

As a critic, the rules which Horace has given are almost entirely borrowed from Aristotle; but he has arranged them with that acute and admirable judgment, and illustrated them with that aptitude of imagery which are conspicuous in the rest of his poetical compositions.

Ovid is the next and last of that constellation of poets which formed the honor of the Augustan age. In what we term *genius*, he is decidedly inferior both to Virgil and Horace. He is deficient in grandeur of conception, in simplicity of expression, and in that high-wrought and ardent imagination which is the accompaniment of the more lofty kinds of genius. But if he wants all this, he possesses still many excellences. His invention is astonishing: in variety of story, in ingenuity of connection, in the profusion and facility of his versification, he cannot be surpassed. He is, in these respects, a kind of Ariosto amongst the ancients. But even these great qualities have led him into errors. He is generally too diffuse to be grand or forcible—too particular, too much a lover of the detail of description, ever to reach the sublime. He is, in the words of Quintilian, *nimum amator sui ingenii*—too fond of his own ingenuity. His learning becomes too often tedious, his narration prolix, his invention puerile. He possesses, in short, more of those minor qualifications which are necessary to constitute a true poet than any of his contemporaries:—he can be tender, harmonious, pathetic, and sometimes eloquent;—but if he is ever great, it is only in a few insulated passages, which are scattered through his works. It is more, perhaps, the effect of chance or of imitation, than of that steady ray of genius which illuminates the nobler work of his friend and contemporary Virgil.

The elegies of Tibullus are elegant, but generally insipid. They never offend, but they seldom move; he is a pleasing, but not an original poet, and, owing to an extreme poverty of fancy, he is constantly pacing the same beaten track, *eodem pæne gyro concluditur*.

The last of the Roman poets whom we may call truly excellent in his own department is *Martial*. The sense which the ancients appear to have affixed to the term "epigram," appears to have been very different from its common acceptation in the present day. By epigram we generally understand some happy or amusing conceit, some sudden ebullition of wit, or humor, expressed in a short and sententious distich. According to the meaning of the ancients, however, there was no limitation as to these qualities. Any happy turn of thought, whether playful or serious, expressed in poetical language, was denominated an epigram. It is for this reason that, amongst the Anthologies of the Greeks, we meet with epigrams which are alternately written in a jocose or serious strain, and which, if they are often smart and humorous, are as frequently tender and pathetic. Such is in truth the real character of the Epigrams of Martial; and the execution of these, to whatever

class they belong, is for the most part peculiarly happy. Yet he has many faults. His ingenuity and quickness have often betrayed him into overstrained and artificial conceits. Conscious of a peculiar talent in discerning remote, though often ludicrous analogies, he is ever too anxious to display this. He plays too much upon the sense, and puns too frequently on the sound and meaning of his words; and he has that unpardonable fault, so common to the age in which he wrote, of introducing an obscenity and licentiousness into his verses, which, although it recommended them to that degraded people for whom he wrote, is fortunately too gross to produce any serious mischief, or to create any other feeling than that of disgust.

The first symptom of the corruption of writing is a species of false and inflated style, a luxuriance of ornament, and a fondness for quaint and pointed terms of expression. This was discernible even in Martial. When these succeed to, or rather usurp, the place of the chaste, manly, and simple mode of expression—of that style which attends more to the sense which it conveys, than to the terms or manner in which it is constructed, it is a certain indication of the decay of a just and genuine taste. Even in the end of the reign of Augustus, poetry seems to have been rather on the decline; and in the succeeding age, if we except the compositions of Martial and Juvenal, nature and simplicity had almost entirely given place to bombast and affectation. Although in Lucan we find some scattered examples of genuine poetic imagery, and in Persius several happy strokes of keen and animated satire, yet they hardly repay the trouble of wading through the unnatural fustian of the one, or the affected obscurity of the other—who, however, we should remember, wrote the pieces which remain to us in early youth.

CHAPTER IV.

Roman Philosophy—Public and Private Manners.

IN the present chapter, I shall consider, in the first place, the state of philosophy, amongst the Romans, and afterwards proceed to the subject of their public and private manners. In the early ages of the republic, the Romans, occupied in continual wars with the states of Italy, or, in the short intervals of respite from these,

engrossed in their domestic dissensions, had little leisure to bestow on the cultivation of the sciences, and had no idea of philosophical speculation. It was not till the end of the sixth century, after the building of the city, and in the interval between the war with Perseus of Macedon and the third Punic war, that philosophy made its first appearance at Rome. A number of Achæians, banished from their native country, had settled in Italy. Part of these, amongst whom were some men of talents and learning, particularly Polybius the Megalopolitan, took up their abode at Rome, and applying themselves there to the pursuit of letters and the education of the Roman youth, soon diffused a relish for these studies, hitherto unknown to the rising republic. This new taste was, as I have hinted at in the former chapter, very unfavorably regarded by the older citizens. The senators, who lived in a perpetual struggle with a people jealous of their civil rights, were in no measure disposed to encourage philosophical disquisitions on the origin of government, on the foundation of liberty, and the natural rights of mankind. To repress, therefore, such dangerous studies, this body passed a decree, banishing those foreign philosophers from their city. This, however, was an ineffectual remedy. The passion for literature may perhaps be cherished by political encouragements, but once roused it is not easily extinguished by political restraints. A few years after this, Carneades and Critolaus, arrived in an Athenian embassy at Rome; the discourses of these philosophers added new strength and vigor to that taste whose first efforts the Roman senate had in vain attempted to extinguish, and the Greek philosophy soon became as generally relished in this era of the republic, as during its earliest ages it had been either unknown or despised.

It was natural that, in the choice among the different systems which the several sects or schools of Greek philosophy presented, those tenets should be most favorably received and most generally adopted, which accorded most with the national character and genius of the people. The Romans had not yet shaken off the severity of ancient manners, and the doctrines of the Stoical philosophy were, therefore, most nearly allied to their own previous conceptions of morality. The philosophy of Aristotle was in truth little known in Rome till the age of Cicero. Cratippus then taught his system with great reputation, though that unnecessarily tedious and complicated mode of reasoning adopted by this philosopher does not appear ever to have had a numerous party to support it. Lucullus, whose stay in Greece afforded him an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the doctrines of all the different schools, at his return to Rome disseminated a very general taste for philosophising. He does not, indeed, appear to have attached himself exclusively to the tenets of any particular sect. If he had a preference for any, it was for that of Plato. The philosophy of the New Academy, which professed to teach the art

of defending all opinions, would necessarily find its partisans among the lawyers and orators. Cicero, if he professed any settled system at all, (a point which his philosophical writings leave very enigmatical,) seems most attached to this.

The truth probably is, that, in his philosophical works, his general purpose was to give rather a history of the ancient philosophy, than any defence or exposition of his own peculiar opinions; to explain to his countrymen in their own language whatever the philosophers of all sects and all ages had taught, with a view towards the enlargement of their understanding, and the improving of their morals. This he declares to be his purpose in his "Treatise de Finibus," in that, *De Natura Deorum*, in his "Tusculan Disputations," and in his book on the Academic Philosophy. As to physics, or natural philosophy, Cicero seems to have entertained the same opinion with Socrates—that a minute and particular attention to these inquiries was a study rather curious than useful, and contributing but little to the real benefit of mankind—a very extraordinary idea, but which seems to have been prevalent with most of the ancient philosophers, if we except Aristotle and the elder Pliny. It was reserved for our own country, in a future and more enlightened age of the world, to lay, in this severe and critical examination of Nature, which was then so much despised, the solid basis of all true and genuine philosophy. Of the writings and principles of Aristotle a particular account has been given in treating of the progress of philosophy amongst the Greeks. Nothing need here be added upon this subject. The elder Pliny, whose books on natural history still remain entire, was perhaps one of the most extraordinary literary phenomena that ever existed in the world. In one of the letters of his nephew, Pliny the younger, there is an account given of the studies, and a description of the manner of life of this singular man, which, as it is extremely curious, I shall be easily excused for inserting.

"You admire," says Pliny to Macer, "the works of my uncle, and wish to have a complete collection of them; I will point out to you the order in which they were composed: for, however immaterial that may seem, it is a sort of information not at all unacceptable to men of letters. The first book he published was a treatise concerning the Art of throwing the Javelin on Horseback. This he wrote when he commanded a troop of horse, and it is drawn up with great accuracy and judgment. He next published the *Life of Pomponius Secundus*, in two books, and after that, the *History of the Wars in Germany*, in twenty books, in which he gave an account of all the battles we had been engaged in against that nation; and a *Treatise upon Eloquence*, divided into six books. In this work he takes the orator from his cradle, and leads him up till he has carried him to the highest point of perfection in his art. In the latter part of Nero's reign, when the tyranny of the times made it dangerous to engage in any studies

of a more free and elevated nature, he published a piece of criticism in eight books, concerning Ambiguity in Expression. He completed the history which Aufidius Bassus left unfinished, and added to it thirty books; and lastly, he has left thirty-seven books of natural history, a work of great compass and learning, and almost as various as Nature herself. You will wonder how a man so engaged as he was could find time to compose so many books; but your surprise will rise still higher, when you hear, that for some time he engaged in the profession of an advocate; that he died in his fifty-sixth year; and that from the time of his quitting the bar till his death, he was employed in the execution of the highest employments, and in the service of his prince. But he had a quick apprehension, joined to unwearied application. Before day-break he used to wait upon Vespasian, who like him chose that time to transact his business. When he had finished the affairs which the emperor committed to his charge, he returned home to his studies. After a short repast at noon, he would repose himself in the sun, during which time, some author was read to him, from which, according to his constant custom, he made extracts and observations. When this was over, he generally took the cold bath, after that, a slight refreshment, and then reposed himself a little. Then, as if beginning a new day, he immediately resumed his studies till supper time, during which, a book was commonly read to him, upon which he would make occasional remarks. In summer, he rose from supper by day-light and in winter as soon as it was dark. Such was his manner of life, amidst the hurry and noise of the town; but in the country, his whole time was devoted to study without intermission, excepting when in the bath, for even when undressing, and when he was rubbed by his servants, he was either listening to a reader, or dictating himself. A secretary constantly attended him in his chariot. I remember he once reproved me for walking. 'You might,' says he, 'employ those hours to more advantage,' for he thought all time was lost which was not given to study. By this extraordinary application he found time to write so many volumes. I cannot but smile, (continues the younger Pliny,) when I hear myself called a studious man, who, in comparison to him, am a mere loiterer. But why do I mention myself, who am diverted from these pursuits by numberless affairs both public and private? Even they whose whole lives are engaged in study must blush when placed in the same view with him."

This picture of the manner of life pursued by the elder Pliny will be allowed by all to be a very singular one, but it is too inconsistent with the ordinary powers of man to serve as a model of imitation. It will appear also from this, that Pliny was infinitely more studious of storing his mind with the opinions of others than to form opinions of his own; for one who is constantly employed, either in listening to a reader, or in dictating to an amanuensis, can-

not possibly give sufficient exercise either to his judgment or his invention. And this, indeed, appears to have been the case with Pliny, if we may judge from the only work of his remaining, *The Books of Natural History*, which is, indeed, little else than a most voluminous compilation from the works of Varro, the elder Cato, Hyginus, Pomponius Mela, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Herodotus, and other writers—a work valuable, no doubt, as containing an immense treasury of the knowledge of the ancients, but filled with discordant and contradictory opinions, and indicating, on the whole, no original genius in the compiler.

It was above remarked that, when philosophy first made its way from Greece to Rome, the doctrines of the Stoical school were then chiefly prevalent in the republic. With a people who were only emerging from a simplicity, or rather a severity of manners, it is not probable that the system of Epicurus would find a very favorable reception. As luxury, however, advanced, and corruption of manners began to undermine the strictness of the ancient morality, it also found its votaries. This change in the Roman manners, it may not be uninteresting to consider somewhat minutely.

The picture of the Roman people during the first five centuries is so perfectly distinct, so widely different from what we find it in the latter ages of the republic, that we might at first be induced to think that some very extraordinary causes must have cooperated to produce so total an alteration. Yet the transition was easy and natural, and was in the Roman people the necessary and inevitable consequence of that rich and luxurious situation in which the virtuous and heroic temper of the earlier times had conducted to place the republic. A spirit of temperance, of frugality, and of industry must be the characteristics of every infant colony. The poverty of the first Romans, the narrow territory to which they were limited, made it necessary for every citizen to labor for his subsistence. In the first ages, the patricians, when in the country, forgot all the distinctions of rank, and toiled daily in the fields like the lowest plebeian. Examples of this are familiar to every reader. Cincinnatus we have seen named dictator by the voice of his country, while at the plough. M. Curius, after expelling Pyrrhus from Italy, retired to the possession of a small farm, which he assiduously cultivated. The elder Cato was fond of this spot, and revered it on account of its former master. It was in emulation of the example of this ancient Roman that Cato betook himself to agriculture. Scipio Africanus also, after the conquest of Hannibal and the reduction of Carthage, retired to his paternal fields, and with his own hand reared and grafted his fruit-trees. If such was the conduct and example of the highest magistrates and most eminent men in the state, what idea must we form of the manners and customs of the inferior ranks?

In times of peace and tranquillity, most of the citizens, employed at their small farms, visited the town only every ninth or market day. There they provided themselves with necessaries for the week, and took their share in the public business of the commonwealth at the comitia. It was on these market-days that the tribunes harangued the people, and it was then that those men—employed for their daily occupation in laboring and husbandry—feeling their weight in the public deliberations, learned to know their own importance in the state, which was in no respect diminished by the necessary cares and duties to which, in those happy and primitive ages, custom had annexed respect and honor instead of meanness or reproach.

Thus simple were the occupations, and, of consequence, the manners of the ancient Romans. Employed either in their warlike expeditions, or, when at peace, in the frugal, laborious, and innocent avocations of a country life, it was to be expected, as a necessary result, that industry and a virtuous simplicity of manners should be the principal features in the character of a people so situated. “*Domi militiaeque (says Sallust) boni mores colebantur—jus bonumque apud eos non legibus magis quam natura valebat: duabus artibus, audacia in bello, ubi pax evenerat æquitate, seque rempublicam curabant.*” But this very discipline, and those manners which paved the way for the extension of the Roman arms, and for the conquest of the surrounding empires, became, of consequence, the remote cause of the corruption of the manners of the people in the later ages of the republic, and the introduction of that luxurious and effeminate spirit from which it is not difficult to deduce the ruin and downfall of the commonwealth. When, after the second Punic war, they had pushed their conquests into Asia, and in the third Punic war accomplished the subversion of Carthage, and acquired the unlimited sovereignty of Greece, then it necessarily happened that, losing their ancient manners with their ancient poverty, possessed of wealth, and adopting with a willing servility the customs of the nations they subdued, the Romans became as vicious, as luxurious, and as effeminate as they had before been remarkable for their virtue, their industry, and their rigid simplicity of manners. They appeared now to be actuated by a new spirit, but chiefly by an affectation of taste in the fine arts, in which nature certainly had never qualified them to make any decided or eminent progress. The faculty to excel in these requires not only a predisposition of nature, an inherent acuteness of perception of what is beautiful, but also an intimate acquaintance with the objects of taste, and a long habit of exercising the judgment exclusively upon them. Of this natural predisposition to the fine arts the Romans never evinced any traces. On the contrary, even in the periods of their greatest refinement, we hear not of the excellence of a single painter, sculptor, or architect; nor did they indeed possess, until their conquest of Greece,

any acquaintance with those exalted specimens of art upon which a corrected and chastened taste could alone have been formed. At that period, indeed, an immense field was at once opened to their view. The master-pieces of art poured in upon them; but these they did not possess the talents to appreciate. The extravagances of glare and show were more suited to their judgment, and possessed more attractive beauties to their unpractised eyes; and it is natural, therefore, to conclude that the Roman luxury, so far as the fine arts were concerned, could only manifest itself in an awkward, heavy, and tasteless magnificence.

In order to give some idea of the manners of the Romans after they had undergone this remarkable change, or rather towards the end of the commonwealth, at a time when the extravagance of general luxury was felt throughout the whole body politic, and to point out also some customs which were peculiarly characteristic of this people, it may not be improper shortly to describe the manner in which the day was spent at Rome, as well by the lower as by the higher and more idle classes of the citizens. Extraordinary as it may appear to us, it is certain that the Romans were, for nearly five centuries, utterly ignorant of the division of the day by hours, and knew no other distinction but that of morning, mid-day, and evening. The laws of the Twelve Tables divided the day into two portions only, *ortus et occasus*, nor was it until a considerable time after, that they added a third division, *meridies*. We are informed by Pliny the naturalist, that till the 477th year of Rome, when Papirius Cursor caused the first sun-dial to be put upon the wall of the temple of Quirinus, they had never used any method of measuring time; that Valerius Messala brought another from Catania, in Sicily, and that these two, although very inaccurate in dividing time, continued to be the only regulators of the day at Rome for nearly a century, till Scipio Nasica introduced the water-clock, which showed the hours both of the day and night.

The first, second, and third hours were differently employed at Rome by the different ranks of the people; and even by these differently according to their separate inclinations. It was the custom with many to begin the day by visiting the temples, where, according as their ideas of devotion were more or less strict, they either sacrificed, or paid their adoration by simply kissing their hand, or prostrating themselves before their own particular deity. Those who were more rigorously devout made their conscientious circuit to most of the temples in the city, a business which must necessarily have occupied many hours; but the great bulk of the citizens, attached to temporal concerns, and intent on more substantial duties, employed the morning very differently. The *Patroni* were attended by all their *Clientes*. The great had their levees, at which either their inferiors who wished to recommend themselves to their protection, or even their equals who courted