JOHN DRYDEN

THE WORKS OF JOHN DRYDEN, NOW FIRST COLLECTED IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES. VOLUME 18

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The Works of John Dryden, now first collected in eighteen volumes. Volume 18

Dryden J.

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PREFACE TO A DIALOGUE CONCERNING WOMEN

The author of this Dialogue, as Dr Johnson has observed, was more remarkable for his familiarity with men of genius, than for any productions of his own. He was the son of Joseph Walsh of Abberley, in Worcestershire, and was born to an easy fortune. This last circumstance may have contributed something to the extreme respect in which he seems to have been held by the most accomplished of his age. Dryden, in the Postscript to "Virgil," calls Walsh the best critic of the English nation; and, in the following Preface, he is profuse in his commendation. But though these praises may have exceeded the measure of Walsh's desert, posterity owe a grateful remembrance to him, who, though a staunch Whig, respected and befriended Dryden in age and adversity, and who encouraged the juvenile essays of Pope, by foretelling his future eminence. Walsh's own Poems and Essays entitle him to respectable rank among the minor poets. His Essay on the Pastorals of Virgil, which he contributed to our author's version, may be found Vol. XIII. p. 345.

The "Dialogue concerning Women," contains a critical disquisition upon the virtues and foibles of the sex. But though the pleasantry be stale, and the learning pedantic, it seems to have excited some attention when published; perhaps because, as an angry Defender of the ladies observes,

> – "To begin with Dryden's dreadful name,
> Should mark out something of no common fame."

I cannot omit remarking, that the Dialogue concludes with a profuse panegyric, upon a theme not very congenial to Dryden's political feelings, the character of Queen Mary.

PREFACE TO WALSH'S DIALOGUE CONCERNING WOMEN

The perusal of this Dialogue, in defence of the fair sex, written by a gentleman of my acquaintance, much surprised me; for it was not easy for me to imagine, that one so young[1] could have treated so nice a subject with so much judgment. It is true, I was not ignorant, that he was naturally ingenious, and that he had improved himself by travelling; and from thence I might reasonably have expected that air of gallantry, which is so visibly diffused through the body of the work, and is indeed the soul that animates all things of this nature; but so much variety of reading, both in ancient and modern authors, such digestion of that reading, so much justness of thought, that it leaves no room for affectation, or pedantry, I may venture to say, are not over-common amongst practised writers, and very rarely to be found amongst beginners. It puts me in mind of what was said of Mr Waller, the father of our English numbers, upon the sight of his first verses, by the wits of the last age; that he came out into the world forty thousand strong, before they heard of him.[1] Here, in imitation of my friend's apostrophes, I hope the reader need not be told, that Mr Waller is only mentioned for honour's sake; that I am desirous of laying hold on his memory, on all occasions, and thereby acknowledging to the world, that unless he had written, none of us could write.

I know, my friend will forgive me this digression; for it is not only a copy of his style, but of his candour. The reader will observe, that he is ready for all hints of commending merit, and the writers of this age and country are particularly obliged to him, for his pointing out those passages which the French call *beaux endroits*, wherein they have most excelled. And though I may seem in this to have my own interest in my eyes, because he has more than once mentioned me[2] so much to my advantage, yet I hope the reader will take it only for a parenthesis, because the piece would have been very perfect without it. I may be suffered to please myself with the kindness of my friend, without valuing myself upon his partiality; he had not confidence enough to send it out into the world, without my opinion of it, that it might pass securely, at least amongst the fair readers, for whose service it was principally designed. I am not so presuming to think my opinion can either be his touchstone, or his passport; but I thought I might send him back to Ariosto, who has made it the business of almost thirty stanzas, in the beginning of the thirty-seventh book of his "Orlando Furioso," not only to praise that beautiful part of the creation, but also to make a sharp satire on their enemies; to give mankind their own, and to tell them plainly, that from their envy it proceeds, that the virtue and great actions of women are purposely concealed, and the failings of some few amongst them exposed with all the aggravating circumstances of malice. For my own part, who have always been their servant, and have never drawn my pen against them, I had rather see some of them praised extraordinarily, than any of them suffer by detraction; and that in this age, and at this time particularly, wherein I find more heroines than heroes. Let me therefore give them joy of their new champion. If any will think me more partial to him than really I am, they can only say, I have returned his bribe; and the worst I wish him is, that he may receive justice from the men, and favour only from the ladies.

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[1] Mr Malone observes, that, according to Antony Wood, (*Ath. Oxon.* ii. 423.) this was not said *of* Waller, but *by* that poet, of Sir John Denham. – "In the latter end of the year 1641, Sir John published the tragedy called the 'Sophy,' which took extremely much, and was admired by all ingenious men, particularly by Edmund Waller of Beaconsfield, who then said of the author, that he broke out, like the Irish rebellion, threescore thousand strong, before any body was aware, or the least suspected it." Mr Malone adds, that the observation is more applicable to Denham than to Waller; for Denham, from the age of sixteen, when he went to Trinity College, in Oxford, November 18, 1631, to the time of his father's death, January 6, 1638-9, was considered as a dull and dissipated young man; whereas Waller distinguished himself, as a poet, before he was eighteen. Besides, the "Sophy" was published just when the Irish rebellion broke out.

[2] In one passage of the Dialogue, our author's version of the sixth satire of Juvenal is mentioned with commendation; and in another, the tragedy of "Aureng-Zebe" is quoted.

CHARACTER OF M. ST. EVREMONT

Charles de St Denis, Seigneur de St Evremont, was born in 1613, of a noble Norman family, and was early distinguished by the vivacity of his wit, as well as by his gallantry; for, like all the French noblesse, he followed the profession of arms. The Duke D'Enghien, afterwards Prince of Conde, was particularly attached to him, and gave him an appointment in his household. This he lost by ill-timed raillery on his patron. He was committed to the Bastile for a joke on cardinal Mazarine; and afterwards forced to fly into Holland for writing a satirical history of the peace of the Pyrenees. From Holland St Evremont retreated to England, where, at the witty court of Charles, his raillery was better understood than in Holland, and less likely to incur unpleasant consequences than in France. St Evremont naturally addressed himself to his fair countrywomen Louise de Querouaille Duchess of Portsmouth, and the Duchess of Mazarine; and, though they were rivals in Charles's affections, they united in protecting the Norman *bel-esprit*. The king conferred on him a thousand caresses, and a small pension; on which he lived, amusing himself by the composition of lighter pieces of literature, and despising the country which afforded him refuge so very thoroughly, that he did not even deign to learn English. The people of England did not, however, consider the labours of their foreign guest with similar apathy. After several surreptitious editions of his various tracts had appeared, there was published, in 1692, a collection entitled, "Miscellaneous Essays, by Monsieur St Evremont, translated out of French; with his character, by a person of honour here in England, continued by Mr Dryden." Desmaiseaux, by whom a complete edition of St Evremont's works was edited in 1705, mentions it as well known, that Dr Knightly Chetwood, who died dean of Gloucester, was the person of honour in the title-page of 1692. His connection with Dryden makes this highly probable; although there is reason to believe, that the title of "person of honour" was not strictly applicable, and was probably assumed for the purpose of disguising the real translator.

CHARACTER OF M. ST. EVREMONT

I know how nice an undertaking it is to write of a living author; yet the example of Father Bouhours has somewhat encouraged me in this attempt. Had not Monsieur St Evremont been very considerable in his own country, that famous jesuit would not have ventured to praise a person in disgrace with the government of France, and living here in banishment. Yet, in his "*Pensees Ingenieuses*," he has often cited our author's thoughts and his expressions, as the standard of judicious thinking, and graceful speaking; an undoubted sign that his merit was sufficiently established, when the disfavour of the court could not prevail against it. There is not only a justness in his conceptions, which is the foundation of good writing, but also a purity of language, and a beautiful turn of words, so little understood by modern writers; and which, indeed, was found at Rome but at the latter end of the commonwealth, and ended with Petronius, under the monarchy. If I durst extend my judgment to particulars, I would say, that our author has determined very nicely in his opinion of Epicurus; and that what he has said of his morals, is according to nature and reason.

It is true, that as I am a religious admirer of Virgil, I could wish that he had not discovered our father's nakedness.[3] But, after all, we must confess, that Æneas was none of the greatest heroes, and that Virgil was sensible of it himself. But what could he do? the Trojan on whom he was to build the Roman empire, had been already vanquished; he had lost his country, and was a fugitive. Nay more, he had fought unsuccessfully with Diomedes, and was only preserved from death by his mother-goddess, who received a wound in his defence. So that Virgil, bound as he was to follow the footsteps of Homer, who had thus described him, could not reasonably have altered his character, and raised him in Italy to a much greater height of prowess than he found him formerly in Troy. Since, therefore, he could make no more of him in valour, he resolved not to give him that virtue, as his principal; but chose another, which was piety. It is true, this latter, in the composition of a hero, was not altogether so shining as the former; but it entitled him more to the favour of the gods, and their protection, in all his undertakings; and, which was the poet's chiefest aim, made a nearer resemblance betwixt Æneas and his patron Augustus Cæsar, who, above all things, loved to be flattered for being pious, both to the gods and his relations. And that very piety, or gratitude, (call it which you please,) to the memory of his uncle Julius, gave him the preference, amongst the soldiers, to Mark Antony; and, consequently, raised him to the empire. As for personal courage, that of Augustus was not pushing;[4] and the poet, who was not ignorant of that defect, for that reason durst not ascribe it, in the supreme degree, to him who was to represent his emperor under another name: which was managed by him with the most imaginable fineness; for had valour been set uppermost, Augustus must have yielded to Agrippa. After all, this is rather to defend the courtier than the poet; and to make his hero escape again, under the covert of a cloud. Only we may add, what I think Bossu says, that the Roman commonwealth being now changed into a monarchy, Virgil was helping to that design; by insinuating into the people the piety of their new conqueror, to make them the better brook this innovation, which was brought on them by a man who was favoured by the gods. Yet we may observe, that Virgil forgot not, upon occasion, to speak honourably of Æneas, in point of courage, and that particularly in the person of him by whom he was overcome. For Diomedes compares him with Hector, and even with advantage:

> Quicquid apud duræ cessatum est mænia Trojæ,
> Hectoris Æneæque manu victoria Graiûm
> Hæsit, et in decimum vestigia retulit annum:

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[3] St Evremont wrote "Observations on Segrais' Translation of Virgil."

[4] – "He at Philippi keptHis sword even like a dancer; —— he aloneDealt on lieutenancy, and no practice hadIn the brave squares of war."Antony and Cleopatra.

Ambo animis, ambo insignes præstantibus armis;
Hic pietate prior.

As for that particular passage, cited by Monsieur St Evremont, where Æneas shows the utmost fear, in the beginning of a tempest,

Extemplo Æneæ solvuntur frigore membra, &c.

why may it not be supposed, that having been long at sea, he might be well acquainted with the nature of a storm; and, by the rough beginning, foresee the increase and danger of it? at least, as a father of his people, his concernment might be greater for them than for himself: and if so, what the poet takes from the merit of his courage, is added to the prime virtue of his character, which was his piety. Be this said with all manner of respect and deference to the opinion of Monsieur St Evremont; amongst whose admirable talents, that of penetration is not the least. He generally dives into the very bottom of his authors; searches into the inmost recesses of their souls, and brings up with him those hidden treasures which had escaped the diligence of others. His examination of the "*Grand Alexandre,*"[5] in my opinion, is an admirable piece of criticism; and I doubt not, but that his observations on the English theatre had been as absolute in their kind, had he seen with his own eyes, and not with those of other men. But conversing in a manner wholly with the court, which is not always the truest judge, he has been unavoidably led into mistakes, and given to some of our coarsest poets a reputation abroad, which they never had at home. Had his conversation in the town been more general, he had certainly received other ideas on that subject; and not transmitted those names into his own country, which will be forgotten by posterity in ours.

Thus I have contracted my thoughts on a large subject; for whatever has been said falls short of the true character of Monsieur St Evremont, and his writings: and if the translation you are about to read does not every where come up to the original, the translator desires you to believe, that it is only because that he has failed in his undertaking.

[5] A tragedy by Racine. St Evremont, in a dissertation on this play, addressed to Madame Borneau, severely reprobates the fault so common in French tragedy, of making a play, though the scene is laid in ancient Rome or India, centre and turn upon Parisian manners. He concludes, that Corneille is the only author of the nation that displays a true taste for antiquity.

CHARACTER OF POLYBIUS

The character of Polybius was prefixed to a translation executed by Sir Henry Shere, or Sheers;[6] the same gentleman whom Dryden has elsewhere classed among the "finer spirits of the age."[7] Our author had announced this work to the public in the preface to "Cleomenes."[8] It was probably at that time under the press, or at least subjected to Dryden for his correction. The translation itself is of little value. Sir Henry disclaims all extent of erudition, and frankly confesses, he "has no warrant from his depth of learning whereof to make ostentation; wherein, indeed, he who most abounds ever finds least cause of boasting." Accordingly, his preface is employed in an attempt to convince the world, that mere scholars, or book-learned men, have rather traduced than translated Polybius, and most authors of his class; such being totally at a loss to discover the sense of many passages in history, wherein matters military and naval are handled. He therefore takes up the pen as a man of the world, of business, science, and conversation, long intimate with such matters as are principally treated of by the historian. Finally, he describes his undertaking as an "employment, wherein he who performs best, traffics for small gain, and it would be unfair and unconscionable to make the loss more than the adventure; and, at the worst, it having been rather a diversion than a task, helping me to while away a few winter hours, which is some recreation to one who has led a life of action and business; and whose humour and fortune suit not with the pleasures of the town. Wherefore I shall have little cause of complaint, if my well-meaning in consenting to its publication be not so well received: I have been worse treated by the world, to which I am as little indebted as most men, who have spent near thirty years in public trusts; wherein I laboured, and wasted my youth and the vigour of my days, more to the service of my country, and the impairment of my health, than the improvement of my fortune; having stood the mark of envy, slander, and hard usage, without gleaning the least of those advantages, which use to be the anchor-hold and refuge of such as wrongfully or otherwise suffer the stroke of censure."

Our author, who seems to have had an especial regard for Sir Henry Shere, contributed this preliminary discourse.

Mr Malone has fixed Sir Henry Shere's death to the year 1713, when his library was exposed to sale by advertisement in "The Guardian."

[6] The full title is, "The History of Polybius the Megalopolitan; containing a general Account of the Transactions of the World, and principally of the Roman People during the first and second Punic Wars. Translated by Sir H.S. To which is added a Character of Polybius and his Writings, by Mr Dryden, 1693."

[7] Where he enumerates the translators of Lucian in the Supplement to his Life.

[8] Vol. VIII. p. 203.

THE CHARACTER OF POLYBIUS, AND HIS WRITINGS

The worthy author of this translation, who is very much my friend, was pleased to entrust it in my hands for many months together, before he published it, desiring me to review the English, and to correct what I found amiss; which he needed not have done, if his modesty would have given him leave to have relied on his own abilities, who is so great a master of our style and language, as the world will acknowledge him to be, after the reading of this excellent version.

It is true, that Polybius has formerly appeared in an English dress,[9] but under such a cloud of errors in his first translation, that his native beauty was not only hidden, but his sense perverted in many places; so that he appeared unlike himself, and unworthy of that esteem which has always been paid him by antiquity, as the most sincere, the clearest, and most instructive of all historians. He is now not only redeemed from those mistakes, but also restored to the first purity of his conceptions; and the style in which he now speaks is as plain and unaffected as that he wrote. I had only the pleasure of reading him in a fair manuscript, without the toil of alteration; at least it was so very inconsiderable, that it only cost me the dash of a pen in some few places, and those of very small importance. So much had the care, the diligence, and exactness of my friend prevented my trouble, that he left me not the occasion of serving him, in a work which was already finished to my hands. I doubt not but the reader will approve my judgement. So happy it is for a good author to fall into the hands of a translator, who is of a genius like his own; who has added experience to his natural abilities; who has been educated in business of several kinds; has travelled, like his author, into many parts of the world, and some of them the same with the present scene of history; has been employed in business of the like nature with Polybius, and, like him, is perfectly acquainted not only with the terms of the mathematics, but has searched into the bottom of that admirable science, and reduced into practice the most useful rules of it, to his own honour, and the benefit of his native country; who, besides these advantages, possesses the knowledge of shipping and navigation; and, in few words, is not ignorant of any thing that concerns the tactics: so that here, from the beginning, we are sure of finding nothing that is not thoroughly understood.[10] The expression is clear, and the words adequate to the subject. Nothing in the matter will be mistaken; nothing of the terms will be misapplied: all is natural and proper; and he who understands good sense and English, will be profited by the first, and delighted with the latter. This is what may be justly said in commendation of the translator, and without the note of flattery to a friend.

As for his author, I shall not be ashamed to copy from the learned Casaubon, who has translated him into Latin,[11] many things which I had not from my own small reading, and which I could not, without great difficulty, have drawn, but from his fountain; not omitting some which came casually in my way, by reading the preface of the Abbot Pichon to the Dauphin's "Tacitus," an admirable and most useful work; which helps I ingenuously profess to have received from them, both to clear myself from being a plagiary of their writings, and to give authority, by their names, to the weakness of my own performance.

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[9] "History of Polybius, the five first bookes entire, with all the parcels of subsequent bookes unto the eighteenth, according to the Greeke original. Also, the manner of the Romane encamping. Translated into English, by Edward Grimestone, sergeant at armes." London, 1634. Folio.

[10] From these expressions, one would suppose Sir Henry Shere to have been a seaman, which may also be conjectured from his writing an "Essay on the certainty and causes of the Earth's Motion on its Axis;" and a "Discourse concerning the Mediterranean Sea and the Straits of Gibraltar;" the one published in 1698, the other in 1705. The naval and military professions were, however, formerly accounted less absolutely distinct branches of service than at present. Many officers distinguished themselves in both. Mr Malone may therefore be right in conjecturing Sir Henry Shere to have been a soldier, though his studies would argue him a seaman or engineer.

[11] *Polybii Lycortæ F. Megalopolites Historiarum Libri, qui supersunt, Gr. Lat. Isaacus Casaubonus, ex antiquis libris emendavit, Lat. vertit et commentariis illustravit. Accessit Æneæ vetustissimi Tactici commentarius de toleranda obsidione. Isaaeus Casaubonus primus vulgavit, Latinam interpretationem ac notas adjecit. Parisiis, 1609, Folio.*

The taking of Constantinople, by Mahomet the Great, fell into the latter times of Pope Nicholas the Fifth,[12] a pope not only studious of good letters, and particularly of history, but also a great encourager of it in others. From the dreadful overthrow of that city, and final subversion of the Greek empire, many learned men escaped, and brought over with them into Italy that treasure of ancient authors,[13] which, by their unhappiness, we now possess; and, amongst the rest, some of these remaining fragments of Polybius. The body of this history, as he left it finished, was consisting of forty books, of which the eighth part[14] is only remaining to us entire. As for his negociations, when he was sent ambassador either from his own countrymen,[15] the commonwealth of the Achaians, or afterwards was employed by the Romans on their business with other nations, we are obliged to Constantine the Great for their preservation; for that emperor was so much in love with the dexterous management and wisdom of our author, that he caused them all to be faithfully transcribed, and made frequent use of them in his own dispatches and affairs with foreign princes, as his best guides in his concernments with them.

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[12] "The fame of Nicholas the Fifth, (who sat in the papal chair from 1447 to 1455,) has not," says Mr Gibbon, —*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vi. 429, 4to.) "been adequate to his merits. From a plebeian origin, he raised himself, by his virtue and learning. The character of the man prevailed over the interests of the pope; and he sharpened those weapons, which were soon pointed against the Roman church. He had been the friend of the most eminent scholars of the age; he became their patron; and such was the humility of his manners, that the change was scarcely discernible, either to them or to himself. If he pressed the acceptance of a liberal gift, it was not as the measure of desert, but as the proof of benevolence; and when modest merit declined his bounty, 'Accept it,' would he say, with a consciousness of his own worth; 'you will not always have a Nicholas among ye.' The influence of the holy see pervaded Christendom; and he exerted that influence in the search, not of benefices, but of books. From the ruins of the Byzantine libraries, from the darkest monasteries of Germany and Britain, he collected the dusty manuscripts of the writers of antiquity; and wherever the original could not be removed, a faithful copy was transcribed, and transmitted for his use. The Vatican, the old repository for bulls and legends, for superstition and forgery, was daily replenished with more precious furniture; and such was the industry of Nicholas, that, in a reign of eight years, he formed a library of five thousand volumes. To his munificence, the Latin world was indebted for the versions of Xenophon, Diodorus, Polybius, Thucydides, Herodotus, and Appian; of Strabo's Geography; of the Iliad; of the most valuable works of Plato and Aristotle; of Ptolemy and Theophrastus; and of the fathers of the Greek church. The example of the Roman pontiff was preceded, or imitated, by a Florentine merchant, who governed the republic without arms, and without a title. Cosmo, of Medicis, was the father of a line of princes, whose name and age are almost synonymous with the restoration of learning. His credit was ennobled into fame; his riches were dedicated to the service of mankind; he corresponded at once with Cairo and London, and a cargo of Indian spices and Greek books was imported in the same vessel. The genius and education of his grandson, Lorenzo, rendered him not only a patron, but a judge and candidate in the literary race. In his palace, distress was entitled to relief, and merit to reward. His leisure hours were delightfully spent in the Platonic academy; he encouraged the emulation of Demetrius Chalcocondyles and Angelo Politian; and his active missionary, Janus Lascaris, returned from the East with a treasure of two hundred manuscripts, fourscore of which were as yet unknown in the libraries of Europe. The rest of Italy was animated by a similar spirit, and the progress of the nation repaid the liberality of the princes. The Latins held the exclusive property of their own literature; and these disciples of Greece were soon capable of transmitting and improving the lessons which they had imbibed. After a short succession of foreign teachers, the tide of emigration subsided; but the language of Constantinople was spread beyond the Alps; and the natives of France, Germany, and England, imparted to their country the sacred fire which they had kindled in the schools of Florence and Rome."

[13] Our author recollected the following panegyric on Pope Nicholas, in the Dedication of Casaubon's edition of Polybius, to Henry IV. of France:"*Quum enim a pluribus retro sæculis, in principum animis, toto Occidente, amor politioris literaturæ et Græci sermonis excoluisset; accidit non sine numine profecto, ut circa illa ipsa tempora Byzantinæ cladis, et paullo ante, summi in Europa viri et principes generossissimi hunc veternum ceu virgula divina tacti, opportune excuterent, et ad bene merendum de studiis politioribus et de linguis, ardore incredibili accenderentur. Prima terrarum Italia ad hanc palmam occupandam, è diuturno torpore tunc demum expergefacta, sese concitavit, et nationibus aliis per Europam, exemplum quod imitarentur præbuit. In ipsa verò Italia, ad certamen adeo gloriosum, Nicolaus Quintus Pontifex Maximus, in cujus extrema tempora Byzantini imperii eversio incidit, princeps, quod equidem sciam, signum sustulit. Nam et literarum dicitur fuisse intelligentissimus; et, quod res arguit, earum amore erat flagrantissimus. Primus hic, illa ætate, libros antiquorum scriptorum sedulo conquirere curæ habuit; magnamque earum copiam in Vaticanam intulit; primus cum assiduis hortatibus, tum ingentibus etiam propositis præmiis, ad meliorem literaturam è tenebris oblivionis in lucem revocandam, homines Italos stimulavit: primus, Græcæ linguæ auctores omnis sincerioris doctrinæ esse promos condos qui uon ignoraret, ut Latino sermone exprimerentur, vehementissime optavit, et efficere contendit*."

[14] That is, the first five books.

[15] Polybius, the historian, was born at Megalopolis, in Arcadia, in the fourth year of the 143d Olympiad, about 205 years before the Christian æra. Being carried to Rome as an hostage, he became the companion and friend of the younger Scipio Africanus; accompanied him in his campaigns; and is said to have witnessed the destruction of Carthage, in the 158th Olympiad. Having returned to his native country, he died in the 164th Olympiad, 124 years before Christ, in consequence of a fall from his horse.The history of Polybius embraced the space from the first year of the 140th to the first of the 153d Olympiad, being fifty-three years.

Polybius, as you will find in reading of him, though he principally intended the history of the Romans, and the establishment of their empire over the greatest part of the world which was then known, yet had in his eye the general history of the times in which he lived, not forgetting either the wars of his own country with their neighbours of Etolia, or the concurrent affairs of Macedonia and the provinces of Greece, which is properly so called; nor the monarchies of Asia and Egypt; nor the republic of the Carthaginians, with the several traverses of their fortunes, either in relation to the Romans, or independent to the wars which they waged with them; besides what happened in Spain and Sicily, and other European countries. The time, which is taken up in this history, consists of three-and-fifty years; and the greatest part of it is employed in the description of those events, of which the author was an eye-witness, or bore a considerable part in the conduct of them. But in what particular time or age it was, when mankind received that irrecoverable loss of this noble history, is not certainly delivered to us. It appears to have been perfect in the reign of Constantine, by what I have already noted; and neither Casaubon, nor any other, can give us any further account concerning it.

The first attempt towards a translation of him, was by command of the same Pope Nicholas the Fifth, already mentioned, who esteemed him the prince of Greek historians; would have him continually in his hands; and used to make this judgement of him, – that, if he yielded to one or two, in the praise of eloquence, yet, in wisdom, and all other accomplishments belonging to a perfect historian, he was at least equal to any other writer, Greek or Roman, and perhaps excelled them all. This is the author, who is now offered to us in our mother-tongue, recommended by the nobility of his birth, by his institution in arts and sciences, by his knowledge in natural and moral philosophy, and particularly the politics; by his being conversant both in the arts of peace and war; by his education under his father Lycortas, who voluntarily deposed himself from his sovereignty of Megalopolis to become a principal member of the Achaian commonwealth, which then flourished under the management of Aratus; by his friendship with Scipio Africanus, who subdued Carthage, to whom he was both a companion and a counsellor; and by the good-will, esteem, and intimacy, which he had with several princes of Asia, Greece, and Egypt, during his life; and after his decease, by deserving the applause and approbation of all succeeding ages.

This author, so long neglected in the barbarous times of Christianity, and so little known in Europe, (according to the fate which commonly follows the best of writers,) was pulled from under the rubbish which covered him, by the learned bishop, Nicholas the Fifth; and some parts of his history (for with all his diligence he was not able to recover the whole) were by him recommended to a person knowing both in the Greek and Roman tongues, and learned for the times in which he lived, to be translated into Latin; and, to the honour of our Polybius, he was amongst the first of the Greek writers, who deserved to have this care bestowed on him; which, notwithstanding so many hindrances occurred in this attempt, that the work was not perfected in his popedom, neither was any more than a third part of what is now recovered in his hands; neither did that learned Italian,[16] who had undertaken him, succeed very happily in that endeavour; for the perfect knowledge of the Greek language was not yet restored, and that translator was but as a one-eyed man amongst the nation of the blind; only suffered till a better could be found to do right to an author, whose excellence required a more just interpreter than the ignorance of that age afforded. And this gives me occasion to admire, (says Casaubon,) that in following times, when eloquence was redeemed, and the knowledge of the Greek language flourished, yet no man thought of pursuing that design, which was so worthily begun in those first rudiments of learning. Some, indeed, of almost every nation in Europe, have been instrumental in the recovery of several lost parts of our Polybius, and commented on them with good success; but no man before Casaubon had reviewed the first translation, corrected its errors, and put the last hand to its accomplishment. The world is therefore beholden to him for this great

[16] Nicolo Peretti published a Latin version of the first five books of Polybius, at Rome, in 1473, folio. The first Greek edition appeared in 1530; the second at Basle, in 1549. The last is most esteemed.

work; for he has collected into one their scattered fragments, has pieced them together, according to the natural order in which they were written, made them intelligible to scholars, and rendered the French translator's task more easy to his hands.

Our author is particularly mentioned with great honour by Cicero, Strabo, Josephus, and Plutarch; and in what rank of writers they are placed, none of the learned need to be informed. He is copied in whole books together, by Livy, commonly esteemed the prince of the Roman history, and translated word for word, though the Latin historian is not to be excused, for not mentioning the man to whom he had been so much obliged, nor for taking, as his own, the worthy labours of another. Marcus Brutus, who preferred the freedom of his country to the obligations which he had to Julius Cæsar, so prized Polybius, that he made a compendium of his works; and read him not only for his instruction, but for the diversion of his grief, when his noble enterprize for the restoration of the commonwealth had not found the success which it deserved. And this is not the least commendation of our author, that he, who was not wholly satisfied with the eloquence of Tully, should epitomise Polybius with his own hand.[17] It was on the consideration of Brutus, and the veneration which he paid him, that Constantine the Great took so great a pleasure in reading our author, and collecting the several treaties of his embassies; of which, though many are now lost, yet those which remain are a sufficient testimony of his abilities; and I congratulate my country, that a prince of our extraction (as was Constantine,) has the honour of obliging the Christian world by these remainders of our great historian.

It is now time to enter into the particular praises of Polybius, which I have given you before in gross; and the first of them (following the method of Casaubon,) is his wonderful skill in political affairs. I had read him, in English, with the pleasure of a boy, before I was ten years of age; and yet, even then, had some dark notions of the prudence with which he conducted his design, particularly in making me know, and almost see, the places where such and such actions were performed. This was the first distinction which I was then capable of making betwixt him and other historians which I read early. But when being of a riper age, I took him again into my hands, I must needs say, that I have profited more by reading him than by Thucydides, Appian, Dion Cassius, and all the rest of the Greek historians together; and amongst all the Romans, none have reached him, in this particular, but Tacitus, who is equal with him.

It is wonderful to consider with how much care and application he instructs, counsels, warns, admonishes, and advises, whensoever he can find a fit occasion. He performs all these sometimes in the nature of a common parent of mankind; and sometimes also limits his instructions to particular nations, by a friendly reproach of those failings and errors to which they were most obnoxious. In this last manner he gives instructions to the Mantinæans, the Elæans, and several other provinces of Greece, by informing them of such things as were conducing to their welfare. Thus he likewise warns the Romans of their obstinacy and wilfulness, vices which have often brought them to the brink of ruin. And thus he frequently exhorts the Greeks, in general, not to depart from their dependence on the Romans; nor to take false measures, by embroiling themselves in wars with that victorious people, in whose fate it was to be masters of the universe. But as his peculiar concernment was for the safety of his own countrymen, the Achaians, he more than once insinuates to them the care of their preservation, which consisted in submitting to the yoke of the Roman people, which they could not possibly avoid; and to make it easy to them, by a cheerful compliance with their commands, rather than unprofitably to oppose them with the hazard of those remaining privileges which the clemency of the conquerors had left them. For this reason, in the whole course of his history he makes it his chiefest business to persuade the Grecians in general, that the growing greatness and fortune

[17] "Plutarch tells us, that Brutus was thus employed the day before the battle of Pharsalia. 'It was the middle of summer; the heats were intense, the marshy situation of the camp disagreeable, and his tent-bearers were long in coming. Nevertheless, though extremely harassed and fatigued, he did not anoint himself till noon; and then taking a morsel of bread, while others were at rest, or musing on the event of the ensuing day, he employed himself till the evening in writing an epitome of Polybius." – Malone.

of the Roman empire was not owing to mere chance, but to the conduct and invincible courage of that people, to whom their own virtue gave the dominion of the world. And yet this counsellor of patience and submission, as long as there was any probability of hope remaining to withstand the progress of the Roman fortune, was not wanting to the utmost of his power to resist them, at least to defer the bondage of his country, which he had long foreseen. But the fates inevitably drawing all things into subjection to Rome, this well-deserving citizen was commanded to appear in that city,[18] where he suffered the imprisonment of many years; yet even then his virtue was beneficial to him, the knowledge of his learning and his wisdom procuring him the friendship of the most potent in the senate; so that it may be said with Casaubon, that the same virtue which had brought him into distress, was the very means of his relief, and of his exaltation to greater dignities than those which he lost; for by the intercession of Cato the Censor, Scipio Æmilianus, who afterwards destroyed Carthage, and some other principal noblemen, our Polybius was restored to liberty. After which, having set it down as a maxim, that the welfare of the Achaians consisted, as I have said, in breaking their own stubborn inclinations, and yielding up that freedom which they no longer could maintain, he made it the utmost aim of his endeavours to bring over his countrymen to that persuasion; in which, though, to their misfortunes, his counsels were not prevalent, yet thereby he not only proved himself a good patriot, but also made his fortunes with the Romans. For his countrymen, by their own unpardonable fault, not long afterwards drew on themselves their own destruction; for when Mummius, in the Achaian war, made a final conquest of that country, he dissolved the great council of their commonwealth.[19] But, in the mean time, Polybius enjoyed that tranquillity of fortune which he had purchased by his wisdom, in that private state, being particularly dear to Scipio and Lælius, and some of the rest, who were then in the administration of the Roman government. And that favour which he had gained amongst them, he employed not in heaping riches to himself, but as a means of performing many considerable actions; as particularly when Scipio was sent to demolish Carthage,[20] he went along with him in the nature of a counsellor and companion of his enterprize. At which time, receiving the command of a fleet from him, he made discoveries in many parts of the Atlantic Ocean, and especially on the shores of Africa; and[21] doing many good offices to all sorts of people whom he had power to oblige, especially to the Grecians, who, in honour of their benefactor, caused many statues of him to be erected, as Pausanias has written. The particular gratitude of the Locrians in Italy is also an undeniable witness of this truth; who, by his mediation, being discharged from the burden of taxes which oppressed them, through the hardship of those conditions which the Romans had imposed on them in the treaty of peace, professed themselves to be owing for their lives and fortunes, to the interest only and good nature of Polybius, which they took care to express by all manner of acknowledgment.

Yet as beneficent as he was, the greatest obligement which he could lay on human kind, was the writing of this present history; wherein he has left a perpetual monument of his public love to all the world in every succeeding age of it, by giving us such precepts as are most conducing to our common safety and our benefit. This philanthropy (which we have not a proper word in English to express,) is every-where manifest in our author; and from hence proceeded that divine rule which he gave to Scipio, – that whensoever he went abroad, he should take care not to return to his own house, before he had acquired a friend by some new obligement. To this excellency of nature we owe the treasure which is contained in this most useful work: this is the standard by which all good and prudent princes ought to regulate their actions. None have more need of friends than monarchs; and though ingratitude is too frequent in the most of those who are obliged, yet encouragement will work on generous minds; and if the experiment be lost on thousands, yet it never fails on all: and one

[18] With a thousand of his countrymen, whom the Romans ordered thither as hostages, after the conquest of Macedonia.

[19] A. U. C. 608.

[20] A. U. C. 607.

[21] The word *and* renders this passage ungrammatical. – Malone.

virtuous man in a whole nation is worth the buying, as one diamond is worth the search in a heap of rubbish. But a narrow-hearted prince, who thinks that mankind is made for him alone, puts his subjects in a way of deserting him on the first occasion;[22] and teaches them to be as sparing of their duty, as he is of his bounty. He is sure of making enemies, who will not be at the cost of rewarding his friends and servants; and by letting his people see he loves them not, instructs them to live upon the square with him, and to make him sensible in his turn, that prerogatives are given, but privileges are inherent. As for tricking, cunning, and that which in sovereigns they call king-craft, and reason of state in commonwealths, to them and their proceedings Polybius is an open enemy. He severely reproves all faithless practices, and that κακοπραγμόσυνη, or vicious policy, which is too frequent in the management of the public. He commends nothing but plainness, sincerity, and the common good, undisguised, and set in a true light before the people. Not but that there may be a necessity of saving a nation, by going beyond the letter of the law, or even sometimes by superseding it; but then that necessity must not be artificial, – it must be visible, it must be strong enough to make the remedy not only pardoned, but desired, to the major part of the people; not for the interest only of some few men, but for the public safety: for otherwise, one infringement of a law draws after it the practice of subverting all the liberties of a nation, which are only entrusted with any government, but can never be given up to it. The best way to distinguish betwixt a pretended necessity and a true, is to observe if the remedy be rarely applied, or frequently; in times of peace, or times of war and public distractions, which are the most usual causes of sudden necessities. From hence Casaubon infers, that this our author, who preaches virtue, and probity, and plain-dealing, ought to be studied principally by kings and ministers of state; and that youth, which are bred up to succeed in the management of business, should read him carefully, and imbibe him thoroughly, detesting the maxims that are given by Machiavel and others, which are only the instruments of tyranny. Furthermore, (continues he,) the study of truth is perpetually joined with the love of virtue; for there is no virtue which derives not its original from truth; as, on the contrary, there is no vice which has not its beginning from a lie. Truth is the foundation of all knowledge, and the cement of all societies; and this is one of the most shining qualities in our author.

I was so strongly persuaded of this myself, in the perusal of the present history, that I confess, amongst all the ancients I never found any who had the air of it so much; and amongst the moderns, none but Philip de Commines.[23] They had this common to them, that they both changed their masters. But Polybius changed not his side, as Philip did: he was not bought off to another party, but pursued the true interest of his country, even when he served the Romans. Yet since truth, as one of the philosophers has told me, lies in the bottom of a well, so it is hard to draw it up: much pains, much diligence, much judgment is necessary to hand it us; even cost is oftentimes required; and Polybius was wanting in none of these.

We find but few historians of all ages, who have been diligent enough in their search for truth: it is their common method to take on trust what they distribute to the public; by which means a falsehood once received from a famed writer becomes traditional to posterity. But Polybius weighed the authors from whom he was forced to borrow the history of the times immediately preceding his, and oftentimes corrected them, either by comparing them each with other, or by the lights which he had received from ancient men of known integrity amongst the Romans, who had been conversant in those affairs which were then managed, and were yet living to instruct him. He also learned the Roman

[22] Mr Malone justly conjectures, that Dryden here thought of his old master James II., whose economy bordered on penury, and whose claims of prerogative approached to tyranny.

[23] Philip de Commines, author of the excellent Memoirs of his own time. He was born in Flanders, and was for several years a distinguished ornament of the court of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, his native sovereign; but was tempted to divert his service for that of Louis XI. by whom he was employed in several negociations. After the death of that monarch, Commines fell into disgrace with his successor, and was long detained in prison: he died in 1509. It was of this historian Catherine de Medicis was wont to say, “that he made as many heretics in the state, as Luther in the Church.”

tongue; and attained to that knowledge of their laws, their rights, their customs, and antiquities, that few of their own citizens understood them better: having gained permission from the senate to search the Capitol, he made himself familiar with their records, and afterwards translated them into his mother-tongue. So that he taught the noblemen of Rome their own municipal laws, and was accounted more skilful in them than Fabius Pictor, a man of the senatorian order, who wrote the transactions of the Punic wars. He who neglected none of the laws of history, was so careful of truth, (which is the principal,) that he made it his whole business to deliver nothing to posterity which might deceive them; and by that diligence and exactness, may easily be known to be studious of truth, and a lover of it. What therefore Brutus thought worthy to transcribe with his own hand out of him, I need not be ashamed to copy after him: "I believe," says Polybius, "that nature herself has constituted truth as the supreme deity, which is to be adored by mankind, and that she has given it greater force than any of the rest; for being opposed, as she is on all sides, and appearances of truth so often passing for the thing itself, in behalf of plausible falsehoods, yet by her wonderful operation she insinuates herself into the minds of men; sometimes exerting her strength immediately, and sometimes lying hid in darkness for length of time; but at last she struggles through it, and appears triumphant over falsehood." This sincerity Polybius preferred to all his friends, and even to his father: "in all other offices of life," says he, "praise a lover of his friends, and of his native country; but in writing history, I am obliged to divest myself of all other obligations, and sacrifice them all to truth."

Aratus, the Sicyonian, in the childhood of our author, was the chief of the Achaian commonwealth; a man in principal esteem, both in his own country and all the provinces of Greece; admired universally for his probity, his wisdom, his just administration, and his conduct: in remembrance of all which, his grateful countrymen, after his decease, ordained him those honours which are only due to heroes. Him our Polybius had in veneration, and formed himself by imitation of his virtues; and is never wanting in his commendations through the course of his history. Yet even this man, when the cause of truth required it, is many times reproved by him for his slowness in counsel, his tardiness in the beginning of his enterprises, his tedious and more than Spanish deliberations; and his heavy and cowardly proceedings are as freely blamed by our Polybius, as they were afterwards by Plutarch, who questionless drew his character from this history. In plain terms, that wise general scarce ever performed any great action but by night: the glittering of a sword before his face was offensive to his eyes: our author therefore boldly accuses him of his faint-heartedness; attributes the defeat at Caphiæ wholly to him; and is not sparing to affirm, that all Peloponnesus was filled with trophies, which were set up as the monuments of his losses. He sometimes praises, and at other times condemns the proceedings of Philip, king of Macedon, the son of Demetrius, according to the occasions which he gave him by the variety and inequality of his conduct; and this most exquisite on either side. He more than once arraigns him for the inconstancy of his judgment, and chapters even his own Aratus on the same head; shewing, by many examples, produced from their actions, how many miseries they had both occasioned to the Grecians; and attributing it to the weakness of human nature, which can make nothing perfect. But some men are brave in battle, who are weak in counsel, which daily experience sets before our eyes; others deliberate wisely, but are weak in the performing part; and even no man is the same to-day, which he was yesterday, or may be to-morrow. On this account, says our author, "a good man is sometimes liable to blame, and a bad man, though not often, may possibly deserve to be commended." And for this very reason he severely taxes Timæus, a malicious historian, who will allow no kind of virtue to Agathocles, the tyrant of Sicily, but detracts from all his actions, even the most glorious, because in general he was a vicious man. "Is it to be thought," says Casaubon, "that Polybius loved the memory of Agathocles, the tyrant, or hated that of the virtuous Aratus?" But it is one thing to commend a tyrant, and another thing to overpass in silence those laudable actions which are performed by him; because it argues an author of the same falsehood, to pretermit what has actually been done, as to feign those actions which have never been.

It will not be unprofitable, in this place, to give another famous instance of the candour and integrity of our historian. There had been an ancient league betwixt the republic of Achaia and the kings of Egypt, which was entertained by both parties sometimes on the same conditions, and sometimes also the confederacy was renewed on other terms. It happened, in the 148th Olympiad,[24] that Ptolomy Epiphanes, on this occasion, sent one Demetrius, his ambassador, to the commonwealth of Achaia. That republic was then ruinously divided into two factions; whereof the heads on one side were Philopœmen, and Lycortas, the father of our author; of the adverse party, the chief was Aristænus, with some other principal Achaians. The faction of Philopœmen was prevalent in the council, for renewing the confederacy with the king of Egypt; in order to which, Lycortas received a commission to go to that court and treat the articles of alliance. Accordingly, he goes, and afterwards returns, and gives account to his superiors, that the treaty was concluded. Aristænus, hearing nothing but a bare relation of a league that was made, without any thing belonging to the conditions of it, and well knowing that several forms of those alliances had been used in the former negociations, asked Lycortas, in the council, according to which of them this present confederacy was made? To this question of his enemy, Lycortas had not a word to answer; for it had so happened by the wonderful neglect of Philopœmen and his own, and also that of Ptolomy's counsellors, (or, as I rather believe, by their craft contrived,) that the whole transaction had been loosely and confusedly managed, which, in a matter of so great importance, redounded to the scandal and ignominy of Philopœmen and Lycortas, in the face of that grave assembly. Now these proceedings our author so relates, as if he had been speaking of persons to whom he had no manner of relation, though one of them was his own father, and the other always esteemed by him in the place of a better father. But being mindful of the law which himself had instituted, concerning the indispensable duty of an historian, (which is truth,) he chose rather to be thought a lover of it, than of either of his parents. It is true, Lycortas, in all probability, was dead when Polybius wrote this history; but, had he been then living, we may safely think, that his son would have assumed the same liberty, and not feared to have offended him in behalf of truth.

Another part of this veracity is also deserving the notice of the reader, though, at the same time we must conclude, that it was also an effect of a sound judgment, that he perpetually explodes the legends of prodigies and miracles, and instead of them, most accurately searches into the natural causes of those actions which he describes; for, from the first of these, the latter follows of direct consequence. And for this reason, he professes an immortal enmity to those tricks and jugglings, which the common people believe as real miracles; because they are ignorant of the causes which produced them. But he had made a diligent search into them, and found out, that they proceeded either from the fond credulity of the people, or were imposed on them by the craft of those whose interest it was that they should be believed. You hear not in Polybius, that it rained blood or stones; that a bull had spoken; or a thousand such impossibilities, with which Livy perpetually crowds the calends of almost every consulship.[25] His new years could no more begin without them, during his description of the Punic wars, than our prognosticating almanacks without the effects of the present oppositions betwixt Saturn and Jupiter, the foretelling of comets and coruscations in the air, which seldom happen at the times assigned by our astrologers, and almost always fail in their events. If you will give credit to some other authors, some god was always present with Hannibal or Scipio to direct their actions; that a visible deity wrought journey-work under Hannibal, to conduct him through the difficult passages of the Alps; and another did the same office of drudgery for Scipio, when he besieged New Carthage, by draining the water, which otherwise would have drowned his army in their rash approaches; which Polybius observing, says wittily and truly, that the authors of

[24] In the year of Rome 568.

[25] I believe the most enthusiastic admirers of Livy must tire of these unvaried prodigies. *Et bos locutus* occurs as often, and is mentioned with as much indifference, as a nomination of sheriffs in Hall, Stowe, or Speed.

such fabulous kind of stuff write tragedies, not histories; for, as the poets, when they are at a loss for the solution of a plot, bungle up their catastrophe with a god descending in a machine, so these inconsiderate historians, when they have brought their heroes into a plunge by some rash and headlong undertaking, having no human way remaining to disengage them with their honour, are forced to have recourse to miracle, and introduce a god for their deliverance. It is a common frenzy of the ignorant multitude, says Casaubon, to be always engaging heaven on their side; and indeed it is a successful stratagem of any general to gain authority among his soldiers, if he can persuade them, that he is the man by fate appointed for such or such an action, though most impracticable. To be favoured of God, and command (if it may be permitted so to say,) the extraordinary concourse of Providence, sets off a hero, and makes more specious the cause for which he fights, without any consideration of morality, which ought to be the beginning and end of all our actions; for, where that is violated, God is only present in permission; and suffers a wrong to be done, but not commands it. Light historians, and such as are superstitious in their natures, by the artifice of feigned miracles captivate the gross understandings of their readers, and please their fancies by relations of things which are rather wonderful than true; but such as are of a more profound and solid judgment, (which is the character of our Polybius), have recourse only to their own natural lights, and by them pursue the methods at least of probability, if they cannot arrive to a settled certainty. He was satisfied that Hannibal was not the first who had made a passage through the Alps, but that the Gauls had been before him in their descent on Italy; and also knew, that this most prudent general, when he laid his design of invading that country, had made an alliance with the Gauls, and prepossessed them in his favour; and before he stirred a foot from Spain, had provided against all those difficulties which he foresaw in his attempt, and compassed his undertaking, which indeed was void of miracles, but full of conduct, and military experience. In the same manner, Scipio, before he departed from Rome, to take his voyage into Spain, had carefully considered every particular circumstance which might cross his purpose, and made his enterprize as easy to him as human prudence could provide; so that he was victorious over that nation, not by virtue of any miracle, but by his admirable forecast, and wise conduct in the execution of his design. Of which, though Polybius was not an eye-witness, he yet had it from the best testimony, which was that of Lælius, the friend of Scipio, who accompanied him in that expedition; of whom our author, with great diligence; enquired concerning every thing of moment which happened in that war, and whom he commends for his sincerity in that relation.

Whensoever he gives us the account of any considerable action, he never fails to tell us why it succeeded, or for what reason it miscarried; together with all the antecedent causes of its undertaking, and the manner of its performance; all which he accurately explains: of which I will select but some few instances, because I want leisure to expatiate on many. In the fragments of the seventeenth book he makes a learned dissertation concerning the Macedonian phalanx, or gross body of foot, which was formerly believed to be invincible, till experience taught the contrary by the success of the battle which Philip lost to the commonwealth of Rome; and the manifest and most certain causes are therein related, which prove it to be inferior to the Roman legions. When also he had told us in his former books, of the three great battles wherein Hannibal had overthrown the Romans, and the last at Cannæ, wherein he had in a manner conquered that republic, he gives the reasons of every defeat, either from the choice of ground, or the strength of the foreign horse in Hannibal's army, or the ill-timing of the fight on the vanquished side. After this, when he describes the turn of fortune on the part of the Romans, you are visibly conducted upwards to the causes of that change, and the reasonableness of the method which was afterwards pursued by that commonwealth, which raised it to the empire of the world. In these and many other examples, which for brevity are omitted, there is nothing more plain than that Polybius denies all power to fortune, and places the sum of success in Providence; συμβαινογγων τύχην άιτιασθι φαυλον, indeed, are his words, It is a madness to make fortune the mistress of events, because in herself she is nothing, can rule nothing, but is ruled by prudence. So

that whenever our author seems to attribute any thing to chance, he speaks only with the vulgar, and desires so to be understood.

But here I must make bold to part company with Casaubon for a moment. He is a vehement friend to any author with whom he has taken any pains; and his partiality to Persius, in opposition to Juvenal, is too fresh in my memory to be forgotten.[26] Because Polybius will allow nothing to the power of chance, he takes an occasion to infer, that he believed a providence; sharply inveighing against those who have accused him of atheism. He makes Suidas his second in this quarrel; and produces his single evidence, and that but a bare assertion, without proof, that Polybius believed, with us Christians, God administered all human actions and affairs. But our author will not be defended in this case; his whole history reclaims to that opinion. When he speaks of Providence, or of any divine admonition, he is as much in jest, as when he speaks of fortune; it is all to the capacity of the vulgar. Prudence was the only divinity which he worshipped, and the possession of virtue the only end which he proposed. If I would have disguised this to the reader, it was not in my power. The passages which manifestly prove his irreligion are so obvious that I need not quote them. Neither do I know any reason why Casaubon should enlarge so much in his justification; since to believe false gods, and to believe none, are errors of the same importance. He who knew not our God, saw through the ridiculous opinions of the heathens concerning theirs; and not being able without revelation to go farther, stopped at home in his own breast, and made prudence his goddess, truth his search, and virtue his reward. If Casaubon, like him, had followed truth, he would have saved me the ungrateful pains of contradicting him; but even the reputation of Polybius, if there were occasion, is to be sacrificed to truth, according to his own maxim.

As for the wisdom of our author, whereby he wonderfully foresaw the decay of the Roman empire, and those civil wars which turned it down from a commonwealth to an absolute monarchy, he who will take the pains to review this history will easily perceive, that Polybius was of the best sort of prophets, who predict from natural causes those events which must naturally proceed from them. And these things were not to succeed even in the compass of the next century to that wherein he lived, but the person was then living who was the first mover towards them; and that was that great Scipio Africanus, who, by cajoling the people to break the fundamental constitutions of the government in his favour, by bringing him too early to the consulship,[27] and afterwards by making their discipline of war precarious, first taught them to devolve the power and authority of the senate into the hands of one, and then to make that one to be at the disposition of the soldiery; which though he practised at a time when it was necessary for the safety of the commonwealth, yet it drew after it those fatal consequences, which not only ruined the republic, but also in process of time, the monarchy itself. But the author was too much in the interests of that family, to name Scipio; and therefore he gives other reasons, to which I refer the reader, that I may avoid prolixity.

By what degrees Polybius arrived to this height of knowledge, and consummate judgment in affairs, it will not be hard to make the reader comprehend; for presupposing in him all that birth or nature could give a man, who was formed for the management of great affairs, and capable of recording them, he was likewise entered from his youth into those employments which add experience to natural endowments; being joined in commission with his father Lycortas, and the younger Aratus, before the age of twenty, in an embassy to Egypt: after which he was perpetually in the business of his own commonwealth, or that of Rome. So that it seems to be one part of the Roman felicity, that he was born in an age when their commonwealth was growing to the height; that he might be the historian of those great actions, which were performed not only in his lifetime, but the chief of them even in his sight.

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[26] See Vol. XIII. p. 68. where our author, in his “Essay on Satire,” controverts keenly the position of Casaubon.

[27] In his thirty-eight year, forty-three being the legal age.

I must confess, that the preparations to his history, or the Prolegomena, as they are called, are very large, and the digressions in it are exceeding frequent. But as to his preparatives, they were but necessary to make the reader comprehend the drift and design of his undertaking: and the digressions are also so instructive, that we may truly say, they transcend the profit which we receive from the matter of fact. Upon the whole, we may conclude him to be a great talker; but we must grant him to be a prudent man. We can spare nothing of all he says, it is so much to our improvement; and if the rest of his history had remained to us, in all probability it would have been more close: for we can scarce conceive what was left in nature for him to add, he has so emptied almost all the common-places of digressions already; or if he could have added any thing, those observations might have been as useful and as necessary as the rest which he has given us, and that are descended to our hands.

I will say nothing farther of the "Excerpta," which (as Casaubon thinks,) are part of that epitome which was begun to be made by Marcus Brutus, but never finished; nor of those embassies which are collected and compiled by the command of Constantine the Great; because neither of them are translated in this work. And whether or no they will be added in another impression, I am not certain; the translator of these five books having carried his work no farther than it was perfect. He, I suppose, will acquaint you with his own purpose, in the preface which I hear he intends to prefix before Polybius.

Let us now hear Polybius himself describing an accomplished historian, wherein we shall see his own picture, as in a glass, reflected to him, and given us afterwards to behold in the writing of this history.

Plato said of old, that it would be happy for mankind, if either philosophers administered the government, or that governors applied themselves to the study of philosophy. I may also say, that it would be happy for history, if those who undertake to write it, were men conversant in political affairs; who applied themselves seriously to their undertaking, not negligently, but as such who were fully persuaded that they undertook a work of the greatest moment, of the greatest excellency, and the most necessary for mankind; establishing this as the foundation whereon they are to build, that they can never be capable of performing their duty as they ought, unless they have formed themselves beforehand to their undertaking, by prudence, and long experience of affairs; without which endowments and advantages, if they attempt to write a history, they will fall into a various and endless labyrinth of errors.

When we hear this author speaking, we are ready to think ourselves engaged in a conversation with Cato the Censor, with Lælius, with Massinissa, and with the two Scipios; that is, with the greatest heroes and most prudent men of the greatest age in the Roman commonwealth. This sets me so on fire, when I am reading either here, or in any ancient author, their lives and actions, that I cannot hold from breaking out with Montagne into this expression: "It is just," says he, "for every honest man to be content with the government and laws of his native country, without endeavouring to alter or subvert them; but if I were to choose, where I would have been born, it should have been in a commonwealth." He indeed names Venice, which, for many reasons, should not be my wish; but rather Rome in such an age, if it were possible, as that wherein Polybius lived; or that of Sparta, whose constitution for a republic, is by our author compared with Rome, to which he justly gives the preference.

I will not undertake to compare Polybius and Tacitus; though, if I should attempt it upon the whole merits of the cause, I must allow to Polybius the greater comprehension, and the larger soul; to Tacitus, the greater eloquence, and the more close connection of his thoughts. The manner of Tacitus in writing is more like the force and gravity of Demosthenes; that of Polybius more like the copiousness and diffusive character of Cicero. Amongst historians, Tacitus imitated Thucydides, and Polybius, Herodotus. Polybius foresaw the ruin of the Roman commonwealth, by luxury, lust, and cruelty; Tacitus foresaw in the causes those events which would destroy the monarchy. They are both of them, without dispute, the best historians in their several kinds. In this they are alike, that both of them suffered under the iniquity of the times in which they lived; both their histories are

dismembered, the greatest part of them lost, and they are interpolated in many places. Had their works been perfect, we might have had longer histories, but not better. Casaubon, according to his usual partiality, condemns Tacitus that he may raise Polybius; who needs not any sinister artifice to make him appear equal to the best. Tacitus described the times of tyranny; but he always writes with some kind of indignation against them. It is not his fault that Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, were bad princes. He is accused of malevolence, and of taking actions in the worst sense: but we are still to remember, that those were the actions of tyrants. Had the rest of his history remained to us, we had certainly found a better account of Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, and Trajan, who were virtuous emperors; and he would have given the principles of their actions a contrary turn. But it is not my business to defend Tacitus; neither dare I decide the preference betwixt him and our Polybius. They are equally profitable and instructive to the reader; but Tacitus more useful to those who are born under a monarchy, Polybius to those who live in a republic.

What may farther be added concerning the history of this author, I leave to be performed by the elegant translator of his work.[28]

[28] The elegant translator, however, gives us no information on that subject; his preface being principally a panegyric upon good discipline, which, without much risque of contradiction, he affirms to be the “substance and sum total of military science.”

THE LIFE OF LUCIAN

The Dialogues of Lucian were translated by Walter Moyle, Sir Henry Shere, Charles Blount, and others, and seem to have been intended for publication about 1696, when our author supplied the following prefatory life. The design was, however, for a time laid aside, and the work did not appear until 1711 several years after Dryden's death. Hence the preface wants those last corrections, which, I suspect, Dryden contented himself with bestowing upon the proof sheets, as they came from press. I have followed several of Mr Malone's judicious, and indeed indispensable, corrections of the printed copy.

THE LIFE OF LUCIAN

The writing a life is at all times, and in all circumstances, the most difficult task of an historian; and, notwithstanding the numerous tribe of biographers, we can scarce find one, except Plutarch, who deserves our perusal, or can invite a second view. But if the difficulty be so great where the materials are plentiful, and the incidents extraordinary, what must it be when the person, that affords the subject, denies matter enough for a page? The learned seldom abound with action, and it is action only that furnishes the historian with things agreeable and instructive. It is true, that Diogenes Laertius, and our learned countryman Mr Stanley,[29] have both written the "Lives of the Philosophers;" but we are more obliged to the various principles of their several sects, than to any thing remarkable that they did, for our entertainment.

But Lucian, as pleasing and useful as he was in his writings, in the opinion of the most candid judges, has left so little of his own affairs on record, that there is scarce sufficient to fill a page, from his birth to his death.

There were many of the name of Lucian among the ancients, eminent in several ways, and whose names have reached posterity with honour and applause. Suidas mentions one, as a man of singular probity, who, having discharged the administration of the chief prefect of the Oriental empire,[30] under Arcadius, with extraordinary justice and praise of the people, drew on himself the envy and hate of the courtiers, (the constant attendant of eminent virtue and merit,) and the anger of the emperor himself; and was at last murdered by Rufinus.[31]

Among those, who were eminent for their learning, were some divines and philosophers. Of the former, we find one in St Cyprian, to whom the fourth and seventeenth epistles are inscribed. There was another, priest of the church of Antioch, who, as Suidas assures us, reviewed, corrected, and restored to its primitive purity, the Hebrew Bible; and afterward suffered martyrdom, at Nicomedia, under Maximilian.[32] A third was a priest of Jerusalem, who not only made a figure among the learned

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[29] Thomas Stanley's "History of Philosophy," &c. was published in folio, in detached parts, between 1655 and 1660; and reprinted entire in 1687.

[30] A. D. 375. Rufinus was chief prefect of the East. The person here alluded to was only count of fifteen provinces. Dryden, writing from memory, confounded the offices of the murderer and murdered. See the next note.

[31] Gibbon thus narrates the catastrophe: – "The extreme parsimony of Rufinus left him only the reproach and envy of ill-gotten wealth. His dependents served him without attachment; the universal hatred of mankind was repressed only by the influence of servile fear. The fate of Lucian proclaimed to the East, that the prefect, whose industry was much abated in the dispatch of ordinary business, was active and indefatigable in the pursuit of revenge. Lucian, (the son of the prefect Florentius, the oppressor of Gaul, and the enemy of Julian,) had employed a considerable part of his inheritance, the fruit of rapine and corruption, to purchase the friendship of Rufinus, and the high office of Count of the East. But the new magistrate imprudently departed from the maxims of the court and of the times; disgraced his benefactor, by the contrast of a virtuous and temperate administration; and presumed to refuse an act of injustice, which might have tended to the profit of the emperor's uncle. Arcadius was easily persuaded to resent the supposed insult; and the prefect of the East resolved to execute in person the cruel vengeance which he meditated against this ungrateful delegate of his power. He performed, with incessant speed, the journey of seven or eight hundred miles, from Constantinople to Antioch, entered the capital of Syria at the dead of night, and spread universal consternation among a people ignorant of his design, but not ignorant of his character. The count of the fifteen provinces of the East was dragged, like the vilest malefactor, before the arbitrary tribunal of Rufinus. Notwithstanding the clearest evidence of his integrity, which was not impeached even by the voice of an accuser, Lucian was condemned, almost without a trial, to suffer a cruel and ignominious punishment. The ministers of the tyrant, by the order, and in the presence, of their master, beat him on the neck with leather thongs, armed at the extremities with lead; and when he fainted under the violence of the pain, he was removed in a close litter to conceal his dying agonies from the eyes of the indignant city. No sooner had Rufinus perpetrated this inhuman act, the sole object of his expedition, than he returned amidst the deep and silent curses of a trembling people, from Antioch to Constantinople; and his diligence was accelerated by the hope of accomplishing, without delay, the nuptials of his daughter with the emperor of the East." – Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. iii. p. 209.The punctuation throughout this piece is so inaccurate, and the paragraphs so strangely divided, that it must have been printed from a copy very carelessly written. In the present passage, we find *Rafiany*, instead of *Rufinus*. Malone.

[32] A. D. 312. He suffered for favouring the Arians. Malone.

of his own age,[33] but, as Gesnerus observes, conveyed his reputation to posterity by the remains of his writings.

But none of this name has met with the general applause of so many ages, as Lucian the philosopher and eminent sophist, who was author of the following Dialogues, of whose birth, life, and death, I shall give you all I could collect of any certain and historical credit.

He had not the good fortune to be born of illustrious or wealthy parents, which give a man a very advantageous rise on his first appearance in the world; but the father of our Lucian laboured under so great a straitness of estate, that he was fain to put his son apprentice to a statuary, whose genius for the finer studies was so extraordinary and so rare; because he hoped from that business, not only a speedy supply to his own wants, but was secure that his education in that art would be much less expensive to him.

He was born in Samosata, a city of Syria, not far from the river Euphrates; and for this reason, he calls himself more than once an Assyrian, and a Syrian; but he was derived from a Greek original, his forefathers having been citizens of Patras in Achaia.

We have nothing certain as to the exact time of his birth. Suidas confirms his flourishing under the Emperor Trajan; but then he was likewise before him. Some mention the reign of Adrian; but it cannot be fixed to any year or consulate.[34]

The person he was bound to was his uncle, a man of a severe and morose temper, of whom he was to learn the statuary's and stone-cutter's art; for his father observing our Lucian, now a boy, of his own head, and without any instructor, make various figures in wax, he persuaded himself, that if he had a good master, he could not but arrive to an uncommon excellence in it.

But it happened, in the very beginning of his time, he broke a model, and was very severely called to account for it by his master. He, not liking this treatment, and having a soul and genius above any mechanic trade, ran away home.

After which, in his sleep, there appeared to him two young women, or rather the tutelar goddesses of the statuary art, and of the liberal sciences, hotly disputing of their preference to each other; and on a full hearing of both sides, he bids adieu to statuary, and entirely surrenders himself to the conduct of virtue and learning. And as his desires of improvement were great, and the instructions he had, very good, the progress he made was as considerable, till, by the maturity of his age and his study, he made his appearance in the world.

Though it is not to be supposed, that there is any thing of reality in this dream, or vision, of Lucian, which he treats of in his works, yet this may be gathered from it, – that Lucian himself, having consulted his genius, and the nature of the study his father had allotted him, and that to which he found a propensity in himself, he quitted the former, and pursued the latter, choosing rather to form the minds of men than their statues.

In his youth, he taught rhetoric in Gaul, and in several other places. He pleaded likewise at the bar in Antioch, the capital of Syria; but the noise of the bar disgusting, and his ill success in causes disheartening him, he quitted the practice of rhetoric and the law, and applied himself to writing.

He was forty years old, when he first took to philosophy. Having a mind to make himself known in Macedon, he took the opportunity of speaking in the public assembly of all that region. In his old age, he was received into the imperial family, and had the place of intendant of Egypt,[35] after he had travelled through almost all the known countries of that age to improve his knowledge in men, manners, and arts; for some writers make this particular observation on his travel into Gaul, and residence in that country, that he gained there the greatest part of his knowledge in rhetoric, that

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[33] A. D. 415. He was minister of Caphargamala, and pretended to have been instructed by a dream of the burial place of the proto-martyr Stephen, Gamaliel, and other saints. See Gibbon's *History*, vol. iii. p. 97.Several other persons of this name, besides those here mentioned, are enumerated by Fabricius. *Bibl. Græc.* iv. 508.

[34] Dr Franklin seems disposed to fix on the year 90.

[35] *Procurator principis*. Under Marcus Aurelius.

region being in his age, and also before it, a nursery of eloquence and oratory, as Juvenal, Martial, and others, sufficiently witness.[36]

The manner of his death is obscure to us, though it is most probable he died of the gout. Suidas alone tells a story of his being worried to death, and devoured by dogs, returning from a feast; which being so uncommon a death, so very improbable, and attested only by one author, has found little credit with posterity. If it be true, that he was once a Christian, and afterwards became a renegade to our belief, perhaps some zealots may have invented this tale of his death, as a just and signal punishment for his apostacy. All men are willing to have the miracle, or at least the wonderful providence, go on their side, and will be teaching God Almighty what he ought to do in this world, as well as in the next; as if they were proper judges of his decrees, and for what end he prospers some, or punishes others, in this life. Ablancourt, and our learned countryman Dr Mayne,[37] look on the story as a fiction: and, for my part, I can see no reason either to believe he ever professed Christianity, or, if he did, why he might[38] not more probably die in his bed at so great an age as fourscore and ten, than be torn in pieces and devoured by dogs, when he was too feeble to defend himself. So early began the want of charity, the presumption of meddling with God's government, and the spirit of calumny amongst the primitive believers.

Of his posterity we know nothing more, than that he left a son behind him, who was as much in favour with the Emperor Julian, as his father had been with Aurelius the philosopher. This son became in time a famous sophist; and among the works of Julian we find an epistle of that great person to him.[39]

I find that I have mingled, before I was aware, some things which are doubtful with some which are certain; forced indeed by the narrowness of the subject, which affords very little of undisputed truth. Yet I find myself obliged to do right to Monsieur d'Ablancourt,[40] who is not positively of opinion, that Suidas was the author of this fable; but rather that it descended to him by the tradition of former times, yet without any certain ground of truth. He concludes it, however, to be a calumny, perhaps a charitable kind of lie, to deter others from satirizing the new dogmas of Christianity, by the judgment shown on Lucian. We find nothing in his writings, which gives any hint of his professing our belief; but being naturally curious, and living not only amongst Christians, but in the neighbourhood of Judea, he might reasonably be supposed to be knowing in our points of faith, without believing them. He ran a muck, and laid about him on all sides with more fury on the heathens, whose religion he professed; he struck at ours but casually, as it came in his way, rather than as he sought it; he contemned it too much to write in earnest against it.

We have indeed the highest probabilities for our revealed religion; arguments which will preponderate with a reasonable man, upon a long and careful disquisition; but I have always been of opinion, that we can demonstrate nothing, because the subject-matter is not capable of a demonstration. It is the particular grace of God, that any man believes the mysteries of our faith; which I think a conclusive argument against the doctrine of persecution in any church. And though I am absolutely convinced, as I heartily thank God I am, not only of the general principles of Christianity, but of all truths necessary to salvation in the Roman church, yet I cannot but detest our inquisition, as it is practised in some foreign parts, particularly in Spain and in the Indies.

Those reasons, which are cogent to me, may not prevail with others, who bear the denomination of Christians; and those which are prevalent with all Christians, in regard of their birth and education, may find no force, when they are used against Mahometans or heathens. To instruct is a charitable

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[36] See *Juv.* sat. i. 44.; vii. 148.; xv. 111. *Quintil.* lib. x. cap. 3.

[37] Dr Jasper Mayne, who published a translation of some select dialogues of Lucian, in folio, in 1664.

[38] I follow Mr Malone in reading *might*; the printed copy has *must*.

[39] This is a gross mistake, 180 years intervening between the death of Aurelius and the reign of Julian.

[40] Nicolas Perrot, Sieur d'Ablancourt, whose translation of the Dialogues of Lucian into French was first published at Paris in 1634. His continuation of the true history of Lucian is very much in the tone of the original.

duty; to compel, by threatenings and punishment, is the office of a hangman, and the principle of a tyrant.

But my zeal in a good cause, as I believe, has transported me beyond the limits of my subject. I was endeavouring to prove, that Lucian had never been a member of the Christian church; and methinks it makes for my opinion, that, in relating the death of Peregrinus, who, being born a Pagan, pretended afterwards to turn Christian, and turned himself publicly at the Olympic games, at his death professing himself a cynic philosopher, it seems, I say, to me, that Lucian would not have so severely declaimed against this Proteus, (which was another of Peregrinus his names,) if he himself had been guilty of that apostacy.

I know not that this passage has been observed by any man before me;[41] and yet in this very place it is, that this author has more severely handled our belief, and more at large, than in any other part of all his writings, excepting only the Dialogue of Triephon and Critias,[42] wherein he lashes his own false gods with more severity than the true; and where the first Christians, with their cropped hair, their whining voices, melancholy faces, mournful discourses, and nasty habits, are described with a greater air of Calvinists or Quakers, than of Roman Catholics or Church of England men.

After all, what if this discourse last mentioned, and the rest of the dialogues wherein the Christians are satirized, were none of Lucian's? The learned and ingenious Dr Mayne, whom I have before cited, is of this opinion, and confirms it by the attestation of Philander, Obsobœus, Mycillus, and Cognatus, whom since I have not read, or two of them but very superficially, I refer you for the faith of his quotation to the authors themselves.[43]

The next supposition concerning Lucian's religion is, that he was of none at all. I doubt not but the same people, who broached the story of his being once a Christian, followed their blow upon him in this second accusation.

There are several sorts of Christians at this day reigning in the world, who will not allow any man to believe in the Son of God, whose other articles of faith are not in all things conformable to theirs. Some of these exercise this rigid and severe kind of charity, with a good intent of reducing several sects into one common church; but the spirit of others is evidently seen by their detraction, their malice, their spitting venom, their raising false reports of those who are not of their communion. I wish the ancientness of these censorious principles may be proved by better arguments, than by any near resemblance they have with the primitive believers. But till I am convinced that Lucian has been charged with atheism of old, I shall be apt to think that this accusation is very modern.

One of Lucian's translators pleads in his defence, that it was very improbable a man, who has laughed paganism out of doors, should believe no God; that he, who could point to the sepulchre of Jupiter in Crete, as well as our Tertullian, should be an atheist. But this argument, I confess, is of little weight to prove him a deist, only because he was no polytheist. He might as well believe in none, as in many gods; and on the other side, he might believe in many, as Julian did, and not in one. For my own part, I think it is not proved that either of them were apostates, though one of them, in hopes of an empire, might temporize, while Christianity was the mode at court. Neither is our author cleared any thing the more, because his writings have served, in the times of the heathens, to destroy that vain, unreasonable, and impious religion; *that* was an oblique service, which Lucian never intended us; for his business, like that of some modern polemics, was rather to pull down every thing, than to set up any thing. With what show of probability can I urge in his defence, that one of the greatest among the fathers has drawn whole homilies from our author's dialogue, since I know that Lucian made them not for that purpose? The occasional good which he has done, is not to be imputed to

[41] This observation had been made by Gilbertas Cognatus, and by Thomas Hickes, in his Life of Lucian, printed in 1634. Malone.

[42] Entitled "Philopatris." The Christian religion, and its mysteries, are ridiculed in this piece with very little ceremony.

[43] Gesner has written a long Latin essay upon this point, which is subjoined to the third volume of Lucian's works, in the 4to edition of Hemsterhucius.

him. St Chrysostom, St Augustin, and many others, have applied his arguments on better motives than their author proposed to himself in framing them.

These reasons therefore, as they make nothing against his being an atheist, so they prove nothing of his believing one God; but only leave him as they found him, and leave us in as great an obscurity concerning his religion as before. I may be as much mistaken in my opinion as these great men have been before me; and this is very probable, because I know less of him than they; yet I have read him over more than once, and therefore will presume to say, that I think him either one of the Eclectic[44] school, or else a Sceptic: I mean, that he either formed a body of philosophy for his own use out of the opinions and dogmas of several heathen philosophers, disagreeing amongst themselves, or that he doubted of every thing; weighed all opinions, and adhered to none of them; only used them as they served his occasion for the present dialogue, and perhaps rejected them in the next. And indeed this last opinion is the more probable of the two, if we consider the genius of the man, whose image we may clearly see in the glass which he holds before us of his writings, which reflects him to our sight.

Not to dwell on examples, with which his works are amply furnished, I will only mention two. In one, Socrates convinces his friend Chærephon of the power of the gods in transformations, and of a supreme Providence which accompanies that power in the administration of the world. In another, he confutes Jupiter, and pulls him down from heaven to earth, by his own Homerical chain; and makes him only a subservient slave to blind eternal fate. I might add, that he is, in one half of his book, a Stoic, in the other an Epicurean; never constant to himself in any scheme of divinity, unless it be in despising his gentile gods. And this derision, as it shews the man himself, so it gives us an idea of the age in which he lived; for if that had been devout or ignorant, his scoffing humour would either have been restrained, or had not passed unpunished; all knowing ages being naturally sceptic, and not at all bigotted; which, if I am not much deceived, is the proper character of our own.

To conclude this article: He was too fantastical, too giddy, too irresolute, either to be any thing at all, or any thing long; and in this view I cannot think he was either a steady atheist, or a deist, but a doubter, a sceptic, as he plainly declares himself to be, when he puts himself under the name of Hermotimus the Stoic, in the dialogue called the “Dialogue of the Sects.”

As for his morals, they are spoken of as variously as his opinions. Some are for decrying him more than he deserves; his defenders themselves dare not set him up for a pattern of severe virtue. No man is so profligate, as openly to profess vice; and therefore it is no wonder, if under the reign of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines, of which the last was his patron and benefactor, he lived not so much a libertine as he had it to be in his nature. He is more accused for his love of boys than of women. Not that we have any particular story to convince us of this detestable passion in him; but his own writings bear this record against him, that he speaks often of it, and I know not that ever he condemns it. Repeated expressions, as well as repeated actions, witness some secret pleasure in the deed, or at least some secret inclination to it. He seems to insinuate, in his “Dialogue of Loves,” that Socrates was given to this vice; but we find not that he blames him for it, which, if he had been wholly innocent himself, it became a philosopher to have done. But as we pass over a foul way as hastily as we can, so I will leave this abominable subject, which strikes me with horror when I name it.

If there be any who are guilty of this sin, we may assure ourselves they will never stop at any other; for when they have overleaped the bounds of nature, they run so fast to all other immoralities, that the grace of God, without a miracle, can never overtake them.

Lucian is accused likewise for his writing too lusciously in his “Dialogue of the Harlots.”[45] It has been the common fault of all satirists, to make vice too amiable, while they expose it; but of all men living, I am the most unfit to accuse Lucian, who am so little able to defend myself from the same

[44] I follow Mr Malone in reading *eclectic* for *elective*.

[45] The best judges have condemned Εταιρικοι Διαλογοι, or “Dialogues of the Harlots,” as not being genuine. They are at any rate gross and devoid of humour.

objection. We find not, however, that Lucian was charged with the wantonness of his "Dialogues" in his own life-time. If he had been, he would certainly have answered for himself, as he did to those who accused him for exposing Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, and other great philosophers, to the laughter of the people, when Jupiter sold them by an inch of candle. But, to confess the truth, [as] I am of their opinion, who think that answer of his not over-ingenuous, viz. that he only attacked the false philosophers of their sects, in their persons whom he honoured; so I am persuaded, that he could not have alleged more in his excuse for these "Dialogues," than that as he taught harlots to deceive, so, at the same time, he discovered their deceits to the knowledge of young men, and thereby warned them to avoid the snare.

I find him not charged with any other faults, than what I have already mentioned. He was otherwise of a life as unblameable as any man, for aught we find to the contrary: and I have this probable inducement to believe it, because he had so honourable an employment under Marcus Aurelius, an emperor as clear-sighted as he was truly virtuous; for both which qualities we need not quote Lucian, who was so much obliged to him, but may securely appeal to Herodian, and to all the historians who have written of him, – besides the testimony of his own admirable works, which are yet in the hands of all the learned.

As for those who condemn our author for the too much gall and virulency of his satires, it is to be suspected, says Dr Mayne, that they themselves are guilty of those hypocrisies, crimes, and follies, which he so sharply exposes, and at the same time endeavours to reform. I may add, that, for the most part, he rather laughs like Horace, than bites like Juvenal. Indeed his genius was of kin to both, but more nearly related to the former. Some diseases are curable by lenitives; to others corrosives are necessary. Can a man inveigh too sharply against the cruelty of tyrants, the pride and vanity of the great, the covetousness of the rich, the baseness of the Sophists, and particularly of the Cynics, (who while they preach poverty to others, are heaping up riches, and living in gluttony,) besides the wrangling of the sects amongst themselves about supreme happiness, which he describes at a drunken feast, and calls it the battle of the Lapithæ.

Excepting what already is excepted, he seems to me to be an enemy to nothing but to vice and folly. The pictures which he draws of Nigrinus and of Demonax are as fair as that of virtue herself, if, as the philosopher said, she could wear a body. And if we oppose to them the lives of Alexander the false prophet, and of Peregrinus, how pleasingly, and with how much profit, does the deformity of the last set off the beauty of the first!

Some of his censurers accuse him of flatness and want of wit in many places. These I suppose have read him in some Latin translations, which I confess, are generally dull; and this is the only excuse I can make for them. Otherwise they accuse themselves too manifestly for want of taste or understanding. Of this number is the wretched author of the *Lucien en Belle Humeur*, who being himself as insipid as a Dutch poet, yet arraigns Lucian for his own fault; introduces the ghost of Ablancourt, confessing his coldness in many places, the poorness of his thoughts, and his want of humour; represents his readers tired and yawning at his ill buffoonery and false mirth, and sleeping over his melancholic stories, which are every where stuffed with improbabilities. He could have said no worse of a Leyden slip.[46]

The best on it is, the jaundice is only in his own eyes, which makes Lucian look yellow to him. All mankind will exclaim against him for preaching this doctrine; and be of opinion when they read his Lucian, that he looked in a glass when he drew his picture. I wish I had the liberty to lash this frog-land wit as he deserves; but when a speech is not seconded in parliament, it falls of course; and this author has the whole senate of the learned to pull him down: *incipient omnes pro Cicerone loqui*.

It is to be acknowledged, that his best translator, Ablancourt, thinks him not a profound master in any sort of philosophy; but only that he skimmed enough from every sect, to serve his turn in

[46] I presume a cant phrase for a graft from that garden of knowledge.

rhetoric, which was his profession. This he gathers from his superficial way of arguing. But why may not another man reply in his defence, that he made choice of those kinds of reasons which were most capable of being made to shine in his facetious way of arguing; and those undoubtedly were not the most knotty, nor the deepest, but the most diverting by the sharpness of the raillery. Dr Mayne, so often praised, has another opinion of Lucian's learning, and the strength of his witty arguments, concluding on that subject in these words, or near them: "For my part, I know not to whose writings we owe more our Christianity, where the true God has succeeded a multitude of false, – whether to the grave confutation of Clemens Alexandrinus, Arnobius, Justin Martyr, St. Augustin, Lactantius, &c. or the facetious wit of Lucian." – I cannot doubt but the treacherous translator would have given his hand to what the Englishman has said of their common author. The success has justified his opinion in the sight of all the world. Lucian's manner of convincing, was certainly more pleasant than that of the Christian writers, and we know the effect was full as powerful; so easily can the Eternal Wisdom draw good out of evil, and make his enemy subservient to the establishment of his faith.

I will not enlarge on the praises of his oratory. If we compare his style with the Greek historians, his contemporaries, or near his time, we shall find it much more pure than that of Plutarch, Dion, or Appian, though not so grave; because his subjects and theirs required to be treated after a different manner. It was not of an uniform web, says Mayne, like Thucydides, Polybius, and some others whom he names, but was somewhat peculiar to himself; his words well chosen, his periods round, the parts of his sentences harmoniously divided, a full flood or even a torrent of persuasion, without inequalities or swellings; such as might be put in equal comparison with the best orations of Demosthenes or Isocrates; not so dry as the first, nor so flowery as the last. His wit, says Ablancourt, was full of urbanity, that attic salt, which the French call, fine raillery; not obscene, not gross, not rude, but facetious, well mannered, and well bred: only he will not allow his love the quality last mentioned, but thinks it rustical, and according either to his own genius, or that of the age in which he lived.

If wit consists in the propriety of thoughts and words, (which I imagined I had first found out, but since am pleasingly convinced that Aristotle has made the same definition in other terms,) then Lucian's thoughts and words are always proper to his characters and his subject. If the pleasure arising from comedy and satire be either laughter, or some nobler sort of delight, which is above it, no man is so great a master of irony as our author. That figure is not only a keen, but a shining weapon in his hand; it glitters in the eyes of those it kills; his own gods, his greatest enemies, are not butchered by him, but fairly slain: they must acknowledge the hero in the stroke, and take the comfort which Virgil gives to a dying captain:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.