lecturing and formulating his numerous writings. He was not only so fortunate as to have a good memory, but he began at

---

\*Students of German literature are reminded of a certain moral and intellectual similarity between Plutarch and Gellert. The latter, though a man of much less natural ability, had all of Plutarch's kindness, moral and religious earnestness, sympathy for those in distress, and the same popularity among all classes from prince to peasant. Both were equally religious, though one was a heathen and the other a Christian; both preserved the same serenity of mind and cheerfulness of heart in a time of national degradation and immorality.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

an early age to take notes on what he read; in this way he accumulated the large stock of quotations so profusely scattered through his writings. In fact this practice of depending upon others for his information must have done a good deal toward weakening his power of original thought, and he usually enforces a precept by an apt quotation rather than by arguments that he has himself elaborated. On the other hand, his frequent reference to older authors has given a special value to his writings in the eyes of the moderns. Though not quoted by any extant Roman writer and rarely by a Greek he must have been much read soon after his death, and at no time was he wholly forgotten. His early and continued popularity doubtless contributed not a little to the preservation of so large a portion of his writings; but it also put into circulation under his name a number of spurious works—just how many cannot be determined. Yet it is certain that some genuine writings have been lost. Among the earliest printed books were portions of Plutarch.

Plutarch is a prolix but not a pedantic nor a tedious writer. Though he displays immense erudition he does so without effort. An apt quotation from one of the poets, a telling anecdote of some celebrated man or woman, or historical incident seems always ready to his hand, and waiting for a suitable place to be used. He is completely master of the extensive stock of knowledge stored up in his mind or his notes. He is a capital story-teller. He knows how to seize

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

the salient features of a situation, and can place them before the reader in the most effective light. A large proportion of the anecdotes of illustrious men, belonging to a remoter antiquity, current in modern literature, have found their way into it through the medium of his writings. He often reminds one of Herodotus notwithstanding his antipathy to this author, and whose veracity he vigorously impeaches in one of his essays—assuming, of course, that *De Malignitate* is really the work of Plutarch. Like Herodotus, he often wanders from the main theme of his narrative, but never loses sight of it, and always returns to it without unduly distracting the reader's attention. Like Herodotus, he is often reminded of a "little story" that he forthwith proceeds to tell; and, as in the case of Herodotus, the reader feels that something of value has been added to the narrative by the story. Like Herodotus, too, he exhibits a strange mixture of credulity with sterling good sense. So it happens that the Father of History and the man whom Jean Paul Richter calls the Biographical Shakespeare of Universal History often meet on common ground, in spite of the aversion of the one to the other. Of course the canvas on which the historian paints is much larger; the interests he discusses are much more momentous; but he does not treat them with greater seriousness than does the biographer and moralist.

Perhaps the most succinct statement of Plutarch's creed is a passage in *Isis and Osiris*. He says:

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

“For God is not a being that is without intelligence, without a soul, and subject to men, but we regard these as gods who constantly and in sufficient measure furnish us these fruits, and there are neither different gods among different peoples, some barbarian some Greek, some northern, some southern; but just as the sun and moon, heaven and earth and sea are common to all, but are differently designated by different peoples, so there is but one intelligence that arranges all those things about us in order and one Providence to which other powers that direct all things are made subordinate, some of which have, by custom, received different honors and appellations among different peoples. The initiates also employ different symbols, some clearer, others more obscure, that lead the mind to what is divine, though not without risk (of being misunderstood). For some, being altogether led astray, fall into superstition; others again, having steered clear of superstition, as if it were a bog, fall into atheism as from a precipice. On this account it is especially important to take reason that is born of philosophy, as a guide through these mysteries, in order that we may comprehend rightly everything that is said and done, in its true significance.”

Plutarch is a philosopher in the sense that every man of sound mind may be a philosopher; but he is not, strictly speaking, a philosophical thinker. He does not hold to any carefully elaborated and consistent system. While he has much to say about char-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

acter and conduct, he rarely attempts to fathom the motives that underlie and influence conduct. He is at times inconsistent with himself because his views on transcendental problems have not been systematically wrought out and firmly fixed. If he can quote the authority of some great name in support of a position he takes, it generally suffices him. Not unfrequently he cites contradictory authorities both for facts and opinions, then declares which he prefers without giving a reason for his preference.

Plutarch's *Moralia* or *Moral Writings* are so called for the reason that they are more or less concerned with ethical problems. But they also treat incidentally of matters religious, political, literary, psychological, physical and metaphysical or philosophical. Many of his treatises are in the form of dialogues, in which he doubtless had before his mind's eye his great prototype Plato, little as he is able to fathom his speculative profundity. Sometimes his discussions are addressed to a real or imaginary interlocuter, who has, however, little to say. His discourses may be regarded as sermons or lectures addressed to a small circle of interested listeners, or even to a single person, though in reality intended for a larger public. The homiletic character of many of Plutarch's discourses is also attested by the fact that he regards morals as closely connected with religion. He is the bitter enemy of atheism, because, as he maintains, it leads to a dissolute and aimless life. He was, however, in no sense an innovator, but

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

ardently attached to the traditions of his countrymen. He seeks to discover a hidden meaning in the popular myths and cults, and to explain them on philosophical grounds. His attitude in this respect has contributed a good deal to the popular interest in the man. He is a self-consecrated priest of the established religion which he defended, not because it was to his personal profit to do so, but from conviction. As he will not or can not discard the cults of his day, or treat them as founded on mere figments of the imagination, it is incumbent upon him to explain them as best he can. And he seems to be convinced that he has been entirely successful.

Not only is he an avowed foe of atheism, but he is an equally vigorous opponent of superstition. Yet it is often impossible to see where he draws the line between what he regards as rational faith and mere credulity; between his own creed and that of the populace. In truth, the task is not an easy one for anybody. The German nicely designates the close proximity of faith and credulity by the two terms *Glaube* and *Aberglaube*. There was hardly a man in the ancient world of whom we have any considerable knowledge, even though he may have been an avowed atheist, who was wholly without superstition. The destiny of individuals and nations was so often decided by influences so mysterious and inscrutable that it might well be attributed to the miraculous interposition of the gods. Even in our day, when the laws of nature are better understood

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

than ever before, men still feel themselves the sport of unseen forces and powers that often seem to be malevolent or benevolent for no discoverable reason, and which, it is hard to believe, are not controlled by a supernal will.

Plutarch's merits as a historical writer are seriously impaired by his readiness to believe everything that comes to him through tradition or record. Still one ought not to blame him for not being what he does not profess to be. His main purpose is not to attain historical truth, but to discover what will "point a moral, or adorn a tale." Had he been other than he was he would never have been so assiduously read.

Plutarch fully recognized the importance of the family in the social fabric. This is the more to his credit for the reason that the trend of public opinion was against him in this respect. All the evidence we have goes to show that he was a judicious father, a loving husband, a dutiful son, and an affectionate brother. He is thus a zealous defender of the virtues he himself exemplified. A knowledge of his character, as shown by his conduct, contributes not a little to the pleasure the modern reader finds in the perusal of his pages. How often, alas! do we discover on closer examination a great gulf between what men write and what they do! How often does a knowledge of the private life of a great writer mar the interest we take in what he writes!

Though a man of kind heart and polished manners, judged by the standard of his time, Plutarch was no



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

reformer. Indeed, no reform was possible by means of his didactic method. He does not denounce vigorously the corruptions of his time. He is far from employing the drastic speech of his Roman contemporaries. It is probable that in his secluded home he did not know or even suspect the moral degradation of the world around him; it is certain he had not fathomed it. He knows something of the Jewish religion, and might have known more, had he cared to inform himself. He might have heard Paul's preaching; and Christianity had gained a firm foothold in Greece before Plutarch's death. But he was too much of a Greek to take any interest in what had no relation either to Greek religion or tradition. The new faith in virtue of its origin, was foolishness to him. He considered the Hellenic religion good enough for anybody and everybody. It might indeed need purification from some of its grosser elements and exotic excrescences; but more than this was wholly unnecessary.

Nothing that Plutarch says exhibits in a more striking light the humaneness of his disposition than his exhortations to the kind treatment of brutes. He believes that the good man is kind to his beast. He regards it a duty to care for the horse and the dog that have served him well, when they become old and useless. He seems to think that animals are not without a measure of reason and that they have to a limited extent, the power to decide between right and wrong. Though possessed of only a modi-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

cum of intelligence, this at least cannot be entirely denied to them, any more than it can be denied to a bad man. A certain measure of reason is the gift of nature; perfect and virtuous reason is the result of practice and instruction. The reasoning powers of many animals are, to an extent, on a level with those of man; they differ not so much in quality as in quantity. It is right, therefore, to use but not to abuse them. Cruelty to animals is evidence of a base heart. Those who treat them harshly usually accentuate their bad traits in their dealings with men. Our treatment of animals is, therefore, in some sort and often to a considerable extent, an index of how we treat our fellow beings. Plutarch finds the lower animals in some respects more rational than men. They never eat or drink more than enough to satisfy hunger and thirst; nor do they give way to any unnatural or excessive appetites. He is somewhat inclined to condemn the use of animal food; but, at any rate, animals must not be cruelly dealt with to make them more palatable, nor put to death by lingering and inhuman methods. He had in view more particularly some of the practices prevalent in Rome in his day,—practices that were, in truth, horrible in the extreme. It is no wonder that he names them only to condemn them. The extreme modernness of Plutarch in this matter becomes the more strikingly evident when we remember that classical antiquity not only very seldom has a kind word for irrational creatures, but was wont to treat them with

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

extreme harshness. This was particularly the case among the Romans.

Plutarch regards the soul as composed of two parts. One part seeks after truth and light; the other is under the influence of the passions, and liable to error. The first is divine, the second carnal. In so far as a man heeds the monitions of the former he will follow the path of virtue. Practical virtue, virtue in action, is wisdom; vice is error. In order to be virtuous it is only necessary to listen to the voice of reason. Plutarch does not doubt that virtue can be taught. To teach virtue consists largely in making it attractive to the young. Reason does not annihilate the passions; it merely directs them toward a goal that it has marked out. Virtue consists in "the golden mean"—*μηδὲν ἄγαν*—in doing neither too much nor too little. Bravery is a virtue whose place is between cowardice and rashness. Mildness or kindness is a virtue: its place is between stolidity and cruelty, just as the place of liberality is midway between the extremes, stinginess and prodigality. He adduces a number of proofs to establish the position that the passions are corporeal and the reason supersensuous; in a correct system of pedagogy a proper use is to be made of the latter for controlling and wisely directing the former toward rational ends. It is in every man's power to be virtuous under all circumstances, but happiness, or rather good fortune, is dependent upon many things. A virtuous man may enjoy peace of mind at all times, while the largest

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

possessions are of no real value to a bad man. Vice is an anomaly in the constitution of society. Tranquillity of mind, calmness of soul, are not to be sought in a state of inactivity and in retirement. The affirmative of this proposition has led many people into error. Disgusted with the world, they seek peace by withdrawing from its turmoil and hurly-burly, too often only to meet with disappointment. There is not a condition in life from which no consolation can be extracted, and it is the province of reason to discover how this may be done. In what way this is possible he shows by a number of examples from biography. What many persons at first looked upon as misfortunes not unfrequently turned out to be a blessing to themselves and to the world. On the other hand, many persons who were regarded by almost every one as among the most fortunate, were found to have a skeleton in their closet. When the sage suffers a loss, he does not grieve over it, but places a higher value on what is left to him. No man is so poor, no man has lost so much, but that there remains in his possession something for which he can felicitate himself. Neither is any one so destitute but that he might be still worse off, and the most wretched are certain to meet with others more needy than themselves. On the physical side of our nature we are all subject to what, for want of a better name, may be called *chance*; but this is not true of our moral and intellectual side. It is therefore within our power to secure indestructible and inalienable

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

possessions: insight, love of knowledge, virtue, the consciousness of being and doing right. Not even the fear of death disquiets the good man, for he knows that after his dissolution he shall enter into a better state of existence than this life; the bad man clings to life because of the dread uncertainty before him after death. As a last resource, if a man's sufferings become too great to be endured, he can make an end of them with his own hand.

To Plutarch, no riches, no purely external possessions, are so conducive to peace of mind and cheerfulness of heart, as a soul that has kept itself free from evil thoughts and acts. For a soul that has held itself aloof from contamination every day is a festival; the world, a temple in which God dwells and which he has adapted to the fulfilment of man's wants. By the proper use of reason men may control their passions and find satisfaction in the enjoyment of what is within their reach. They may reflect with complacency on the past and look forward to the future with hope. A man's unhappiness is caused rather by the pains of the soul than those of the body. Diseases of the body are due to its nature, but disease of the soul is man's own work. Moreover the maladies of the soul are curable, a condition of things that ought to afford us much consolation. Though the sufferings and diseases to which the body is subject take many forms, those that a corrupt heart and a debased soul send forth, as from a perennial fountain, are much more numerous. Again,

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

corporal diseases may be detected by their external symptoms; the maladies of the soul are hidden. They are the more dangerous from the fact that, in most instances, the patient himself is not aware of them. The greatest malady of the soul is the want of reason and good sense, because they disqualify men from recognizing their own baseness and the remedies necessary for a cure. Few persons who are guilty of wrong-doing realize that they have committed transgressions; oftentimes they even think they have acted wisely and judiciously. They call their anger, bravery; their envy and jealousy, emulation; their cowardice, prudence; while it never occurs to them to seek the aid of a philosopher for the diseases of the soul until they are incurable and have become so virulent that they drive the patient to the commission of the most diabolical crimes.

From these premises there follows the inevitable conclusion that the chief end of man is progress in virtue, or, we might better say, in all the virtues, though virtue in reality is but one. Our progress in philosophy is the result of constant and uninterrupted effort. Parallel to this is our progress in virtue; if we relax our efforts for a moment we incur the danger of letting vice get a hold upon us. He who is always in conflict with vice, with his evil passions, may rest assured that he is making progress in virtue. But our love for virtue must partake of the nature of a passion; in it we ought to find our highest gratification, so that if we are interrupted in

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

our pursuit we shall long to return to it. The aim and purpose of our philosophy must be practical, and it is chiefly in our activity as a citizen and a man in all the multiplex relations of life, that we may test our love for it. Yet, the true philosopher is not ostentatious, and it makes little difference to him whether the world recognizes him as such or not. He ought to seek internal satisfaction, not public acknowledgement. Herein Plutarch takes his stand in opposition to many of his countrymen who aspired to the name and title of philosophers, but did little to deserve them. How men of sense regarded them has been pointed out elsewhere.

We may also measure our progress in philosophy, that is, in virtue, by our love of the beautiful and the good; by our attitude towards praise and blame. We ought neither to seek the one nor avoid the other. If we really desire to correct our faults and shortcomings, we will be ready at all times to listen to advice and to heed criticism; nor will we conceal any part of our nature or cover up any of our acts in order to seem what we are not. Nevertheless, when we are firmly convinced that we are in the right, it is our duty to go forward in the course we have marked out for ourselves, no matter what others may think or say.

There is no stronger incentive to noble deeds and an upright life than the lives of the great and the good of all ages. It was mainly under the impulse of this belief that Plutarch compiled his parallel

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

biographies. In the nature of the case their value as truthful records is greatly impaired by the standpoint from which they were written; but it is this fact that has given them an attractiveness and a currency such as no other works of their kind have equalled. Plutarch's Lives have for centuries been the monitors of youth and the solace of the aged. They have been read and admired wherever men have honored courage, fortitude, intrepidity, self-control, patriotism, humaneness—in short, every trait of character that can be classed among the virtues. Greeks and Romans, ancients and moderns, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, have been fascinated by them, and it is on them that their author's fame chiefly rests. To many persons, in fact to the great majority of readers, Plutarch is known only as the writer of charming biographies; yet these constitute a good deal less than half his extant works.

Plutarch holds that men find the path of virtue and continue to walk in it, by reflection, deliberation, introspection; by a systematic, rigid and continued self-examination—in other words, by a practical application of the methods that philosophy points out. Man is sane and sound only so long as he puts into practice the principles of virtue. So long as he is the slave of his passions he is in need of a physician. Philosophy is the sanitation of the soul; the genuine philosopher is the real physician of the soul. In pursuance of his chosen vocation, Plutarch wrote a number of essays for the purpose of giving instruction



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

upon the best methods of controlling the different passions to which men are subject. Their purport easily becomes evident from a glance at their titles. They show that he has carefully observed and studied men, at least those that constitute the various higher classes and give the prevailing tone to society. Many of these essays are still of interest and well repay perusal. They contain many acute observations and piquant remarks.

For Plutarch the old mythology is sufficient as a basis for a religious belief. Like most of the Greek philosophers who incline toward theism, he maintains that myths are, to a greater or less extent, corruptions of primitive verities. These originated in the popular mind and received artistic form at the hands of the poets. Underlying them all there is truth enough and beauty enough to show the aspiration of the soul after higher things, and they form the basis of a purely theistic belief. Plutarch's unbounded faith in human reason leads him to believe that it alone is entirely sufficient to enable any and every man to lead a virtuous life. His advice to every one is, in substance: get all the light you can; use the reason you are endowed with by the creator; acquire additional knowledge and wisdom every day; make your inward life an object of daily study and reflection,—if you do these things you will lead a virtuous life. Those persons who have no love for the beautiful and the good, no desire to become virtuous, fail because they neglect to cultivate the reason with

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

which every man is originally endowed. They grope in the darkness cast about them by their own passions, and refuse to follow the lamp that reason holds up before them. Plutarch's optimism; his faith in the power of the intellect to make the world better, is especially remarkable in view of the fact that his countrymen, notwithstanding their general intelligence, notwithstanding the large number of great men in almost every department of knowledge born in Greek lands, in spite of the fact that Greece was the native hearth of philosophy, had for centuries been retrograding morally, intellectually and politically. So hard is it to divorce most men from a theory to which they have attached themselves. His mistake arose from his seeing all men in the mirror of his own thoughts. He believed that the whole human race could be influenced by the motives that influenced himself, and that all could, if they wished, be constantly engaged in the search for light and wisdom in the way he sought them. This radical error he inherited from his master, Plato, and it is strange that he did not detect it. He seems never to have suspected that he might be mistaken.

Plutarch's religion is wholly without enthusiasm and his morality has in it not a tinge of emotion. Do right always, because by such a course of life you will enjoy the largest measure of mundane happiness that can fall to the lot of a mortal, and be a benefactor to all who come within the circle of your influence. Make the best of every situation in which

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

you may be placed. Do not take too seriously the hindrances to a virtuous life that you may find in your way, because you can remove them if you will. No matter what your station in life, do not expect your path to be always a smooth one. If you keep these things in mind you will probably live long,—you are sure to live happily.

Plutarch's views regarding the education of women are far in advance of his age. He follows his master, Plato, in vindicating for them the same virtues that belong to men. His treatise often designated *The Virtues of Women* is chiefly a record of heroic deeds that have been performed by the so-called weaker sex. He admits that the worth or efficiency of women is not necessarily of the same quality as that of men, but he contends that its ethical value is equal and its intrinsic merit in no wise inferior. The woman who has performed a noble deed is entitled to just as much credit as a man. He takes issue with Thucydides for saying that the best woman is the one of whom least is said either for good or evil. He also takes issue with the thoroughly Greek sentiment, though perhaps more pronounced in Athens than elsewhere, that woman is at most little else than a plaything and a convenience for man; and that her highest function is to bear legitimate male children. According to Plutarch the wife is to be the equal partner in the management of the household. When it is well conducted she deserves equal commendation with the

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

husband. He would open a wider sphere for women; train them intellectually, and awaken in them an interest in the larger affairs of life. Consistently with these views, Plutarch assigned to his wife an honorable place in his household. She received guests in her husband's absence; sat at table with him and interested herself in public as well as private affairs. While this was in contravention of the custom of his day, it was in harmony with a faintly discernible trend of public opinion, probably the result of Roman influence. That the innovation made slow progress is plain not only from the later history of Greece but also from Greek social usages in our own day. When we take cognizance of the unhappy state of his country we are inclined to wonder at Plutarch's uniform serenity of mind. He never indulges in satire or sneer, while many of his contemporaries did both. But we must remember that his philosophy had, above and beyond everything else, a practical purpose, and that in a rather material sense. Men's misfortunes are their own fault and therefore preventible; or they are not their own fault and therefore unavoidable. In either case nothing is gained by grieving over them.

It will be evident from a perusal of the *De Sera* that optimism is the basis of Plutarch's philosophy. Men can do right if they will, and if they do right they can not fail to be happy. There is a superintending Providence that in the end rectifies all wrong and injustice. He seems to hold with Goethe that "Every sin is punished here below," though the

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

punishment does not end in this life. Retribution is not delayed until after death; it visits the sinner in this world. Or if he is so fortunate as to end his days in peace, so far as mortals can see, he entails a curse upon his descendants. The iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. But the punishment of the wicked does not end with this life. The soul bears the imprint of its crimes after it has left the body. That God sometimes permits a wicked man to end his days in peace but that He has fastened a curse on his offspring, is a prominent article in the creed of many of the older Greek writers. It is often referred to by Herodotus. So firmly convinced is he that all wrong-doing must be atoned for that when he finds an instance where the law does not appear to hold good he confesses himself at a loss to account for the failure of its operation. Not only individuals but nations as well must expiate crimes committed and wrongs done by their representatives in an official capacity. And there is no doubt that the influence of this belief was most wholesome. Much of what Plutarch says on this point is probably fanciful, especially when he appeals to the testimony of history; but what he records is in keeping with his philosophy and has therefore a strong personal interest. Moreover, he furnishes us with some interesting testimony as to the prevalence of a belief in rewards and punishments among men outside the pale of Christianity.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

Plutarch's ideal of duty is a high one. The fulfilment of some duty is incumbent upon every man so long as he lives. It is as imperative in old age as in early life. When a man is quit of his obligations to his children, he owes a service to his country and to his fellow citizens in a narrower sense. From this service, only the impairment of his facilities or death may release him. As every man is born into the state, and as, in a certain sense, he is a man only in so far as he discharges his obligations to the state, he has no choice in the matter. Herein lies a duty from which there is no possible escape. But the mere holding of an office is not the only or even the chief test of the good citizen. His duties in a private capacity are no less important, and if less conspicuous are equally far reaching. The good citizen is the philosopher in his true sphere: good citizenship is philosophy in action—applied philosophy. It is only in actual life that the philosopher can put his theories to the test. The form of government is a matter of minor importance. Plutarch regards monarchy, as on the whole, the best, but he is not radical. In this he agrees with the majority of Greek philosophers, most of whom were generally more or less dissatisfied with the turbulent Athenian democracy. That monarchy is best where the head of the state is what Plutarch would have him be, a philosopher. But even the most absolute monarch should not regard himself above law; he is to be its executor. Moreover, it is his duty not only to obey cheerfully

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

the written law that binds prince and people alike, but also that unwritten law that reason has implanted in the soul of every man of sound mind. Rulers are in a sense the servants of God whose duty it is to apportion rewards and punishments according to their deserts, to all that are under their authority.

After all, man's first and chief duty is to himself. His quest for light, for knowledge, for truth is never to be intermitted. He is to take his bearings, as it were, frequently, in order to see what progress he is making. If his aims are noble, his purposes right, and his motives pure, he will not only make daily progress in virtue, but when he is called to leave this world he can depart in peace because he will have the consciousness that it is the better for his having lived in it.

Having thus given a short sketch of Plutarch as a man and a citizen let us proceed to examine briefly the times in which he lived as supplementary to what has already been said under this general head in treating of Seneca. What had Roman rule done for his country? What was the social and economic condition of Greece and Greek lands in the first century of the Christian era? Unfortunately our information on these points is exceedingly scanty. In fact, political economy is a recent science; in ancient times the lot of the poor was little taken note of. It was everywhere a hard one, and the care of the indigent, so much insisted on in the New Testament, is almost the first sign of an awakening in this respect. But

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

it did not originate with the government; that had other ends in view. That the Roman policy toward the proletariat in the imperial capital only made matters worse, is well known. When we remember how much has been done in recent years by legislation in every civilized country for the amelioration of the condition of the lowest classes and how much still remains to be done, we can picture to ourselves the state of society where all this was omitted.

When we remember further that up to a comparatively recent period commerce, trade and manufactures flourished, in so far as they can be said to have flourished, not because they were fostered by governments, but almost in spite of them, it is not surprising that they received little attention at the hands of the Greeks and Romans, either individually or collectively. It has already been stated that the sole object of the ruling powers was to raise the largest amount of revenue, not to equalize the burdens on all the subjects. On no question is ancient thought so crude as upon economics. The blight of slavery that made free labor to a certain extent disgraceful, and a condition of things that hindered the establishment of manufactories on a large scale, tells the sorrowful story.

In his attitude toward slavery, Plutarch does not seem to hold as advanced views as Seneca and some of the better men of his age and preceding times. Yet he did not endorse the prevalent opinion, embodied in legislation, that a slave is



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

a soulless thing, though the justice of emancipation occupied his attention but little. Here again we find his practical ideas in the foreground. He is concerned to make the best of the situation as he finds it. Slavery exists, is an ineradicable element of organized society and is coextensive with the human race. The best that the philosopher can do is to make sages of slave-holders, to the end that they treat their bondmen with justice and humaneness. Compare the anecdotes of Plato and Archytas in *De Sera*, Chap. 5. According to Plutarch slaves have souls like other human beings, and are capable of mental and moral improvement; consequently masters have duties to perform toward them that are just as plain and just as imperative as those due to persons on the same social level with themselves.

The prosperity of nations rests mainly upon the numbers and intelligence of its middle classes. It can everywhere be measured by the rise of this class. What wonder then that the nations were poor among whom it scarcely existed? Rome could not go on plundering interminably, and the riches of its provinces in time became exhausted because not replenished. All that the ancient world has left upon record for us, proceeds upon the assumption of a large body of slaves and a small body of free citizens, and breathes a contempt for labor and trade. In most of the Greek states the commercial and manufacturing class consisted chiefly of resident aliens who were also slave-holders, and no citizen was

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

so poor that he did not own at least one slave. To be a slave-owner was a badge of respectability even for those who were not citizens. In the Greek states, so long as they were free polities, war and religion occupied all the time and attention of the citizens, except that small body that were interested in philosophical pursuits. When they were no longer free and no longer had serious affairs in which to employ their time, they spent most of it in idle gossip or as the Acts tell us, "in hearing or telling some new thing." What legislation they were still permitted to engage in never concerned matters of grave import. They decreed crowns and statues to real or supposed benefactors, only to annul their decrees when those whom they were intended to honor happened to incur the displeasure of the legislators or to fall into disgrace with the higher powers. Then there were deputations between different states about boundary disputes, about festivals, about claims and counter claims of all sorts, the sending of which was often debated with a solemnity that makes us wonder how the participants could themselves fail to see their farcical character. Generally the game at stake was the favor of the emperor, each party striving to outbid the other in professions of loyalty or to outvie it in the length of its bill for services rendered. When, as was frequently the case, these delegations did not find the emperor in Rome, they had, of course, to follow him into provinces or to await his return. This required time that, we may be sure, was in most cases

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

ungrudgingly given. Instead of directing their energies into channels of activity and trying by honest work to better their worldly condition it was talk, talk with the Greeks, and talk without end.

There is no stronger evidence of their fondness for discussion and for listening to the spoken word than Greek literature itself. The historians are in the habit of stating the case of opposing parties by harangues which they put into the mouth of a representative of each. Greek poetry consists in a great measure of dialogue. Philosophy was chiefly developed by means of oral discussion. Comedy, even after it was no longer represented on the stage, still appears as dialogue and not in the usual form of the satire. Among its richest legacies to posterity is its oratory, and in it we have the spoken word in its most effective form; but it still represents words rather than deeds, and belongs for the most part to the declining age of Greece. A solitary thinker like Kant was wholly foreign to Greek ideas. So persistently has this trait remained a characteristic of the Hellenes that many of their best friends deplore their fondness for petty politics; their sleepless anxiety to assist in the management of the government instead of turning their attention to bettering their material condition by a steady devotion to private business. Many of the rich and well-to-do Greeks live outside the kingdom of Greece where their lingual activity is circumscribed and they are compelled by circumstances to turn their energies into more

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

profitable channels. Rarely has a man, distinguished for eloquence alone, profoundly influenced the course of human events. Contemporaries are unanimous in ascribing to Julius Caesar oratorical gifts of the highest order; but he preferred to make his mark as a doer of deeds rather than as a maker of phrases.

In Rome the economic conditions were somewhat different from those prevailing in Greece and the East, yet Rome was not a commercial state. It was founded on military power, extended by valor and endurance in war, and when there were no more worlds to conquer, the forces that had been turned against external enemies began to be turned against herself. Rome was rich while she had other countries to plunder; when this was no longer possible her decay began. And these countries, by which we mean all the provinces outside of the city, were rich so long as the fertility of their soil continued and their mines were productive. That Rome's moral decline antedated her economic retrogression by centuries is familiar to every reader of ancient history, but it is only the latter that we are concerned with here.

Money was not used for purposes of production, but for the purchase of articles of luxury and display. Much of what had been accumulated in the capital flowed eastward and disappeared. Italy gradually passed into the hands of a small number of largelanded proprietors, whose vast estates were cultivated by persons who had no interest in maintaining their fertility. Great numbers of free citizens flocked to

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

Rome to enjoy the doles distributed to the populace at stated intervals; to feast their eyes on the bloody spectacles, so frequently and so magnificently given; and to die, only to leave room to be filled by the constantly inflowing stream. The empire existed for the City, its capital. We have already spoken of the strange fascination it exercised over all who had once been under its spell. We may safely assume that of the eighty thousand Romans put to death by Mithridates in his dominions, a considerable portion had gone abroad in the hope of enriching themselves in order to spend their gains in the capital. Doubtless, too, so far afield, trade was less despised than at the seat of government. The empire built, and for a time kept in repair, those magnificent highways that are still the admiration of all who see them. But they served military purposes almost exclusively. When no longer needed they were suffered to fall into decay. They were not constructed to facilitate commercial intercourse, and contributed little to the economic welfare of the empire. When the lack of local improvements was sufficiently felt and the people were not too much impoverished, which was seldom the case, to bear the necessary financial burdens these were undertaken by the local authorities. But there is reason to believe that some of the provinces, notably the Grecian, became poorer and poorer from year to year. The capital drained the province; the people lost heart, and gave themselves up to the apathy of indifference or despair.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

It was the evil destiny of the Greek polities that they could never be brought to act together for any length of time; nor did all of them ever act together in any common enterprise. And they learned nothing from experience. The misfortunes resulting from this centripetal tendency were pointed out time and again by writers and orators, but to no purpose. Local pride always outweighed the dictates of reason or even of common prudence. Had Greece presented a united front, under competent leadership, it would have been a hard task for even Rome to subdue it. But it was impossible for the different states to forget their reciprocal animosities: the increasing prosperity of one was usually the signal for others to turn their arms against it. In this way all of them were gradually weakened and thus became a comparatively easy prey to any strong foreign foe that might choose to attack them. Their subjugation by Rome was by far the greatest misfortune that ever befell them. Philip of Macedon and his successors were at least more than half Greeks, and had a good deal of sympathy with Greek ideas. The Romans had none whatever. Still, cruelly as they carried out the work of subjugation in certain localities, when their first animosity was appeased they seem not to have interfered systematically with existing municipal administrations. Yet the financial pressure became harder as the people grew poorer, and matters went from bad to worse. The wickedness of Corinth, the most Roman of Greek cities after it had been re-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

built under imperial auspices, affords striking evidence of what Roman influence meant on the morals of a Greek polity.

It is a matter of common knowledge what Roman internecine war brought upon Italy. To a certain extent the same evils were shared by Greece. Three of the fiercest battles between the contestants for the principate were fought in or near Greece. The Greeks were always on the losing side, though her soldiers were not numerously represented in the Roman armies. These battles did but accelerate a retrograde movement that had been quite marked at least since the Mithridatic war, though it did not begin then. The population was rapidly decreasing. Plutarch says that in his time all Greece could not furnish three thousand heavy-armed soldiers. This statement must not be taken too literally; it can hardly mean that there were not this number of able-bodied men in the whole of Greece; it must mean that it did not contain three thousand citizens sufficiently well-to-do to enable them to support themselves in the field. In the days of their glory some of the smallest Greek states were better off than this would indicate. It is certainly proof positive of poverty, if not of a very sparse population. But this, too, had greatly decreased in some places. In the time of Augustus, Thebes had ceased to be anything more than a large village—the same Thebes that had played so prominent a part in legend and history. With a few exceptions, the larger Boeotian

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

towns were in the same sad plight. Cities without inhabitants, or only a few; cattle grazing in the deserted streets, and even in the market-place, seem to have been a common sight. What had become of the inhabitants? We only know that they were gone, most of them, doubtless, to their graves.

In Greece, Sparta excepted, slavery was of a rather mild type, and it was unusual for a Greek to sell a slave to a foreigner. Neither did gladiatorial combats flourish among the Greeks. Even Corinth, that in later times contained a large admixture of Romans, could not acclimate them. While it is true that the Greeks made light of human life and took it upon the slightest pretext, it was rarely done by the cruel methods of the Romans. With all their faults and frailties they belonged to a distinctly higher type of men, and their civilization at a very early period began to move along lines afterward followed by the progressive nations of the world. How infinitely better were their peaceful contests than the bloody spectacles that were the delight of Rome!

Just as the Greeks were reluctant to admit foreigners to citizenship, they were also reluctant to admit exotic gods into their pantheon. In both, their policy was diametrically opposed to that of Rome. Their exclusiveness in the former regard was due to their belief in their own superiority; in the latter, to the conviction that their national gods were sufficient for all human needs. Friedlaender is probably right in his contention that the period here under considera-



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

tion shows no decay in what we may call religion, either in Greece or Rome. Its external forms and traditional rites were sedulously kept up and scrupulously maintained. Plutarch likewise bears testimony to this condition of things. Scoffers and infidels had become more numerous, mainly because the Romans were more tolerant in such matters than the Greeks. To the ruling class all cults were alike; consequently they made no objections to anything that was spoken or written, so long as their authority was not directly or indirectly attacked. In the various controversies about religion mentioned in the New Testament, the attitude of the government is always one of indifference except as to the maintenance of public order.

The Greeks, generally speaking, preferred, like Plutarch, the limited sphere of local political activity to the larger one offered at Rome. The provincials who came to honor on the other side of the Adriatic were few in number.

In the main the provinces fared better under the imperial government than under the republic. There was a higher degree of probability that wrongs would be redressed. A case in point is that of the apostle Paul who appealed to Caesar even when the Caesar was Nero.

It is a well-known fact of ancient history that property in transit, either by land or sea, was at no time particularly safe at a distance from the centers of population. The thief and the robber are familiar figures

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

in both sacred and profane writings. Pompey's extensive crusade against the pirates that infested all parts of the Mediterranean forms an important episode in the records of the Roman navy. Even in the cities, the unlighted streets afforded frequent opportunities for plunder and murder to those who had no scruples about taking life or property. As domestic affairs from time to time engrossed the attention of the imperial administration, the outlying provinces were not carefully looked after; roads were neglected and became insecure; the police force lacked efficiency, and commercial intercourse between the different parts of the empire was reduced to a minimum. The people were driven to agriculture as their only means of support, which, in Greece particularly, was never a profitable industry. Nothing affords a more striking contrast between the police system of ancient and modern times than the frequency with which robberies are mentioned in the former and their rarity in the other. Paul tells us that he had been in peril by robbers; we know, too, from the writings of Josephus and others that the conflicts between this class of outlaws and the Roman government were by no means infrequent. Those who had been engaged in rebellion, or who were among the vanquished in battle, or who had become voluntary or compulsory exiles, often felt that they had a right to prey on orderly society.

It is a recognized fact that the monarchical system of the East tended to encourage immorality, a con-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

dition of things that usually exists where there is no strong and wholesome public opinion. The usurpers in the Greek cities, and later, the Roman provincial governors, were, with rare exceptions, men of loose morals if not worse. The private life of its representatives was a matter with which the home government did not concern itself, and the subjects were constrained to be dumb. Now and then one of these petty sovereigns ruled wisely according to the standards of the time, and the public was satisfied, especially if they knew how to maintain brilliant courts, and to adorn their capitals with imposing structures. It was so easy to trump up the charge of sedition against persons who refused to be servile flatterers, that only the most courageous dared to stand aloof. Finlay, though somewhat given to painting in strong colors, is probably not far wrong when he says: "It is difficult to imagine a society more completely destitute of moral restraint than that in which the Asiatic Greeks lived. Public opinion was powerless to enforce even an outward respect for virtue; military accomplishments, talents for civil administration, literary eminence and devotion to the power of an arbitrary sovereign, were the direct roads to distinction and wealth; honesty and virtue were very secondary qualities. In old countries or societies where a class becomes predominant, a conventional character is formed, according to the exigencies of the case, as the standard of an honorable man; and it is usually very different indeed from what is really

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

necessary to constitute a virtuous or even an honest citizen."

The student of Greek history is often inclined to believe that the bane of Hellenic statesmanship was the bitter rivalry that always existed between the different polities. From the standpoint of the philosopher this view is correct. If the energies devoted to the means and methods of mutual destruction had been expended on the arts of peace, not only Greece, but the entire world would, to-day, present a widely different aspect. However much the moralist may deplore the existing conditions, the man who takes the world as it is cannot fail to see that the utmost strength of a nation is always put forth in war and for warlike purposes. It was so with the Greeks. Political rivalry was the strongest stimulus under which they acted. It was their life and growth, and to a large extent the measure of their prosperity. When political rivalries were extinguished by Alexander, and more effectually by the Romans, the spirit of Greece, too, died out. The Romans, especially in their first contact with Greece, were too much barbarians to have any sympathy with the best that Greece had to offer. A genius for government is not necessarily a mark of advanced civilization. It is true there were at all times men among the Romans able to appreciate the proud preeminence of the Greeks in arts and letters, but their numbers were too few to make any general impression. The leading families, including most of the emperors, were fa-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

miliar with the Greek language and used it with ease; but there were few Romans who did not despise the Greeks and regard them as inferiors. Nations, like individuals, feel more or less contempt for those whose tastes are different from their own; and in the case before us, the Greeks being the weaker, were the chief sufferers. But just as rich men sometimes buy books and statuary of which they do not know the value, and collect libraries which they cannot read, because intelligent people take pleasure in these things, so a certain class of Romans affected a fondness for Greek art and literature and philosophy. An enormous quantity of works of Greek art was transported across the Adriatic by the Romans with small advantage to the pillagers or to the nation. Notwithstanding the predilection of some of the leading families for Greek culture, their influence made no deep and lasting impression on Roman thought, in the better sense. Rome always showed itself much more receptive toward what is debasing than for what was ennobling.

After this hasty survey of the condition of Plutarch's countrymen we are more than ever inclined to be surprised at his optimism. Yet the explanation is not far to seek, and is consistent with his philosophy. He had an abiding faith in a divine Providence who orders all things for the best. He holds that men are free and therefore responsible. The ills that afflict them are chiefly of their own making; why then should a wise man grieve over them? It is man's chief business to free himself

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

from unholy desires; to control the volcanic and perturbing impulses of his nature by means of philosophy, which when rightly apprehended is divine. As man is in the last analysis an ethical being, the fundamental problem of philosophy how to carry out in practice those ethical principles in the observance of which man only can be truly happy. If, then, men's misfortunes are the natural consequence and result of their own perverseness, there is no reason why we should grieve over them. So far as political conditions are concerned, he doubtless felt that the rule of the Roman emperors had at last given peace to his long distracted country, on as favorable terms as could be expected.

It has been said of Plutarch that there is not a new thought in all his writings,—and this by way of disparagement. The charge is probably true. The men who have put new ideas into the world are few indeed. The world is far less in need of instruction than of reminding. Besides, there is no reason why an artist should not deal with a familiar subject in his own way. If he can tell an old story so as to give it a new interest, or treat a well-worn theme so as to make it seem fresh, he is not the least among his brethren. It is especially writers upon ethics that are apt to be tedious. The more honor to him who can make his preaching attractive and interesting.

Perhaps the chief charm of Plutarch's writings is the assumption on his part that he is a reasonable man himself and is talking to reasonable men; for as we

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

have already seen, he has always hearers in mind rather than readers. We can imagine him ever and anon saying, You either know what is right, what your duty is, or you want to know. The rules of conduct are plain and simple; you have but to obey them and you will be happy. Perform the duties incumbent upon you, to the gods, to your fellow citizens, to the members of your family, to yourself, and you will be content with the present order of things, and your fellow men with you. If you want to lead a moral life, be humane, be truthful, be sympathetic, be chaste, deal honestly with your fellow men, follow your rational nature rather than your emotions, and you will have no reason to regret that you have lived; your fellow men will be glad that you have for a time sojourned among them, and have left behind you the light of your example to shine for those who come after you.

Lecky in his *History of European Morals*, already cited, has some interesting passages on the relation of Seneca and Plutarch to certain phases of the thought of their time, a few of which may properly find a place here. He says: "A class of writers began to arise, who, like the Stoics, believed virtue rather than enjoyment, to be the supreme good, and who acknowledged that virtue consisted solely of the control which the enlightened will exercises over the desires, but who at the same time gave free scope to the benevolent affections, and a more religious and mystical tone to the whole scheme of morals."

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

“ Plutarch, whose fame as a biographer has, I think, unduly eclipsed his reputation as a moralist, may be justly regarded as the leader of this movement, and his moral writings may be profitably compared with those of Seneca, the most ample exponent of the sterner school. Seneca is not unfrequently self-conscious, theatrical, and over-strained. His precepts have something of the affected ring of a popular preacher. The imperfect fusion of his short sentences gives his style a disjointed and, so to speak, granulated character, which the emperor Caligula happily expressed when he compared it to sand without cement; yet he often rises to a majesty of eloquence, a grandeur both of thought and expression, that few moralists have ever rivaled. Plutarch, though far less sublime, is more sustained, equable and uniformly pleasing. The Montaigne of antiquity, his genius coruscates playfully and gracefully around his subject; he delights in illustrations which are often singularly vivid and original, but which by their excessive multiplication appear sometimes rather the texture than the ornament of his discourse. A gentle, tender spirit, and a judgment equally free from paradox, exaggeration, and excessive subtilty, are characteristics of all he wrote. Plutarch excels most in collecting motives of consolation; Seneca in forming characters that need no consolation. There is something of the woman in Plutarch; Seneca is all man.\* The writings

---

\* “ When Plutarch, after the death of his daughter; was writing a letter of consolation to his wife, we find him turning away



## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

of the first resemble the strains of the flute, to which the ancients attributed the power of calming the passions and chasing away the clouds of sorrow, and drawing men by gentle suasion into the paths of virtue; the writings of the other are like the trumpet blast which kindles the soul with heroic courage. The first is more fitted to console a mother sorrowing over her dead child; the second to nerve a brave man, without flinching and without illusion, to grapple with an inevitable fate. The elaborate letters which Seneca has left us on distinctive tenets of the Stoical school, such as the equality of the vices, or the evil of the affections, have now little more than an historic interest; but the general tone of his writings gives them a permanent importance, for they reflect and foster a certain type of excellence which, since the extinction of Stoicism, has had no adequate expression in literature. The prevailing moral tone of Plutarch, on the other hand, being formed mainly on the prominence of the amiable virtues has been eclipsed or transcended by the Christian writers, but his definite contribution to philosophy and morals are more important than those of Seneca. He has left us one of the best

---

from all the commonplaces of the stoics as the recollection of one simple trait of his little child rushed upon his mind:—‘She desired her nurse to press even her dolls to her breast. She was so loving that she wished everything that gave her pleasure to share in the best she had.’” The statement that Seneca is all man will be questioned by those who know that two of his Letters of Condolence are addressed to women. These are almost the only writings in Roman literature so addressed.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

works on Superstition, and one of the most ingenious on Providence, we possess. He was probably the first writer who advocated very strongly humanity to animals on the broad ground of universal benevolence, as distinguished from the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration, as he was also remarkable, beyond all his contemporaries for his high sense of female excellence, and of the sanctity of female love."

Seneca, Plutarch, and the Apostle Paul were in a sense contemporaries. All three did what they could to make the world better in their time and after them. All three were preachers of righteousness, each in his way. All three wrote much that has engaged the attention of the world, and stimulated its thought. But how great the contrast between the projects of these men, especially the two last! Plutarch was wholly lacking in Paul's devotion to an idea. He would have scouted the suggestion that a man should give up friends, social position, country, kindred, everything, to go forth to preach a new doctrine. How widely apart, how almost diametrically opposite the methods of two men who are in a sense seeking the same end! The thoughts of the philosopher, his intellectual vision, was turned toward the setting sun. At most he could only hope, as we now see, to prolong the dim twilight that still hovered over the earth. The world had well-nigh lost faith in the power of human reason to regenerate mankind. The spiritual eyes of the Christian were on the rising sun. Though he saw that it was as yet shining but dimly, he had

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

no doubt that in time it would rise to noonday splendor. The pillar of fire that led and lighted the way for the saint; the beatific vision that always stood before his enraptured gaze; the world-embracing panorama that kept growing larger and larger as the little Christian colonies were planted one after another in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Rome, had no existence for the philosopher. He has, it is true, a belief in an overruling Providence, but it lacks clearness, because weakened by a polytheistic creed, or at least by the remnants of such a creed. To it he still tenaciously clings, though it may be half unconsciously. He too had a belief in an existence after death; but it was not of the sort that made him feel that all the tribulations of this world which were but for a moment were not to be compared with the glory that should follow.

If we would personify Christianity and Philosophy as they met each other at the close of the first century of our era, we may designate the one as the young man, who, though poor in this world's goods, is strong in hope, in faith, in himself and in his cause. His superb physique, his capital digestion, make him ready for any enterprise, any sacrifice that shall promise success. Any field in which he may display his splendid energies is welcome to him, for he lives not in the past, but in the future. The other is the old man who has, in the main, lived a useful and honorable life, who has performed some noble deeds, and whose chief anxiety is to give the rising genera-

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

tion the benefit of the wisdom that has come to him in a life of study and observation. But, as is usually the case with the aged, his advice has become commonplace and the rising generation passes him by almost unheeded. Few have now any confidence in his teachings, while many of his former disciples have deserted him. It is his sad fate, to see himself jostled at first and finally thrust aside by the passing stream of humanity.

The principal works used in the study of Plutarch here placed before the reader are the following:

*Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia. Edidit Daniel Wytttenbach. 8 voll. Oxonii, 1795-1821.*

*R. Volkmann. Leben und Schriften des Plutarch von Chaeronea. Berlin, 1869.*

*O. Grèard. De la Morale de Plutarque. Cinquième edition. Paris. 1892.*

*Plutarch's Werke übersetzt von Klaiber, Bähr, u. A. Stuttgart, 1837-57.*

*Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia. Recognovit Gregorius N. Bernardakis. Lipsiae, 1888-96. 7 voll.*

The last named contains a revised text only; from it my translation of the *De Sera* was made. The German translation of Bähr, the well-known Heidelberg professor, in the collection above cited, follows the original very closely and has been of much service to me by its interpretation of obscure passages.

A complete catalogue of Plutarch's *Moralia* is given in the appendix. The list is borrowed from the edition of Bernardakis and the question of authenticity is not taken into account.

## Plutarch and the Greece of His Age

NOTE:—To translate Plutarch is a very different task from that of translating Seneca. The style of the latter is terse and epigrammatic; clauses and sentences often follow each other without connectives, and are in the main short. That of the former is the reverse. Most of his sentences are long, many of them very long. These, as well as clauses and words, are often strung together with the participles *καὶ* and *γὰρ*, or other connectives, until the reader sometimes wonders whether they will ever end. Seneca is full of pithy sayings well suited for quotation; in Plutarch they are rare. The style of both writers is highly rhetorical, but, if we except the evident striving after effect, they have little else in common.

As in the case of Seneca, it has been my aim to preserve for the English reader the peculiarities of the Greek, so far as possible. There is much to be said in favor of making a translation, above everything else, readable; but in the effort to do so, the translator is constantly exposed to the danger of displacing the style of the original with his own. I hope I have in a measure, at least, succeeded in putting before the English reader, not only what Plutarch said in the following Tract, but also how he said it.

“ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

## CONCERNING THE DELAY OF THE DEITY IN PUNISHING THE WICKED.

---

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

PLUTARCH. PATROCLEAS, his son-in-law. TIMON, his brother.  
OLYMPICHUS.

---

The scene is the portico of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The tract is dedicated to a certain Quintus, whose name seems to indicate that he was a Roman, but of whom nothing definite is known.

---

When Epicurus had thus spoken, O Quintus, and before any one had replied, he went hurriedly away, as we were now at the end of the porch. We stood for some time in speechless wonder at the strange conduct of the man and looking at one another, then turned back to resume our walk. Thereupon Patrocleas first broke the silence: “ Pray, what shall we do?” said he, “ Shall we drop the inquiry, or shall we answer the arguments of the speaker who is not present as if he were?” “ It would not be fitting to leave the dart he discharged, as he departed, sticking in the wound. Brasidas, as we are told, drew the shaft from his body, and with the same weapon slew the man who had hit him. It is not worth our while,

## The Delay of the Deity

of course, to defend ourselves against all those who assail us with ill-grounded or fallacious arguments, but it will suffice us if we cast them from us before they become firmly fixed in our minds." "What was there then," said I, "in what he said that most impressed you? For many things and without any order, one here, another there, the man kept charging against Providence, with anger and vituperation at the same time."

2. Hereupon Patrocleas said: "The tardiness and delay of the Deity in punishing the wicked seems to me a matter of special importance; and now, by the arguments that have been advanced, I have been led anew and, as it were, a stranger, to the question; but long ago I was offended when I read in Euripides,

'He procrastinates, and this is the manner of the Deity.' Yet God ought, least of all things, to be slack towards the wicked, as they are neither slack nor dilatory about doing evil, but are impelled by their unrestrained passions to acts of injustice. And in truth, the retribution, which Thucydides says follows close upon the commission of a crime, forthwith bars the way for those who usually prosper in successful villainy. For there is no debt like overdue justice that makes him who has been wronged so faint-hearted and discouraged, while it emboldens the wicked man in his audacity and violence; but the punishments that follow close upon the commission of crimes are restraints upon those who are meditating wrongs against others, and there is the greatest consolation

## The Delay of the Deity

in this for those who have suffered injustice. So, then, the remark of Bias often troubles me when I reflect upon it; for he said, according to report, to a certain reprobate, that he did not fear lest he might not suffer the punishment of his misdeeds, but only that he might not himself (Bias) live to see it. What profit was it to the Messenians, who were long since dead, that Aristokrates was punished for betraying them at the battle of Taphros, when the matter remained undiscovered for more than twenty years, during which time he had been king of the Arcadians, though he was finally detected and punished, when they were no longer alive? Or what consolation was it to the Orchomenians who had lost children and friends and kinsmen through the treason of Lykiscus, that he was seized a long time afterwards by a disease which gradually ate up his body?—this man who was always dipping his feet into the river to wet them and calling down a curse upon himself, praying that he might rot if he had betrayed and wronged them. And the casting forth of the bodies of the accursed from Athens and their transportation beyond the boundaries was an act that not even the children of those who had been slain were permitted to behold. Wherefore, Euripides inappropriately uses these lines to deter men from the commission of crime, ‘Fear not lest injustice overtake thee and smite thee down, unjust man; but in silence and with slow step it will overtake the wicked when the time is ripe.’ For verily, no other consideration but just such as these, the bad



## The Delay of the Deity

will naturally use to encourage themselves and take as pledges of security in villainy, on the ground that wrong-doing brings forth early and evident fruit, while the penalty comes late, and long after the satisfaction (that arises from success in crime).”

3. When Patrocleas had concluded his remarks, Olympichus spoke up and said, “To what great absurdities do the delays and postponements of the Deity in such matters lead! Because this tardiness destroys faith in Providence, and the fact that retribution does not closely follow each particular act of wrong-doing but is later, thus making room for chance, men, by calling it a misfortune, not a penalty, are they in any wise bettered? Even though they may be grieved at what has befallen them, do they feel regret at what they have done? For just as the immediate stroke of the whip or the spur laid quickly to the horse that makes a false step or stumbles brings it to a sense of duty, but all the subsequent jerking and tugging at the reins and shouting seem rather to be done for some other reason than correction, because they produce pain but not betterment; so vice, if lashed and beaten for each act of villainy committed, would speedily become repentant and humble and fearful of God who beholds men’s acts and sufferings, if He did not postpone justice. And justice that according to Euripides procrastinates and with slow pace overtakes the wicked, seems more like an affair of chance than of Providence, because there is about it so much uncertainty, delay and lack of system. The result is

## The Delay of the Deity

that I do not see what use there is in the saying that the mills of the gods grind late, both because they obscure justice and take away the fear of evil-doing."

4. Thereupon in reply to these remarks and while I was still absorbed in reflection, Timon said: "Shall I now add to the discussion the climax of my own perplexity or shall I pass it over until after the disposal of the main argument?" "What is the use," said I, "of sending along a third wave to wash away the subject-matter, if it be found impossible to refute and invalidate the first objection? First, then, beginning, as we say, at the ingle-side and with the caution of the philosophers of the Academy in regard to the divinity, let us beware of assuming that we know just what to say on this subject. In truth, an affair of more serious moment is the consideration of supernal and divine things, for us who are human beings, than when one who has no ear for music discusses this art, or when one who has never served in the army discourses on military affairs; because, though ignorant of the plan of the artificer, we assume to be able to fathom his designs from what we suppose to be probable and fitting. It is not hard for one unacquainted with the healing art to comprehend the reasoning of a physician as to why he did not sooner perform a certain amputation rather than later, or why he ordered a bath yesterday and not to-day; in respect to God, on the other hand, it is not easy for a mortal to say any thing positive except that, knowing best the proper occasion for curing a man of his

## The Delay of the Deity

vices, He administers to each person chastisements as medicaments, but not equally severe in all cases nor at one and the same time. For that the healing art when applied to the soul is called right and righteousness and is the greatest of all arts, Pindar in addition to thousands of others, affirms, when he calls God the ruler and custodian of the whole universe, the 'master builder,' for the reason that He is the guardian of justice according to which it shall be determined when and how and to what degree every wicked man is to be punished. And of this art Plato says that Minos the son of Jove was a student, as it is not possible to properly dispense justice, or to recognize what is just unless one has learned and acquired a knowledge of the same. Not even the laws that men enact have always their clear and plain justification and some enactments even seem at first sight ridiculous. For instance, in Lacedaemon, the ephors, immediately upon taking office, issue an edict that no one is to wear a mustache and that the laws are to be obeyed in order that none may feel their severity. The Romans inflict a slight blow with a twig upon those whom they intend to emancipate; and when they make a will they bequeath their property to some persons as their heirs, but sell it to others,—which seems to be absurd. But most absurd one would think the law of Solon to be to the effect that he shall be deprived of civil rights, who, when there are parties and factions in the state, take sides with neither. In short, one could name many anomalies

## The Delay of the Deity

in law, if he did not know the intentions of the law-maker, and did not understand the reason for every single part of the decrees that have been issued. What wonder is it then, if, when it is so hard to see through human purposes, that it is not easy to say with respect to the gods for what reason they punish some transgressors later, others sooner.

5. These things are no excuse for shunning an investigation, but a plea for indulgence, so that the discussion, looking as it were, toward a harbor and port of refuge, may move forward with the greater confidence, in the midst of perplexities. Then consider first this fact, that according to Plato, God having placed Himself in the midst of all that is enchantingly fair, as a sort of model, gives to human worth, which is in some measure an image of Himself, an exemplar which all are to follow so far as they are able. For the universe, being in its natural state devoid of order, began to change and to be transformed into a cosmos when it participated in, and became assimilated to, the divine idea and virtue. This same man also says that nature kindles in us the germ of vision so that by beholding the heavenly bodies borne along in their courses, and by admiration of the same, the soul becomes habituated to take pleasure in and to love what is orderly and systematically arranged, but that it hates all disorderly and uncontrolled passion, and shuns the purposeless and hit-or-miss as being the origin of all vice and discord. It is impossible for man, by his very

## The Delay of the Deity

nature, to have a completer enjoyment of God than when seeking and earnestly striving after virtue by imitating everything that is good and noble. For this reason also God punishes the wicked in due time and with deliberation; not because He is Himself afraid of making a mistake by chastising any one too soon or because He might repent of it, but in order to remove from us what is brutal and hasty in the infliction of punishment, and to teach us not to chastise in anger nor when greatly excited and indignant, 'rage o'erleaps the bounds of reason'; as if, in order to satisfy our hunger or quench our thirst we rushed upon those who have done us an injury, but imitating His goodness and long-suffering and taking time as our adviser, that gives least room for repentance, we should proceed to inflict punishments in accordance with justice. For, as Socrates said, it is less mischievous to drink murky water, heedlessly, than when one is in a perturbed state of mind and under the influence of anger and has lost the power of self-control before the mind has become calm and clear, to vent one's wrath on the person of a kinsman or friend. For vengeance does not belong close upon the inquiry, as Thucydides says, but is most in place when as far from it as possible. Since anger, according to Melanthius 'commits terrible deeds when it has displaced self-control'; so, likewise, reason does what is just and fitting when it has put aside anger and excitement. Further also, men are made humane by the example of others when

## The Delay of the Deity

they learn, for instance, that Plato, after raising his staff to strike his slave, remained standing for a long time, as he himself says, in this way chastening his anger. And Archytas, on learning that his servants were negligent and disorderly in his fields, but noticing that he was greatly angered and incensed at them, did nothing but remark as he walked away, 'You are lucky that I am very wroth at you.' If, therefore, the reported sayings of men, treasured up for us, deter us from harshness and the violence resulting from passion; much more does it become us, as we look upon God who lacks nothing and who knows no repentance for any deed, yet postpones punishment to the future and bides His time, to be on our guard in such matters. We ought also to look upon mildness and long-suffering as the divine part of the virtue which God Himself exemplifies (in His dealings with men), and to remember that few are made better by swift chastisement, but that many are profited and admonished by tardiness in punishing.

6. In the second place, let us remember that punishments among men, having regard solely to the infliction of injuries to others, cease with the malefactor and go no further; therefore, like a barking dog they (the penalties) cling to the heels of the transgression and follow up actions closely. But God, as seems reasonable, discerns the passions of the diseased soul upon which He wishes to visit punishment, whether in any way, perchance, it

## The Delay of the Deity

may turn to repentance, and He gives time for amendment to those whose vices are not ineradicable and incurable. For, knowing (as He does) what portion of virtue souls going forth from Him to be born, carry with them, and how strong and ineffaceable is the nobleness implanted in them, and that virtue yields to vice contrary to its nature because corrupted by food and evil communications, and that some, after undergoing a cure, again resume their former nature, He does not inflict upon all a penalty equally severe. But him who is incorrigible He removes forthwith from life and cuts off, because constant association with wickedness is very harmful to others, and in the highest degree harmful to the soul itself. On the contrary, to those who from ignorance of the good rather than from a predilection for evil and to whom it is only second nature to go astray, He gives time for repentance. But if they remain obdurate He visits these also with punishment, for, of course, He has no fear lest they may escape Him. Consider also what transformations have taken place in the character of men and in their life; for which reason also this change and character ( $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ) is called a turning ( $\tau\rho\acute{o}\pi\omicron\varsigma$ ) as habit ( $\xi\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ) for the most part shapes it and by laying hold of it controls it. I think, therefore, that the ancients represented Kecrops dual in form (a combination of man and dragon), not as some say, because, after he had been an excellent king he became a cruel and ruthless tyrant, but for the opposite reason, namely, that after having been

## The Delay of the Deity

unjust and merciless he turned out to be gentle and kindly, when he had got into power. If this is not certain, we know, at least, that Gelo and Hiero, both Sicilians, and Peisistratus the son of Hippokrates, all men who had put themselves at the head of affairs by base methods, used their power for the furtherance of virtuous ends; and though they had attained power illegally, they nevertheless became just and popular rulers. They promoted good order and the cultivation of the soil; made temperate and industrious citizens out of men who had been gossipers and idlers; and Gelo, after fighting bravely and defeating the Carthaginians in a great battle, would not make the peace with them which they sued for until they had pledged themselves to cease from sacrificing their children to Kronos. In Megalopolis, Lydiades was a usurper; but when at the height of his power a change came over him and, having conceived a loathing for iniquity, he gave a constitution to the citizens, then in a battle with the enemies of his country met a glorious death. If some one had slain the usurper Miltiades in the Chersonesus, or had prosecuted Kimon for incest with his sister, or had driven Themistocles from the city by an indictment, when he was indulging in drunken revelries and insulting people in the market place, as was afterwards done with Alkibiades, would we not have lost the heroes of Marathon, of the Eurymedon and fair Artemisium, 'where the sons of the Athenians laid the glorious corner-stone of liberty?' Men cast in a large



## The Delay of the Deity

mold neither do anything in a small way, nor do the vehemence and energy of their titanic natures suffer them to be inactive; but they are tossed to and fro like a ship on the waves until they settle down into a fixed and well-grounded character. Just as a person who was ignorant of agriculture would not take a fancy to land, if he saw it overgrown with weeds and brambles, full of wild animals, running water and marshes; while to one who has learned to discriminate and to judge, these very things show the strength and goodness of the soil; so men cast in a large mold commit irregularities and follies—men whose volcanic and vehement natures we cannot endure, and think they ought to be cut off or kept in check. But the better judge, he who in spite of these things discerns innate worth and nobility, waits until age and maturity become the co-workers of reason and virtue, when nature shall bring forth her proper fruit.”

7. “So much, then, on this point. And do you not think certain of the Greeks have done wisely in adopting the Egyptian law that forbids the execution of a woman condemned to death during pregnancy, until after her delivery?” “Most assuredly,” they said. “If then,” said I, “a person is big, not with a child, but with a deed or a secret project which he may in the course of time bring into the world and put into execution, or if he might disclose some hidden crime, or be the author of some judicious counsel or the discoverer of some useful invention, would it not be better to await a seasonable time for

## The Delay of the Deity

removing him (than to do it prematurely)? To me at least it seems so," I said. "And to us also," replied Patrocleas. "Very good," said I. "Now consider that if Dionysius had been punished at the beginning of his usurped power, no Greek would have settled in Sicily, though it had been laid waste by the Carthaginians; nor would Greeks have settled in Apollonia or in Anaktorium or in the peninsula of Leukadia, if Periander had not received his punishment a long time after (his accession to power). And I believe also that the day of reckoning for Kasander was postponed in order that Thebes might be rebuilt. Of the mercenaries that had assisted in plundering the temple here the greater part accompanied Timoleon on an expedition to Sicily where they conquered the Carthaginians and overthrew the tyrants; then the miserable wretches died a miserable death. There is no doubt that the Deity sometimes employs certain men after the manner of public executioners, to be the avengers of other villains, then destroys them as I think He does most tyrants. For just as the gall of the hyena and the beestings (or rennet) of the seal and other parts of repulsive animals have a property that is useful for the cure of diseases, so God inflicts on some persons who need a drastic remedy and chastisement, a stern and hard tyrant; nor does He release them from their grievous and melancholy state until He has cured their disease and purified them. Such a medicine was Phalaris to the Akragantines, and to the Romans, Marius. To the

## The Delay of the Deity

Sikyonians also the god declared explicitly that their city needed a scourge for taking away from the Kleonians the boy Teletias, crowned in the Pythian games, as their own fellow-citizen, and putting him to death. So, sure enough, when Orthagoras had become tyrant of Sikyon, and after him Myron and Kleisthenes, he and his successors made an end of their lasciviousness; the Kleonians, however, not receiving such curative treatment, sank into insignificance. You know that Homer somewhere says, 'From him, a far baser father, was born a son better in all manner of excellence'; yet that son of Kopreus performed no brilliant or even noteworthy exploit. But the descendants of Sisyphus and of Autolycus and of Phlegyas were conspicuous for the deeds and virtues of great kings. Pericles of Athens, also sprang from a house on which rested a curse; while in Rome, Pompey the Great was the son of Strabo whose corpse the Roman people, in their hatred, cast out and trampled under foot. Why should it then be thought strange, if, just as the husbandman does not dig up the thorns lest he destroy the asparagus, and the Lydians do not burn the shrub until they have gathered the gum from it; so God should in like manner delay to extirpate the evil and corrupt root of an illustrious and kingly house until the proper fruit has grown from it? It was better for the Phokians to lose the countless herds of kine and horses belonging to Iphitus, as also that much gold and silver should be taken from Delphi, than not to have had Ulysses

## The Delay of the Deity

or Asklepias born among them, or the other distinguished and noble-minded men whose ancestors had been evil-doers and reprobates.

8. Do you not think it better that retribution should come in due season and in a fitting way, than immediately and all at once? As, for instance, in the case of Kalippus, who, supposed to be the friend of Dion, killed him with the same sword with which he was afterward dispatched by his friends; and that of Mitias the Argive who had been slain in a tumult and whose brazen statue in the market-place fell on the slayer of Mitias during a dramatic performance and killed him. And the stories of Bessus, the Paeonian, and of Aristo the Oetaean, the leaders of the mercenaries, you, of course, know, Patrocleas." "I do not," said he, "but I would like to hear them." "Aristo," I said, "having taken away the ornaments of Eriphyle lying here (in this temple), with the permission of the authorities, presented them to his wife; but his son, angered at his mother from some cause, set the house on fire and burned up all who were in it. And Bessus, as the story goes, having killed his own father, was not found out for a long time, but finally, going to a banquet with some friends and happening to strike a nest of young swallows with his spear, knocked it down and killed the fledglings. When those who were present said, as was natural, 'Man, what possessed you to do such an ill-omened deed'? he replied, 'Have they not this long time been falsely accusing me and crying out

## The Delay of the Deity

against me for killing my father'? The astonished company reported the remark to the king, and after the case had been investigated Bessus received his just deserts."

9. "We say these things," I continued, "on the assumption that there is a postponement of punishment for the wicked; on the other hand, it is proper to hear what Hesiod says, who does not think with Plato that punishment is a pain which follows injustice, but that it is something of equal age with it; that it springs from the same root and place, for he says, 'Evil counsel is most hurtful to him who has given it,' and,

'He who lays plots for another, lays a plot against himself.'

The cantharis, you know, is said to contain within itself the antidote (for the pain it inflicts), and villainy, by engendering within itself both pain and punishment, pays the penalty for evil-doing, not at a subsequent time, but in the outrage itself. Every malefactor who is punished by the infliction of pain on his body bears his own cross, and vice wreaks upon itself, out of itself, its own vengeance, because it is in a sense a creator of the woes of life that it brings into existence, together with the accompanying disgrace, many sorrows, fears and violent passions and regrets and unceasing restlessness. Some people are in no wise different from children, who, on seeing malefactors in the theaters often clad in gilded and purple garments, crowned and dancing about, are delighted

## The Delay of the Deity

and admire them as fortunate mortals, until they are seen goaded and scourged, while the fire breaks forth from their splendid and costly attire. For many of the wicked are the owners of fine mansions, and, as they hold magistracies and other responsible positions, no one is aware that they are undergoing punishment until they are put to death or hurled from rocks. This, one ought not to call punishment, but the consummation and fulfilment of punishment. For as Herodicus of Selymbria, who had been attacked by consumption, an incurable disease, was the first to combine gymnastics with the healing art, and of whom Plato says, that (in so doing) he protracted his own death, and that of all who were similarly diseased; so malefactors who are seen to have escaped immediate punishment, expiate their crimes by a longer, not by a shorter penalty; nor after a longer time but during a longer time; they are not punished after they have grown old, but they grow old during their punishment. And I say *a long time* with reference to ourselves, for to the gods the span of human life is nothing,—now, but not thirty years ago is the same as to say, that in the evening, but not in the morning, the malefactor, is to be tortured or hanged, especially since man is shut up in this life just as in a prison from which there is no migration to another place or escape, but which in the meanwhile allows time for many enjoyments and the transaction of business, the bestowing and receiving of honors and favors, and for diversions; just as persons in prison

## The Delay of the Deity

are allowed to play at dice or draughts, though the noose is all the while dangling above their heads.

10. Moreover, what reason is there for saying that those who lie in prison under sentence of death do not receive their punishment until they are decapitated? or that he who has drunk the hemlock-juice, but is still walking about waiting for the heaviness to get into his legs, until he is seized by anaesthesia and the rigor of death, (has not received his?) If we regard the consummation of the punishment as the punishment itself, we overlook the intervening sufferings and fears, as well as the apprehension and regret with which every evil-doer is harassed. Is not this just as if we were to say of the fish that has swallowed the hook, that it is not caught until we see it broiled or cut up by the cooks? Every one who has committed a crime is firmly held by justice and has then and there fastened within himself, like a bait the sweet morsel of iniquity. Having an avenging conscience in his breast, 'Like a frantic tunny he spins round in the sea.' For the well-known reckless audacity and over-confidence of vice is active and ardent until the evil deed has been done; then the passion subsiding like a wind, sinks down weak and cowed under the weight of fears and superstitions; so that it is entirely in accordance with the event and the truth that Stesichorus attributes a dream to Klytemnestra in about these words: 'She thought a dragon with gory head approached her, and from it Pleisthenades came forth.' For visions by night and

## The Delay of the Delty

apparitions by day and oracles and celestial portents and whatever other phenomenon is regarded as caused by the direct interposition of God, cause anxieties and fears to persons who have a guilty conscience. For example, it is said, that Apollodorus once in a dream saw himself flayed by the Scythians, then boiled, and heard his heart speaking from the caldron and saying, 'I am the cause of all this'; and that at another time he saw his daughters all ablaze, their bodies encircled with flame, running about him. Hipparchus also, the son of Peisistratus, a little before his death saw Aphrodite flinging blood in his face from a kind of basin; and the favorites of Ptolemy the Thunderer, saw him summoned before a tribunal by Seleucus where vultures and wolves were the judges, distributing many pieces of flesh among his enemies. Pausanias, likewise, having caused a free maiden to be brought by force from Byzantium in order to pass the night with her, but when she was come, owing to some perturbation of mind and suspicion, had her put to death—this maiden he frequently saw in a dream calling to him, 'Hasten to judgment; assuredly lust brings sorrow on men.' As the apparition did not cease to haunt him, it is said that he set sail for the oracle of the dead at Heracleia where he called up the ghost of the damsel by expiatory rites and libations. Appearing before him, she said that he would be freed from his troubles when he came to Lacedaemon; but as soon as he arrived there he died.



## The Delay of the Deity

11. If then the soul has no sensation after death, and dissolution is the end of all rewards and punishments, one might rather say that the divinity deals kindly and indulgently with the wicked who are speedily chastised and die. For if we were to assert nothing more than that as long as they live and during the present existence no evil befalls the bad, but that when vice is exposed and is seen to be a fruitless and barren thing, that it brings nothing good or worth an effort, in spite of many severe agonies of mind—the recognition of these facts renders life an uneasy one. A case in point is the story told of Lysimachus that under stress of thirst he gave up his body and his dominions to the Getae, but that when he had got into their hands and received a draught he cried out, ‘Shame on my baseness for depriving myself of such a kingdom for so short-lived a pleasure.’ Yet it is exceedingly difficult to resist the needs of our physical nature; but when a man, either for the sake of money or from avidity for political honors or influence, commits a lawless and wicked act, and when, after the thirst and madness of his passion have been allayed, he finds, in the course of time, that the ignominy and the bitter sorrow for his crimes remain behind, and that villainy has been neither advantageous nor necessary nor profitable, must not the thought, so servile and mean, often occur to him, that for empty glory or fleeting enjoyment he has trampled under foot the dearest and highest rights of mankind, only to fill his

## The Delay of the Deity

life with shame and confusion. For as Simonides jestingly said, that he always found the chest he kept for money full and the one he kept for gratitude empty; so wicked men, when they examine their own evil hearts, discover that for the sake of a pleasure which directly proves to be an empty one, they find them void of hope but full of sorrows and pain, unpleasant memories, and anxiety for the future, but big with distrust of the present. Just as we hear Ino crying out in the theater when filled with regret for what she had done, 'Dear women, how can I again dwell in the house of Athamas? Would that I had done none of the deeds I committed!' So the soul of every villain ought to consider well and reflect how it may rid itself of the memory of its iniquities and exorcise a bad conscience, undergo a process of purification and live life over again. When the bad is deliberately preferred, it shows a lack of confidence and firmness and strength and stability—unless, forsooth, we admit that evil-doers are a class of sages. Wherever there exists an uncontrollable love of money and pleasure, and insatiable avarice coupled with malice or a bad character, there you will find also, if you look closely, latent superstitions and an aversion to labor and fear of death and sudden gusts of passion and an eagerness to be talked about joined to a penchant for boasting. Such men fear those who censure them and are afraid of those who praise them as persons who have been wronged by deception; they are particularly hostile

## The Delay of the Deity

to the wicked because they freely praise those who have the reputation of being virtuous. For that which hardens men in vice is like the brittleness in poor iron and is easily shivered. Whence it comes that as they, in the course of time, gain a deeper insight into the nature of things, are weighed down with sorrow and become morose and abhor their own past life. It surely cannot be but that a bad man who has restored a trust, or become surety for a friend, or who from a love of glory or fame has given and contributed something to his country, will forthwith regret what he has done, because he is unstable in his ways and fickle in his purpose; sometimes persons of this kind, even when applauded in the theaters, groan inwardly because the love of money has supplanted the love of glory; nor can it be that those who have sacrificed men for the attainment of sovereignty or to carry out a conspiracy, as did Apollodorus, or who have taken away money from their friends, as did Glaucus, do not repent, nor hate themselves, and do not feel regret for what they have done. I, for my part, do not believe, if I may say so, that there is need of any god or man to punish the impious, but that their life, ruined and made uneasy by vice, is fully sufficient."

12. "Consider, however," I said, "whether we are not examining the argument at greater length than its importance demands." To this Timon replied, "It may be, in view of what is yet to come and of what has been omitted. For I shall now bring up as

## The Delay of the Deity

a sort of reserve the final difficulty, since we have in a measure worked our way through those that preceded. What Euripides alleges against the gods when he boldly charges them with turning 'the transgressions of the parents over to their children,' this, believe me, we also tacitly impute to them as an injustice. For, if those who have committed offenses have themselves expiated them, there is no further need of punishing those who have committed none, since it is not just to punish a second time for the same crime those who are innocent; or if through negligence they have failed to punish the real criminals, and long after visit the penalty upon the innocent, they do not justly make up for their tardiness by injustice. Something of this kind is told of Aesop who, it is said, came here (to Delphi) with gold from Cræsus in order to make a magnificent oblation to the god and to distribute to each of the Delphians four minae; but some difficulty arising, as it seems, and he having got into a quarrel with the parties here, performed the sacrifice but sent the money back to Sardis, alleging that the men were not worthy to receive it; thereupon they trumped up a charge of temple-robbery against him and put him to death by hurling him from the rock called Hyampeia. For this the god is said to have become incensed at them and to have sent a famine upon the land, together with all manner of strange diseases; so that they went around to the Hellenic festivals proclaiming and making known everywhere that whoever

## The Delay of the Deity

wished might wreak vengeance upon them for the wrong they had done to Aesop. In the third generation came one Iadmon, a man in no way related to Aesop, but a descendant of those who had bought him in Samos; and to this man, having in some way made satisfaction (for the wrong done to Aesop), the Delphians were released from their calamities. After that date also, they say, the punishment of temple-robbery was transferred to Nauplia from Hyampeia. Those who are great admirers of Alexander, of which number we also are, do not commend him for destroying the city of the Branchidae and putting them all to death, without distinction of age or sex, because their forefathers had betrayed the temple at Miletus. Agathocles, too, the usurper of Syracuse, mockingly told the Corcyreans, in answer to the question why he had laid waste their island, 'That it most assuredly was because their fathers had kindly received Ulysses.' To the people of Ithaca he likewise replied when they expostulated with him because his soldiers carried off their sheep, 'Your king also came to us and even blinded the shepherd.' And is not Apollo even more unreasonable if he is destroying the present generation of Pheneatae by blocking up the barathrum and inundating their entire territory, because a thousand years ago, as they say, Hercules carried off the prophetic tripod and took it to Pheneus? or when he foretold to the Sybarites a release from their ills, whenever they had appeased the anger of the Leucadian Hera, by a demolition three

## The Delay of the Deity

times repeated? And in truth, it is not long since the Lacedaemonians ceased to send virgins to Troy 'who without upper garments and with bare feet, like slaves, at early dawn swept around the altar of Athena, without the wimple, even though old age bore heavy upon them,' on account of the lasciviousness of Ajax. Where, pray, is the logic or justice of these things? We do not approve the custom of the Thracians, who even at the present day tattoo their wives for the purpose of avenging Orpheus, nor that of the barbarians along the Po for wearing black garments in token of mourning for Pentheus, as they say. And it would have been still more ridiculous, I think, if the men who lived at the time when Phaethon perished had not concerned themselves about him, but those who were born five or ten generations after his death had begun to change their garments for his sake and to put on mourning. Nevertheless this is merely silly and has nothing pernicious or irremediable about it. But with what reason does the anger of the gods sometimes suddenly disappear like certain rivers, only to break out afterwards against others in order to plunge them into the direst misfortunes?"

13. As soon as he ceased, I, fearing lest he might again proceed anew to more and greater absurdities, spoke up and asked him: "Very well, but do you accept all these things as true?" To which he replied, "Even if not all, but only some of them are true, do you not think the question presents the same diffi-

## The Delay of the Deity

culty?" "Perhaps," said I, "and yet when persons are suffering from a high fever, the same or nearly the same heat remains whether they have on them one or more garments; nevertheless it affords some relief (to the patient) to remove what is superfluous. Still, if you do not wish to go on, we will let this matter pass; at any rate, these stories look like fables and inventions; remember, however, the festival of Theoxenia, recently celebrated, and the honorable place the heralds assign to the descendants of Pindar; how imposing and delightful the ceremony appeared to you. Who would not, I said, be charmed with the bestowal of this honor, so entirely in harmony with the spirit of Greek antiquity, unless his 'black heart had been forged with cold flame,' to use one of Pindar's own expressions? Then I forbear to mention, I said, a proclamation similar to this in Sparta called, After the Lesbian Bard, in honor and memory of Terpander the Ancient, for the argument is the same. And you too, descendants of Opheltas, forsooth, claim somewhat more consideration than others among the Boeotians and at the hands of the Phokians because of Diophantus; besides, you were present and were the first to support me when I upheld the traditional honor of Herakles and the right to wear a crown which the Lycormae and the Sati-laiæ laid claim to; for I said it was altogether proper that the descendants of Herakles should enjoy unimpaired honors and benefits for services which he had rendered to the Greeks, but for which he had not

## The Delay of the Deity

himself received adequate recognition and requital." "You have recalled to my mind a noble contest," he said, "and one well worthy of a philosopher." "Retract, then, my friend," said I, "this serious charge, and do not take it ill if the descendants of wicked or base men are sometimes punished; or cease to speak with approval of the honors conferred upon those who are of noble ancestry. For it is incumbent upon us, if we are to requite to their descendants, the services of their forefathers, as a matter of consistency not to think that punishment ought to cease or be discontinued at once after the crime, but that it ought to run along with it and render a recompense corresponding to it. He who is pleased to see the family Kimon honored at Athens, but feels sore and aggrieved when the descendants of Lachares or Aristo are expelled, is very weak and inconsistent; or rather, he is captious and hypercritical as regards the deity: for he finds fault if the grandchildren of a wicked and unjust man seem to meet with good fortune, and he finds fault again, if the offspring of the vicious are cut off and blotted out. He blames God equally whether the children of a good man or a bad man fare ill."

14. "Let these things," I said, "serve you as a sort of bulwark against those over hasty and carping critics; but let us take up again, as one may say, the beginning of the thread of this obscure problem concerning the Deity, with its many windings and ramifications, and let us follow them up with care but without fear,



## The Delay of the Deity

to what is probable as well as what is reasonable; this at least is clear and well established, that even in those things which we ourselves do, we cannot always give the reason. For example, why do we direct the children of those who have died of consumption or dropsy to sit with both feet in the water until the corpse is buried? for it is believed that in this way the disease will not pass to them or come near them. Again, for what reason does a whole herd of goats stand still if one of their number gets eryngo in its mouth, until the herdsman comes up and takes it out? And there are other forces in nature that interact among each other and pass back and forth with incredible swiftness through a great extent of space. Yet we are surprised at intervals of time, but not those of space. With all that, it is more wonderful if Athens is infected with a disease that had its origin in Ethiopia and of which Pericles died and from which Thucydides suffered than if the penalty for the crimes committed by the Delphians or Sybarites should be carried down to and visited upon their children. The forces of nature have certain connections, and inter-relations with each other extending from their farthest endings to their very beginnings, the cause of which, though unknown by us, silently produce their proper effects.

15. And, in truth, the wrath of the gods, when it falls upon a whole city, has its justification. For a city is a unit and an entirety, just like an animal, that does not lose its identity with the passing of the years,

## The Delay of the Deity

nor is transformed from one thing into something different in the course of time, but is always affected by like feelings and has a character peculiar to itself. It merits all the praise and all the blame for what it has done in its sovereign capacity, so long as the community which makes it one and binds it together preserves its unity. To make one city, in the course of time, consist of many cities, or rather, of a countless number, is like dividing one man into many because he is now older, but was formerly younger, and still earlier, a stripling. This is altogether like the well-known argument of Epicharmus, the so-called increasing syllogism, much used by the Sophists, that the man who had incurred a debt some time ago does not owe it now as he has become another man, and that he who was invited to a banquet yesterday comes to-day an unbidden guest because he is another person. Advancing age produces greater changes in each one of us than in the general character of cities. Any one would recognize Athens if he saw it thirty years ago; the customs of to-day, the motions, the sports, the occupations, the likes and dislikes of the people are precisely the same they were in former times; but a man whom a relative or a friend might chance to meet after an interval of time, he would scarcely recognize, and the change of character easily seen in every remark and occupation and in the feelings and habits have, even for those who are about us all the time, something strange and striking by their novelty. Nevertheless a man is regarded as one per-

## The Delay of the Deity

son from his birth to his death; and in like manner we think it right that the city, which remains the same, ought to be held responsible for the transgressions of its former citizens with the same show of reason that it shares in their glory and prestige; otherwise we shall, without being aware of it, cast everything into the river of Heracleitus into which he says nothing goes twice because nature keeps all things in motion and changes their form.

16. If then a city is a unit and a continuous thing, the same is undoubtedly true of the family that springs from one and the same beginning and engenders a certain power and a natural bond of sympathy between all its members. That which is begotten is not as if it were the handiwork of an artisan, separate from him who begets, for it is something that proceeds out of him, not something framed by him; consequently it possesses and bears within itself some portion of its original that may rightfully be chastised or honored. If I were not afraid I should be thought to be jesting I would say that the statue of Kasander has suffered a greater wrong at the hands of the Athenians when it was melted down, and the body of Dionysius when after death it was carried beyond their boundary by the Syracusans, than their descendants in paying the penalty for the deeds of these men. For in a statue of Kasander there was no part of him, and the soul of Dionysius had left the dead body long previously; but in the case of Nysaeus and of Apollokrates and of Anti-

## The Delay of the Deity

pater and of Philip and of all other persons in like manner who are the children of vicious parents, nature has implanted this predominant principle and it is ever present with them; is not dormant or inoperative, but they live in it and are nurtured by it; with them it abides and it directs their actions. It is not cruel or unreasonable if the children of these men share their destiny. All things considered, here, as in the healing art, what is advantageous is just, and he would make himself ridiculous who should affirm that in diseases of the hip-joint it was wrong to cauterize the thumb, and in the case of an ulcerated liver, to make an incision in the belly, and to anoint the tips of the horns of cattle if their hoofs are soft. So in the matter of punishments; he who thinks anything else is just than what will cure vice, and is scandalized if the healing is affected on one party for the sake of another,—like the opening of a vein to relieve the eyes—evidently sees no farther than what is plain to the senses. He does not take into account that even a schoolmaster, when he punishes one pupil also corrects others, and that a general who decimates his army punishes all his soldiers. Likewise, certain qualities, good as well as bad, are transmitted not only from one body to another, but even more readily from one soul to another. For in the one case it seems reasonable that the same conditions should also produce the same change, while in the other, the soul impelled by motives and impulses is naturally inclined by

## The Delay of the Deity

boldness or timidity to become worse or better.”

17. While I was yet speaking, Olympichus interrupting me, said, “You seem, in your discourse, to proceed on a weighty assumption, namely, the continued existence of the soul.” “You will surely grant this,” I replied, “or rather, have granted it, for my argument has proceeded from the beginning on the hypothesis that God distributes to us all rewards and punishments according to our deserts.” Hereupon he replied, “Do you then think it follows of necessity, from the fact that because the gods observe all our actions, and apportion rewards and punishments, that souls are either altogether incorruptible, or that they continue to exist for some time after death?” “My good friends,” said I, “God is not impatient, or so occupied with trifles, that if there were not something of the divinity in us, something at least in a measure similar to Himself, but if, like unto leaves, as Homer says, we are altogether transitory, and doomed to perish in a little while, He would treat us with so much consideration—like those women who plant the gardens of Adonis in fragments of pottery and bestow pains on them—cherishing those ephemeral souls of ours, that dwell in a frail body, and when they are sprung up have no firm root in life, but are forever extinguished by any sudden calamity. But if you are agreed, let us pass over the other gods and let us consider ours here (in Delphi), whether you think, if he were aware that the souls of those who have passed from life, forth-

## The Delay of the Deity

with dissolve into nothing, like clouds or smoke, as soon as they leave the body, he would have instituted so many ceremonies for the dead, and would still require large gifts and honors for the deceased, merely to impose upon and delude the credulous. For my part, I could never give up (my faith in) the immortality of the soul unless some one should again, like another Herakles, take away the tripod of the Pythia, and eradicate and destroy the oracle. So long as even in our day many such oracular responses are rendered, as they say were given to Korax the Naxian, it is impious to assert that the soul can die." Here Patrocleas asked, "What was the response and who was this Korax? for to me both the name and the circumstance are unknown." "Not at all," said I, "but I am to blame for using a cognomen instead of a name. The man who slew Archilochus in battle was called Kalondas, as you know; but he bore the eponym, Korax. Repelled at first by the Pythia for killing a devotee of the Muses, he next had recourse to prayers and humble supplications in order to secure his restoration to favor, then was commanded to repair to the habitation of Tettix, in order to appease the soul of Archilochus. This was at Taenarus, for thither, they say, Tettix the Cretan came with his fleet, founded a city and settled near an oracle of the dead. In like manner, also, an oracle came to the Spartans, bidding them conciliate the soul of Pausanias, persons who could evoke the dead having been sent for to Italy; these, after offering sacrifice,

## The Delay of the Deity

conjured up the ghost of the dead man in the temple.

18. This, then is one argument which establishes the providence of God and at the same time the immortality of the soul, and it is not possible to reject the one and accept the other. Now if the soul survives after the death of the body, it is also quite reasonable that it shares the rewards and punishments (of the latter). For in this life it is engaged in a contest, like an athlete, and when the contest is ended it receives its deserts. To the rewards and punishments meted out when existing there by itself (separate from the body) for the deeds of the previous life, the living attach no importance; they are concealed from our knowledge, and discredited. But those that are transmitted to children and through successive generations, being plainly evident to all who live here, turn many bad men from their ways and hold them in check. There is no more grievous chastisement, and none that reaches more to the quick, than for men to see their descendants in misfortune on their account; and when the soul of an impious and unjust man beholds, after death, not statues overturned and honors annulled, but children and friends and his own household overwhelmed with calamities and paying the penalty for crimes that he has himself committed,—there is no one who would again be unjust, or who would yield to his unbridled passion, for the honors of Zeus. I have also a story to tell that I recently heard, but I hesitate to do so lest you

## The Delay of the Deity

think it a fable, I will therefore keep to what is probable. "By no means," said Olympichus, "but repeat it entire." When the others also joined in the request, I said, "Permit me to repeat what is probable in the story and afterward, if you like, we will take up the fable, granting, of course, that it is a fable."

19. Now Bion says for a god to punish the children of bad men would be more ridiculous than if a physician were to administer medicine to the son or grandson, for the disease of the grandfather, or the father. In one respect the conditions are unlike, in another they are alike, or similar. Administering medicine to one man for the disease of another does not, it is true, cure the patient, and a person who is suffering from a disease of the eyes, or a fever, does not get better when he sees another annointed or having a plaster put on him; but the punishments of the wicked make it evident to all men that it is the purpose of wisely-directed justice to restrain some by the correction of others. In what respect the comparison made by Bion is pertinent to the inquiry, he himself failed to notice; for suppose, now, a man falls sick of a painful but by no means incurable disease. then gives himself up to intemperance and effeminate habits, and dies; and suppose, again, that his son does not have the same disease but only a predisposition to it,—would not a physician, or a trainer, or even a careful master, on learning this fact, put him on a frugal diet, and keep him from dainties and pastry,



## The Delay of the Deity

from drink and women, and by enjoining the continuous use of remedies and the exercise of the body in gymnastics, scatter and eradicate the little germ of a big disorder, before it had reached the serious stage? Forsooth, do not we admonish those who are born of diseased fathers or mothers, to take heed to themselves, and to be on their guard against neglecting themselves, and forthwith to expel the inbred evil while its germ is yet undeveloped, and thus take the danger by the forelock? "Most assuredly," said they. "Then," replied I, "we are not doing an absurd but a necessary thing; not something ridiculous but something useful, when we recommend to the children of epileptics and hypochondriacs and gouty persons, physical exercise and wholesome diet and medicaments, not because they are sick, but to the end that they may not become sick. The body that is born of an unsound body does not need chastisement but medical treatment and good regimen. If anybody calls the interdiction of pleasures and the imposition of toil and labor, punishment, he does so because he is inept and effeminate, and no attention need be paid to him. Shall we say, then, that a body born of an unsound body is worthy of care and attention, but the congenital seeds of vice that germinate and spring up in the young character, we are to let alone and wait and dally, until the evil passions break forth openly, —'show forth the malignant fruit of the heart,' as Pindar says?

## The Delay of the Deity

20. Of a truth, in this matter is the Deity any wiser than Hesiod when he exhorts and advises us 'Not when returned from the sorrowful burial, to propagate the race, but after the feast of the immortals?' on the ground that not only vice and virtue, but sorrow and joy and all qualities, are transferred to the offspring in procreation; that at such a time men should be jocund and in good spirits and merry. But it does not follow, according to Hesiod, nor is it the work of human wisdom, but of God, to see through and understand similarities and differences of human nature, before they have led to great crimes and are thus made plain to all men. For while the cubs of bears and the whelps of wolves and monkeys immediately disclose their inborn nature because there is nothing to conceal or disguise it, the natural disposition of man conforms to customs and opinions and laws, and thus frequently puts a mask on what is evil and imitates the good. In this way it altogether expunges or eradicates the inborn taint of vice, or hides it for a long time by cunningly disguising itself under the cloak of virtue; inasmuch as we hardly take note of any particular act of villany, unless it falls upon us or strikes us; or, rather, we are for the most part accustomed to regard men as bad only when they do a bad deed, licentious when they indulge their lusts, and cowards when they run away. This is doing as if we believed scorpions had a sting only when they strike, and serpents were poisonous only when they bite,—a foolish notion, verily! The man who proves

## The Delay of the Deity

to be a villain does not become so just at the moment he is found out, but he had in him from his birth the germs of iniquity, the thief merely seizing the opportunity or using his power to steal, and the tyrant to override the law. But God, depend upon it, is not ignorant of the inclinations and nature of any man because He looks to the soul rather than the body; He does not wait to punish deeds of violence, until they are done with the hands, or impurity until it is uttered with the tongue, or lasciviousness until it is committed with the sexual organs. He does not take vengeance on the evil-doer from any wrong he has himself suffered, neither is He incensed at the robber, because he has been roughly handled, nor does He hate the adulterer because of the disgrace; yet, for the sake of betterment, He often punishes the adulterer and the miser and the unjust man, thus cutting off vice, as if it were an epilepsy, before it becomes firmly rooted.

21. A little while ago we expressed our ill-will at the late and tardy punishment of the wicked; now we find fault because in some cases, even before they perpetrate any evil deed, God checks the natural bent and disposition of men, though we are aware that the future is often worse and more to be feared than the past, and what is dormant than what is apparent. We are not able to fathom the reasons why it is sometimes better to let men commit crimes and sometimes better to anticipate them while they are merely deliberating and contriving; just as some

## The Delay of the Deity

medicines are not adapted to certain patients, though helpful to others who are not actually sick, and yet in a worse condition than the former. For this reason the gods do not 'turn all the transgressions of the parents upon their offspring,' but if a virtuous son is begotten by a wicked father, as it were, a sound man, by one who is diseased, he averts the penalty from the house, the offspring of one being, so to speak, adopted into another. But it is fitting that a young man who conforms himself to the likeness of a corrupt family should also share the chastisement of its villainies as a debt incurred by inheritance. Antigonus was not punished on account of Demetrius, any more than the heroes of the olden time, Phyleus and Nestor, for the sake of Augeas and Neleus; since these men, though sprung from wicked fathers, were themselves good men. But those who cherish and take naturally to the baseness that is born in them must also expect to be pursued to the end by that justice which the likeness of vice demands. For just as warts and livid spots and freckles that fathers sometimes have, are not on their sons, but afterwards reappear on the grandsons, and granddaughters; and a certain Greek woman who had given birth to a black child for which she was charged with adultery until she proved that she was descended from an Ethiopian in the fourth generation; and one of the sons of Pytho of Nisibis, who recently died, and who was said to be sprung from the Sparti, was born with the print of a spear on his body—in which case the

## The Delay of the Deity

family likeness reappeared and came to the surface as out of the deep, after such a long space of time,—so in like manner the character and passions of the soul are often concealed in the first generations and remain unknown, but some time afterward and in other persons nature springs up and asserts its power, either for virtue or vice.”

22. When he had spoken thus he held his peace, whereupon Olympichus said with a smile, “We do not give you our approval lest we shall seem to excuse you from telling the story, on the ground that the case has been sufficiently proved; but we shall only then render our verdict when we have heard that.” In this wise I accordingly began: “Thespesius of Soli, a kinsman and friend of the Protagenes who spent some time here with us, having passed the first part of his life in great dissoluteness, and having speedily squandered all his patrimony, now pressed by the exigencies of his situation, for some time led a vicious life; besides repenting of his bad management, he also sought in every way to recover what he had lost, and acted just like those libertines who care nothing for their wives so long as they are in possession of them, but after they are divorced and married to other men, basely try to corrupt them. Accordingly, by holding aloof from no act of meanness that brought either gratification or gain, he acquired in a short time not only very great possessions, but also the reputation of being a thorough scoundrel. Above all, an oracle brought from Amphiloehus gave him a bad

## The Delay of the Deity

name; for having asked the god through a messenger, as we are told, whether he would lead a better life in the future, the answer came back that it would be better with him after he was dead. And in a measure this turned out to be true, not long after. For happening to fall on his head from a height he lay like one dead from the shock alone, for he had received no wound, and on the third day was already carried forth for burial. Then all at once recovering strength and coming to himself, he showed a most astonishing change in his manner of life; for the Cilicians know of no man of his time more just in dealings between man and man, none more reverent toward the gods, none more dreaded by his enemies, or more faithful to his friends. Consequently all who knew him were eager to hear the cause of this transformation, as they thought such an alteration of character could not be a mere matter of chance—which was in fact the case, as he himself related to Protagenes and other equally intimate friends. For when he lost consciousness,—(literally, when his rational soul left his body)—he at first experienced about the same sensation as the result of the change that a pilot would feel who should be hurled from a ship into the deep; afterwards, having recovered a little, he thought he had entirely regained his breath and was able to see on every side with his soul opened as if it were all one eye. Yet he beheld none of the former things, but the objects he recognized were stars of immense magnitude at immeasurable

## The Delay of the Deity

distances from one another, and a radiance proceeding from them, surprising in its brilliancy and color, in which his soul moved about with facility just as a man in a calm moves a ship in any direction, easily and quickly. Though he omitted most of what he saw, he said that the souls of the dead, rising from below, made flame-like bubbles as they displaced the air before them; then, as each bubble noiselessly burst, the souls came forth, human in form but of a smaller size. Their movements, however, were not alike, for some started forth with surprising fleetness and darted straight up, while others whirled round in a circle just like spindles, and whisking, now upward, now downward, with a kind of confused and aimless motion, they came to rest only after a long time and with great difficulty. Respecting most of the souls, however, he was in ignorance as to who they were; but recognizing two or three of his acquaintances, he tried to approach and address them, yet they neither heard him nor were in their right mind, but beside themselves and dazed, trying to avoid all notice and intercourse, moving aimlessly about, at first alone by themselves, then encountering many who were in a like condition, they joined themselves to these, and, tossed about in a disorderly manner in all directions, they uttered unintelligible cries that sounded like mingled screams of lamentation and fear. Others, again, were seen at the very summit of the upper air, radiant with joy, frequently approaching each other with signs of affection, but avoiding the disorderly

## The Delay of the Deity

ones and testifying their aversion, as he thought, by drawing themselves together, but their delight and satisfaction, by expanding and extending themselves. Here, he said, he recognized the soul of one of his kinsmen, though not quite distinctly, for he had died when yet very young; but drawing near it saluted him with, 'Hail, Thespesius!' When he, in surprise, rejoined that his name was not Thespesius, but Aridaeus. 'Formerly, it is true,' replied the spirit, 'that was thy name, but henceforth it is Thespesius (the Divine). For thou didst not die, but through the interposition of God art come hither in the full possession of thy faculties; the other part of thy soul thou hast left behind in thy body, as it were an anchor; and let this be a token to thee both, now, and henceforth, that the souls of the departed neither cast a shadow nor move the eyelids.' On hearing this, Thespesius, who had by this time somewhat recovered consciousness, looked and beheld a kind of faint line about himself, while the rest were completely encircled with a radiance and diaphanous, though not all in the same manner, for some, like the moon in her brightest splendor, had a uniformly smooth and even color, while others were marked with a kind of spots or faint weals; others again were all variegated and strange to look upon; while still others were marked with livid fleckings like vipers, and some even showed slight scarifications. The kinsman of Thespesius explained these things in detail (for there is nothing to hinder us from calling



## The Delay of the Deity

the souls of men by the name they themselves bore during life) by reciting that Adrastea, the daughter of Necessity and Zeus, had been placed in the highest seat as the avenger of all crimes, and that there is no wicked man so powerful or so insignificant as to be able, either by craft or by force, to escape her. Three attendants wait upon her to each of whom has been assigned a different mode of inflicting punishment: those who are to be chastised while yet in the body and by means of the body, swift Poena (Punishment) seizes, though in a rather mild way that still leaves behind many things needing expiation; those whose cure is a matter of greater difficulty on account of their vices, the daemon hands over, after death, to Dike (Justice), while those that Dike gives up as entirely incorrigible, the third and most terrible of the attendants of Adrastea, Erinys (the Fury), pursues, and after hounding them as they rush about trying to escape her in one way or another, she puts them all out of sight in a pitiless and awful way by thrusting them into a nameless and invisible abyss. Of the other punishments, said he, that inflicted by Poena in this life is like those of the non-Greeks. For as among the Persians the clothes and tiaras of those who are undergoing chastisement are pulled off and they are scourged, while the culprits beg with tears that their castigation may be ended; so the punishments suffered in body or estate are no severe affliction, nor do they touch vice itself, but are chiefly for appearance sake and for the outward

## The Delay of the Deity

sense. But him who comes hither from there, unpunished and unpurged, Dike seizes and exposes his soul in all its nakedness, and there is no place where it can hide or go into concealment or cover up its baseness, but it is completely seen on all sides and by everybody. At first Dike shows this soul to honest parents, if such he had, or to ancestors, as a detestable creature and unworthy (of such ancestry); but if they were likewise wicked, he sees them undergoing chastisement, while he is in turn beheld by them receiving his deserts and expiating, for a long time, each of his evil passions with pains and torments which as far exceed in sharpness those endured in the flesh as the reality exceeds in distinctness the mere vision (before you). The stripes and weals for each of the passions remain on some a longer, on others a shorter time." 'Observe also,' said he, 'the variegated and party-colored appearance of the souls; the darkish and filthy hue is the mark of fraud and avarice, while the blood-red and flame-colored indicates cruelty and ugliness of temper; where the soul has a bluish color, a lack of self-control as against lust has not been wholly eradicated from it; inherent malevolence combined with envy give out the violet color and festering appearance underneath, just as the cuttle-fish sets free its black fluid. For yonder (in the world), vice, when the soul is changed by its passions and changes the body, occasions a variety of colors, but here (in the realm of departed spirits) there is an end of purifi-

## The Delay of the Deity

cation and punishment, and when the passions are purged out, the soul recovers entirely its native luster and uniform color. Until this takes place, paroxysms of passion break forth, causing relapses and heart-throbs, in some cases faint and easily recovered from, in others exceedingly violent. Some of the souls, after undergoing repeated castigations resume their natural character and disposition; others again are carried away into the bodies of animals by the force and power of ignorance and the innate love of sensual gratification; for, owing to the weakness of the reasoning faculty and a disinclination to discursive thought, one is impelled by its active principle to procreation, while another, though lacking an instrument of sensual gratification, yet longs to satisfy its desires with worldly pleasures and to attain its ends by means of the body, for in this place there is only a kind of imperfect shadow and vision of joys that can have no reality. When the spirit had thus spoken, it conducted him (Thespesius) swiftly through boundless space, as he thought, easily and without deviation, borne up by the beams of light as if on wings, until he came to a wide and deep chasm where the power that supported him gave way; he saw, too, that the other souls had a like experience at that place, for these, crowding together like birds, and darting downward, flew about the chasm,—for they dared not venture to pass directly across it—which he saw was decorated within like the grottoes of Bacchus, with shrubbery and plants and with all

## The Delay of the Deity

sorts of green twigs bearing flowers; it also sent forth a gentle and agreeable breeze which was singularly pleasant and which produced the same effect that wine does on those who are addicted to it, for the souls that inhaled these fragrant odors were in ecstasies of joy and embraced one another. All around this place there was revelry and laughter, together with every kind of enjoyment and merry-making. He said that here Dionysus had ascended and had afterwards fetched up Semele and that it was called the place of Forgetfulness (Lethe). Here, too, Thespesius desired to tarry, but his conductor would not allow it, and hurried him forcibly away, at the same time telling him that the rational soul is melted and dissolved under the influence of pleasure, but that the irrational and carnal part, moistened and clothed in flesh, revives the memory of the body, and as a result of this reminiscence, a desire and a concupiscence that incites to procreation; for which reason it is called an *inclination toward the earth* because the soul is weighed down with moisture. Passing next over another way of equal extent, he thought he saw a huge goblet into which streams flowed, of which one was of a whiter color than the foam of the sea or snow; another, purple like the iris; while others again showed, from afar, different hues, each of which shone with its own particular luster, yet when he came near, the ambient air became more and more rarified, the colors became fainter, and the goblet lost its brilliant tints, except

## The Delay of the Deity

the white. Here he saw three supernatural beings (daemons) sitting by one another in the form of a triangle, mixing together the streams with certain measures. The conductor of the soul of Thespesius said that to this point Orpheus had advanced when he was following after the soul of his wife, but because his memory partly failed him he brought back to men an incorrect account when he said that the oracle at Delphi was the common property of Apollo and Night, when in sooth, there is nothing in common between Apollo and Night. 'But this oracle,' the spirit said, 'is common to night and the moon; it gives response nowhere upon the earth and has no fixed abode, but roams about everywhere among men, in dreams and apparitions; and emanating from it, as thou seest, dreams mixed up with the plain and simple truth, spread abroad trickery and fraud. But that of Apollo thou didst not see,' it said, 'nor wilt thou be able to see it, for the earthly part of the soul neither strives toward what is higher nor does it release (the spiritual part), but it tends downward as long as it is joined to the body.' At the same time the spirit leading him (Thespesius) nearer tried to show him the light issuing from the tripod which, as he said, passed through the bosom of Themis and reached as far as Parnassus. Though greatly desiring to see it, he was not able to do so because of its brilliancy; but as he passed by he heard the shrill voice of a woman chanting in verse some other things, and the time of his death, as he thought. The supernatural

## The Delay of the Deity

being (daemon) said it was the Sibyl, and that she foretold future events as she was whirled about on the face of the moon. Though wishing to hear more, he was carried round to the opposite side by the rotary motion of the moon and caught but a few words; among which was the prediction about Mount Vesuvius and the impending destruction of Dicaearchia by fire, and a verse about the reigning emperor, thus:

‘Though he is good, disease shall end his reign.’ Next in order they turned to look upon those who were undergoing punishments. From the very first they beheld nothing but repulsive and pitiable sights; then Thespesius quite unexpectedly came upon kindred and acquaintances and former companions who were in terrible sufferings and undergoing horrible torments and pains, and who besought him with loud lamentations to have pity on them. Finally, he recognized his own father coming up from a kind of abyss, all covered with marks and wounds, stretching out his hands to him; nor did those who directed his castigations suffer him to hold his peace, but they compelled him to confess that he had been guilty of a base crime against some guests, for their gold, by taking them off with poison, and that, though the deed was unknown to everybody in the world above, it was known to those below. (He also said) that he had already undergone some torments, but was being dragged away to suffer others. Smitten with fear and horror he durst not

## The Delay of the Deity

offer supplications and intercessions for his father; but wanting to turn about and flee, he no longer saw his kind and familiar guide, and felt himself urged forward by other beings horrible to look upon, by whom he was compelled to pass among and behold the chastisements of others of his acquaintances who had openly led a wicked life, though the shade of those who had been punished in the world was less grievously tormented than the rest, and not in the same way, as they were merely condemned to severe toil for the irrational nature and the passions. On the other hand, those who had worn the garb and assumed the name of virtue, but had in secret led corrupt lives, were forced by other tormentors, with severe exertion and great pain, to turn the inner parts of the soul outward; which action being so contrary to their nature, they performed it with wriggings and contortions like those made by the marine scolopendra when they have swallowed the hook; some, their tormentors flayed and laid open in order to show how corrupt and flecked they were, and that their iniquity had its root in the reason which is the noblest part of the soul. Other souls, he also said, he observed coiled about each other by twos and threes and even more, gnawing one another on the score of old grudges for the deeds of malice they had suffered or committed in life. And he noticed further, some lakes alongside of each other, one of which was of seething gold, another of exceeding cold lead, and still another of hard iron;

## The Delay of the Deity

that over these stood certain demons who in turn, like smiths, seized with tongs the souls of those who had been guilty of insatiable greed and avarice, drawing them out and thrusting them in. When they had become heated, through and diaphanous in the gold from the effects of the burning, they were plunged into the sea of lead; having become congealed here and hard as hailstones, they were next thrust into the lake of iron, where they turned completely black, and were then twisted round and round because of their hard-heartedness, and rubbed together until they lost all semblance of their former selves. They were then put once more into the lake of gold to undergo, as he said, awful torments by the change. But he said those endured the keenest anguish, who, supposing they had been released by Justice (Dike) were seized anew: these were the souls of those for whose transgressions their descendants or children had to pay the penalty. For whenever one of these arrived and encountered the other, he fell upon the shade in great wrath, uttering loud cries and showing the marks of what he had endured, at the same time execrating and pursuing it while it endeavored to flee away and hide itself, yet could not. For swiftly did the avengers of justice pursue such, dragging them back again amid loud lamentations because they foreknew their impending doom. To some of the souls, he said, many of their descendants at the same time attached themselves like bees or bats, uttering shrill cries and



## The Delay of the Deity

falling into transports of rage at the recollection of what they had endured for their sakes; and last of all he saw the souls of those who were undergoing the preparation for a second birth by a forced transformation into all sorts of animals, and by metempsychosis at the hands of those who were appointed to the task. These, by the use of certain tools, and with blows, hammered together entire members, turned others round, scraped down or removed others entirely in order to adapt them to different modes of life, among which also appeared the soul of Nero that had already undergone the other castigations, and had been transfixed with red-hot nails. When the workmen had begun to prepare the figure of a Pindaric viper, in which it was destined to live after it had been conceived and had eaten its way out of its mother, he said that a great light appeared and a voice came out of the light commanding that it be transformed into some more gentle creature and made over into an animal that is wont to chant around marshes and ponds, as he had already expiated his crimes, and some consideration was due him at the hands of the gods for freeing Greece, the land in which dwelt the best and most god-favored of his subjects. Thus far now Thespesius was an eye-witness; but when he was about to turn back, he got into the utmost perplexity through fright; for a woman, imposing by her stature and beauty, taking hold of him, said, 'Pray come hither, my friend, in order that you may the better remember everything'

## The Delay of the Deity

(you have seen). And as she was about to apply to him a little red-hot iron rod such as the painters in encaustic are wont to use, another woman interfered. But he himself was carried away all at once by a sudden and very violent gust of wind, as if blown through a tube, and so lighting again in his own body, he was restored to life, as it were, on the very brink of the grave.”

---

### NOTES.

A few notes of general character are here appended. Biographical and mythological details may be found in classical dictionaries. They are, however, rarely necessary to make clear the object of the author's allusions. A word or a phrase not in the original has, in a few cases, been inserted in the translation to preclude the necessity of a note.

*Τοῦ θείου* of the title. It is not clear from the writings of Plutarch to what extent he was a monotheist. He uses *θεός* both with and without the article. In some cases his meaning is perfectly clear; in others not. The New Testament writers, whose monotheism is beyond question, frequently use the article before the name of God. In like manner proper names sometimes have the article and sometimes are without it. Thus we have *Παῦλος* and *ὁ Παῦλος*, *Πιλάτος* usually has the article while *Τίτος* never has it, etc.

CHAP. 3. The thought here expressed regarding the mills of the gods has been put into the form of a couplet by Longfellow in his Poetic Aphorisms, thus:

“Though the mills of God grind slowly  
yet they grind exceeding small;  
Though with patience He stands waiting,  
with exactness grinds He all.”

## The Delay of the Deity

The purport of the passage is plain, but the parallelism between the fact and the figure is not very close. The idea is much older than Plutarch.

CHAP. 4. "The ingle-side" or ancestral hearth. According to the ancients the hearth was the center and beginning of the family and the state. The expression, which is often used by Plato and others, is equivalent to the *remotest beginning*. Compare also the Roman Vesta.

5. "God having placed Himself," etc. The following extract from the *Timaeus* of Plato will serve to illustrate our author's meaning. "Let me tell you then why the Creator made this world of generation. He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men. God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable. Wherefore also finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other. Now the deeds of the best could never be or have been other than the fairest and best; and the Creator, reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. For which reason, when he was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was, by nature, fairest. Wherefore, using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living creature, truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God."

6. "Souls going forth from him." The idea here is, that the human soul existed previous to its incarnation in the human body, and that it is a direct emanation from the Deity. This doctrine is fully expounded by Plato. How to establish the immortality of the soul, if it comes into existence with the body, was a serious problem with the ancients. Plutarch

## The Delay of the Deity

seems to have regarded both the soul and the body as eternal and uncreated, but the latter without form until it was united with the soul. Or we may put the case otherwise by saying that the soul, upon entering into a conscious existence, shapes the hitherto formless body into an abode for itself. He also holds that the soul consists of two parts: The one part seeks after truth and has an affection for the beautiful; the other is subject to the passions and under the dominion of error. "For which reason," the author here assumes that the words *ἔθος* and *ἥθος* are from the same root. The former means, use and wont; the latter was originally applied to the haunts or abodes of animals; then the manners, habits, and dispositions of men. Aristotle says, *ἡ δ' ἠθικὴ ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται, ὁθεν καὶ τοῦνομα ἔσχηκε μικρὸν περιζλῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἥθους.* (Ethical is from *ἔθος*, for which reason the word differs but slightly from *ἥθος*.) Plutarch himself says that custom is second nature. It is easy to trace the connection between a man's acts and the psychical forces, the character, that produces them.

8. "An ill-omened deed." It was a prevalent belief in antiquity that misfortunes fell upon those who were concerned in disturbing a swallow's nest.

10. Near the end. The Greeks ventured to consult oracles of the dead only on rare and extraordinary occasions. They probably borrowed the custom from the East.

11. The story of Glaucus is told at length by Herodotus in the third book of his history and is often alluded to by later writers. The ethical import of the anecdote is far-reaching.

17. "Gardens of Adonis." Shakespeare probably had these in mind when he wrote (King Henry VI. Part 1, scene sixth): "Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens, That one day bloomed and fruitful were the next." At Taenarus, the most southern point of the Peloponnesus, there was believed to be an entrance to the lower world.

22. "None more dreaded by his enemies." To return good for good and evil for evil was a fundamental article of Greek ethics. It is more than once alluded to in the Anabasis, and is found in nearly all Greek writers. Socrates, however, takes a firm stand against the principle and maintains that whatever

## The Delay of the Deity

is intrinsically wrong can never under any circumstances become right.

“An inclination toward the earth.” The author here assumes that γένεσις, procreation, beginning, is both in fact and etymologically, connected with νεῦσις ἐπὶ γῆν, an inclination or tendency toward the earth. It need hardly be said that his idea is pure fancy.

This eruption of Vesuvius, as is well known, took place in the year 79. Decaearchea or Puteoli was one of the cities destroyed together with Herculaneum, Pompei and others. Vespasian was one of the few Roman emperors, who, up to his time, died a natural death.

What is meant by a Pindaric viper is not known. Plutarch is evidently of the opinion that its young gnaw their way out of the mother's womb instead of being born in the natural way, and the allusion to Nero's treatment of his mother is plain. Nero's love for music and his proficiency in the musical art are evidently held up to ridicule in this passage.

## APPENDIX.

A list of Plutarch's works in the order of Bernardakis' edition. Lipsiae, 1888—96.

### VOLUME I.

- De liberis educandis*, (On the education of children).  
*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*, (How a young man ought to hear poems).  
*De recta ratione audiendi*, (How one ought to hear lectures).  
*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*, (How one may distinguish a flatterer from a friend).  
*Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*, (How one may know whether he is making progress in virtue).  
*De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, (How one may profit by his enemies).  
*De amicorum multitudine*, (On the abundance of friends).  
*De fortuna*, (On good and ill fortune).  
*De virtute et vitio*, (On virtue and vice).  
*Consolatio ad Apollonium*, (Consolation for Apollonius).  
*De tuenda sanitate præcepta*, (Precepts on the preservation of health).  
*Conjugalia præcepta*, (Precepts on matrimony).  
*Septem sapientum convivium*, (The banquet of the seven sages).  
*De superstitione*, (On superstition).

### VOLUME II.

- Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata*, (Memorable sayings of kings and commanders).  
*Apophthegmata Laconica*, (Memorable sayings of Spartans).  
*Instituta Laconica*, (The ancient customs of the Lacedaemonians).  
*Laccenarum apophthegmata*, (Memorable sayings of Spartan women).  
*Mulierum virtutes*, (Heroic deeds of women).  
*Ætia Romana*, (A list of topics, Roman).  
*Ætia Græca*, (A list of topics, Greek).  
*Parallela Græca et Romana*, (A collection of Greek and Roman historical parallels).  
*De fortuna Romanorum*, (On the good fortune of the Romans).  
*De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute, oratio I et II*, (On the good fortune or valor of Alexander the Great, discourses I and II).  
*Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses*, (Were the Athenians more distinguished in war or in wisdom)?  
*De Iside et Osiride*, (Concerning Isis and Osiris).

# Appendix

## VOLUME III.

- De E apud Delphos*, (On the E at Delphi).  
*De Pythia oraculis*, (On the cessation of the Pythian oracles in meter).  
*De defectu oraculorum*, (On the cessation of oracles).  
*An virtus doceri possit*, (Can virtue be taught)?  
*De virtute morali*, (On moral virtue).  
*De cohibenda ira*, (On the control of the temper).  
*De tranquillitate animi*, (On peace of mind).  
*De fraterno amore*, (On fraternal love).  
*De amore prolis*, (On the love of offspring).  
*An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat*, (Does vice of itself make men unhappy)?  
*Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores*, (Are the sufferings of the mind more grievous than those of the body)?  
*De garrulitate*, (On talkativeness).  
*De curiositate*, (On meddlesomness).  
*De cupiditate divitiarum*, (On the love of riches).  
*De vitioso pudore*, (On excess of modesty).  
*De invidia et odio*, (Concerning envy and hatred).  
*De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*, (On praising one's self without reproach).  
*De sera numinis vindicta*, (Concerning those whom God is slow to punish).  
*De fato*, (On fate).  
*De genio Socratis*, (On the tutelary deity of Socrates).  
*De exilio*, (On exile).  
*Consolatio ad uxorem*, (A letter of condolence to his wife).

## VOLUME IV.

- Questionum convivialium libri IX*, (Nine books of table-talk).  
*Amatorius*, (A dialogue on love).  
*Amatoriae narrationes*, (Love stories).

## VOLUME V.

- Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*, (On the proposition that the philosopher ought chiefly to converse with rulers).  
*Ad principem ineruditum*, (To an uneducated ruler).  
*An seni res publica gerenda sit*, (Should an old man hold a public office)?  
*Praecepta gerendae rei publicae*, (Political precepts).  
*De unius in re publica dominatione, populari statu et paucorum imperio*, (On monarchy, democracy, and oligarchy).  
*De vitando aere alieno*, (On avoiding debts).  
*X oratorum vitae*, (The lives of the ten orators).

## Appendix

*De comparatione Aristophanis et Menandri epitome* (Abstract of a comparison between Aristophanes and Menander).

*De Herodoti malignitate*, (On the malice of Herodotus).

*De placitis philosophorum libri V*, (Five books of maxims of the philosophers).

*Aetia physica*, (Problems in physics).

*De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, (Concerning the face that appears on the moon's disk).

*De primo frigido*. (On the origin of cold).

### VOLUME VI.

*Aquane an ignis sit utilior*, (Is fire or water the more useful)?

*Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora*, (Are water or land animals the more cunning)?

*Bruta animalia ratione uti*, (On the use of reason by brutes).

*De esu carniū, orationes duo*, (On the eating of flesh, two discourses).

*Platonicae quaestiones*, (Platonic questions).

*De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, (On the origin of the soul in the Timaeus).

*Epitome libri de animae procreatione in Timaeo*, (Abstract of the book on the origin of the soul in the Timaeus).

*De Stoicorum repugnantis*, (On contradictions of the Stoics).

*Compendium libri cui argumentum fuit, Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere*, (Synopsis of the book the argument of which was, The Stoics utter greater absurdities than the poets).

*De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*, (Concerning the common conceptions against the Stoics).

*Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, (That it is not possible to live pleasantly according to Epicurus).

*Adversus Coloten*, (Against Colotes).

*An recte dictum sit latenter vivendum esse*, (Is it a true saying that one ought to live in seclusion)?

*De musica*, (On music).

### VOLUME VII.

*De fluviorum et montium nominibus et de iis quae in illis inveniuntur*, (On the names of rivers and mountains and those things that are found in them).

*De vita et poesi Homeri, Lib. I et II*, (On the life and poetry of Homer).

The two treatises last named fill more than one-third of the volume, the remainder being chiefly taken up with fragments, some of them only a few lines in length. It also contains the so-called catalogue of Lamprias which, including the Parallel lives, assigns 227 different works to Plutarch. Volume seven concludes with an index of names. As these treatises are usually



## Appendix

cited by their Latin titles, they only are given above. A complete edition of Plutarch's *Morals*, with an introduction by R. W. Emerson was published in Boston about twenty-five years ago, under the editorial supervision of Professor Goodwin of Harvard University. The translations were made by a number of English scholars near the close of the seventeenth century. In their revised form they are in the main correct and some of them are vigorous and readable.





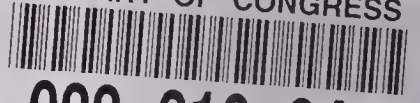




JUL 14 1899



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 210 344 7