

Meditations

by Marcus Aurelius

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MEDITATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS was born on April 26, A.D. 121. His real name was M. Annius Verus, and he was sprung of a noble family which claimed descent from Numa, second King of Rome. Thus the most religious of emperors came of the blood of the most pious of early kings. His father, Annius Verus, had held high office in Rome, and his grandfather, of the same name, had been thrice Consul. Both his parents died young, but Marcus held them in loving remembrance. On his father's death Marcus was adopted by his grandfather, the consular Annius Verus, and there was deep love between these two. On the very first page of his book Marcus gratefully declares how of his grandfather he had learned to be gentle and meek, and to refrain from all anger and passion. The Emperor Hadrian divined the fine character of the lad, whom he used to call not Verus but Verissimus, more Truthful than his own name. He advanced Marcus to equestrian rank when six years of age, and at the age of eight made him a member of the ancient Salian priesthood. The boy's aunt, Annia Galeria Faustina, was married to Antoninus Pius, afterwards emperor. Hence it came about that Antoninus, having no son, adopted Marcus, changing his name to that which he is known by, and betrothed him to his daughter Faustina. His education was conducted with all care. The ablest teachers were engaged for him, and he was trained in the strict doctrine of the Stoic philosophy, which was his great delight. He was taught to dress plainly and to live simply, to avoid all softness and luxury. His body was trained to hardihood by wrestling, hunting, and outdoor games; and though his constitution was weak, he showed great personal courage to encounter the fiercest boars. At the same time he was kept from the

extravagancies of his day. The great excitement in Rome was the strife of the Factions, as they were called, in the circus. The racing drivers used to adopt one of four colours--red, blue, white, or green--and their partisans showed an eagerness in supporting them which nothing could surpass. Riot and corruption went in the train of the racing chariots; and from all these things Marcus held severely aloof.

In 140 Marcus was raised to the consulship, and in 145 his betrothal was consummated by marriage. Two years later Faustina brought him a daughter; and soon after the tribunate and other imperial honours were conferred upon him.

Antoninus Pius died in 161, and Marcus assumed the imperial state. He at once associated with himself L. Ceionius Commodus, whom Antoninus had adopted as a younger son at the same time with Marcus, giving him the name of Lucius Aurelius Verus. Henceforth the two are colleagues in the empire, the junior being trained as it were to succeed. No sooner was Marcus settled upon the throne than wars broke out on all sides. In the east, Vologeses III. of Parthia began a long-meditated revolt by destroying a whole Roman Legion and invading Syria (162). Verus was sent off in hot haste to quell this rising; and he fulfilled his trust by plunging into drunkenness and debauchery, while the war was left to his officers. Soon after Marcus had to face a more serious danger at home in the coalition of several powerful tribes on the northern frontier. Chief among those were the Marcomanni or Marchmen, the Quadi (mentioned in this book), the Sarmatians, the Catti, the Jazyges. In Rome itself there was pestilence and starvation, the one brought from the east by Verus's legions, the other caused by floods which had destroyed vast quantities of grain. After all had been done possible to allay famine and to supply pressing needs--Marcus being forced even to sell the imperial jewels to find money--both emperors set forth to a struggle which was to continue more or less during the rest of Marcus's reign. During these wars, in 169, Verus died. We have no means of following the campaigns in detail; but thus much is certain, that in the end the Romans succeeded in crushing the barbarian tribes, and effecting a settlement which made the empire more secure. Marcus was himself commander-in-chief, and victory was due no less to his own ability than to his wisdom in choice of lieutenants, shown conspicuously in the case of Pertinax. There were several important battles fought in these campaigns; and one of them has become celebrated for the legend of the Thundering Legion. In a battle against the Quadi in 174, the day seemed to be going in favour of the foe, when on a sudden arose a great storm of thunder and rain the lightning struck the barbarians with terror, and they turned to rout. In later days this storm was said to have been sent in answer to the prayers of a legion which contained many Christians, and the name Thundering Legion should be given to it on this account. The title of Thundering Legion is known at an earlier date, so this part of the story at least cannot be true; but the aid of the storm is acknowledged by one of the scenes carved on Antonine's Column at Rome, which commemorates these wars.

The settlement made after these troubles might have been more satisfactory but for an unexpected rising in the east. Avidius Cassius, an able captain who had won renown in the Parthian wars, was at this time chief governor of the eastern provinces. By whatever means induced,

he had conceived the project of proclaiming himself emperor as soon as Marcus, who was then in feeble health, should die; and a report having been conveyed to him that Marcus was dead, Cassius did as he had planned. Marcus, on hearing the news, immediately patched up a peace and returned home to meet this new peril. The emperor's great grief was that he must needs engage in the horrors of civil strife. He praised the qualities of Cassius, and expressed a heartfelt wish that Cassius might not be driven to do himself a hurt before he should have the opportunity to grant a free pardon. But before he could come to the east news had come to Cassius that the emperor still lived; his followers fell away from him, and he was assassinated. Marcus now went to the east, and while there the murderers brought the head of Cassius to him; but the emperor indignantly refused their gift, nor would he admit the men to his presence.

On this journey his wife, Faustina, died. At his return the emperor celebrated a triumph (176). Immediately afterwards he repaired to Germany, and took up once more the burden of war. His operations were followed by complete success; but the troubles of late years had been too much for his constitution, at no time robust, and on March 17, 180, he died in Pannonia.

The good emperor was not spared domestic troubles. Faustina had borne him several children, of whom he was passionately fond. Their innocent faces may still be seen in many a sculpture gallery, recalling with odd effect the dreamy countenance of their father. But they died one by one, and when Marcus came to his own end only one of his sons still lived--the weak and worthless Commodus. On his father's death Commodus, who succeeded him, undid the work of many campaigns by a hasty and unwise peace; and his reign of twelve years proved him to be a ferocious and bloodthirsty tyrant. Scandal has made free with the name of Faustina herself, who is accused not only of unfaithfulness, but of intriguing with Cassius and egging him on to his fatal rebellion, it must be admitted that these charges rest on no sure evidence; and the emperor, at all events, loved her dearly, nor ever felt the slightest qualm of suspicion.

As a soldier we have seen that Marcus was both capable and successful; as an administrator he was prudent and conscientious. Although steeped in the teachings of philosophy, he did not attempt to remodel the world on any preconceived plan. He trod the path beaten by his predecessors, seeking only to do his duty as well as he could, and to keep out corruption. He did some unwise things, it is true. To create a compeer in empire, as he did with Verus, was a dangerous innovation which could only succeed if one of the two effaced himself; and under Diocletian this very precedent caused the Roman Empire to split into halves. He erred in his civil administration by too much centralising. But the strong point of his reign was the administration of justice. Marcus sought by-laws to protect the weak, to make the lot of the slaves less hard, to stand in place of father to the fatherless. Charitable foundations were endowed for rearing and educating poor children. The provinces were protected against oppression, and public help was given to cities or districts which might be visited by calamity. The great blot on his name, and one hard indeed to explain, is his treatment of the Christians. In his reign Justin at Rome became a martyr to

his faith, and Polycarp at Smyrna, and we know of many outbreaks of fanaticism in the provinces which caused the death of the faithful. It is no excuse to plead that he knew nothing about the atrocities done in his name: it was his duty to know, and if he did not he would have been the first to confess that he had failed in his duty. But from his own tone in speaking of the Christians it is clear he knew them only from calumny; and we hear of no measures taken even to secure that they should have a fair hearing. In this respect Trajan was better than he. To a thoughtful mind such a religion as that of Rome would give small satisfaction. Its legends were often childish or impossible; its teaching had little to do with morality. The Roman religion was in fact of the nature of a bargain: men paid certain sacrifices and rites, and the gods granted their favour, irrespective of right or wrong. In this case all devout souls were thrown back upon philosophy, as they had been, though to a less extent, in Greece. There were under the early empire two rival schools which practically divided the field between them, Stoicism and Epicureanism. The ideal set before each was nominally much the same. The Stoics aspired to ἀπαθῆναι, the repression of all emotion, and the Epicureans to ἀταραξία, freedom from all disturbance; yet in the upshot the one has become a synonym of stubborn endurance, the other for unbridled licence. With Epicureanism we have nothing to do now; but it will be worth while to sketch the history and tenets of the Stoic sect.

Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was born in Cyprus at some date unknown, but his life may be said roughly to be between the years 350 and 250 B.C. Cyprus has been from time immemorial a meeting-place of the East and West, and although we cannot grant any importance to a possible strain of Phœnician blood in him (for the Phœnicians were no philosophers), yet it is quite likely that through Asia Minor he may have come in touch with the Far East. He studied under the cynic Crates, but he did not neglect other philosophical systems. After many years' study he opened his own school in a colonnade in Athens called the Painted Porch, or Stoa, which gave the Stoics their name. Next to Zeno, the School of the Porch owes most to Chrysippus (280--207 b.c.), who organised Stoicism into a system. Of him it was said, 'But for Chrysippus, there had been no Porch.'

The Stoics regarded speculation as a means to an end and that end was, as Zeno put it, to live consistently (ἀσπασίως), or as it was later explained, to live in conformity with nature (κατὰ φύσιν). This conforming of the life to nature was the Stoic idea of Virtue. This dictum might easily be taken to mean that virtue consists in yielding to each natural impulse; but that was very far from the Stoic meaning. In order to live in accord with nature, it is necessary to know what nature is; and to this end a threefold division of philosophy is made—into Physics, dealing with the universe and its laws, the problems of divine government and teleology; Logic, which trains the mind to discern true from false; and Ethics, which applies the knowledge thus gained and tested to practical life.

The Stoic system of physics was materialism with an infusion of pantheism. In contradiction to Plato's view that the Ideas, or Prototypes, of phenomena alone really exist, the Stoics held that material objects alone existed; but immanent in the material universe

was a spiritual force which acted through them, manifesting itself under many forms, as fire, æther, spirit, soul, reason, the ruling principle.

The universe, then, is God, of whom the popular gods are manifestations; while legends and myths are allegorical. The soul of man is thus an emanation from the godhead, into whom it will eventually be re-absorbed. The divine ruling principle makes all things work together for good, but for the good of the whole. The highest good of man is consciously to work with God for the common good, and this is the sense in which the Stoic tried to live in accord with nature. In the individual it is virtue alone which enables him to do this; as Providence rules the universe, so virtue in the soul must rule man.

In Logic, the Stoic system is noteworthy for their theory as to the test of truth, the Criterion. They compared the new-born soul to a sheet of paper ready for writing. Upon this the senses write their impressions ($\text{Æ} \pm \frac{1}{2} \text{Ä} \pm \text{Ä} w \pm 1$), and by experience of a number of these the soul unconsciously conceives general notions (${}^0 \text{ç}^{1\frac{1}{2}} \pm v \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \text{ç}^{1\pm 1}$) or anticipations ($\text{Ä} \text{Ä} \text{ç} \gg u \text{Ë} \mu^1 \text{Ä}$). When the impression was such as to be irresistible it was called (${}^0 \pm \text{Ä} \pm \gg \cdot \text{Ä} \text{Ä}^{10} t \text{Æ} \pm \frac{1}{2} \text{Ä} \pm \text{Ä} w \pm$) one that holds fast, or as they explained it, one proceeding from truth. Ideas and inferences artificially produced by deduction or the like were tested by this 'holding perception.' Of the Ethical application I have already spoken. The highest good was the virtuous life. Virtue alone is happiness, and vice is unhappiness. Carrying this theory to its extreme, the Stoic said that there could be no gradations between virtue and vice, though of course each has its special manifestations. Moreover, nothing is good but virtue, and nothing but vice is bad. Those outside things which are commonly called good or bad, such as health and sickness, wealth and poverty, pleasure and pain, are to him indifferent ($\text{'}^1 q \text{Æ} \text{ç} \text{Ä} \pm$). All these things are merely the sphere in which virtue may act. The ideal Wise Man is sufficient unto himself in all things ($\pm P \text{Ä} \pm \text{Ä}^0 u \text{Ä}$); and knowing these truths, he will be happy even when stretched upon the rack. It is probable that no Stoic claimed for himself that he was this Wise Man, but that each strove after it as an ideal much as the Christian strives after a likeness to Christ. The exaggeration in this statement was, however, so obvious, that the later Stoics were driven to make a further subdivision of things indifferent into what is preferable ($\text{Ä} \text{Ä} \text{ç} \cdot^3 \frac{1}{4} s \frac{1}{2} \pm$) and what is undesirable ($\text{Ä} \text{ç} \text{Ä} \text{Ä} \text{ç} \cdot^3 \frac{1}{4} s \frac{1}{2} \pm$). They also held that for him who had not attained to the perfect wisdom, certain actions were proper. (${}^0 \pm, u^0 \text{ç} \frac{1}{2} \text{Ä} \pm$) These were neither virtuous nor vicious, but, like the indifferent things, held a middle place.

Two points in the Stoic system deserve special mention. One is a careful distinction between things which are in our power and things which are not. Desire and dislike, opinion and affection, are within the power of the will; whereas health, wealth, honour, and other such are generally not so. The Stoic was called upon to control his desires and affections, and to guide his opinion; to bring his whole being under the sway of the will or leading principle, just as the universe is guided and governed by divine Providence. This is a special application of the favourite Greek virtue of moderation, ($\text{Ä} \text{É} \text{Æ} \text{Ä} \text{ç} \text{Ä} \{ \frac{1}{2} \cdot \}$) and has also its parallel in Christian ethics. The second point is a

strong insistence on the unity of the universe, and on man's duty as part of a great whole. Public spirit was the most splendid political virtue of the ancient world, and it is here made cosmopolitan. It is again instructive to note that Christian sages insisted on the same thing. Christians are taught that they are members of a worldwide brotherhood, where is neither Greek nor Hebrew, bond nor free and that they live their lives as fellow-workers with God.

Such is the system which underlies the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. Some knowledge of it is necessary to the right understanding of the book, but for us the chief interest lies elsewhere. We do not come to Marcus Aurelius for a treatise on Stoicism. He is no head of a school to lay down a body of doctrine for students; he does not even contemplate that others should read what he writes. His philosophy is not an eager intellectual inquiry, but more what we should call religious feeling.

The uncompromising stiffness of Zeno or Chrysippus is softened and transformed by passing through a nature reverent and tolerant, gentle and free from guile; the grim resignation which made life possible to the Stoic sage becomes in him almost a mood of aspiration. His book records the innermost thoughts of his heart, set down to ease it, with such moral maxims and reflections as may help him to bear the burden of duty and the countless annoyances of a busy life.

It is instructive to compare the *Meditations* with another famous book, the *Imitation of Christ*. There is the same ideal of self-control in both. It should be a man's task, says the *Imitation*, 'to overcome himself, and every day to be stronger than himself.' 'In withstanding of the passions standeth very peace of heart.' 'Let us set the axe to the root, that we being purged of our passions may have a peaceable mind.' To this end there must be continual self-examination. 'If thou may not continually gather thyself together, namely sometimes do it, at least once a day, the morning or the evening. In the morning purpose, in the evening discuss the manner, what thou hast been this day, in word, work, and thought.' But while the Roman's temper is a modest self-reliance, the Christian aims at a more passive mood, humbleness and meekness, and reliance on the presence and personal friendship of God. The Roman scrutinises his faults with severity, but without the self-contempt which makes the Christian 'vile in his own sight.' The Christian, like the Roman, bids 'study to withdraw thine heart from the love of things visible'; but it is not the busy life of duty he has in mind so much as the contempt of all worldly things, and the 'cutting away of all lower delectations.' Both rate men's praise or blame at their real worthlessness; 'Let not thy peace,' says the Christian, 'be in the mouths of men.' But it is to God's censure the Christian appeals, the Roman to his own soul. The petty annoyances of injustice or unkindness are looked on by each with the same magnanimity. 'Why doth a little thing said or done against thee make thee sorry? It is no new thing; it is not the first, nor shall it be the last, if thou live long. At best suffer patiently, if thou canst not suffer joyously.' The Christian should sorrow more for other men's malice than for our own wrongs; but the Roman is inclined to wash his hands of the offender. 'Study to be patient in suffering and bearing other men's defaults and all manner infirmities,' says the Christian; but the Roman would never have thought to add, 'If all men were perfect, what had we then to suffer of other

men for God?' The virtue of suffering in itself is an idea which does not meet us in the *_Meditations_*. Both alike realise that man is one of a great community. 'No man is sufficient to himself,' says the Christian; 'we must bear together, help together, comfort together.' But while he sees a chief importance in zeal, in exalted emotion that is, and avoidance of lukewarmness, the Roman thought mainly of the duty to be done as well as might be, and less of the feeling which should go with the doing of it. To the saint as to the emperor, the world is a poor thing at best. 'Verily it is a misery to live upon the earth,' says the Christian; few and evil are the days of man's life, which passeth away suddenly as a shadow.

But there is one great difference between the two books we are considering. The *_Imitation_* is addressed to others, the *_Meditations_* by the writer to himself. We learn nothing from the *_Imitation_* of the author's own life, except in so far as he may be assumed to have practised his own preachings; the *_Meditations_* reflect mood by mood the mind of him who wrote them. In their intimacy and frankness lies their great charm. These notes are not sermons; they are not even confessions. There is always an air of self-consciousness in confessions; in such revelations there is always a danger of unctuousness or of vulgarity for the best of men. St. Augustine is not always clear of offence, and John Bunyan himself exaggerates venial peccadilloes into heinous sins. But Marcus Aurelius is neither vulgar nor unctuous; he extenuates nothing, but nothing sets down in malice. He never poses before an audience; he may not be profound, he is always sincere. And it is a lofty and serene soul which is here disclosed before us. Vulgar vices seem to have no temptation for him; this is not one tied and bound with chains which he strives to break. The faults he detects in himself are often such as most men would have no eyes to see. To serve the divine spirit which is implanted within him, a man must 'keep himself pure from all violent passion and evil affection, from all rashness and vanity, and from all manner of discontent, either in regard of the gods or men': or, as he says elsewhere, 'unspotted by pleasure, undaunted by pain.' Unwavering courtesy and consideration are his aims. 'Whatsoever any man either doth or saith, thou must be good;' 'doth any man offend? It is against himself that he doth offend: why should it trouble thee?' The offender needs pity, not wrath; those who must needs be corrected, should be treated with tact and gentleness; and one must be always ready to learn better. 'The best kind of revenge is, not to become like unto them.' There are so many hints of offence forgiven, that we may believe the notes followed sharp on the facts. Perhaps he has fallen short of his aim, and thus seeks to call his principles to mind, and to strengthen himself for the future. That these sayings are not mere talk is plain from the story of Avidius Cassius, who would have usurped his imperial throne. Thus the emperor faithfully carries out his own principle, that evil must be overcome with good. For each fault in others, Nature (says he) has given us a counteracting virtue; 'as, for example, against the unthankful, it hath given goodness and meekness, as an antidote.' One so gentle towards a foe was sure to be a good friend; and indeed his pages are full of generous gratitude to those who had served him. In his First Book he sets down to account all the debts due to his kinsfolk and teachers. To his grandfather he owed his own gentle spirit, to

his father shamefastness and courage; he learnt of his mother to be religious and bountiful and single-minded. Rusticus did not work in vain, if he showed his pupil that his life needed amending. Apollonius taught him simplicity, reasonableness, gratitude, a love of true liberty. So the list runs on; every one he had dealings with seems to have given him something good, a sure proof of the goodness of his nature, which thought no evil.

If his was that honest and true heart which is the Christian ideal, this is the more wonderful in that he lacked the faith which makes Christians strong. He could say, it is true, 'either there is a God, and then all is well; or if all things go by chance and fortune, yet mayest thou use thine own providence in those things that concern thee properly; and then art thou well.' Or again, 'We must needs grant that there is a nature that doth govern the universe.' But his own part in the scheme of things is so small, that he does not hope for any personal happiness beyond what a serene soul may win in this mortal life. 'O my soul, the time I trust will be, when thou shalt be good, simple, more open and visible, than that body by which it is enclosed;' but this is said of the calm contentment with human lot which he hopes to attain, not of a time when the trammels of the body shall be cast off. For the rest, the world and its fame and wealth, 'all is vanity.' The gods may perhaps have a particular care for him, but their especial care is for the universe at large: thus much should suffice. His gods are better than the Stoic gods, who sit aloof from all human things, untroubled and uncaring, but his personal hope is hardly stronger. On this point he says little, though there are many allusions to death as the natural end; doubtless he expected his soul one day to be absorbed into the universal soul, since nothing comes out of nothing, and nothing can be annihilated. His mood is one of strenuous weariness; he does his duty as a good soldier, waiting for the sound of the trumpet which shall sound the retreat; he has not that cheerful confidence which led Socrates through a life no less noble, to a death which was to bring him into the company of gods he had worshipped and men whom he had revered. But although Marcus Aurelius may have held intellectually that his soul was destined to be absorbed, and to lose consciousness of itself, there were times when he felt, as all who hold it must sometimes feel, how unsatisfying is such a creed. Then he gropes blindly after something less empty and vain. 'Thou hast taken ship,' he says, 'thou hast sailed, thou art come to land, go out, if to another life, there also shalt thou find gods, who are everywhere.' There is more in this than the assumption of a rival theory for argument's sake. If worldly things 'be but as a dream, the thought is not far off that there may be an awakening to what is real. When he speaks of death as a necessary change, and points out that nothing useful and profitable can be brought about without change, did he perhaps think of the change in a corn of wheat, which is not quickened except it die? Nature's marvellous power of recreating out of Corruption is surely not confined to bodily things. Many of his thoughts sound like far-off echoes of St. Paul; and it is strange indeed that this most Christian of emperors has nothing good to say of the Christians. To him they are only sectaries 'violently and passionately set upon opposition.

Profound as philosophy these Meditations certainly are not; but Marcus

Aurelius was too sincere not to see the essence of such things as came within his experience. Ancient religions were for the most part concerned with outward things. Do the necessary rites, and you propitiate the gods; and these rites were often trivial, sometimes violated right feeling or even morality. Even when the gods stood on the side of righteousness, they were concerned with the act more than with the intent. But Marcus Aurelius knows that what the heart is full of, the man will do. 'Such as thy thoughts and ordinary cogitations are,' he says, 'such will thy mind be in time.' And every page of the book shows us that he knew thought was sure to issue in act. He drills his soul, as it were, in right principles, that when the time comes, it may be guided by them. To wait until the emergency is to be too late.

He sees also the true essence of happiness. 'If happiness did consist in pleasure, how came notorious robbers, impure abominable livers, parricides, and tyrants, in so large a measure to have their part of pleasures?' He who had all the world's pleasures at command can write thus 'A happy lot and portion is, good inclinations of the soul, good desires, good actions.'

By the irony of fate this man, so gentle and good, so desirous of quiet joys and a mind free from care, was set at the head of the Roman Empire when great dangers threatened from east and west. For several years he himself commanded his armies in chief. In camp before the Quadi he dates the first book of his *Meditations*, and shows how he could retire within himself amid the coarse clangour of arms. The pomps and glories which he despised were all his; what to most men is an ambition or a dream, to him was a round of weary tasks which nothing but the stern sense of duty could carry him through. And he did his work well. His wars were slow and tedious, but successful. With a statesman's wisdom he foresaw the danger to Rome of the barbarian hordes from the north, and took measures to meet it. As it was, his settlement gave two centuries of respite to the Roman Empire; had he fulfilled the plan of pushing the imperial frontiers to the Elbe, which seems to have been in his mind, much more might have been accomplished. But death cut short his designs.

Truly a rare opportunity was given to Marcus Aurelius of showing what the mind can do in despite of circumstances. Most peaceful of warriors, a magnificent monarch whose ideal was quiet happiness in home life, bent to obscurity yet born to greatness, the loving father of children who died young or turned out hateful, his life was one paradox. That nothing might lack, it was in camp before the face of the enemy that he passed away and went to his own place.

The following is a list of the chief English translations of Marcus Aurelius: (1) By Meric Casaubon, 1634; (2) Jeremy Collier, 1701; (3) James Thomson, 1747; (4) R. Graves, 1792; (5) H. McCormac, 1844; (6) George Long, 1862; (7) G. H. Rendall, 1898; and (8) J. Jackson, 1906. Renan's "Marc-Aurèle"—in his "History of the Origins of Christianity," which appeared in 1882—is the most vital and original book to be had relating to the time of Marcus Aurelius. Pater's "Marius the Epicurean" forms another outside commentary, which is of service in the imaginative attempt to create again the period.

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS THE ROMAN EMPEROR
HIS FIRST BOOK
concerning HIMSELF:

Wherein Antoninus recordeth, What and of whom, whether Parents, Friends, or Masters; by their good examples, or good advice and counsel, he had learned:

Divided into Numbers or Sections.

ANTONINUS Book vi. Num. xlviii. Whensoever thou wilt rejoice thyself, think and meditate upon those good parts and especial gifts, which thou hast observed in any of them that live with thee:

as industry in one, in another modesty, in another bountifulness, in another some other thing. For nothing can so much rejoice thee, as the resemblances and parallels of several virtues, eminent in the dispositions of them that live with thee, especially when all at once, as it were, they represent themselves unto thee. See therefore, that thou have them always in a readiness.

THE FIRST BOOK

I. Of my grandfather Verus I have learned to be gentle and meek, and to refrain from all anger and passion. From the fame and memory of him that begot me I have learned both shamefastness and manlike behaviour. Of my mother I have learned to be religious, and bountiful; and to forbear, not only to do, but to intend any evil; to content myself with a spare diet, and to fly all such excess as is incidental to great wealth. Of my great-grandfather, both to frequent public schools and auditories, and to get me good and able teachers at home; and that I ought not to think much, if upon such occasions, I were at excessive charges.

II. Of him that brought me up, not to be fondly addicted to either of the two great factions of the coursers in the circus, called Prasini, and Veneti: nor in the amphitheatre partially to favour any of the gladiators, or fencers, as either the Parmularii, or the Secutores. Moreover, to endure labour; nor to need many things; when I have anything to do, to do it myself rather than by others; not to meddle with many businesses; and not easily to admit of any slander.

III. Of Diognetus, not to busy myself about vain things, and not easily to believe those things, which are commonly spoken, by such as take upon them to work wonders, and by sorcerers, or prestidigitators, and impostors; concerning the power of charms, and their driving out of demons, or evil spirits; and the like. Not to keep quails for the game; nor to be mad after such things. Not to be offended with other men's liberty of speech, and to apply myself unto philosophy. Him also I must thank, that ever I heard first Bacchius, then Tandasis and Marcianus, and that I did write dialogues in my youth; and that I took liking to the philosophers' little couch and skins, and such other things, which by the Grecian discipline are proper to those who profess philosophy.

IV. To Rusticus I am beholding, that I first entered into the conceit that my life wanted some redress and cure. And then, that I did not fall into the ambition of ordinary sophists, either to write tracts concerning the common theorems, or to exhort men unto virtue and the study of philosophy by public orations; as also that I never by way of ostentation did affect to show myself an active able man, for any kind of bodily exercises. And that I gave over the study of rhetoric and poetry, and of elegant neat language. That I did not use to walk about the house in my long robe, nor to do any such things. Moreover I learned of him to write letters without any affectation, or curiosity; such as that was, which by him was written to my mother from Sinuessa: and to be

easy and ready to be reconciled, and well pleased again with them that had offended me, as soon as any of them would be content to seek unto me again. To read with diligence; not to rest satisfied with a light and superficial knowledge, nor quickly to assent to things commonly spoken of: whom also I must thank that ever I lighted upon Epictetus his Hypomnemata, or moral commentaries and common-factions: which also he gave me of his own.

V. From Apollonius, true liberty, and unvariable steadfastness, and not to regard anything at all, though never so little, but right and reason: and always, whether in the sharpest pains, or after the loss of a child, or in long diseases, to be still the same man; who also was a present and visible example unto me, that it was possible for the same man to be both vehement and remiss: a man not subject to be vexed, and offended with the incapacity of his scholars and auditors in his lectures and expositions; and a true pattern of a man who of all his good gifts and faculties, least esteemed in himself, that his excellent skill and ability to teach and persuade others the common theorems and maxims of the Stoic philosophy. Of him also I learned how to receive favours and kindnesses (as commonly they are accounted:) from friends, so that I might not become obnoxious unto them, for them, nor more yielding upon occasion, than in right I ought; and yet so that I should not pass them neither, as an unsensible and unthankful man.

VI. Of Sextus, mildness and the pattern of a family governed with paternal affection; and a purpose to live according to nature: to be grave without affectation: to observe carefully the several dispositions of my friends, not to be offended with idiots, nor unseasonably to set upon those that are carried with the vulgar opinions, with the theorems, and tenets of philosophers: his conversation being an example how a man might accommodate himself to all men and companies; so that though his company were sweeter and more pleasing than any flatterer's coggings and fawning; yet was it at the same time most respected and revered: who also had a proper happiness and faculty, rationally and methodically to find out, and set in order all necessary determinations and instructions for a man's life. A man without ever the least appearance of anger, or any other passion; able at the same time most exactly to observe the Stoic Apathia, or unpassionateness, and yet to be most tender-hearted: ever of good credit; and yet almost without any noise, or rumour: very learned, and yet making little show.

VII. From Alexander the Grammarian, to be un-reprovable myself, and not reproachfully to reprehend any man for a barbarism, or a solecism, or any false pronunciation, but dextrously by way of answer, or testimony, or confirmation of the same matter (taking no notice of the word) to utter it as it should have been spoken; or by some other such close and indirect admonition, handsomely and civilly to tell him of it.

VIII. Of Fronto, to how much envy and fraud and hypocrisy the state of a tyrannous king is subject unto, and how they who are commonly called $\mu\text{P}\text{À}\pm\text{Ä}\text{w}'\pm^1$, i.e. nobly born, are in some sort incapable, or void of natural affection.

IX. Of Alexander the Platonic, not often nor without great necessity to say, or to write to any man in a letter, 'I am not at leisure'; nor in this manner still to put off those duties, which we owe to our friends and acquaintances (to every one in his kind) under pretence of urgent

affairs.

X. Of Catulus, not to condemn any friend's expostulation, though unjust, but to strive to reduce him to his former disposition: freely and heartily to speak well of all my masters upon any occasion, as it is reported of Domitius, and Athenodotus: and to love my children with true affection.

XI. From my brother Severus, to be kind and loving to all them of my house and family; by whom also I came to the knowledge of Thrasea and Helvidius, and Cato, and Dio, and Brutus. He it was also that did put me in the first conceit and desire of an equal commonwealth, administered by justice and equality; and of a kingdom wherein should be regarded nothing more than the good and welfare of the subjects. Of him also, to observe a constant tenor, (not interrupted, with any other cares and distractions,) in the study and esteem of philosophy: to be bountiful and liberal in the largest measure; always to hope the best; and to be confident that my friends love me. In whom I moreover observed open dealing towards those whom he reprov'd at any time, and that his friends might without all doubt or much observation know what he would, or would not, so open and plain was he.

XII. From Claudius Maximus, in all things to endeavour to have power of myself, and in nothing to be carried about; to be cheerful and courageous in all sudden chances and accidents, as in sicknesses: to love mildness, and moderation, and gravity: and to do my business, whatsoever it be, thoroughly, and without querulousness. Whatsoever he said, all men believed him that as he spake, so he thought, and whatsoever he did, that he did it with a good intent. His manner was, never to wonder at anything; never to be in haste, and yet never slow: nor to be perplexed, or dejected, or at any time unseemly, or excessively to laugh: nor to be angry, or suspicious, but ever ready to do good, and to forgive, and to speak truth; and all this, as one that seemed rather of himself to have been straight and right, than ever to have been rectified or redressed; neither was there any man that ever thought himself undervalued by him, or that could find in his heart, to think himself a better man than he. He would also be very pleasant and gracious.

XIII. In my father, I observed his meekness; his constancy without wavering in those things, which after a due examination and deliberation, he had determined. How free from all vanity he carried himself in matter of honour and dignity, (as they are esteemed:) his laboriousness and assiduity, his readiness to hear any man, that had aught to say tending to any common good: how generally and impartially he would give every man his due; his skill and knowledge, when rigour or extremity, or when remissness or moderation was in season; how he did abstain from all unchaste love of youths; his moderate condescending to other men's occasions as an ordinary man, neither absolutely requiring of his friends, that they should wait upon him at his ordinary meals, nor that they should of necessity accompany him in his journeys; and that whensoever any business upon some necessary occasions was to be put off and omitted before it could be ended, he was ever found when he went about it again, the same man that he was before. His accurate examination of things in consultations, and patient hearing of others. He would not hastily give over the search of the matter, as one easy to

be satisfied with sudden notions and apprehensions. His care to preserve his friends; how neither at any time he would carry himself towards them with disdainful neglect, and grow weary of them; nor yet at any time be madly fond of them. His contented mind in all things, his cheerful countenance, his care to foresee things afar off, and to take order for the least, without any noise or clamour. Moreover how all acclamations and flattery were repressed by him: how carefully he observed all things necessary to the government, and kept an account of the common expenses, and how patiently he did abide that he was reprehended by some for this his strict and rigid kind of dealing. How he was neither a superstitious worshipper of the gods, nor an ambitious pleaser of men, or studious of popular applause; but sober in all things, and everywhere observant of that which was fitting; no affecter of novelties: in those things which conduced to his ease and convenience, (plenty whereof his fortune did afford him,) without pride and bragging, yet with all freedom and liberty: so that as he did freely enjoy them without any anxiety or affectation when they were present; so when absent, he found no want of them. Moreover, that he was never commended by any man, as either a learned acute man, or an obsequious officious man, or a fine orator; but as a ripe mature man, a perfect sound man; one that could not endure to be flattered; able to govern both himself and others. Moreover, how much he did honour all true philosophers, without upbraiding those that were not so; his sociableness, his gracious and delightful conversation, but never unto satiety; his care of his body within bounds and measure, not as one that desired to live long, or over-studious of neatness, and elegancy; and yet not as one that did not regard it: so that through his own care and providence, he seldom needed any inward physic, or outward applications: but especially how ingeniously he would yield to any that had obtained any peculiar faculty, as either eloquence, or the knowledge of the laws, or of ancient customs, or the like; and how he concurred with them, in his best care and endeavour that every one of them might in his kind, for that wherein he excelled, be regarded and esteemed: and although he did all things carefully after the ancient customs of his forefathers, yet even of this was he not desirous that men should take notice, that he did imitate ancient customs. Again, how he was not easily moved and tossed up and down, but loved to be constant, both in the same places and businesses; and how after his great fits of headache he would return fresh and vigorous to his wonted affairs. Again, that secrets he neither had many, nor often, and such only as concerned public matters: his discretion and moderation, in exhibiting of the public sights and shows for the pleasure and pastime of the people: in public buildings. congiaries, and the like. In all these things, having a respect unto men only as men, and to the equity of the things themselves, and not unto the glory that might follow. Never went to use the baths at unseasonable hours; no builder; never curious, or solicitous, either about his meat, or about the workmanship, or colour of his clothes, or about anything that belonged to external beauty. In all his conversation, far from all inhumanity, all boldness, and incivility, all greediness and impetuosity; never doing anything with such earnestness, and intention, that a man could say of him, that he did sweat about it: but contrariwise, all things distinctly, as at leisure; without trouble; orderly, soundly, and agreeably. A man might

have applied that to him, which is recorded of Socrates, that he knew how to want, and to enjoy those things, in the want whereof, most men show themselves weak; and in the fruition, intemperate: but to hold out firm and constant, and to keep within the compass of true moderation and sobriety in either estate, is proper to a man, who hath a perfect and invincible soul; such as he showed himself in the sickness of Maximus.

XIV. From the gods I received that I had good grandfathers, and parents, a good sister, good masters, good domestics, loving kinsmen, almost all that I have; and that I never through haste and rashness transgressed against any of them, notwithstanding that my disposition was such, as that such a thing (if occasion had been) might very well have been committed by me, but that It was the mercy of the gods, to prevent such a concurring of matters and occasions, as might make me to incur this blame. That I was not long brought up by the concubine of my father; that I preserved the flower of my youth. That I took not upon me to be a man before my time, but rather put it off longer than I needed. That I lived under the government of my lord and father, who would take away from me all pride and vainglory, and reduce me to that conceit and opinion that it was not impossible for a prince to live in the court without a troop of guards and followers, extraordinary apparel, such and such torches and statues, and other like particulars of state and magnificence; but that a man may reduce and contract himself almost to the state of a private man, and yet for all that not to become the more base and remiss in those public matters and affairs, wherein power and authority is requisite. That I have had such a brother, who by his own example might stir me up to think of myself; and by his respect and love, delight and please me. That I have got ingenuous children, and that they were not born distorted, nor with any other natural deformity. That I was no great proficient in the study of rhetoric and poetry, and of other faculties, which perchance I might have dwelt upon, if I had found myself to go on in them with success. That I did by times prefer those, by whom I was brought up, to such places and dignities, which they seemed unto me most to desire; and that I did not put them off with hope and expectation, that (since that they were yet but young) I would do the same hereafter. That I ever knew Apollonius and Rusticus, and Maximus. That I have had occasion often and effectually to consider and meditate with myself, concerning that life which is according to nature, what the nature and manner of it is: so that as for the gods and such suggestions, helps and inspirations, as might be expected from them, nothing did hinder, but that I might have begun long before to live according to nature; or that even now that I was not yet partaker and in present possession of that life, that I myself (in that I did not observe those inward motions, and suggestions, yea and almost plain and apparent instructions and admonitions of the gods,) was the only cause of it. That my body in such a life, hath been able to hold out so long. That I never had to do with Benedicta and Theodotus, yea and afterwards when I fell into some fits of love, I was soon cured. That having been often displeased with Rusticus, I never did him anything for which afterwards I had occasion to repent. That it being so that my mother was to die young, yet she lived with me all her latter years. That as often as I had a purpose to help and succour any that either were poor, or fallen into some present necessity, I never was answered by my officers

that there was not ready money enough to do it; and that I myself never had occasion to require the like succour from any other. That I have such a wife, so obedient, so loving, so ingenuous. That I had choice of fit and able men, to whom I might commit the bringing up of my children. That by dreams I have received help, as for other things, so in particular, how I might stay my casting of blood, and cure my dizziness, as that also that happened to thee in Cajeta, as unto Chryses when he prayed by the seashore. And when I did first apply myself to philosophy, that I did not fall into the hands of some sophists, or spent my time either in reading the manifold volumes of ordinary philosophers, nor in practising myself in the solution of arguments and fallacies, nor dwelt upon the studies of the meteors, and other natural curiosities. All these things without the assistance of the gods, and fortune, could not have been.

XV. In the country of the Quadi at Granua, these. Betimes in the morning say to thyself, This day I shalt have to do with an idle curious man, with an unthankful man, a railer, a crafty, false, or an envious man; an unsociable uncharitable man. All these ill qualities have happened unto them, through ignorance of that which is truly good and truly bad. But I that understand the nature of that which is good, that it only is to be desired, and of that which is bad, that it only is truly odious and shameful: who know moreover, that this transgressor, whosoever he be, is my kinsman, not by the same blood and seed, but by participation of the same reason, and of the same divine particle; How can I either be hurt by any of those, since it is not in their power to make me incur anything that is truly reproachful? or angry, and ill affected towards him, who by nature is so near unto me? for we are all born to be fellow-workers, as the feet, the hands, and the eyelids; as the rows of the upper and under teeth: for such therefore to be in opposition, is against nature; and what is it to chafe at, and to be averse from, but to be in opposition?

XVI. Whatsoever I am, is either flesh, or life, or that which we commonly call the mistress and overruling part of man; reason. Away with thy books, suffer not thy mind any more to be distracted, and carried to and fro; for it will not be; but as even now ready to die, think little of thy flesh: blood, bones, and a skin; a pretty piece of knit and twisted work, consisting of nerves, veins and arteries; think no more of it, than so. And as for thy life, consider what it is; a wind; not one constant wind neither, but every moment of an hour let out, and sucked in again. The third, is thy ruling part; and here consider; Thou art an old man; suffer not that excellent part to be brought in subjection, and to become slavish: suffer it not to be drawn up and down with unreasonable and unsociable lusts and motions, as it were with wires and nerves; suffer it not any more, either to repine at anything now present, or to fear and fly anything to come, which the destiny hath appointed thee.

XVII. Whatsoever proceeds from the gods immediately, that any man will grant totally depends from their divine providence. As for those things that are commonly said to happen by fortune, even those must be conceived to have dependence from nature, or from that first and general connection, and concatenation of all those things, which more apparently by the divine providence are administered and brought to pass.

All things flow from thence: and whatsoever it is that is, is both necessary, and conducing to the whole (part of which thou art), and whatsoever it is that is requisite and necessary for the preservation of the general, must of necessity for every particular nature, be good and behoveful. And as for the whole, it is preserved, as by the perpetual mutation and conversion of the simple elements one into another, so also by the mutation, and alteration of things mixed and compounded. Let these things suffice thee; let them be always unto thee, as thy general rules and precepts. As for thy thirst after books, away with it with all speed, that thou die not murmuring and complaining, but truly meek and well satisfied, and from thy heart thankful unto the gods.

THE SECOND BOOK

I. Remember how long thou hast already put off these things, and how often a certain day and hour as it were, having been set unto thee by the gods, thou hast neglected it. It is high time for thee to understand the true nature both of the world, whereof thou art a part; and of that Lord and Governor of the world, from whom, as a channel from the spring, thou thyself didst flow: and that there is but a certain limit of time appointed unto thee, which if thou shalt not make use of to calm and allay the many distempers of thy soul, it will pass away and thou with it, and never after return.

II. Let it be thy earnest and incessant care as a Roman and a man to perform whatsoever it is that thou art about, with true and unfeigned gravity, natural affection, freedom and justice: and as for all other cares, and imaginations, how thou mayest ease thy mind of them. Which thou shalt do; if thou shalt go about every action as thy last action,