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THE LAMP OF EPICTETUS

THE LAMP OF EPICTETUS

Being Arrian's Lectures of Epictetus
to Young Men Paraphrased
into Modern English

by

EDWARD JACOMB
(SOMETIME OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD)

. . . "*We moderns*" . . .
(see p. 131)



METHUEN & CO. LTD., LONDON
36 Essex Street, Strand, W.C.2

First published in 1938

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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INTRODUCTION

IN more than one list of the World's *Hundred Best Books* will be found included the *Encheiridion* or *Manual* of Epictetus.

Epictetus himself wrote nothing, and we owe the *Manual* and four books of *Lectures* (four others being lost) to one of his pupils, Flavius Arrianus of Nicomedia (who subsequently became Consul and Governor of Cappadocia and a noted historian under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *circa* A.D. 140).

Epictetus was born about A.D. 50, and died some eighty years later. He was the son of a slave woman and was himself, in his youth and until freed, slave to one Epaphroditus, himself a freedman, but who had attained high position (and who was subsequently executed for aiding the Emperor Nero to commit suicide). He learned his philosophy from the Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus, and, after obtaining his freedom, apparently began teaching in Rome till the Emperor Domitian in A.D. 90 banished all philosophers from that city. He then took up his residence in, and transferred his teaching activities to, Nicopolis, a town of Epirus, built by Augustus opposite Actium after his naval defeat of Cleopatra and Anthony there in 31 B.C. (not to be confused with the Nicopolis in Macedonia where St. Paul wrote that he proposed wintering *circa* A.D. 65). [1]

[1] Titus iii. 12.

Various personal details of himself and his life are found scattered through the *Lectures*.[1]

Like his Master Rufus, he was a Stoic. His teachings are so clearly set forth in the *Lectures* and *Manual* that no résumé of them is necessary.

The various philosophies of Rome in the first and second centuries of the Christian era may all be said to have sprung from Socrates (*obiit* 400 B.C., in his seventieth year). Socrates had as one of his pupils Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynics at Athens. Diogenes of Sinope, the famous Cynic, was pupil of Antisthenes and teacher of Crates of Boeotia. (Diogenes died in 324 B.C., aged 95.) Crates taught Zeno, the founder of Stoicism (who came from Citium in Cyprus, who taught in Athens, and who died in 264 B.C., aged 97). His followers were called Stoics because Zeno lectured in the Great Hall, the *Stoa*. Other famous Stoics were Chrysippus, Euphrates, Seneca, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

There have been many translations of Epictetus into different languages, the best known in English being that of Elizabeth Carter,[2] the most recent that of W. A. Oldfather.[3] Unhappily both are hard to read. Indeed, I doubt if a literal translation of Epictetus could ever be really readable or widely read.

Speaking of archaeologists, the late Arthur Weigall, in an interesting essay contained in *The Glory of the Pharaohs*,[4] maintained the thesis that an archaeologist should not be a mere cataloguer of dead bones and

[1] See Index.

[2] Rivington, London, 1768, and Dent's Everyman's Library, No. 404 (1910).

[3] Loeb Classical Library, 1926 and 1928.

[4] Thornton Butterworth, 1923.

other survivals of a remote past, but should be able to re-create by imagination, based on ascertained facts, a picture of things and persons as they were ; that he is interested in, say, an ancient sword, splintered and covered with rust, only in so far as it enables him to visualize the original perfect sword as it came out of the hands of the smelter, and so to furnish a model as near to the original as possible ; that his pleasure in skeletons is not in them as skeletons, but in order to cover them decently with flesh and skin once more, and to put some thoughts back into the empty skulls. So, too, I believe that the translator should not be bound slavishly to the texts as they lie before him, but should try to reconstruct in terms of modern thought and language what the writer or speaker would wish us to understand to-day, and so to make his message once more a living thing. That is what I have aimed at in the following pages. I have attempted to express Epictetus's thoughts as he might have expressed them were he lecturing in English to a class of young Englishmen at the present day ; and I have deliberately used anachronisms, slang, and even Americanisms, when such seemed likely to beget a vividness which would otherwise be lacking. I have tried, too, to evolve a style suited both to the teacher and the subject, and have permitted myself certain liberties which I justify to myself by the consideration that Epictetus is probably the only moral teacher of front rank who has had a sense of humour.

If it should be asked why it is necessary to paraphrase or even to read Epictetus at all, I would answer *First :* that it is indisputable that Epictetus was one of the greatest moral teachers the world has ever seen, which seems in itself a sufficient reason. But if a

DEDICATION

MY DEAR LUCIUS,

These *Lectures of Epictetus* are not a work of imagination. I was one of his pupils and I used to attend his lectures and take notes, and they are my lecture notes which I have furbished up as best I may. So you must take what follows, not as a studied literary composition written with an eye to future generations, but merely as fragments of casual conversations. Still they reveal the bent of his thought in all its frankness and mordant humour. What the Master wanted was to make us reflect seriously on those things that are most worth reflecting about; and you may be sure that listening to *him* we could not help doing so. I wrote them down primarily for my own use, but I feel that they may also be of service to others.

Yours in all sincerity,

F. ARRIANUS

SIR LUCIUS GELLIUS (*Circa* A.D. 140)

BOOK I

i

IN this world one thing, and one thing only, is under our own control and so really matters, and that is our power of being able to reason. It is this that enables us to make use of our *sense-perceptions*, i.e. of the impressions we get of the outer world through our five senses—to choose, refuse, like, dislike, and so forth. It is by the exercise of our reasoning faculty that we are enabled to build up what I may term a *moral purpose*. Mere material things are not under our control and are relatively unimportant. For instance: we cannot help being born poor, the congenital infirmities of our bodies, the trammels of earthly associates, the obligations of even a small estate. And yet most of us set far more store by such uncontrollable things (by our bodies, estates, brothers, friends, children, slaves —and are overwhelmed if anything goes wrong with any of them), than we do by the highness of our moral purpose which, were we to rank it first and last in our regard, would teach us the true value of the rest and so enable us to remain untouched by mere material misfortunes. We have it in our power, I say, to do this, and not to make ourselves ridiculous by, for instance, being upset just because the wind happens to be rather chilly. Why, then, don't we do it?

A real philosopher when threatened with prison or banishment accepts his fate calmly and with a smile.

A tyrant may enchain his limbs and keep his body in a dungeon, but he cannot imprison his mind. And if he kill him, then he will have done his worst and can do no more. Anyway, is death so great an evil?

Remember how Agrippinus behaved when he was tried by the Senate. Someone came and told him that he had been found guilty.

'What is the sentence,' he asked; 'banishment or death?'

'Banishment,' was the reply.

'And have they confiscated my property?'

'No.'

'Good! then I shall be able to afford some lunch,' said he.[1]

ii

Always and in everything that we do we should take the greatest care never to fall short of the highest standard of our moral purpose. We cannot all, of course, expect to do great deeds; only the greatest men, like Socrates, can do them. But though the very highest may be unattainable for us, we can in a small way try to follow in their footsteps. Even though we cannot all be Milos [2] we need not neglect our bodies; though we cannot all be Croesuses [3] we need not neglect our properties.

How then, you may ask, is each of us to know what is befitting to his moral purpose? That is a thing of

[1] See Fragment xxi, p. 281.

[2] Milo (of Crotona, Italy, *circa* 300 B.C.). A famous athlete and the typical strong man (Samson) of antiquity.

[3] Croesus, King of Lydia, 562–548 B.C., the typical rich man of antiquity.

which we become instinctively aware when circumstances arise which call for this self-knowledge, even as a bull instinctively rushes forward to defend his herd when a lion attacks it. And yet we must not rely solely on instinct. We must train ourselves carefully beforehand so as to be prepared to face steadfastly all that life may bring us.

Another test of what is or is not befitting to our moral purpose is this :—Ask yourself : does such or such a thing seem to me to be *reasonable* ? If so it is probably befitting, that is to say right. But we must qualify this a little. For the same thing or action may appear reasonable to one person and quite the reverse to another. And further, we may think a thing wrong, whereas were we better educated, or had we fuller knowledge, we should know that it was really right. Or it may be right for us and wrong for somebody else. Remember how the Spartans thought it was right to learn how to endure a whipping ; and how some men have thought it right to commit suicide. Each must judge for himself to the best of his ability.

But when we have come to a decision as to what is right and proper for us to do, then we must stick to it and not fall short of the highest standard. You know how a thin band of red [1] sets off a white coat so that in a way it seems to be the most important part of it. Some may aspire to be the red band of life ; others may be content to be just a plain white thread like all the others of which the coat is made up. Decide for yourself which you want to be, which you ought to be—the station in life to which God has called you—and then do your duty in it as best you can whate'er betide.

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. i, p. 118.

Remember what the Senator Helvidius Priscus said when the Emperor Vespasian forbade him to attend a sitting of the Senate.

'So long as I am a Senator,' he replied, 'I must attend its sittings.'

'No speeches, then, or your life is forfeit!'

'That is your affair. If it is your duty to have me killed, do so; if it is mine to speak, speak I will; and if to die, I will die.' [1]

iii

We ought all to believe (for it is true) that we were made by God and are His children. Now if the Emperor (Caesar) were to adopt one of us as his son, would not such a one be filled with pride at the honour? Are we to feel less pride at being God's sons?

Our bodies we have in common with the brute creation; reason and intelligence are a gift from Heaven. Those who incline towards the flesh (and they are the majority) become treacherous as wolves, savage as lions, cunning as foxes. Beware lest you become like one of them.

iv

We learn from philosophers that we should desire things that are good and eschew those that are evil—in short, that we should strive after virtue, which alone can make us happy, calm and serene. The nearer we attain to such a state of mind, the more we may be said to *progress*.

[1] See Book IV, Ch. i, p. 216.

But we shall make little progress merely by reading the writings of philosophers, however eminent. What we have to do is :—*First :* exercise a rigid control over our inclinations, so as not to miss what we want nor meet what we would avoid ; *Secondly :* choose and refuse wisely ; and *Thirdly :* judge, aye or nay, aright.

The man who is really making progress is he who has set up an ideal of conduct for himself, and who in his least actions is faithful to his *governing principle.*[1] Such a man if flung into prison will not like many—Kings even—Priam, Oedipus—all Kings in fact—say : 'Alack-a-day, to what a pass have these grey hairs of mine come ! ' but : 'As God will, so be it ! '[2]

Such wisdom is not to be learned from books, no not even from those of the great Chrysippus. It is true he wrote : 'Read my books and ye shall *know* . . .' Ha ha ! Now, is it not scandalous that men should build shrines and altars to Triptolemus who merely taught mankind how to cultivate the fruits of the earth, but have forgotten to do so to Chrysippus who had shown them how to win the rarer fruit of happiness ? I ask you !

V

Those philosophers named *Academics* assert that nothing can actually be known. They prefer to suspend their judgement. I once asked one of them if his senses didn't tell him when he was awake ? 'No,' he replied ; 'not more than they do when in dreams I have the impression of being awake.' 'You

[1] I.e. his reason.

[2] Also quoted : Book I, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 228 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 311.

think,' I said, 'that these two impressions are the same?' 'Yes,' he answered. Well, well!

The fact is one cannot argue with, or convince, a man who will not admit self-evident truths. He may be merely stupid, incapable of understanding even the simplest thing; or, which is worse, he may be perverse and pig-headed, afraid to admit that he is in the wrong though knowing all the time that he is . . . an attitude sometimes facetiously described as *strength of character.*

vi

Every work reveals its artificer. Take this sword and scabbard, for instance; somebody must have made them and fitted the one to the other; they did not just happen spontaneously and at random. So, too, do such things as colour and vision and light predicate a Maker. They cannot have made themselves. Besides, clearly, some one must have made them purposefully to co-operate with one another. To have made colours without also making the faculty of seeing them would have been as useless as to have made vision without something to look at, or to have made either without also making light. Does not the marvellous mating instinct of male and female connote a Creator, and that even greater marvel, the human intellect, which enables us to observe, remember, subtract, add and combine? What other explanation can be adduced?

Man is a rational animal; the lower animals are irrational. We and they have, indeed, many things in common. But whereas for them it is sufficient to eat and drink and rest and procreate, we not only need

to do all these things but other things too, for to us alone has been granted the faculty of understanding. Further, our ends are different. God has designed the brute beasts, one to be eaten, another to serve in farming, a third to produce cheese, and so on. But He has brought Man into the world to be a spectator of Himself, and not merely a spectator but an interpreter too.

No one grudges the trouble, discomfort and expense of travelling to Olympia to see Pheidias' [1] great gold and ivory statue of Zeus,[2] a thing every man should see at least once in his life-time. But why neglect to contemplate the works of God which bear witness to Him, and which you can see without having to travel at all, without trouble and for nothing ? To what end do you suppose you were created and were given the gift of sight ? In order *not* to look at things ?

Were you given your hands in order *not* to use them ? When you have a cold don't you use them to wipe your nose with ? Or do you merely whine : ' What an awful cold I've got—how my nose runs ! ' and let it go on running ?

And for what reason do you suppose you've received your faculties of magnanimity, of courage, of endurance ? What is the good of having them if you don't use them ?

How would Herakles have achieved immortal fame had there been no lions or hydras or boars or wicked and brutal men for him to destroy ? How would he have developed his strength and exercised his arms,

[1] Pheidias, the celebrated Athenian sculptor (*obiit* 432 B.C.).

[2] Zeus : As far as possible the name Zeus has throughout been replaced by the title God, but there are a number of passages in which the context makes this impossible.

courage, and patience? God sent Herakles these trials so that he should exercise his faculties and so develop his character. And we can do the same. So let us realize our equipment, the resources that God has given us, and say :—'Bring upon me, O God, whatsoever troubles Thou wilt. Thanks to Thee I am prepared to meet and surmount them.' In very truth He has given us our faculties to enable us to bear anything that may befall without being crushed. Moreover, He has put them entirely under our own control, without even reserving to Himself any power to prevent or hinder. Could He have been more generous than this? And yet some folk still grumble and are never satisfied!

vii

Hypothetical premises, syllogisms, and all the other devices of logic by whose rules arguments are or should be conducted, are not mere dry-as-dust rules, but have a very real bearing upon the duties of life. The object of reasoning is to state the true, eliminate the false, and suspend judgement in doubtful cases.[1] The object of inquiry is to find out how a man should steer his course through life. Therefore all arguments on such subjects are important and should be treated seriously. The slightest false premise, an undistributed middle, an omission—may vitiate your syllogism. I once made a slip of the kind myself and Rufus[2] 'ticked me off' for it properly. 'Well,' I said, defending myself, 'it's not so bad as . . .' 'Yes, it is,' he interrupted; 'it's worse!'

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxviii, p. 35; and Book III, Ch. iii, p. 124.
[2] Musonius Rufus, Epictetus' teacher: see Introduction, p. vii.

viii

A man who can reason and argue persuasively has much influence, especially if he practise his powers diligently and deck his arguments with fair words. But mere dexterity in argumentation must be fortified with knowledge. For the uneducated, such technical skill is dangerous ; it is apt to lead to swollen heads.

Plato was a philosopher, Hippocrates a doctor. The latter could argue the hind leg off a donkey, but that had nothing more to do with his being a doctor than Plato's good looks had to do with his being a philosopher. I am a philosopher, but I am not good-looking. Moreover, I am lame. If you want to become philosophers, it is not indispensable that you should first become lame. Learn to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials.

If you ask me what is Man's greatest good, I can only answer—it is to have a right moral purpose.

ix

The seeds of life of all men and beings that are begotten, and of all things that grow upon earth, are derived primarily from God, though Man is more akin to Him than the rest, thanks to his faculty of reasoning. This being so, why should not a man call himself a citizen of the Universe and a son of God instead of merely describing himself as an Athenian or a Corinthian? That, at any rate, is how Socrates used to describe himself.

Now, if we were kin to Caesar or to some great man in Rome, we should live securely without fear of any kind. Surely, then, if God is our Maker and Father

and Guardian, we ought to live even more securely and fearlessly still. Do you fear to lack for food? But does food fail runaway slaves or the lower animals [1] every one of which is sufficient to itself and neither lacks its proper meat nor that way of life which is appropriate to it and is in harmony with Nature? If God so provide for them you may be sure He will not let you starve.

And now here I am trying to teach you young men to have a good conceit of yourselves, as you should have, being (as you are) sons of God. But you ought to know this without my having to teach it you. You ought to know it so well that you should feel that the body and its possessions, and everything necessary to us for living in this world, are burdensome, vexatious and unprofitable; and you should ardently desire to depart to join your kindred beyond the grave. I would you could say to me: 'Epictetus, we can no longer endure being imprisoned in these wretched bodies, which we have to tend and feed, and which bring us willy-nilly into contact with all sorts of people we would far rather avoid. All this is naught to us. Moreover, we are in a sort akin to God, for we have come from Him. Suffer us, therefore, to return whence we came; to be freed from our fetters; to escape from tyrants, thieves, and courts of law, which imagine they have some sort of power over us because of our bodies and their possessions. Death is not an evil; it will free us and teach them that they have no power over us at all.' I would rejoice with all my heart to hear you speak like this, for then I should know that of a truth you are set on higher things. And I could then teach you and say: 'Wait upon God.

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxvi, p. 195.

When He shall give the signal and set you free from this service of life, then and then only shall you go to Him. For the time being you must stay where He has stationed you. Short shall be the time of your waiting, nor shall it be too burdensome for men of your way of thinking. No tyrants, no thieves, no courts of law can injure those who are masters of their bodies, and who have not enslaved themselves to their possessions.'

Remember the words of Socrates to his judges : ' If you say that you will acquit me on condition that I give up my teaching, I answer you thus :—If I, a soldier, am ordered by my Commanding Officer to defend a certain post, should I not die ten thousand deaths rather than desert it ? [1] Of course I should, and would. When, then, I am—as I am—commanded by God to teach in Athens, do you suppose I shall disobey *Him* ? Don't be absurd ! ' These are the words of one who in very truth was a kinsman of the Gods.

X

I know a man older than I am—and I am no chicken —who at the present moment holds an important post in Rome. He is Head of the Corn Distribution Department. Some years ago he did something he shouldn't have done and was banished for it. Later he was allowed to return home, and on his way passed through here. I remember him assuring me at the time that he was firmly resolved to spend the rest of his life—and he said he didn't suppose he had much of it left to spend—in strict quiet and retirement.

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxiv, p. 192.

'Not you!' I told him; 'once you scent the streets of Rome again you will forget all about quiet and retirement. And if there is a ghost of a chance of your being able to worm your way into one of Caesar's levées, you will take it.' 'Wild horses wouldn't drag me to one!' he replied. Within a month all his resolutions went up like smoke, he had attended his levée, got a fat job, and now there he is piling up money as fast as he can, and is probably a millionaire. Not a bad prophet, am I?

If we old philosophers only applied ourselves to our particular job as zealously as those old gentlemen in Rome do to the acquisition of money, power and position, perhaps we, too, should accomplish something. Perhaps a little encouragement would be good for us. When I see you young men playing games I love joining in with you. But what I should love even more would be for you to join me in a little solid reading.

xi

The following conversation took place between Epictetus and one of his visitors:

Epictetus: Are you a married man?
Visitor: Yes.
Epictetus: Any children?
Visitor: Three.
Epictetus: Tell me, do you like being married?
Visitor: No!
Epictetus: Good gracious me! Why not?
Visitor: Because of the children—I get so worried about them. A few weeks back my little daughter was dangerously ill and I simply couldn't bear to see

her lying sick in bed. So I cleared out, and didn't come home till I heard she was well again.

Epictetus : Do you think that was a right thing to do ?

Visitor : I don't know if it was right—it was the natural thing to do.

Epictetus : Natural ?

Visitor : I think most fathers would feel like that.

Epictetus : Perhaps. All things are possible. But how do you make out it was a natural thing to do ?

Visitor : I find it very hard to explain these things. Perhaps you would find it easier to explain to me how it was not natural.

Epictetus : Well, let us think about it. Suppose we want to distinguish between black and white, how are we to do it ?

Visitor : It is a question of eyesight.

Epictetus : And between hot and cold, and hard and soft ?

Visitor : By touch.

Epictetus : And between right and wrong ?

Visitor : I don't know.

Epictetus : I'm surprised at you ! Surely it is more important to distinguish between right and wrong than between white and black or hot and cold ?

Visitor : Of course it is.

Epictetus : Look at it in this way. It is possible, is it not, for mistakes to be made as to what is or is not right ?

Visitor : I suppose so.

Epictetus : Well, for example, the Romans and Egyptians think it right to eat pork, but the Jews think it wrong. They can't both be correct.

Visitor : No.

Epictetus : Well, it is quite clear that what *you* have to do is to find out what standard to apply to determine what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps I can give you a pointer or two. Tell me, do you consider family affection to be natural, good and reasonable ?

Visitor : Of course I do.

Epictetus : Well, to go away and leave your child when she was sick can hardly be described as *reasonable.* . . . By the way, I suppose her mother and nurse love the child ?

Visitor : Very dearly.

Epictetus : Then I suppose you think they ought to have abandoned her too.

Visitor : No, I don't !

Epictetus : Of course you do ! How better could they have displayed their pure affection for her than by leaving her to die alone and helpless amongst strangers ? And when it is your turn to die you will naturally want your wife and children to show their affection by deserting you.

Visitor : No !

Epictetus : No ? But surely what applies to the goose applies to the gander. Now confess ! You didn't behave kindly to your little daughter. Why ? For no valid reason, but simply because you didn't choose to. Isn't that so ?

Visitor : Yes.

Epictetus : Be assured that neither toil nor banishment nor death nor any other thing makes us do or not do a thing. Our deeds, both good and evil, are due simply and solely to our opinions and to our decisions. So it is no use trying to blame any one else when things go wrong. It is entirely our own fault.

xii

Some say there is no God ; others that there is a God, but that He remains aloof and impassive ; others again that He is concerned only with heavenly matters and in no wise with those of earth. A fourth view is that He is conversant with earthly matters, but only in a general sense, paying no attention to the individual. And, lastly, there are those—and amongst them may be numbered Odysseus and Socrates—who say :

'I cannot move but Thou dost know of it.' [1]

Now if God does not exist, or if He pays no regard to Man, how can men serve Him ? Before we start trying to serve Him we ought, therefore, to be sure both that He exists and that we are His concern. And if we believe this, then we must inquire how best we may serve Him, and how we may become *free.*

What is this *freedom* to which we should aspire ? It is not the freedom to do just what we like, to gratify every passing whim. Licence is not liberty. We cannot change the dispositions of Nature. God has ordained summer and winter, abundance and dearth, virtue and vice. He has given each one of us a body, limbs, property, and companions. We cannot change all this. We must find our freedom within the limits set by Nature, and by seeking to keep our wills in harmony therewith. If we achieve this we shall be truly free.

If you find yourself alone, what is the good of being impatient and petulant and complaining of loneliness, and then when you are with your parents, children and neighbours saying you have not a moment's quiet

[1] *Iliad,* Book X, lines 279, 280.

and would rather their room than their company? Rather when you are alone thank God for giving you a quiet time, and when others are with you rejoice in their society, and in both be content.

A discontented man is not free—he is really in a prison of his own making. Where a man is against his will, that place for him *is* a prison. Conversely, if, like Socrates, you are in an actual prison of your own free will, then you are not really in prison at all.

So cease from grumbling at trifles. Do I grumble at my game leg and because of it assert that God muddled His making of the Universe? Nay, rather, I thank Him for His gift of reason which makes me akin to Him.

We are what we are. It is no use complaining about our parents. We did not choose them, nor are we accountable for them. God will call us to account neither for them, nor for our bodies, nor for our property, death nor life. For one thing only are we accountable and that is for the only thing under our control—the proper use of our reasoning faculties and wills.

xiii

Some one once asked Epictetus what manner of eating is pleasing to the Gods. 'Eat with decency and restraint,' he replied. 'And,' he added, 'I can tell you one or two other things which would be pleasing to them. For instance, not to fly into a rage if, when you call your valet to bring you some hot water, he either doesn't bring it at all, or brings it tepid. Is not he, like yourself, descended from Zeus, and are you not, in effect, brothers?'

xiv

Some one once asked him how a man can be sure that everything he does is seen by God.

'Do you believe', said Epictetus, 'in the physical unity of the Universe—that is, that the experience of one part of it necessarily affects every other part? You do? And so that everything on earth is affected by heavenly influences? Do not plants flower and fruit, does not fruit ripen and fall, do not leaves fade and wither, simply because God wills it to be so? What other explanation can you offer? Very well, then! If this be true of plants, and of everything else including our own bodies, is it not equally true of our souls? If, then, our souls are so joined to God that they are part and parcel of His being, does He not perceive their every motion as being a motion of Himself? And as it is in our power to meditate about things human and divine, to feel, understand, assent, dissent, suspend judgement, learn, memorize, and so forth, does He not share in and oversee all our thoughts?

'Consider: if the sun is able to light the whole world save that little space covered by the shadow cast by the earth, will not He who created the sun, which is but a small portion of Himself, be able to see everything?

'Now God has set by each man's side a Guardian Angel to watch over him—a Protector who never slumbers and who is incorruptible. Remember, then, that when you lock your door and turn out the light, you are not alone. Both God and your Guardian Angel are there with you; and They need no light to see what you are doing.

'We should swear allegiance to God as soldiers do to Caesar. Soldiers are but hirelings, yet they swear to put Caesar's safety above everything. Will not you, who have received so many and so great blessings, swear allegiance to God, and having sworn keep your oath? This is the oath that you shall swear: Never to disobey Him; never to find fault with anything that He has given; never to rebel when you are called upon to do or suffer something you do not like.

'Alas, how few of us take this oath! Most men swear to prefer themselves above everything else.'

XV

When some one asked Epictetus to advise him how to effect a reconciliation with his brother who had quarrelled with him,[1] he replied:

Epictetus: Philosophy does not pretend to obtain material benefits for men; that is outside its province. It is concerned with the conduct of men's lives.

Client: But this quarrel is part of the conduct of my brother's life.

Epictetus: Yes, but the conduct of your brother's life—including his quarrels—is his affair. I cannot discuss his affairs with you. Bring him to me, and I will talk to *him* about them.

Client: Suppose my brother won't make friends again, then what am I to do? I want to do what is right.

Epictetus: The knowledge of how to act rightly is the perfected fruit of a ripe mind. You must not think your mind will ripen as fast as a fig or a bunch of

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. x, pp. 143 & 144.

grapes. Even a fig tree has first to blossom, then put forth its fruit, and finally the fruit has to ripen. All that requires time, much time.

xvi

Have you ever remarked how Nature has made the lower animals—those animals, that is, that are born not for their own sake but for Man's service—ready, as it were, for use, so that we do not have to provide them with food, drink, shoes, bedding or clothing? Should we not be thankful and give thanks to God for such forethought on our behalf?

Again : does not milk come from grass, and cheese from milk? Does not wool grow on the skin? Who made such things possible? Do I hear some idiot say 'No one!'?

Can you imagine anything more useless than the hairs on your chin? And yet Nature has found a use for them—as a mark of sex, to distinguish a man from a woman. Could you improve upon a beard for this? Would a cock's comb or a lion's mane have been better?

Ponder on these and all the other works of Providence which are manifest in us, and say what words of ours can sufficiently proclaim their goodness? Ought we not, then, to tell the tale of God's goodness and praise Him both in our homes and abroad? Should we not, as we dig and plough and eat, sing songs of praise to Him, saying : 'Great is God who has given us tools to till the soil. Great is He who has made our hands to use them ; who has given us power to swallow, and a belly, and power to grow without knowing it, and to breathe while we are asleep. Great is He who

has given us the power of understanding, and to follow the paths of reason.' We ought to laud Him thus continually. But as most of you are blind, let me praise Him for you. I am only a lame old man, but I know that this is my duty and I will do it. Were I a nightingale I would sing like a nightingale ; were I a swan, like a swan. But as I am a man endowed with intelligence I can do no other than sing songs of praise to God. Come, let us all sing together !

xvii

To ascertain what quantity of grain there is in a stack one must first have a proper measure ; to weigh something one needs a pair of scales. Similarly, if you want to reason correctly, some sort of standard is indispensable. That is why Stoic philosophers insist primarily on the study of logic ; for if we neglect the study of logic we shall never be able to detect unsound arguments. All the best authorities are agreed on this, including Socrates and Xenophon.

xviii

Philosophers assert that thought and action both spring from *feeling*—a kind of judgement or opinion. For instance (they say) if we assent to a thing it is because we *feel* (or judge or are of opinion) that it is so ; if we dissent, it is because we feel it is not so ; while if we suspend judgement it is because we feel it is uncertain. Similarly we may feel things to be expedient or inexpedient. If the philosophers are correct, it follows that we have no right to be wroth with, say, thieves and robbers. They have simply felt

wrongly on certain subjects, from ignorance, and so have gone astray over questions of right and wrong. 'No man', said Socrates, 'errs voluntarily.'[1] So all one has to do is to point out their errors to them and they will err no more ; but so long as their eyes are blinded they have nothing but their feelings to guide them.

Are, then, brigands and adulterers to escape punishment altogether? To this I reply : Ought blind and deaf men, or men who do not know how to distinguish between good and evil, to be punished? Surely they ought rather to be pitied. Let us, then, eschew censorious terms such as 'accursed', 'hateful', 'abominable', all too commonly applied to them, and consider the real cause of our indignation against such folk. Is it not because we set fantastic store by the things they have robbed us of? Cease to worry about clothes and you won't be annoyed with any one who steals yours ; stop admiring your wife's beauty, and you will not curse her seducer. In reality you should only be annoyed with yourself for setting absurd store by such things. If you counted them as nothing you would have no further ground for anger. Such things are not really under your control. Neither a thief nor an adulterer can touch the one thing that is under your control—your only real possession—to wit, your power of being able to reason.

Remember this too. If you happen to have fine clothes and parade them ostentatiously, your poorer neighbour, who doesn't happen to know wherein the true good of Man consists, very naturally assumes that it consists in having fine clothes like you. So, of course, when he gets a chance, he steals them. And

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. xxvi, p. 113.

if you stuff yourself with quantities of expensive food in the sight of hungry men, is it not a very natural thing for them to try and snatch some of it for themselves? Why blame them? It is your own fault; you tempted them.

The other day I heard a noise at my window, and running downstairs found my iron lamp had been stolen. On reflection I perceived that it served me right. I had no business to flaunt an iron lamp before everybody. In future I shall be content with an earthenware one.[1]

. . . . .

Here are a few reflections for you:

The only things that can be stolen from us are our material possessions.

A tyrant may imprison our bodies, or sever our heads from our trunks, but he can't touch our moral purposes.

If you have a headache or an earache, what is the good of making a song about it? Groan if you must, but groan with a grin.

If your servant is slow when you call him, don't start whimpering that everybody hates you. If you do, everybody *will* hate you, and rightly so.

Make up your minds that for the future you will bear yourselves like men, and prove yourselves unconquerable—not like an ass, thanks to a huge body and brute strength, but thanks to reason. Who is the unconquerable man? He whom nothing outside the ambit of his moral purpose can deflect, he who is proof against bribes, a maid, secrecy, reputation, abuse, praise, aye, even death itself; and who will still stand firm even though he be drunk, mad or asleep!

[1] See Book I, Ch. xxix, p. 39. Epictetus' earthenware lamp was sold after his death for approximately £95.

xix

Any man of exceptional talent, or who fancies that he is even if he isn't, will inevitably, unless he be an educated man, suffer from a swollen head. From that it is but a short step to his becoming a bully, and then he begins to talk stuff like this :

Bully : I have influence and power !

And this is the way I reply to him :

Epictetus : Well, let us see what your power can do for *me.* Can it make me desire only those things that are good ? Can it save me from encountering things I dislike ? Can it inspire me always to choose aright ? Does it do all this for *you* ? When you are in a ship, on whom do you rely for safety, on yourself or on the Captain ? When you go out for a drive don't you entrust yourself to the driver ? Ha ha ! you can't answer me ! Your power doesn't seem to amount to very much after all, does it ?

Bully : You can't ignore *me* !

Epictetus : No, no more than I can ignore the plate off which I eat, or the flask in which I keep my oil. I have to clean the one and hang up the other. They are useful articles and so I look after them. I attend to my donkey too. And I attend to you in the same sense. But who pays any attention to you as a *man* ? Who wants to imitate you, or become your pupil, as men used to imitate Socrates and become his pupils ?

Bully : If I wanted to I could have you put to death !

Epictetus : Ah, I had forgotten that ! Then I must

indeed pay the greatest attention to you—as I would to a dose of fever or to an attack of cholera. I think, perhaps, I had better build an altar to you, like the one in Rome to the God *Fever*!

Bully: Aren't you afraid of me?

Epictetus: Not in the least!

Bully: Well, I'll soon show you who is master!

Epictetus: You master—of *me*! How can *you* be my master? God set me free.[1] I happen to be one of His sons. Do you really think He would let you harm one of His sons? You can, however, be master of my dead body if it will be of any use to you.

Bully: Do you mean to pay no attention to me?

Epictetus: I only pay attention to myself. But if you want me to pay attention to you too, well, I will . . . the same sort of attention I pay to my chamber-pot.

. . . . .

When men forget that the only thing they really possess and is worth having is their power of being able to reason, and set foolish store by their mere material possessions, it is quite impossible for them to do otherwise than truckle to bullies, and alas! not to them only but to their servants too.

You know I was myself slave of Epaphroditus. My former Master also owned a certain cobbler, one Felicio,[2] whom he sold because he was useless. Some time after it chanced that this cobbler was bought by a member of Caesar's household, and eventually became cobbler to Caesar. Then what a metamorphosis was there! From being a useless cobbler Felicio suddenly blossomed out as the wisest of men—so wise that Epaphroditus used constantly to consult him over all

[1] See Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 247. [2] *Ibid.*, Ch. i, p. 219.

sorts of important business. Ha ha ! Excuse my mirth—but you see the point.

. . . . . .

Have you noticed how when somebody has been honoured in some way, all his friends and dependants congratulate him, shake hands with him, embrace him, fête him, while he for his part climbs up to the Capitol and offers sacrifice in gratitude to God ? He is grateful, indeed, for something he values. But who ever heard of any one sacrificing in gratitude for having desired virtue, or for having chosen aright ?

Only this morning a man spoke to me about getting a Priesthood in the Temple of Augustus. I advised him to drop the idea, telling him that he would only be spending a great deal of money for nothing. ' Oh ! ' he replied, ' but I shall ensure my name living on after me ; and besides, I shall wear a golden crown.' I told him he could ensure his name living on equally well by carving it on a stone ; while as for his golden crown, that a crown of roses would be much more suitable to his peculiar style of manly beauty besides being considerably cheaper.

XX

The first and greatest task of the philosopher is to verify the impressions he gets of the outer world through his senses, rejecting those that are false, and basing action solely on those that are true. As with coins which are tested by sight, touch and sound, i.e. by their *ring*, so with our sense-perceptions—they too must be tested.

Unfortunately, while we take an infinity of pains over testing the worth of things that really do not

matter in the least, such as whether a coin be made of good or base metal, we are hopelessly careless over essential matters such as the difference between good and evil. For instance, how much more seriously are we apt to rate physical than moral blindness. It is, of course, harder to distinguish a wrong from a right action than it is a bad from a good coin. But it can be done. The teaching of philosophers is both simple and succinct. This is how Zeno sums it up : 'The object of Man's existence is to obey God, and the essence of virtue lies in the proper use of our sense-perceptions.'

xxi

When a man has found his proper niche in life, he is, or should be, content. What more, indeed, can he want ? Personally, so long as I can exercise desire and aversion properly, and can choose and refuse, propose, plan and agree, I am satisfied. Some, however, crave for admiration and strut about as though they had swallowed pokers. It is generally this type of person that maintains that everybody else is mad. Their admirers undoubtedly are.

xxii

All men have definite views, preconceptions or instincts, on certain subjects, for instance on the obligation to be virtuous. So far so good. It is when they come to apply these preconceptions to particular cases that trouble is apt to arise. Jews, Syrians, Egyptians and Romans all agree, as I say, that to be virtuous is of paramount importance ; but when one inquires

whether a virtuous man may eat pork or no, they instantly disagree. Similarly Agamemnon and Achilles both professed the highest principles, but when it was a question of the surrender of the Lady Chryseis back to her father, the one invoked these principles to prove that she should not be surrendered, while the other invoked the same principles to prove that she should be !

Now this is precisely what we mean by *education*—the learning how to apply our natural preconceptions justly to particular cases ; and also the learning in what our real *good* consists.

Remember that some things are under our control, while others are not. Those under our control include our moral purpose and all the actions it inspires ; those not under our control are the body, parts of the body, our possessions, parents, brothers, children, country—in a word, our whole environment. Under which of these two groups are we to place our *good* ? If we are foolish enough to place it under the latter, then when we fail to get what we consider to be our *good*, i.e. what we want, and are consequently unhappy, do we not try to get it by hook or by crook, by force if not by right ? (Hence arise wars, seditions, tyrannies, plots.) And in addition we proceed to blame God, complaining that He pays no heed to us. From this it is but a step to saying : ' What have I to do with Him ? ' ; and then actually to hate Him, so that He is no longer our *Preserver*, the *Raingiver* and *Fruitgiver*. That is what inevitably happens when you set your *good* (or desire) on the things of earth.

xxiii

Epicurus knew perfectly well that we are by nature social beings.[1] Now social beings naturally love their children; they wouldn't be social beings if they didn't. Then why does he advise us not to procreate or bring up children? Was he afraid that they might bring us more sorrow than joy? Did his own little house-boy slave *Mouse* bring *him* more sorrow than comfort? He knew as well as I do that once we become fathers we can't help loving our children. Why, even animals, sheep and wolves, love and look after their young. Would he have had Man alone abandon his? Anyhow, when any of you sees his child fall down and bark his shin and then start crying, don't you pick him up and comfort him? Why, I don't believe Epicurus' own parents—even had they been able to foresee the rubbish their son would one day write—I say, I don't believe even *they* would have abandoned *him*!

xxiv & xxv

Advice to a Boy on leaving school

Well, my dear boy, here you are just going out into the world for the first time. What an adventure! Now we want you to do something for us—to be, in fact, a kind of *scout*[2] for us; to go out and see everything, and then come back and make a report. It won't be an easy job, you know. You'll want all your pluck to carry it through. But you won't be daunted by difficulties, will you? Difficulties prove

[1] See Book IV, Ch. ii, p. 223. [2] See Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 163.

the man. So when you find yourself confronted by one, remember that it is God who has, as it were, pitted you against it, just as a physical trainer might pit you to wrestle against a trained athlete. Any one who wants to win at Olympia has got to work, sweat, practise, train ; and any lad who wants to become a man—a real man—has to do the same. But about this report of yours—don't come back and tell us that everything in the world is wrong ; that the nation is going to the dogs ; that poverty is insupportable, banishment a terror, that men do nothing but basely revile each other, and that death is the greatest of all evils. We shan't believe you if you do ; we shall merely regret our error in having sent you out to scout for us. For, mark you, you are not the first we have sent out. We sent out Diogenes before you, and he made us a magnificent report. ' Death ', he said, ' is no evil, for there is no dishonour in dying. The ill-report of men is but a noise made by madmen. It is better to be unclothed than to wear royal purple. The bare ground is softer than the softest couch.' All of which is true if (like Diogenes) you have courage, a calm mind, freedom of soul, and a hard, healthy body. For such a man enemies do not exist—all is peace.

When you, a passenger, disembark from a ship, you don't bring the rudder and oars ashore with you, do you ? You bring your luggage. Exactly ! In other words, you look after your own property and abstain from interfering with that of other people. But reflect : what *is* your own property ? Not your material possessions, not your robes of rank, not even your body or your bed—any more than the bed you sleep in at an inn is yours. If you have no material

possessions at all, what on earth does it matter? If, for instance, you have no bed, like Diogenes you can sleep on the ground. That wouldn't be a tragedy. The poor don't have tragedies—tragedies are reserved for the rich who have material possessions to lose. For if the rich lose their wealth they generally lose their friends too. You, being poor, needn't envy them their flocks of *friends*. If you want friends yourself, you have all the world to choose from.

And, finally, don't forget that there *is* a door of escape—if you choose to make use of it. When you are weary of it all, you can—if you like—say, as children say, 'I won't play any more,' and go. But if you elect to stay to the end, at least do so with a good grace, and refrain from grumbling.

xxv. If all this be true, and it be not merely silly to assert that Man's *good* and *evil* lie in his moral purpose and that everything else should be as naught to us, then what is there left that can distress or terrify us? No one has any power over the things we really care for, except ourselves; while the things over which other men have power are no concern of ours. It is really impossible for me to add usefully to this. You may read God's promptings in your instincts. He has given you that which is your own to use freely as you will. Things which are not yours you cannot, of course, use freely. Protect your own possessions and leave other people's alone. Yours is your faithfulness, yours your self-respect. No one can take them from you; no one but yourself can prevent you from using them. Since you have such promptings from Him, what further directions do you need from me? Am I greater or more reliable than He is?

From time to time you may receive invitations to dinner, and of course you will decide whether you will accept them or not. Your prospective host may be an old gentleman who loves spinning long-winded yarns about what he used to do in youth—of the campaign he took part in in Moesia, of how he scaled such or such a mountain peak, or of how he was one of a besieged garrison somewhere. You may think : ' I know I shall have to listen to his stupid reminiscences all over again, and I simply can't face it.' Or : ' I don't mind the old boy gassing away, it pleases him, and, after all, a good dinner is a good dinner ! ' It is up to you to choose ; but—and this is the point—if you do accept, carry it through with a good grace and don't hurt the old fellow's feelings by looking bored. After all, no one forced you to accept his invitation.

Life is full of situations where one has to make a choice—some trumpery, some important and difficult. Suppose, for instance, the chimney starts smoking and the house becomes full of smoke, what are you to do ? Well, you please yourself ; if there is not very much smoke, perhaps you will decide to ignore it ; if there is a lot, you will probably go out for a walk. Suppose somebody says to you : ' You shall not live in Nicopolis, in Athens or in Rome ; you shall live in exile in Gyaros.' [1] But perhaps you don't want to live in Gyaros. Well, you need not. It is for you to decide. For remember always that at any time it is within your power to go to a place where no one can prevent you dwelling—I mean the grave.

You may be despoiled of all material possessions,

[1] A small island in the Aegean Sea, now called Giura. In Epictetus' time it was used as a place of banishment.

even your body may be forfeit—but beyond that no one has power over you. If you pamper your body you enslave yourself to it. If you set store by material possessions you enslave yourself to them. For where your heart is there is your tenderest spot. It is there you can be hurt. And be sure your enemies will soon discover your tenderest spot—to your cost.

Is it your ambition to sit among the Senators? Why? To have the best view of the amphitheatre? I don't think that is your real reason. Isn't it because you want to appear as if you were one of the great of the earth? If you merely want to sit in those particular seats just for the pleasure of sitting in them, why not wait a little, and then when the show is over you can sit where you will, and sun yourself in comfort without being wedged in a crowd.

If some one starts blackguarding you, what of it? Suppose you were to make a few unpleasant remarks to a stone, would the stone mind? All you have to do is to listen like a stone,[1] and your reviler won't have much satisfaction. But if he happens to know you have a tender spot, he may flick you on the raw. One thing you can always do, however, and that is to keep your face under control—like a mask. That was one of Socrates' devices.

Ah, my boy . . . if you will only remember what I have told you, you will never have either to flatter or to fear anybody in the world!

xxvi

We must obey the dictates of Nature—that is the law of life. We must do what she commands, and

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173.

refrain from doing what she forbids. We shall not succeed all at once. We must start with the simpler things and gradually work our way on to the more difficult.

Should your father be annoyed with you for studying philosophy, say to him : 'Father, I keep on making mistakes because I don't know what I ought to do, or where my duty lies. I want to know ; and I am sure you would wish me to know. Please teach me. Or, if you cannot, suffer me at least to learn from those who can, and do not be angry with me for wanting to learn how to live properly.'

It is very hard to live properly in a large city like Rome. One is apt to lose one's sense of values there, and to forget the precepts of philosophy. I remember how once a friend of Epaphroditus broke down and sobbingly told him that he was in the direst distress. And do you know what the trouble was all about ? Just because he had lost everything *except a million and a half* ! And what do you think Epaphroditus said ? He said : 'Good God ! RUINED !' !

. . . . .

On one occasion a student was reading aloud a passage out of a book on logic which had been set him by his teacher, and Epictetus asked a few questions about the subject-matter which the lad couldn't answer. Whereupon the teacher, who happened to be present, laughed. Epictetus was very annoyed, and said to the teacher : 'You ought to laugh at yourself, not at him. What's the good of telling a junior student to read an abstruse passage like the one he's just read ? You should first teach him the elements of logic. When he knows those you may reasonably expect him to understand more advanced

things.' And then he added, speaking to the company generally: 'Only too often do we see an untrained mind, ignorant of logic and quite incapable of following an involved argument, pitchforked into some post where he has to pass judgements on others or dispense patronage. The first step for the student of philosophy is to realize the strength or weakness of his reasoning powers. When he realizes how weak and undeveloped they are, he will not rashly undertake tasks beyond his capacity. Unfortunately, however, there are not a few who want to run before they can walk.

One might think it is easy to prove to an ignorant man that he is in the wrong. But it isn't easy. The ignorant don't like being shown to be in the wrong, and they dislike those who essay the task. The wise man (as Socrates used to say) subjects himself to constant self-examination.' [1]

xxvii

Things may seem true and be false, or seem false and be true; or they may both seem and be either true or false. Education helps a man to determine which of these four any particular thing is. We must rely on our instincts—God's promptings—and on our knowledge of and training in logic, weapons which we must keep sharp and unsheathed, ready for instant use. Thus we shall avoid being misled into imagining (for instance) that something is good when in fact it is evil, either by plausible arguments or by sentiment. Try always to remember that there are two sides to

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xii, p. 146; Ch. xiv (*c*), p. 149; and Ch. xvi, p. 154.

every question, and to appreciate the arguments on both sides.

Death at first sight may appear to be an evil. But what can we do, whither shall we flee to escape it? Tell me what country or people death does not visit? Nay, it is unescapable! All we can do is to try not to fear it. Anyhow, being afraid of it does no good. Do you remember the noble words of Sarpedon, the son of Zeus? 'I came to the war thinking myself to win the prize for valour; but there are many others far braver than I.' Such sublimity is beyond us, but we can at least be brave enough to deny that death is an evil. So cease to sorrow.

Sorrow is born of unfulfilled desire. When we can, we mould circumstances according to our wishes; when we cannot, we try to crush any one who thwarts us. If we cannot do that either, then we curse God and all the Gods. 'For', we say, 'if they will not do what we want, what use are they to us?' Is not our professed love of God too often based in reality on self-interest?

xxviii

Intelligent beings assent to what is true, dissent from what is false, and suspend judgement when anything appears to be uncertain.[1] When a man assents to a falsehood you may be sure he is not doing so purposely, for, as Plato says: 'No man deliberately blinds himself to the truth.'[2] It only seems to him that the false is true. Now as with sense-perceptions so too with actions such as duty and dereliction, the

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. vii, p. 8; Book III, Ch. iii, p. 124.
[2] See Book II, Ch. xxii, p. 104.

seemly and the unseemly, the fitting and the unbefitting, and so forth. If a man think that a certain thing will be to his advantage, he will inevitably do it. Medea chose vengeance on her husband in preference to saving her children's lives. She chose wrongly ; but she had no one to point out to her the mistake she was making. She simply acted according to her lights such as they were. So what is the use of blaming her ? Pity her rather. We pity the blind and the maimed ; we should pity also the blindness and lameness of ignorance.

If we are quite clear on this point, namely that Man's actions are his reactions to the impressions he receives of the outside world through his five senses (such sense-perceptions, of course, may be correct or mistaken ; if mistaken he and he alone has to pay the penalty, for no one pays save for his own acts), we shall not find fault with or reproach or censure or hate or take offence at any one. The origin of everything may be traced back to our sense-perceptions. The *Iliad*, for instance, is nothing but a poetical account of the reactions of various persons to their sense-perceptions. If Menelaus had drawn a different conclusion and had considered that he would be well rid of such a wife as Helen, instead of the one he actually drew ; viz., that he must get her back at all costs, we should have lost both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. So hang great events on trivial causes.

What do we mean by *great events* ? Not wars, factions, the death of multitudes of human beings, nor the sack of cities. I don't call such *great events*, any more than I should call *great events* the slaughter of vast herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, or the burning and destruction of myriads of nests of swallows

or of storks. Bodies are only bodies, whether they be bodies of men or of birds ; and dwellings are merely dwellings, men's made of beams, tiles and bricks, storks' of sticks and clay. I attach little importance to either.

But that does not mean that a stork is as good as a man. Man knows what he does, has capacity for social action, has the qualities of faithfulness, self-respect, steadfastness and intelligence. And it is in the firm maintenance of these qualities that the highest capacity of Man for good lies, and in their neglect his greatest capacity for evil. If they be destroyed he too is destroyed ; if they be preserved he is preserved. Alexander Paris (at the siege of Troy) lapsed from his highest standard not when the Greeks were laying waste the country and his brothers lay a-dying, but when he lost his self-respect, his faithfulness, his respect for the laws of hospitality, and his decency of behaviour. Achilles lapsed, not when death robbed him of Patroclus, but when he forgot his duty as a soldier and squandered his talents over some girl on whom he had set his fancy. Such are the real lapses of men—when their better judgement goes astray. Here are their real evils—not the driving away and enslavement of women and children, not the slaughtering of men.

Man is really an astonishing creature. If he wants to weigh something or to find out if a line is exactly straight, he uses scales or a ruler ; but when it is a question of ascertaining how to act rightly and not wrongly, he has no standard at all and is perfectly content with making a guess based on some totally inadequate sense-perception ! That is precisely what Agamemnon, Achilles, Atreus, Oedipus and Hippo-

lytus all did, and you can read in Homer, Euripides, Sophocles and the poets, all the misfortunes that overtook them for so doing. If we act like they did, are we likely to fare any better than they? In fact they all behaved like lunatics.

xxix

By *good* we mean a good moral purpose; by *evil* an evil one. Material things are grist for the formation of our moral purpose which, according as it deals with them, becomes either good or evil. Thus right judgements on material things make the moral purpose good; wrong and crooked ones make it evil. This is the law ordained by God: 'If you desire good things, find them from within yourselves, not from others.' When a despot sends for me and browbeats me, saying: 'I will have you put in chains; I will throw you into prison or banish you; I will have you beheaded!' I cry: 'Aha! he is threatening my hands and feet, my neck, and my worthless body; but he is not threatening *me*. For he threatens things that are not under my control. So I have nothing to fear.'

We philosophers do not teach men to despise Kings. We do not dispute Kings' claims to the things over which they have authority. They can have our worthless bodies, our property, our reputation, our associates; but they cannot control our judgements and moral purposes. Nothing can overrule *them* but themselves. God has ordained that good shall always prevail over evil. Might is *not* stronger than right.

Might no doubt dragged Socrates' body to prison and made it drink hemlock so that it might grow

cold and die ; but the real Socrates was not dragged to prison and murdered. Listen to his own words : 'Anytus and Meletus may kill me, but they cannot harm me.' [1] And : 'As God will, so be it!' [2]

The man who judges aright will always prevail over him who judges wrongly. It is a law of Nature and of God that good shall always prevail over evil. One man is stronger than another ; several men are stronger than one ; a thief is stronger than an honest man . . . and so it was I lost my lamp.[3] However, he who stole it really paid an exorbitant price for it, for to get it he had to become a thief. And yet, no doubt, he thought he had made a very good bargain.

Imagine that some one laid hold of me by my cloak and haled me into the market-place, and that all the people cried out at me : 'Aha ! now we see to what philosophy brings a man—to prison—to the scaffold !' As if philosophy could prevent a man physically stronger than myself from pulling me thus, or ten men from seizing one and throwing him into gaol should they so desire ! But I am quite unaffected by anything that happens outside the ambit of my moral purpose. So, as I sat in prison, I should say : 'Those fellows who shouted at me have not even begun to understand my philosophy.' And then, later, if I were set free from prison, I should say, quite sincerely, that it was all one to me whether they kept me or let me go ; and that should they change their minds and want to reimprison me they would be

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. ii, p. 46 ; Book III, Ch. xxiii, p. 177 ; *Manual*, 53 ; and Plato's *Apology* 30, C–D.

[2] Also quoted, Book I, Ch. iv, p. 5 ; Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 228 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 311.

[3] See Book I, Ch. xviii, p. 22.

welcome to do so for so long as . . . for so long as reason decided that I should remain in my worthless body. Of course, when reason decided that I should not remain in it any longer, I would make them a present of it, and much good might it do them! But I should not resign my life needlessly nor faint-heartedly, nor for some trivial reason. God would not wish that, for He has need of men upon the earth. When He gives the signal for me to retire (as He did to Socrates), then I will obey Him; for He is my General and I am His soldier.

Do you want me to teach these truths indiscriminately? Why should I? I believe in them, and that is enough. We cannot make a child understand things that are beyond his mental grasp, nor a man whose mentality is still that of a child—and there are many such; so it is better to acquiesce in their illusions, and save one's breath and one's time.

It is when we are confronted by some practical difficulty in life that it becomes apparent whether or no we have been properly trained. A keen young scholar will not thank you for setting him simple problems; he wants hard ones to sharpen his wits on. So, too, an athlete needs sturdy, strong, heavy opponents to wrestle and box with, not light-weights. You must so direct your training that you can translate what you have learned into action; and you should—like some of Caesar's gladiators who complain bitterly that they cannot get a chance to fight in the arena—long for an opportunity, a difficulty, to arise, to pit yourself against. But when one does arise, do not let me hear you say: 'O, but I don't want *this* kind of difficulty!' It is not for you to choose. You have been given your body, your parents, brethren, country

and an estate in life, and resources that will enable you to make the best of them. Say rather, then : ' It is for God to set me my task, for me to execute it.'

Remember, too, that God requires you to bear witness for Him. ' Is there ', He asks, ' anything outside the ambit of Man's moral purpose that is either good or evil ? Has God wronged any man ? Has He not placed every man's *good* under His own control ? Go, then, My son, and bear witness for Me ! ' And if you were to reply : ' Nay, but I am in sore straits, for I am held of no account, I am poor, and all men hate and speak ill of me '—would that be bearing witness for Him ? No, you would be a hostile witness, unworthy of the honour bestowed upon you when He summoned you to give such important testimony on His behalf.

If some one in authority accuses you of being impious and profane, reflect—who is he ? Does he know what piety or impiety is ? Has he studied the question ? Where did he learn ? Who taught him ? An educated man need not pay any attention to an uninstructed person when he passes judgement on what is holy and unholy, just and unjust.

XXX

When you come into the presence of one of the Great of the Earth, remember that God sees everything that is taking place, and that you have to please Him rather than the Great Man. And God questions you thus :

Question : How, in your school, were you taught to regard bonds, imprisonment, banishment, ill-repute of men, and death ?

Answer : As matters of no importance.

Question : Are there any other things you regard as of no importance ?

Answer : Yes ; everything outside the ambit of my moral purpose.

Question : And what things are of importance to you ?

Answer : A proper moral purpose, and a right use of the impressions I receive through my senses of the outer world.

Question : To what end ?

Answer : To follow Thee.

Question : Do you really mean all this ?

Answer : I do.

If you can thus answer God's questions, go in and interview the Great Man in all confidence, and you will soon discover what it is to be a youth who has studied as he ought when he is in the presence of men who have not so studied. Your feeling will, I imagine, be something like this : ' Why on earth did I make such elaborate preparations ? All these ceremonials, flunkeys, and armed guards are absurd. The whole thing amounts to nothing, and never amounted to anything. And I all this time—idiot that I was—have been thinking it extremely important ! '

BOOK II

i

PHILOSOPHERS assert that our actions should be both bold *and* prudent. What do they mean by this seeming paradox? Listen. You have been told repeatedly that our moral purpose will be good or evil according as we use properly or misuse the impressions of the outside world we receive through our five senses, and that all those things which lie outside the ambit of our moral purpose are neither good nor evil. Now what the philosophers mean is this : be bold in regard to the things outside the ambit of the moral purpose which are neither good nor evil, and which are therefor nothing to us ; but be prudent in regard to those things which lie within it, lest our moral purpose be evil. Thus we shall be at once both prudent and bold—bold, in truth, because of our prudence ; for if we are careful to avoid evil deeds we shall be bold in well-doing.

You know how huntsmen scare deer with bright-coloured feathers, so that mistaking security for danger they run away from safety into nets where they are trapped and killed. Do not we act similarly when we show abject cowardice towards things which lie outside the ambit of our moral purpose, such as hardships, exile, ignominy and death ; while we are not merely bold but reckless, indeed brazen, over matters which lie within its ambit, such as being deceived,

acting hastily, cruelly or passionately, and wrongful desire?

Clearly, if we are prudent in regard to matters within the ambit of our moral purpose over which we have control, we shall have the power of avoiding evil; but if we are prudent only over matters outside it which are not under our control but under that of other people, we shall of necessity be subject to fears and uncertainties. It is not hardship or death that are terrible, but the fear of them. Yet in face of death we are so prudent that we try to run away; while we are bold to carelessness when we are forming an opinion about death!

Socrates was absolutely right when he termed all such things *bogeys*. Children are frightened by hideous masks because they are as yet ignorant and inexperienced. Grown-ups, too, fear what they do not understand. Death is only a bogy. Why, you know as well as I do that sooner or later the spirit has to be divorced from the body—they were originally separate, and they will be again—so why worry if it be sooner rather than later? It must be so sometime so that the full circle of things may be accomplished; for there is need of the things that are, that shall be, and that have been. And what is hardship? Another bogy. Consider: we all have good times and bad times; and if you don't like it, there is always a door of escape.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? A fair conclusion for those who have had a sound training—peace, fearlessness, freedom.

When people tell you that only the free can be educated, do not believe them. Believe rather the philosophers who say that only the educated are

free. What, then, is freedom ? It is *First* : the right to live the kind of life we wish ; and *Second* : not to live in error. For no one who lives in error, or who is in fear, sorrow or turmoil of mind, is free.[1] You know how when a man wishes to free one of his slaves, he has to fulfil certain legal formalities—he has to turn his slave round in the presence of the Praetor, and pay a five per cent. tax on the slave's value. Do you imagine that when he has done all this he has made his slave free ? It depends upon what you mean by *free.* No doubt he has made him legally free, but has he given him freedom of mind and peace ? Take your own case—you who can free others—have *you* no master—money, for instance, or a mistress, a boy friend, or some influential man from whom you hope to obtain a favour ? That is why I repeat and go on repeating : Face fearlessly everything outside the ambit of your moral purpose, but be very prudent in regard to everything within it. Nothing else matters. What, for example, does it matter if you can read or write or figure ? Leave such things to others, and if any one compliments you on your skill in such matters, disclaim all merit therein and let yourself be accounted an ignoramus. Let others go in for lawsuits and fret themselves with all manner of problems. All you need to know is how to suffer imprisonment, exile, torture and death. Learn to face these confidently, trusting in Him who calls upon you and deems you worthy to face them, and thus show what can be achieved by reason against the forces that lie outside the ambit of the moral purpose. And in this way the paradox I quoted you will be found to be no paradox, and you will know

[1] See Book IV, Ch. i, p. 201.

that we can, and ought, to be at once both prudent *and* bold—bold in regard to all that lies outside the ambit of our moral purpose, prudent in regard to that which lies within it.

ii

Before instructing your solicitor to issue a writ, consider for a few moments what it is precisely you wish to obtain. If it is freedom to use your moral purpose as you think best, why, you have it already! No one can prevent you from being self-respecting and honourable, or force you to desire what you do not want, or avoid what you do not seek to avoid. Desire and aversion are both under your control; so what more do you want? That is why when somebody conjured him to prepare his defence, Socrates replied: 'But my whole life has been one long preparation for my trial, for I have consistently cared for those things that are under my control, and have never done anything wrong either in my public or my private life.' But if you want to secure some material possession which is not under your control—your worthless body, estate or reputation—ah then, by all means make every possible preparation. You will need them all. Study the characters of your adversary and of the Judge. Learn how to intrigue and curry favour. But remember what Socrates said: 'Anytus and Meletus may kill me, but they cannot harm me.' [1] These are not the words of a man who is trying to defend his material possessions.

However, if you do decide to go to law, there is no need to be provocative in word or manner. I will

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxix, p. 39; Book III, Ch. xxiii, p. 177.

give you an instance of what I mean. My friend Heracleitus [1] had a lawsuit over some trumpery piece of land in Rhodes. He had a strong case and put his points well, but at the last moment he spoiled everything by saying to the judges : 'Decide what you like ; but if you decide against me you will be condemning yourselves ! ' That, of course, put the lid on. What sense was there in talking like that ? There is no need to grovel, but you may as well be civil even to a Judge, unless, of course, circumstances are such that it is your bounden duty deliberately to rebuke them, as Socrates had to do.

iii

Diogenes once made a capital reply to some one who asked him for a reference to show to a prospective employer. 'That you are a man,' he said, 'he will see at a glance ; and if he knows the difference between good and evil he will be able to find out for himself which your character is. But if he doesn't, he will never discover, no, not if I wrote and told him ten thousand times. So in either case it is quite useless my writing.'

A shilling needs no introduction to an assayer of silver ; it recommends itself. And as an assayer of silver can appraise any coin you care to bring him, so too we should be able to appraise men and circumstances in everyday life. But how few of us can ! Sometimes we call a thing good, at other times bad—for we are very ignorant and inexperienced.

[1] Not the philosopher. See *Manual*, 15, and footnote thereto.

iv

On one occasion, as Epictetus was talking about Faithfulness, pointing out that it is one of Man's most characteristic qualities, there came in one, a scholar by reputation, who had been caught in the very act of adultery. 'And', continued Epictetus, apparently not noticing his entrance, 'if we are untrue to this characteristic quality, and harbour designs on our neighbours' wives, we are bringing such qualities as faithfulness, self-respect and piety into contempt, and outraging the good relations which should exist between friends and neighbours, to say nothing of our duty to the State. How is one to treat a man who behaves thus? As a citizen, neighbour and friend? A queer sort of friend whom nobody can trust! a useless creature—like some cracked pot that is thrown away on to the dunghill! like a wasp that stings! Men avoid, or, if they can, strike down and kill wasps.

Oh, I know that Archedemus maintains that women are designed by Nature to be the common property of men![1] But when you go out to dinner, do you help yourself to some of the food on your neighbour's plate on the pretext that it is the common property of all your host's guests? Or when you go to the theatre, do you forcibly eject somebody from his seat and take it for yourself on the pretence that the theatre is the common property of all the citizens? Don't you see that it is in this sense only that women are common property? Even as the host at a banquet apportions the viands, so the Lawgiver apportions women. Be content, then, with the one allotted to you, and do not try to filch your neighbour's. How-

[1] Cp. p. 279 (Fragment 15).

ever, if you are determined to be faithless and an adulterer, more like a wolf or an ape than a man, there is nothing to stop you.'

V

It is the use we make of the material things of this world that is important, not the things themselves. If we are to make good use of them we must cultivate a calm equable temperament, being constantly careful, never hasty or negligent. Learn a lesson from those who play at dice. The dice and counters they use are unimportant ; what is important is to make the best use of the numbers that turn up. Similarly in life our chief task is to balance one thing against another, telling oneself : ' Material things are not under my control, but moral choice is. Hence I must look within me, in that which is under my control, for good and evil.' Never apply the terms ' good ', ' evil ', ' injury ', ' benefit ', to things under somebody else's control.

But this does not mean that material things are to be used carelessly. On the contrary, we must use them very carefully.[1] To use a thing carelessly is to make a wrong exercise of the moral purpose. But as the things are in themselves unimportant, we must use them calmly and dispassionately. It is, I know, difficult to reconcile this carefulness which we are bound to use in regard to material things with the detachment of spirit which sets no store by them. But it can be done ; otherwise happiness is impossible.

Before starting on a voyage I settle the date of my departure and select my ship. My responsibility ends

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. x, p. 143.

there. If a storm arises, it concerns not me but the Captain and the sailors. And if the ship sinks, all I can do is to drown fearlessly, without blaspheming against God, but recognizing that Man is mortal and that what is born must some day die. For as an hour Man comes and as an hour he passes away. What difference can it possibly make to me whether I perish by drowning or die of a flux?

We may learn the same truth from games at ball. It is not the ball that is good or bad, but the way in which it is thrown or caught. Personally, I confess, I can't catch a ball even if I spread out my coat to catch it in, let alone with my hands! But an expert catches and throws balls coolly and steadily, so that he is always ready for the next one.

Socrates knew another kind of game—that of the law courts. Do you remember the game he had with Anytus? 'Tell me', he asked him, 'exactly what you mean when you say that I am guilty both of not believing in the gods and at the same time of having invented new demi-gods? Are not demi-gods either the offspring of the Gods, or a hybrid race sprung from Gods and men? You agree? Then do you still think that I believe in mules and not in horses and asses?' The 'ball' Socrates was then playing with was imprisonment, exile, a draught of hemlock, and the leaving of his wife a widow and his children orphans. What a fine game he played!

And we in the common affairs of everyday life ought to do the same—exhibit the same care that the player does over his game, and his indifference to the object played with, which is nothing but a ball. And we ought most assuredly to apply our best skill when dealing with material things, while refraining

from making them as it were a part of ourselves. God gives us food and property, and He can take them away again, aye, and our bodies too, if He thinks fit. It is for us to take what He gives and deal with it to the best of our ability.

The foot cannot regard itself as a separate entity and carry on as if it had nothing to do with the body as a whole ; the foot is part of the body, and apart from the body is not really a foot at all. So, too, a man is part of the State, and the State is part of the Universe, and apart from the State Man is not really a man at all. Sometimes it is necessary for the foot to step into mud, or trample on thorns, or even be cut off, for the sake of the body. If you, as a man, consider yourself to be an entirely separate entity, with no connexion with the State or the Universe, you will naturally just continue living on to old age, piling up riches and looking after your health. But if you regard yourself as being a part of a greater whole, you will recognize that for the sake of that whole you may at times have to suffer sickness, go voyages, run risks, be in want, or even die before your time. There is nothing in that to vex you. For, indeed, with such bodies as we have, with the fellow-creatures amongst whom we dwell, and in the Universe which surrounds us, it must needs be that some such mischances should occur to one man or another.

Should we be tried and unjustly condemned, we can but say to our Judge : ' I have done my part ; look you if you have done yours.' A judge should remember that he runs a risk as well as the prisoner at the bar.[1]

[1] See Book III, Ch. xviii, p. 156.

vi

The premises in an imaginary syllogism are of nc importance, but the knowledge, opinions and mistake: resulting from the inference drawn are important. So, too, mere life is unimportant, but not so the use we make of it. Hence when some one assures you that knowledge, opinions, mistakes, and the use we make of life, are really unimportant, do not believe them and become careless about such things, and proceed to lavish all your care over material possessions.

It is well for us to realize the extent of our educa- tion and abilities, so that conscious of our lack of both we may keep modestly in the background and not be piqued when others outshine us. Perhaps some day it will be our turn to surpass others, and then we should assuage their wounded feelings by saying 'It's no credit to us ; we just happen to have learned about it and you haven't ! '

Do not attempt tasks beyond your powers. Leave such to specialists who combine a natural aptitude with special study.

If some one advises you to call on some Great Man and ask a favour of him,[1] there is no reason why you should not do so if you want to. But always preserve an independent spirit. Ask frankly ; do not try to get what you want by devious methods. If the door be shut in your face, do not try to crawl in by the window. And if your request be refused well ! that is the Great Man's affair, not yours. After all, you asked him for something that belongs to him. If you are careful never to forget what belongs to

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxiv, pp. 186, 187 ; Book IV, Ch. vii p. 249 ; and *Manual*, 33, p. 304.

you and what belongs to other people, you will never be worried.

Chrysippus well says : 'When God created us He gave us the power of choice. But we are often puzzled how to choose. Under such circumstances try always to act in conformity with the dictates of Nature, even though the consequences look as if they might be unpleasant. Were I assured that it was ordained for me to be ill at this very moment, I would wish to be ill. If the foot were a separate entity and it could realize that it was for the benefit of the body as a whole that it should step into and be covered with mud, it would assuredly step into it, even though it were past its comprehension how any benefit could thereby possibly accrue to the body.'

Why do spikes of corn grow? Surely that they may ripen and then be harvested. They do not grow for themselves alone. Were they sentient would they pray never to be harvested? Were they indeed never to be harvested it would be a tragedy for them, for their destiny would then be unfulfilled. So, too, I tell you, it would be a tragedy for men were they never to die, for death is the summation of our maturity. It is given to us to know these things, both that the day of our own harvesting will sometime dawn, and also when it has dawned. But this knowledge vexes us. We know not who we are, and we neglect the study of Man. Should we not study Man as horse-breeders study horses?

You have heard how Chrysanthus, in the act of spearing his foe, forbore when he heard the bugler's 'retreat'; for he put his duty to his superior officer before his personal inclinations. Yet who of us is willing to submit cheerfully even when we are com-

pelled to? For the most part we submit indeed (for that we cannot avoid doing), but fearfully, full of lamentations, and blaming 'circumstances'. If by 'circumstances' we mean 'hardships', pray tell me what hardship is involved in the death of a living thing? Be the instrument of destruction what it may—a sword, the rack, the sea, a tile or a tyrant, what difference does it make?[1] All roads lead to the tomb, and if you would have the truth, the one a tyrant makes you tread has the merit of being shorter than the others; for no tyrant ever took six months to cut a man's throat, whereas a fever often takes more than a year.

If some one say his life will be in peril if Caesar hap to set eyes upon him, I reply: 'But do not I run a risk by living in Nicopolis where there are so many earthquakes? And does not one risk one's life every time one crosses the Adriatic?'

If some one say that at Court one will be in danger of not being allowed to have an opinion of one's own, I reply: 'But who can compel you to opine anything against your will?'

If some one say: 'But I run the risk of banishment,' I reply: 'What *is* banishment?' Does it mean not to be in Rome? Does it mean being sent to Gyaros?[2] Well, if it be for your good, go to Gyaros; if not, well! you have an alternative; you can go to a place where he who is sending you to Gyaros will some day have to go himself, whether he like it or no. Do you really think it worth while going to Rome? I am sure it is not worth all the trouble of preparation that one makes beforehand. I can

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 249.

[2] Now Giura, a small island in the Aegean.

well imagine an intelligent youth exclaiming after his arrival there : ' To get here has cost me the listening to innumerable lectures, the writing of numberless essays, and the being the pupil for an unconscionable time of a futile little old man. It wasn't worth it ! '

The great thing is never to forget to distinguish between what is yours and what isn't yours. Never lay a claim to anything that is not yours. A palace is lofty, a prison is low ; but your moral purpose can accommodate itself to either if you want it to. Some day (who knows ?) we may even hope to emulate Socrates, who wrote hymns of praise in prison. Suppose you were in prison (like he was) awaiting execution, and one of your fellow-prisoners said to you : ' Listen to this hymn of praise I have just composed ! ' I fear you would probably reply : ' Oh, go to the devil and leave me in peace ! What is the good of hymns of praise to one under sentence of death ? ' But would your troubles really be any worse than those of other men ? All have to die.

vii [1]

Of what can a diviner tell me more important than illness, danger and death ? He may have studied the signs of entrails and of birds, but what does he know of the nature of good and evil ? What can he say about them, a subject on which we are all astray and at variance with one another ? Anyhow, have I not within me a diviner who has already taught me the true nature and signs of good and evil ? If it be my duty to risk my life for, perhaps even to die for, a friend, I don't need another diviner to tell me so.

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 32, p. 301.

What an admirable saying was that of the woman who wanted to send a boat-load of supplies to Gratilla just after she had been sentenced to exile. When some one warned her that Domitian would confiscate it, she retorted : ' I would far rather it were confiscated than that I should fail to send it ! '

What is it, then, that induces us so constantly to consult diviners ? It is fear. ' Let me do sacrifice that I may discover whether I shall inherit my father's property,' we say. And if the answer be in the affirmative, we promptly thank the diviner almost as if it were *he* who were leaving it to us ! And he, no doubt, laughs at us up his sleeve. The proper way to employ divination is to do so without desire or aversion, just as a wayfarer asks a native of the locality at some bifurcation of his road which path he should follow, being indifferent as to whether he should turn right or left provided only he reach his destination. Our eyes show us not what we want to see but things as they are. In the same way we should call upon God to guide us, instead of trembling before an augur as though he were a God. Are we foolish enough to want anything but what is best for us ? And what is best for us but what is pleasing to God ? '

viii

What is the essential nature of ' good ', and in wha, is it to be found ? We must be clear. There are the impressions of the outer world received through the senses together with capacity to react to such impressions. This constitutes the first stage of development. The second is being able to appreciate why one reacts to them ; i.e. the faculty of understanding. Now

organisms such as plants cannot appreciate sense-perceptions at all ; hence in their case the question of ' good ' does not arise. Nor does it arise in the case of the lower animals. They, it is true, react to external stimuli, but they are only reflex creatures. Their faculties are developed no further than this. Were they also able to understand *why* they use their sense-perceptions, they would be the equals of Man, and no longer subject to or of any use to us. In fact, however, they cannot. They were born for service. The ass, for instance, was created because Man had need of a broad back for porterage, a back with legs attached for locomotion, the whole contrivance capable of reacting to the external stimulus of an order or a whip. But Man has what all other creatures lack—the faculty of understanding ; and it is in this that we must look for the essential nature of ' good ', in understanding, that is in intelligence, reason and knowledge, in a word, in the rational, not in the irrational.

And does not the essential nature of God also reside in intelligence, reason and knowledge ? Therefore the essential natures of ' good ' and of God are the same.

Now the lower animals are, like men, creations of God, but they stand on a lower plane of importance. They have nothing of the nature of God in them. But Man is on a higher plane and is, as it were, a part of God, and has within him a part of God. You should know your own kinship and pedigree. When you eat, remember who you are that eat, and whom you are feeding. Whether you eat or take exercise, remember that you are feeding and exercising God. You carry God about with you, but, unhappy man, you know it not ! It is God Himself that you bear about within

you. So do not forget that when you think impure thoughts, and do filthy things, you are defiling Him. I am not speaking of a God made of silver or gold, though you would hardly dare to do in the presence of a mere image the things you are not ashamed of thinking and doing, God Himself being present within you seeing and hearing everything !

When we see a beloved son going out into the world for the first time, we are racked with fears lest he do something amiss—live riotously, run after loose women, lose caste through poverty, or be spoiled by success. But we need not fret. Surely he knows that God is within him, is his constant Companion and that he has no need to cry : ' O God, would that Thou wert here with me ! ' ? For He is with him all the time, and having Him he has no need of any one else. Had you been a statue fashioned by Pheidias (like his Athena or his Zeus), you would (had you any power of perception) have been mindful both of yourself and of your creator, and have tried to do nothing unworthy of him, and you would have endeavoured to do nothing unseemly in men's eyes. But it was a greater than Pheidias who made you, God Himself. And yet you seem to be altogether indifferent as to what manner of person you appear to be. And how can you compare Pheidias and his works to God and His ? The statues of Pheidias are but stone, bronze, gold or ivory. His Athena stands, the figure of Victory on its outstretched palm, eternally motionless. But the works of God move, breathe, make use of the impressions of the outer world they receive through their senses, and pass judgement upon them. Will you dishonour the handiwork of God—yourself? Will you forget that He fashioned you, that He entrusted and committed

you to your own sole charge ? If you do forget you will be guilty of a breach of trust. Had God entrusted some orphan to your care, would you have neglected him ? But He has delivered your own self into your keeping, saying : ' I have no one more faithful than thee ; keep this man for Me unspoiled, with all those virtues with which he has been endowed by Nature, to wit reverence, loyalty, highmindedness, courage, serenity, calm.' Will you neglect such a solemn charge as this ?

ix

It is not easy to be a man—a real man. Man has been defined as a mortal animal endowed with reason. It is reason that distinguishes us on the one hand from wild beasts, on the other from domestic cattle such as sheep. See to it that you never sink to the level of sheep by allowing your actions to be random, unconsidered or filthy, prompted merely by your bellies or by lust. Do not thus abrogate your reason. See to it, too, that you never sink to the level of a wild beast, by behaving pugnaciously, injuriously, angrily or rudely. By so doing you insult your manhood. Alas ! I fear that many of us do sometimes behave like wild beasts, some—and they are the nastiest—like petty, malignant ones. I would rather be mauled to death by a lion than by one of them.

Manhood can only be preserved by the constant exercise of all those qualities which taken together constitute it. Indeed this is true of everything. A carpenter can only remain a carpenter by plying his trade ; a grammarian can only remain a grammarian by persistent grammatical studies. The activities

corresponding to various trades and professions when performed assiduously strengthen and confirm him who practises them. Modest acts make a modest man still more modest, whereas immodest acts destroy his modesty ; faithful acts strengthen the faithfulness of the faithful man ; treacherous acts undo him. Similarly, of course, shamelessness makes the shameless man yet more shameless, faithlessness the faithless man more faithless, abuse the abusive man more abusive, wrath the wrathful man more wrathful, and meanness the miser more miserly.

Philosophers teach us that book learning alone is not enough ; we must translate into action what we have learned. Often in the course of years we pick up bad habits, so that we do instinctively that which, had we only remembered what we had learned, we should have known was wrong. When we thus act instinctively and without reflection—doing what we really know better than to do—we are acting unintelligently, simply copying other people's mistakes. No doubt if we were asked theoretical distinctions between good and evil, we could rattle them off readily enough, but when our actions belie our words we give occasion to the scoffer. And in fact we are playing fast and loose with the most serious matters.

One can either eat one's cake and wine or lock it up in the store-room. What is eaten becomes sinews, flesh, bones, blood, a good complexion, easy breathing. What is locked up is of use only for display or for gaining a reputation for wealth. And what is the good of that ? Surely it is better to make use of things than to hoard them like a Jew. You are Greeks ; do not act, then, as if you were Jews. Be what you are—Greeks and men. And to be men you must practise

assiduously those principles which conduce to manhood. What is the use of knowing what they are if you do not apply them? It is a form of hoarding. Anyhow, until you comport yourselves as men should, there is no hope of your aspiring to the next step upwards, that is of becoming philosophers. You might just as well expect one who cannot lift a ten-pound weight to pick up and hurl the rock wherewith Aias beat down Aeneas!

x

Consider who you are. *In the first place*, a Man; i.e. one whose chief characteristic is the possession of free moral choice. You are distinguished both from wild beasts and from domestic cattle by the gift of reason. *Secondly:* a citizen of the world, not a mere beast designed for service, but set on a higher plane, capable of appreciating God's ordering of the Universe, and drawing your own conclusions as to the part you should play therein. Remember that a respectable citizen makes no personal profit out of public duties; never acts as if he were an independent unit, but as if he were a hand or a foot. For if the hand and foot could reason and comprehend, they would never seek to act otherwise than as members of the body. Similarly (as philosophers rightly point out) a man should welcome diseases, being maimed and death, realizing that these so-called misfortunes of the individual may well be to the greater benefit of the State, of which he is one of the members. *Thirdly:* [1] Remember that you are a son. It behoves a son to treat all he has as belonging to his father; to be subservient to his

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 30, p. 299.

father in all things ; never to speak ill of him, nor in any way to harm him, but to submit himself to him and serve him with all his might. *Fourthly :* [1] As a brother you owe consideration and gentle words. Never claim from your brother anything that lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose, but rather surrender all such things cheerfully, so that in respect of those things which lie within it you may have the best of it ! At how small a price—some trifling gift —a theatre ticket, even a mere head of lettuce—may you gain his good-will ! *Fifthly :* As town councillor. If you are still in the twenties, remember your youth ; if you are past your prime, remember that old age should be dignified ; if you are a father, remember that fatherhood has its responsibilities. Each of these titles suggests an appropriate line of conduct. If you permit yourself to speak ill of, or to act unfriendly towards, your brother, you will be untrue to your true self, and yours will be the loss. If instead of behaving as a man should, that is to say as a gentle and social being, you descend to the level of the wild beast and become mischievous, treacherous and hurtful, you will have lost something. Money, you know, is not the only thing one can lose. One can lose one's skill in languages or in music, and be the poorer for the loss ; and one may lose one's self-respect, dignity and gentleness, and be poorer still. For if we lose our skill in languages or in music, it will be owing to some cause not under our control ; and in any case possession of such talents is of no credit to us, nor are we shamed if we lose them. But not to possess, or to lose, self-respect, dignity and gentleness, is a cause of reproach and disgrace—a real calamity.

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 30, pp. 299 & 300.

What is lost by those who practise unnatural vice? Their manhood. What does the adulterer lose? His status as a man of self-respect and self-control, as a neighbour, citizen and gentleman. What does the man who loses his temper lose? And the coward? And the evil-doer? All lose something; no one can sin without loss and damage to himself. And you cannot measure loss in terms of cash. If you make money your only standard of gain and loss, clearly if some one slices off the tip of your nose, on your own showing you have lost nothing! Which is absurd! As a matter of fact, in all the instances I have just cited, the person in question may actually make money out of his sin, and yet he is the poorer, for he has lost his natural sense of self-respect. We all have an innate sense of fidelity, affection, helpfulness, and forbearance, and when we lose any of them we suffer a very real loss.

Are we to requite injury by injury? Consider for a moment what 'injury' is. Remember what philosophy teaches—that 'good' and 'evil' both lie in the moral purpose. Remembering that, you will realize that because a certain person has injured himself by doing you a wrong, there is no reason why you should injure yourself by doing him one in revenge. Losses affecting our bodies or estates are not injuries at all; the only real injuries are those where the loss affects our moral purposes. I believe we all realize the truth of this when we discuss such matters theoretically. And in so far as we do thus realize it we may be said to be making progress. The trouble is that we make no progress at all when it comes to applying these principles to the affairs of everyday life.

xi

If you want to be a philosopher, the first step—the door through which you must enter—is to realize how feeble and helpless one is in regard to those things that matter most. We have no innate conception of, say, what constitutes a right-angled triangle, or a half-tone musical interval. We are taught such things as we grow up, or if we do not happen to be taught them at least we know that we know nothing about them. But we have a certain instinct as to the meaning of 'good' and 'evil', 'honour' and 'dishonour', 'right' and 'wrong', 'happiness', of what we ought or ought not to do, and so forth ; but without bothering to be sure that we really know what they mean, we proceed to use these terms and apply our preconceptions about them to particular cases. What we ought to do, of course, is to fortify this rudimentary knowledge implanted in us by Nature with study, instead of merely eking it out with our opinions or prejudices. Now we are all more or less agreed on what these preconceptions are or should be. It is when we come to apply them that difficulties crop up, because we all have different ideas as to how they ought to be applied. Everybody thinks his own idea or opinion is the right one ; but obviously as our opinions are most different they cannot all be right ; and even if they were always the same, they would not necessarily be right. Clearly, then, our various opinions are of little value as a standard, and we must look elsewhere for some better criterion wherewith to judge any particular case. Remember that even lunatics have 'opinions'.

This, then, is the beginning of philosophy—to realize

that men's opinions conflict with one another ; that they cannot all be right ; that there is no reason why ours should be right rather than those of other men ; and that therefore in the same way as we need, and indeed use, standards for determining weight and line, so too we need a standard for determining truth. It is inconceivable that in regard to matters which are of the utmost consequence to men that there should be no proper standard. And, of course, there is one ; and it is for us to discover what it is, and then when we have found it, to use it unswervingly, never lifting even a finger without applying it.

That is the task of philosophy—to establish proper criteria, so that we may judge in any particular case what it is right or wrong for us to do.

xii

It is quite easy to learn how to argue correctly if you study and observe the rules of logic as enunciated by Stoic philosophers. At all events it is easier than to make a proper use of the fruits of your arguments.

If you start arguing with some one who argues illogically, and find you cannot convince him, don't blame or laugh at him ; your failure is due less to his stupidity than to your own inability to explain yourself.

Socrates' method was to get admissions from the person he was arguing with. He didn't bother about any one else. He made each step in his argument so clear that there was really nothing more to be said about it. And another very characteristic thing about him was that he never lost his temper or used harsh language ; he left that for others to do. Moreover, he smoothed over many disputes.

However, what Socrates used to do would not be a very safe form of activity for us to indulge in nowadays, especially in Rome. If you did, I can visualize the kind of thing that would happen. Imagine yourself accosting some complete stranger of opulent and distinguished appearance, and proceeding to catechize him:

You: Excuse me, sir! You know the man in charge of your stable?

Opulent and Distinguished Stranger (surprised but politely): Yes!

You: Does he know anything about horses?

O. and D. S.: I hope so!

You: Tell me, do you leave your jewellery, plate, and money lying about?

O. and D. S.: I do not; I lodge them at my bank.

You: And you yourself?—your health? Do you look after your health properly?

O. and D. S.: I have a doctor.

You: Have you anything more valuable than your horses, jewellery, plate, money, and health?'

O. and D. S.: What on earth are you talking about?

You: About that something which makes use of all the things I have mentioned; which evaluates them and makes decisions about them.

O. and D. S.: Are you talking about my soul?

You: I am!

O. and D. S.: Certainly my soul is my most valued possession.

You: Quite. Then tell me—what steps do you take to care for it properly? Obviously a man of your intelligence and standing is not going to allow his most valued possession to go to rack and ruin for lack of proper care.

At this point, if no earlier, your victim will probably exclaim :

O. and D. S. : Confound it, sir ! What the blàzes has my soul got to do with you ? Mind your own business !

And if you still persisted in annoying him, he would probably knock you down.

I myself used to be very fond of baiting people like this—but that was many years ago.

xiii

My friend, you are looking worried !

Now when I see someone looking worried I say to myself : ' What's biting him ? He must be hankering after something outside his control.' Such a one reminds me of a musician who is as brave as a lion when he is playing and singing to himself in his own study but who, the moment he goes on a platform and faces an audience, shows signs of nervousness—in spite of the fact that he has a good voice and is a talented performer. He is nervous because he wants not merely to sing well but to win applause into the bargain, and the winning of applause is a thing outside his control.

A worried man is a stranger in the world he lives in. Though he may have been living in it for years, he really knows nothing of its laws and customs. If he wants to make his will, or if he is thinking of standing surety for some one, or embarking on some important business deal, he may have the sense to consult a lawyer. But it never even occurs to him to seek advice over what is far more important—such matters as the exercise of his likes and dislikes, choices, designs,

and purposes. And yet it is in such matters as these that he stands in greatest need of advice ; for how else can he learn that he is desirous of things that he should not desire, that he is seeking to escape the inevitable, that he cannot distinguish between his own and other people's property. If he knew such things he would never feel worried. Do remember : all things which lie within the ambit of our moral purpose are under our control ; no man can deprive us of them ; no man can force them upon us if we do not want them. Worry begins when we start vexing ourselves over our worthless bodies and estates, or over what Caesar thinks about us. Unfortunately it is just such things as these that form our chief preoccupation, and we are not a bit perturbed if we form false opinions or make some choice contrary to Nature.

Just as a doctor can tell at a glance that his patient's liver is out of order, so when I see some one looking worried I know immediately that his desire and aversion are affected. Nothing else can so alter a man's demeanour, and make him so restless and uneasy.

That is why Zeno, the painter, was quite undisturbed at the prospect of meeting Antigonus, who wanted to be his patron. For Antigonus had no power over any of the things Zeno valued, while the things over which Antigonus had power were matters of utter indifference to him. Antigonus, on the other hand, was very nervous about meeting Zeno. Naturally ! because he wanted to please and conciliate him. But Zeno didn't care a rap whether he pleased Antigonus or not. No artist cares about pleasing folk who know nothing about painting.

Why should I want to please *you*, for instance ? Shall I be any better off if I do ? I only want to please

good men, and are you a good man? Do you know what constitutes a good man, and what a bad one? Or how each becomes what he is? As I remarked before, you look worried, and we all know what that signifies. No really good man grieves or groans or laments or turns pale or trembles at anything. But you, I know, are fretting yourself about the reception you are going to get, speculating whether or no you will get an attentive hearing. He—whoever he is—will receive you and listen to you as seems best to *him*. Why *will* you concern yourself with things which do not belong to you? If he gives you a bad reception that is his affair. If he makes a mistake, that can't hurt you. Why be nervous as to what you shall say? You can say what you choose. You have practised speaking. You wouldn't be nervous over reading or writing just for this reason—because you have practised them. Besides, you have studied the rules of logic and know all about syllogisms, and so can conduct an argument intelligently and skilfully. So there is no reason for you to feel embarrassed or anything else but confident. What, in fact, have you to fear? Are you afraid of being put to death? Ah! you shake your head! Well, my friend with the worried face, if you *are* afraid of such things, at least be honest about it and admit that you are no longer a philosopher. Recognize your masters, those who rule you by their hold over you through your body. Socrates practised speaking and spoke to some purpose. Remember what he said to the Thirty Tyrants, to his judges and in prison. Diogenes, too, practised speaking, as Alexander the Great, Philip, the pirates and the man who bought him all discovered. But such things naturally do not interest you now that you are no longer a philo-

sopher. Well, well, don't bother your head about them ; leave them to those who *are* interested in them —to those with a bit of spunk in their make-up !

xiv

A certain Roman citizen named Naso, and his son, were once listening to one of his readings when, all of a sudden, the Master broke off and said : ' That is *my* method of teaching ! ' and then lapsed into silence. And then when Naso begged him to go on, he said : ' Instruction in the technique of any art is extremely boring ; but assiduous practice in acquiring the technique justifies the labour expended, for it produces something of attraction and charm. For instance, to stand by and watch a cobbler learn his trade is a desperate undertaking, but the result—a shoe—is useful and may even be attractive. The details of a carpenter's apprenticeship are even more tiresome to the onlooker, but the cabinet he makes may be a work of art. The studies of a budding musician are far worse than either, and yet when he has learned how to produce real music, he gives infinite pleasure to many.

' Let us, in the same kind of way, try to picture to ourselves the mentality of a philosopher. He should try to bring his will into harmony with events, so that nothing that happens or fails to happen, does so against his will. Thus he has what he desires and avoids what he would avoid. And so he passes his life free from pain, fear and perturbation, and yet at the same time fulfilling all his duties as son, father, brother, citizen, wife, neighbour, fellow-traveller, ruler, or subject.

' The next point is—how are we to achieve it ? Now just as a carpenter and helmsman have to learn before

they can become properly qualified, so too we have to learn something before we can become good and noble. And philosophers tell us that the first thing we have to learn is this : that God exists, that He provides for the Universe, and that we cannot conceal our thoughts and intentions from Him any more than we can our actions. Secondly, we must learn what God is like, for if we want to obey and please Him we must try and make ourselves as like Him as possible. If God be faithful, free, beneficent and high-minded, we must be the same. In fact in everything we say and do we must imitate Him.

'How then (you will ask) are you to begin? As a preliminary you must understand the meaning of philosophical terms. At present you don't understand them. You may use them, in fact you do use them, but you use them as cattle use their sense-perceptions —reflexly. Use is one thing; understanding is another. However, if you think you do understand such terms, suggest any one you like and we will analyse it and see if you really understand it.'

Naso : Isn't that rather hard on a man of my age —I have served in three campaigns—to have to undergo a sort of examination?

Epictetus : Yes, it is. . . . But, you see, you come to me as if you were in need of nothing. Who indeed looking at you would imagine that you were in need of anything? You are rich, you have children, a wife no doubt, and many slaves. Caesar knows you. You have many friends in Rome. You perform punctiliously all your duties. If any one has done you a service or a wrong, it is in your power to requite him suitably. What, then, do you still lack? Well, in the first place, you won't, I am sure, mind my saying that

you lack just those things that are essential to happiness—you do not know what God, or Man, or 'good' or 'evil' are. But that is not all. I am afraid you won't like what I am going to say now—perhaps you will be offended and walk out—you also lack understanding of yourself; your desires are feverish; your attempts to avoid things are cowardly; your objectives are inconsistent; your choices are out of harmony with your nature; your conceptions are vague or false. Now don't feel insulted when I tell you this. I have done you no more harm than a mirror does to an ugly man by reflecting his ugliness, or than a doctor does to his patient when he tells him he is feverish and must take nothing but water. His patient doesn't feel insulted, so why should you?

We are like visitors to a cattle-fair. Most of those present are busy buying or selling; a few, however, are there merely as spectators, to see how the fair is conducted, what there is for sale, and to ascertain who are its organizers. The world, too, is a fair. And in the same way as cattle are interested only in their fodder, so too some of those who live in the world are interested only in their property, land, slaves, offices and so forth—*their* fodder, in fact. Yet there are some few who, viewing the world as spectators, ask: 'What is the Universe? Who rules it? (Some one must rule it, for no city, not even a household, can remain long without some one to rule and look after it; and it is impossible that this great and beautiful structure should maintain its orderly arrangement by sheer accident or chance. There must be some one who rules it.) What kind of a Being is He, and how does He govern it? And who are we whom He has created? and why did He create us? Have we or

have we not communion with Him ? ' This is what some few ask, and thenceforward they devote themselves exclusively to studying this world-fair of life before they leave it. And for so doing they earn the contempt of the multitude, just as in a cattle-fair mere spectators are laughed at by the traffickers. Aye, and could the cattle comprehend the cause of their laughter, they too would laugh at the folly of those who marvel at or admire anything else than their fodder !

xv

Such precepts as ' One ought to be resolute ', or ' The moral purpose is naturally free and cannot be coerced, while everything else, being under the control not of ourselves but of others, may be coerced ', are sometimes misinterpreted. For instance : some men think that they are being resolute if, once they have formed a considered opinion on some subject, they never modify it. Which is absurd ; for their considered opinion may be a mistaken one. To be of any value opinions must be well founded, just as bodily vigour, to be of any value, must be that of a healthy body, not that of a lunatic. Again : some will never change their mind once they have made it up. A friend of mine (Heaven save me from such friends !) once made up his mind that he would starve himself to death . . . for no reason whatsoever. I only heard about it on the third day of his fast, and went round at once to see him to find out what was the matter. ' There is nothing the matter,' he told me, ' but I have made up my mind.' ' But *why* ? ' I asked. ' You know quite well that if you have a good reason for so doing, we, your friends, will do all we can to facilitate

your exit from this life ; but if you have no valid reason, why, then, don't be so stupid ! ' But his only reply was : ' I must stick to my decision ! ' ' But surely,' I said, ' you don't want to stick to your decision if it is a wrong one, do you ? . . . It is now midday. Suppose you were to decide that it is really midnight, would you stick to that too ? Surely you ought to be certain that your decisions are right before you base such irrevocable action upon them. . . . Yet here you are, for no reason at all, removing from this life, and so robbing us of him, a man, our friend and fellow-citizen ; and while thus engaged in murdering a perfectly innocent person you coolly say you " must stick to your decision " ! I suppose, then, that if instead of deciding to murder yourself, you had decided to murder me, you would have had to stick to that too ! ' Well, believe me, it was no easy task to persuade that idiot to abandon his ' decision '. However, eventually, I succeeded. But I know some others whom it is simply impossible to budge. And now I know, what formerly I did not understand, the meaning of the saying : ' One can neither lead nor drive a fool.' How can one deal with one who ' has decided ' ! Lunatics ' decide ', and the madder they are the worse their decisions.

Of course, what one ought to do is to do what a sick man does. He sends for his doctor and says : ' Doctor, I am ill. Tell me what I ought to do and I will do it ! ' Similarly we ought to say : ' What shall I do—tell me, for I do not know ! ' instead of saying : ' Talk to me of anything else you like except this one thing, for in regard to it I have made up my mind once and for all.' ' Of anything else ', forsooth ! Of what can it be more important to talk than the

folly of coming to irrevocable decisions ? If you were to say : ' I have decided to give my services free and gratis,' couldn't you change your mind and let us hear you say a few months later : ' I have decided *not* to give my services free and gratis ! ' ? I am sure you could say it with the same unction !

xvi

We know perfectly well that ' good ' and ' evil ' both lie within, and that things that are neither good nor evil lie without, the ambit of our moral purpose. But which of us remembers and strives to practise this truth once he is outside the lecture room ? If some one asks you a simple question, such as : ' Is it day or night ? ' you can answer straight off which it is. If some one asks you whether there is an even or odd number of stars, you can reply straight away : ' I don't know.' But which of us can give pat answers to questions about good and evil ? For instance : were you asked whether money is a good or a bad thing, would you at once give the right answer—that it is a bad thing ? Do you practise answering such questions as you should answer them, or are you content merely with evading them ? Practice makes perfect ; and if you don't practise you can't expect to answer properly.

Why is an orator nervous in spite of having composed and memorized what he knows to be a good speech, and in spite of knowing that he has a pleasing voice ? I will tell you : it is because he wants more than the self-satisfaction of being a good speaker—he hankers after applause into the bargain. But his training extends only to his powers of oratory ; it does not embrace applause or scorn. He has never concerned

himself with the nature of either, or inquired what kinds of applause should be sought after, what kinds of scorn should be shunned. In fact he is like a musician who is both a good harpist and a good singer but who, for all that, is nervous when he faces an audience ; for though he knows all about playing and singing, he knows nothing of audiences or their derision ; no, nor does he know why he is nervous, nor whether he can or cannot control his nervousness. And so if he is lucky enough to win applause, he makes his exit all puffed up with conceit ; whereas if he is hissed, the bubble of his pride is pricked and bursts.

And is our own behaviour so very different ? What, in fact, is our chief concern ? About what are we most in earnest ? Is it not about things outside our control ? Indeed it is, and that is why we are so fearful and anxious. We must needs be so when we fear the future as though it were an evil thing, saying in our folly : ' O Lord God, save us from fear and anxiety ! ' Fools that we are ! Has not God given us power to endure, magnanimity and courage ? Then let us practise these virtues, and refrain from blaming Him. But who does ? Show me one single man who is more concerned about what he does than what he gets, about what he plans than about what he is planning for ! (Do you think a plan is worthless unless it succeeds ?) Show me such a man—young or old ! For such a one I have long sought—in vain !

So do not let us pretend astonishment, but rather freely confess that we are thoroughly experienced in all material matters outside our control, and the merest tyros in regard to everything that lies within it. Indeed it is true to say that we have not bothered ourselves about, still less practised, these latter. And yet how

much better would it be were we to cease fearing such things as exile and death, and to concentrate on fearing only lest we fear ! As I have said, it is not from lack of knowledge. In the lecture room we are keen and voluble enough, and answer conundrums posed as glibly and as logically as you will. But when we come to the practical application of our principles we are as helpless as shipwrecked mariners. *Utter helplessness*—that is the only result of all our training and practice ! And in consequence our fears are infinitely worse than they need be. For instance : whenever I am in a ship at sea and out of sight of land, and I gaze on the waste of waters, I begin to terrify myself with fancies : ' Should we be shipwrecked ' (I think to myself), ' how shall I escape being drowned with all this water ? ' forgetting that to be drowned three pints of it would suffice. Or, when there is an earthquake, I begin to imagine that the whole city is about to topple on me ! And as in reality it would need but a single brick to knock my brains out, I should be no worse off if it did !

No, it is not the vast expanse of the ocean nor the huge size of a city that really affects us under such circumstances ; it is the judgements of our minds. When a man finds the burden of life more than he can bear and commits suicide, thus abandoning friends, relatives and home, is not his action due to the judgement of his mind ? Children cry when their nurse leaves them, but they are soon consoled with sugarplums. But we are grown up and should not behave like children. We should be swayed not by sugarplums but by just judgements. What are just judgements ? Surely they are judgements based on the things a man ought to practise daily and continually,

abstaining from devoting himself overmuch to what is not his own, be it comrade, place, school, or even his own body. A man should ever remember and keep God's law before his eyes—to guard diligently his own possessions—not to lay claim to those of others —to make good use of what God has given him—not to covet what He has withheld—and when He withdraws some gift from him, to surrender it readily and at once, being grateful for the time during which he has been permitted its use.

If we do not do this, are we not in effect behaving like children crying for their nurses and their mothers? We may want and cry for different things, but the principle is the same. Some cry for a maid, some for their old school, a piece of statuary, a group of friends; some lament that they will no longer be able to drink of the water of the Theban fountain of Dirce, but have to drink that of the Marcian aqueduct instead. And yet the one is as good as the other, and they will soon get accustomed to the latter. And yet another will whine: 'Ah me, when shall I see Athens and the Acropolis again!' Can't he be content with what he can see daily? What can be finer or better to look at than the sun, moon, stars, earth, and sea? If he really understood Him who rules the Universe and whom he bears about within him, would he still yearn for that pretty rock yclept the Acropolis, and the bits of marble wherewith men have adorned it? When you are about to leave the sight of sun and moon for that country where they neither rise nor set, what will you do then? Will you sit and cry like children? Come! Can you imagine Socrates or Diogenes grieving or being upset just because they could not see some particular man or woman, or because they had to live

in Susa or Ecbatana instead of in Athens or Corinth ? You can quit the feast or the game at will when they tire or bore you. Children stay only so long as they are amused.

Surely by this time you should be weaned and ready to partake of more solid food, and to give up babyish complainings ! Do you flatter yourselves that if you do depart your departure will be mourned ? I assure you that any sorrow will be due not to your departure, but to an error of judgement on the part of those you leave behind. When you yourselves feel grieved about anything, that is the real cause of your grief—an error of judgement. We must get rid of mistaken judgements and get back to just ones. It is a desperately serious matter that we should do so, for it is only by so doing that we shall win peace, freedom and high-mindedness, and be able to lift up our heads and, as men escaped from slavery, say boldly to God : ' Henceforth use Thou me as Thou wilt. I am of one mind with Thee. I am Thine. I shun nothing that seems good in Thy sight. Lead Thou me where Thou wilt. Clothe me as seems best to Thee. Wouldst Thou have me hold office, or remain in a private station of life, continue where I am or be exiled, be poor or rich, I will defend all Thy acts before men and set forth their true purport ! '

But you will not ! You prefer to sit at home like girls and wait for your mothers to spoon-feed you ! If Herakles had sat about at home, what would he have amounted to ? He would have been no better than a Eurystheus. Tell me, how many friends had Herakles in this world ? His chief friend was God. That is why men believed him to be the son of God. And he was. It was in obedience to his Father's will

that he went up and down throughout the world sweeping away wickedness and lawlessness. But, you say, you are no Herakles to sweep away the wickedness of men ; you are not even a Theseus to tackle the ills of merely an Attica. Very well, then : Get rid, at least, of your own. From your own minds cast out, not Procrustes and Sciron, but grief, fear, desire, envy, joy at other's ills, greed, effeminacy, incontinency. And the only way in which you can do that is by looking to and devoting yourselves exclusively to God, consecrating yourselves to His commands. If you permit yourselves to desire anything else, you will be pursuing something stronger than yourselves, and you will do so with grief and groans, ever seeking outside yourselves for peace and never being able to find it—for you will be seeking it where it is not.[1]

xvii

What is the first thing a man must do who wishes to practise philosophy ? This : he must realize that he knows nothing. For one cannot teach a man what he thinks he knows already. Men go to philosophers to learn what they are conscious they are ignorant of —namely, general principles. Some imagine they will learn to be witty or wise or successful. No man, however, will ever learn anything without concentration and hard work, nor will the mastery of one particular subject teach him anything beyond that subject.

Most people, however, labour under the same misapprehension as the orator Theopompus did, who actually found fault with Plato for teaching that all terms should be defined, asking if no one had ever

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 164.

before Plato's time used such terms as 'good' and 'just', or had merely uttered them as vague empty sounds without attaching to them any particular meaning. And no doubt men did (before Plato's time) have an instinctive conception of their import, though probably not a sufficiently systematized one. And that is the point. Our preconceptions on such matters *should* be systematized so that particular facts may be classified under them. Let me illustrate my meaning by a further example. Did no one, think you, use the terms 'healthy' and 'diseased' before Hippocrates? or, if they did, were they merely making empty noises with these sounds? Of course, men had a certain preconception of what 'healthy' meant, but lack of precise definition led to inability to apply the idea consistently to specific instances, and as a result some said 'Fast!', others 'Feed!', and others, again, 'Bleed!' or 'Cup!'

In just the same way have we not all on our lips such words as 'good', 'evil', 'profitable', 'unprofitable'; and have we not, each of us, a preconceived idea as to what these terms mean? And do we not each try to apply our preconception to specific facts? We do indeed and, as a result, we find that whereas Plato classifies 'definitions' as being 'useful' others classify them as 'useless'. Both can't be right. One man applies his preconceived idea of 'good' to wealth, another to pleasure, a third to health.

Again: if we all who have such terms constantly on our lips really knew what they mean, and so have no need to systematize our ideas about them, how is it we fail to agree amongst ourselves as to their meaning? For, unfortunately, far from agreeing, we do little but wrangle and abuse one another.

Take your own individual cases. If you apply your instincts correctly, nothing can trouble or disturb you. For the moment I will not speak of the second field of study ; viz. : choice and our duties pertaining to that choice ; or of the third field, which deals with assent. I will confine what I am going to say to the first field, that of desire, which will afford us the clearest possible proof that we do not apply our instincts correctly. Consider : do you at this very moment desire what you ought to desire both in particular and in general ? If you do—what are you troubled about ? But *do* you ? If you do, why is it that when you want something it does not happen, and when you don't want it it does happen ? What stronger proof of the wrongness of your desires can there be than this ?

Again, take the case of Medea. Her desires were wrong and so remained unrealized. ' Very well, then,' said she, ' I will be revenged on him who has insulted and wronged me even though I have to injure myself to do it ! But what care I for that ? ' ! And so she murdered her children. In a way hers was the deed of a great spirit—the outburst of a mighty soul. But she did not know wherein lies the power to get what we wish. Give up wanting to keep your husband, wanting him to live with you at all costs ; give up wanting to live in Corinth ; give up wanting everything except what God wants, and then nothing of what you want will fail to happen. No one will then be able to prevent or compel you any more than they can prevent or compel God Himself.

Now when you have such a leader as God and identify your wishes and desires with His, you need have no fear of failure. But if you let your desires

light on wealth and bend your aversion on poverty, you will assuredly fail to get what you want, and fall instead into what you would fain avoid. Desire health and you will not achieve it ; desire offices, honours, country, friends, children, in a word anything that lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose, and you will come to grief. But entrust your desires to Zeus and the other Gods ; give them to Their keeping ; let Them control you ; and how can you be troubled ? But if you give way to such sentiments as envy, pity, jealousy and fear, and daily bemoan your fate, you can scarcely claim to be properly educated. Education, you know, does not consist merely in a knowledge of syllogisms and other devices of logic. If that is your idea of true education, you would do well (were it possible) to forget such knowledge and begin again, starting from the realization that you have not yet begun ; and then to see to it that for the future nothing shall happen that you do not wish, and nothing shall fail to happen that you do.

Is there a single youth in this class of mine who is, like an athlete, intent on this sole objective, and who can say, ' I want nothing but to live free and untroubled, able to face facts as a man should, and to look up fearlessly to Heaven as a friend of God ' ? If there be such a one among you I tell him—philosophy is his sphere. Let him practise it diligently and he shall adorn it. And when he has worked his way through and mastered this first field of study, if he can then tell me, ' I not only want peace and tranquillity, but being a God-fearing man, a philosopher and a student, I want also to know what are my duties towards my parents, brothers, country and to strangers,' I will tell him he is ripe to pass on to the second field

of study. And were he then to reply : ' But I have already studied the second field. My aim is to be safe and unshakable, not merely when I am awake, but even though I be asleep, drunk or mad ! ' Ah, one with such an aim would be almost more than mere man !

But, alas ! I have never heard any of my pupils speak like this. No ! But the sort of thing I hear is : ' Can you explain to me the dilemma of Chrysippus : [1] " If a man say he is lying, is he lying or speaking the truth ? For if he be lying he is speaking the truth ; but if he is speaking the truth he must be lying " ? ' What good would it do you if I did explain it to you ? *Or :* ' Shall we read our essays to one another ? ' All you really want is to hear flatteries—' How wonderfully you write ! Your style is just like Xenophon's (or Plato's or Antisthenes') ! ' And when you have done you are no further on than when you started. You have the same old desires, the same old aversions, the same old choices, designs and aims ; you pray for and are interested in the same old things. And you don't want any one to give you any advice, and if any one talks to you like I am talking to you, you get irritated.

The other day I overheard one of you talking about me. ' He is an old man,' he said, ' and lacks the milk of human kindness. Why, would you believe it, when I went away, he never shed a single tear. He didn't even say : " I am afraid, my boy, you are going into great peril ; if you come back safely I will light lamps in thankfulness." ' Is that what a man with the milk of human kindness in him would have said ? Well,

[1] See Book II, Ch. xviii, p. 87 ; Book III, Ch. ii, p. 122, Ch. ix, p. 141.

perhaps he was right. Indeed it would have been such a remarkable piece of luck if a booby like him *had* returned safely, that it would have been almost worth while celebrating it !

Seriously : whether we seek to study philosophy, geometry or music, we must start by ridding our minds of the conceit that we already know something about them. Unless we do this we shall never make any progress at all ; no, not even though we were to read every syllable that Chrysippus ever wrote, and all the work of Antipater and Archedemus into the bargain !

xviii

All our habits and talents are strengthened by exercise. To be a good walker one must walk ; to be a good runner one must practise running ; to be a good reader or writer one must read and write assiduously. Give up reading for a month and devote yourself to other pursuits, and note the result. If you lie abed for ten days and then get up and go for a long walk you will find your legs giving way under you. So, speaking generally, if you want to do something well, you must make a habit of it ; if you want not to do it, don't do it—do something else instead. The same principle holds good, too, in the moral sphere. Every time you give way to anger, it is not merely a misfortune to yourself that you have done so, but you have in addition confirmed and strengthened the habit of anger in you. Each time you give way to carnal desire, you have not merely suffered present defeat, but you have made it harder for yourself to resist in future. Thus, by our actions, existing habits and tendencies are reinforced, and new ones come into being.

We may be sure that it is in this way that our faults

of mind and character originate. A passion for acquiring money can easily be checked if we realize that it is unreasonable and evil ; but if our reason does not check it, the desire will burn ever fiercer until at last we shall become hardened in avarice. He who recovers from a fever is not usually quite the same man after as he was before. So, too, in affections of the mind, marks are left on the mind, and if they be not completely erased they will at the next attack become open wounds. So if you are prone to lose your temper, do nothing to feed the habit, give it nothing on which it can thrive. Keep a record of each day you have refrained from anger and you will soon be able to say : ' I used to lose my temper every day ; then only every other day ; then only every third day ; then only every fourth day ' ; and so on. And when you have succeeded in not losing it for a whole month, you may give thanks to God. You will thus first weaken your bad habit and then finally destroy it. You may apply this method to any other weaknesses you may have—to a tendency to excessive melancholy, for instance. Say : ' To-day I have been quite cheerful, though I have had to be on my guard all the time against being upset by trifles.' Keep that up for two or three months, counting the days. If you will do so you will find you will get on splendidly.

Some of our sense-perceptions raise difficult problems for us. Take one, for instance, which is often brought to us by our eyes and the solution of which is at least as hard as that of the famous ' Master ' [1] problem—I mean when we happen to see a handsome lad or a pretty woman. This is the way *I* solve it—I deliberately abstain from all lascivious thoughts about them.

[1] See Book II, Ch. xix, p. 88.

I do not even permit myself to think of the woman's husband as a happy man, for if her husband be happy, her paramour would be not less so. Still less do I permit my imagination to picture myself as her paramour. This particular problem may assume ever harder forms—harder even than those named 'The Liar' [1] and 'The Quiescent'—when, for instance, the woman is willing, smiles at me, sends for and embraces me. But if then I still hold firm and refuse, I have solved that too. I have triumphed and have cause to be proud of myself.

How can this be done? Only by resolving completely to satisfy yourself and to appear in God's sight in the beauty of purity. 'When', says Plato, 'you are suddenly confronted with sense-perception of that sort, go and beseech God to ward off evil from you.' To which I would add: Think of good and upright men—living or dead—and of how *they* behaved under similar circumstances, and take them as your models. Think of Socrates: did he yield to the youthful beauty of Alcibiades as he lay beside him? Do not be swept off your feet by the vividness of any sense-perception; wait a little; examine it first carefully; test it; and do not let your imagination paint all sorts of pleasant pictures of what will happen if you yield to temptation—for, if you do, it will take possession of you and you will be powerless. Nay, rather substitute in your mind's eye for such a base sense-perception some other good and noble one. If you will only make a practice of so doing, your moral sinews will grow strong enough to enable you to defeat temptation.

He who exercises himself in resisting such sense-

[1] See Book II, Ch. xvii, p. 84; Book III, Ch. ii, p. 122, Ch. ix, p. 141.

perceptions is a true athlete. Be not swept away by them ! It will be a mighty struggle if you are to resist successfully, but the prize is a great one—the being able to dwell in freedom, calm and peace of mind. Even as travellers in a storm, so do you pray to God to stand by your side and help you. What storm, indeed, could be greater than those aroused by strong sense-perceptions that undermine the reason ? If you once give way, consoling yourselves with the thought that next time you will resist and overcome, you will assuredly give way a second time, and then a third, and then many times, till eventually you will become so weak that you will even forget that you are doing wrong, or if perchance you remember you will begin to find arguments in self-justification—to so miserable a state will you have sunk !

xix

The ' Master ', the supposedly unanswerable argument, is founded on three propositions of which it is said that if any two be true the third must be false. The propositions in question are : (1) that everything true as an event in the past is necessary ; (2) that a possibility cannot be followed by an impossibility ; and (3) that things which are not true now and which never will be true are nevertheless possible. Now Diodorus accepted the first two and inferred that what is not true now and which never will be true must be impossible. Others accept (2) and (3) and consequently deny (1). That, in fact, is the view of Panthoides and Cleanthes and their schools, and they are supported by Antipater. Others again, including Chrysippus and his school, maintain the truth of (1)

and (3) and then draw the conclusion that an impossibility *can* follow a possibility.

But if you ask me which two of these propositions *I* accept as true, I tell you frankly that I don't know and I don't care !

It is true that were it worth my while to try and astonish, say, my fellow-guests at some banquet, I could give a long list of people who have written on the subject. I could say : ' Chrysippus has written admirably about it in the first book of his treatise *On Things Possible* ; Cleanthes wrote a special work on the subject, and so did Archedemus. Antipater discussed the matter not only in his book *On Things Possible*, but also in a separate monograph entitled *The Master Argument*—Haven't you read it ? ' And then when my interlocutor shook his head, I should say : ' Tut, tut ! you must certainly read it at once ! ' Yes, I *could* talk like that ! But if you ask me what good it would do any one if he did read it, I can only say that it would probably make him even more finicky and tiresome than he is already, for instead of forming an opinion of his own he would merely be retailing Antipater's.

In purely literary problems it probably doesn't matter so very much if we content ourselves with accepted views rather than evolve one of our own ; but it matters a great deal if we pursue this principle in questions of conduct. It is easy enough merely to recite : ' Some things are good, some bad, and some neither good nor bad ; in the first category are the virtues, in the second vices, and in the third such things as riches, health, life, death, pleasures, and pain.' Quite so—and how did you discover all this ? Ah, really—you read it in Hellanicus' *History of Egypt*, did

you? and if you had read it in Diogenes' *Treatise on Ethics*, or in the works of Chrysippus or Cleanthes, you would, no doubt, have rattled it off with equal fluency. But the point is—have you tested any of these statements for yourself, and formed an independent judgement about them? I say 'tested', and by that I mean 'acted upon them'. How, for instance, do you behave when you are in a ship at sea and there is a storm? When the sails flap and crack do you cry out in terror, and then when one of your fellow-passengers comes up and asks you (grinning): 'What was that you were saying a while back about there being no evil in shipwreck?!' do you, at that moment, still remember the difference between 'good' and 'evil', or do you lose your temper and revile him as an ill-timed jester and perhaps strike him? Or if Caesar summoned you to answer to some charge, would you go in pale and trembling, and then if some one asked you what affrighted you, and reminded you that Caesar in his palace does not dispense virtue and vice to those who appear before him, would you then still remember the difference between good and evil, or would you cry: 'Why do you add to my troubles by mocking me?' And yet, tell me, you who call yourselves philosophers, what would your troubles really be? Surely naught else but the danger of prison, torture, exile, loss of reputation or death! How used you to characterise such things? As evils? And if you turned on me saying: 'Can't you let us alone? What have we to do with you? Our own evils are enough for us!' Ah, you would indeed by right! Your own evils *would* be enough for you—your baseness, cowardice, and the bragging you used to indulge in in the lecture room. Why did you boast of owning

what was not really yours? Why did you claim to be a Stoic?

Study yourselves thus in the light of your actions and you will discover to what sect of philosophers you really belong. Most of you, you will find, are Epicureans, some few Peripatetics—and spineless ones at that—for in what way do you make manifest that you really consider virtue to be more important than anything else? And as for Stoics—show me one if you can! Oh, I quite admit you can produce thousands who can patter the Stoic formulae! They could probably patter the Epicurean and Peripatetic formulae too if they wanted to. But what *is* a Stoic? Just as a statue is 'Pheidian' when it has been modelled by Pheidias, so a man is a Stoic when his life is in truth fashioned by the precepts of Stoicism that he professes —a man who, though sick, in danger, exiled, shamed, aye, even though dying, is still happy. Show me such a man! And if you can't show me a perfect Stoic at least show me one who is trying to be one, who is on the way to becoming one. Do this for me, I beseech you! Do not begrudge an old man a sight he has never yet seen! I don't ask you to show me the Zeus or the Athena of Pheidias, fashioned in ivory and gold; I only ask you to show me a man whose soul longs to be of one mind with God, who is resolved never again to grumble at either God or man, to get all that he wants, not to have anything that he does not want, to be free from anger, envy, and jealousy—in a word, a man who has set his heart upon changing from a mere man into a God, and who, though still confined in a human body, aims at achieving fellowship with God. Show me such a man—if you can! But you can't! Why, then, do you mock yourselves

and deceive others by disguising your true selves and strutting about in stolen plumes?

I am your teacher, you are my pupils. My aim is to make you perfect Stoics, free, prosperous, happy, looking to God in all things both small and great. You are here in order to learn and practise all this. Why, then, don't you do it? I have to assume that you wish to do so just as I want to teach you and am qualified to teach you. If this be so, what is still lacking? When I see a craftsman with material lying ready to his hand, I look to see the finished article. I am the craftsman, you are my material. What, then, is still lacking? Cannot the material be fashioned? Of course it can be. Is it, then, outside our control? Nay, it is the one and only thing in the whole world that *is* under our control. Not wealth, nor health, nor fame, nor anything whatsoever is under our control save only the right use of our sense-perceptions; this alone is secure and free from outside hindrance. Why, then, do you not learn and practise what I teach? Tell me the reason. The fault must lie in me, or in you, or in the nature of the thing itself. But we know that the thing is possible, for it is the only thing in the world that is under our control. The fault, then, must lie either in you or in me—perhaps it lies partly in both of us. What, then, are we to do? There is only one possible course: we must let bygones be bygones and make a fresh start here and now!

XX

Some people will not admit self-evident truths. For instance they say: 'Knowledge is impossible; everything is uncertain.'—'One should believe nobody.'—

' It is impossible to learn anything.' The Academics maintain that no man can believe anybody and that we must all suspend judgement. But the curious thing is that though they will not admit them, they can't help using self-evident truths themselves. In fact it is this inability to avoid using them that is the strongest evidence of their truth. Any one denying that some universal statement is true is forced to use it in order to assert the contrary, viz. ' that no universal statement is true '. And that is not true either !

And in the same way, when Epicurus denied that men have a natural fellowship with one another, he made use of the very principle he was denying. This is what he wrote : ' Make no mistake about it : there is no natural fellowship amongst rational beings, and those who assert that there is are deceiving you.' Now if there be indeed no natural fellowship between men, why should he have bothered to warn us not to be deceived ? Why should he have cared whether we were deceived or not ? Why not have let us go on being deluded ? He, at least, would have been no worse off if we had been. And yet he fretted himself on our account, lost his sleep, burned midnight oil, and got up early in the morning, all to write interminable dissertations to prove his point. Why ? Did he imagine that by so doing he would preserve us from such ' false beliefs ' as that God cares for men, or that the essence of ' good ' is not mere pleasure ? Well, if that was his objective he had better far have returned to his bed and his slumbers, for we *know* that Man's life does *not*, like a worm's, consist merely in eating, drinking, procreation, defaecation, and sleep. Or did he want to treat us as though we were sheep, to be shorn, milked, butchered and cut up ? If that was

what he was after, surely he would have done better to have disguised his real sentiments from all except his disciples and to have professed publically that Man *is* endowed by Nature with a sense of fellowship, and that self-control *is* a good thing.

No, what prompted Epicurus to write as he did was Nature, the strongest thing in Man—that which compels a man to do her will even though it be contrary to his desires. Verily Nature herself must have said to him : ' Since you hold such anti-social doctrines, you shall lose your sleep in writing them down, and your writings shall be the strongest argument to prevent men from believing in them. That shall be your punishment ! '

You remember how Orestes was pursued by Furies which robbed him of sleep, and how the Galli, Priests of the Great Mother Cybele, mutilate themselves in frenzy, incited by madness and by wine ? Like them Epicurus was tormented by even more savage Furies which kept him from his slumbers, denied him repose, and forced him to proclaim abroad his miseries. So mighty and unsubduable is human nature !

A man can no more wholly lose natural human affections than a vine can bring forth olives or an olive tree yield grapes. Even though a man be made a eunuch he is not free from sexual desire. And that is just where Epicurus failed. He might whittle away everything characteristic of man, whether as head of the family, as citizen or as friend, but he could not suppress human desire. Nor can the Academics, try as they may and do, rid themselves of, or be entirely blind to, the evidence of their senses.

Man has been endowed by Nature with faculties which are so many standards or measures to enable

him to discover truth. What a pity, then, if instead of using them, and if possible developing them, he does just the opposite, viz. neglects and destroys them!

Ask an Epicurean philosopher what he thinks of piety and holiness and he will probably start by telling you (politely) that if you wish him to he can prove conclusively that they are right. And if you urge him to do so (so that our citizens may be converted to honour God and cease from being indifferent to matters of such supreme importance), he may ask you if you can't prove it yourself. And, then, if you reply that you can, he may retort : 'Well, and why don't you? though as a matter of fact in *my* opinion the gods don't exist; or if they do at all events they do not concern themselves with men. Anyhow, men have no fellowship with Them. While as for all this "piety" and "holiness" which people chatter about, they are lies told by liars, or by legislators, who want to scare men from wrong-doing, so-called "righteousness" is rubbish, "reverence" folly, "family affection" (that of a father for a son, of a son for his father) an illusion.'

And there you are! That's the way to talk! Carry on in that vein, ye disciples of Epicurus; convert our young men to your way of thinking, so that we may have more who feel and speak like you! Truly it was from principles such as these that well-governed states have grown great! Principles like these made Sparta what she was! These were the convictions Lycurgus implanted in the Spartans by his laws and training (when he said that slavery was no baser than freedom was noble)! These were the beliefs that inspired those who fell at Thermopylae, and that twice prompted the Athenians to abandon

Athens ! And do not forget, my friends, that the men who talk this kind of stuff marry and beget children, are citizens, and become Priests ! Priests of whom ? Of gods who do not exist ! How monstrous !

Then, again, take the Academics. Every day their actions belie their theories, but they are too stubborn to admit it. Do they lift their hands to their eyes or to their mouths when they eat ? When they bathe is it in a bath they bathe or in what ? Do they call pots plates, or ladles spits ? If I were slave to one of them, wouldn't I just love to lead him a daily dance, even though it cost me a flogging ! When he asked for olive oil I would give him fish oil and protest that I could not tell one from t'other. When he demanded porridge I would bring him vinegar and assure him they both smelled and tasted the same to me, and ask him how I was to distinguish between them if we cannot trust our senses ! Yes, and if only I had three or four fellow-slaves who would do the same, we would soon make him die of rage—or alter his opinions. They are an ungrateful, godless crew. Is there one of them who does not eat bread at least once a day ? And yet they have the impudence to say that they do not know if Demeter, Kore or Pluto even exist ! They enjoy night and day, the seasons, the stars, the sea, the earth, and the society of their fellow-men, but none of these things move them. All they are really interested in is the intellectual problem of the cosmos ; but as to what good their hearers are going to derive from it all, that does not bother them in the least. What I fear is that some young man of good character may hear such theories, be swayed by them, and lose his high principles ; that some adulterer may find in them excuse for his adulteries ; that some dishonest

public servant may justify himself by them ; that some one who neglects his parents may by them be confirmed in his wickedness.

xxi

Some of their faults men will admit readily enough, but others not quite so readily. No one minds admitting that perhaps he is a bit too shy or soft-hearted ; but no one will confess to being stupid, incontinent, unjust, envious or meddlesome. Now, why is this ? In the first place it is certain that men will never admit to anything they conceive to be disgraceful or anti-social. But I think the main reason is that they cannot bring themselves to believe that they may be mistaken in matters concerning ' good ' and ' evil '. Shyness and soft-heartedness can be explained away as indicative of a prudent character, but stupidity is supposed to be the hall-mark of the mentality of slaves. Again, in most admitted faults there is generally some sort of suggestion that ' it can't be helped '. Not only are shyness and soft-heartedness excused thus, but sometimes even incontinency (' I was in love and you know a man in love is hardly responsible. . . .'), and jealousy (' How could I help being jealous of . . . ? ').

Now most men are not merely supremely ignorant of what ' evil ' really is, but they have no idea whether they have or have not any evil traits in themselves, and, if they have, how they acquired them or how they are to get rid of them. This being so, don't you think that each one of us might profitably inquire whether, perchance, we are not ourselves in this case ? Let each of us, then, ask himself: ' Is it

possible that I am just like everybody else? Am I deceived about myself? Do I always behave as a wise man, as a man of self-control, should? Is my education truly such that I am prepared for all contingencies? Do I realize, as I should, that I know nothing? Do I regard my teacher as one who should be unquestioningly obeyed, or do I go to him to study the history of philosophy and difficult text-books with no other thought beyond getting my degree as a means of livelihood?

What have some of you been doing this morning before coming to my lecture and sitting down here to listen to my exposition of the text I set you yesterday with solemn faces but with minds full of turmoil? Beating your slaves? Disturbing your neighbours with the noise of your domestic squabbles? Is that the proper frame of mind in which to come? How can you pay attention to what I am saying when your thoughts are far away and you are dreaming . . . of when your next allowance will reach you . . . of what your people are saying about your progress . . . of how they are probably prophesying: 'Ah! he will know everything when he comes home!' and then reflecting: 'Yes, indeed, I suppose I did once want to learn everything before going home, but that would have meant a lot of hard work, and in the meantime nobody sends me anything, and the baths in Nicopolis are rotten, and my lodgings are rotten, and the lectures are rotten!'

No wonder people say: 'Nobody gets any good out of lectures on philosophy!' Well, of course they don't. How can they? They don't come to get rid of or correct their faulty ideas and to get other and better ones in their place. So, naturally, when they

leave, they go home with exactly the same ideas they had when they first came. Indeed, all they really come for is to acquire a certain fluency in talking about philosophic principles, and that, of course, they do acquire, so that they can resolve syllogisms, argue and generally make a display of their cleverness. They don't want anything more. 'What good is it to us', they say, 'if our children or our brethren learn how to die, or if we ourselves learn how to die or to suffer torture? The principles you teach are useless.' Useless indeed to you, and to all like you who do not use them properly! Eye salves are useless to those with sound eyes; poultices are useless to those who are not sick; jumping weights are useless to those who cannot jump. But that does not mean that they are not useful to some one else. So, too, with my principles. No doubt they are useless to you in your present frame of mind; but come here with tranquil and undistracted attention and you will soon discover that they are not so useless as you imagine.

xxii

A man's affections are centred on those things in which he takes an interest. No man is interested in evil things or in things which do not concern him. It follows, therefore, that men are only interested in and so care for good things. But if a man cannot distinguish good from evil, how can his affections be centred on good? To love good things he must first be wise enough to know what things are good.

But one of you may say: 'That is all very well,

but I am not wise and yet I love my child.' Now just think a minute. You say you are not wise ; i.e. that there is something lacking in you? What is lacking? Surely you can use your senses ; you can differentiate one sense-perception from another ; you feed, clothe, and house your body? Why, then, do you disclaim being wise? It must be, I suppose, because you are sometimes puzzled and swept away by your sense-perception, at one moment thinking material things like wealth, pleasure and so forth good, and a little later thinking the very same things evil or neither good nor evil—in short, because you are subject to pain, fear, envy, turmoil, and change. Isn't that so? Yes, and in your loving, too, are you not changeable? Do you not think the same persons at one moment nice and so feel friendly towards them and sing their praises, while at another time you consider them to be extremely disagreeable and so feel unfriendly and say unpleasant things about them? You know you do! Well, now, tell me : Can one be real friends with somebody in whom one has been deceived? Is a fickle nature capable of friendship? Of course not! Haven't you ever watched dogs playing and romping together in the friendliest possible way—apparently? Well, if you wanted to find out what their apparent friendliness was really worth, just try throwing a bit of meat between them and see what happens. What would happen if some one, so to speak, threw a bit of ground between you and your son? I am afraid you would soon find out how much and how quickly your son would like to bury you, and how earnestly you would pray for his death. Or what would happen if some one threw between you a pretty wench, or a bit of glory?

Remember Pheres. Do you imagine Pheres[1] did not love his son Admetus when he was a little chap, or that when he was feverish he did not say over and over again : ' If only I could be sick instead of him ! ' ? And then when the hour of his testing came and Admetus reproached him for not being willing to die in his stead, what was his reply ?

> Thou joyest seeing daylight ; dost suppose
> Thy father joys not too ?

Remember Eteocles and Polyneices.[2] Were they not brothers ? Did they not grow up, play and sleep together ? If any one had seen them tenderly embracing one another, would he not have scoffed at the (to him) cynical views of philosophers on the subject of friendship ? And yet when the throne was cast between them, they were like two dogs growling over a bit of meat.

Make no mistake about it—no living thing puts anything before its own self-interest. Whatever it thinks stands in the way, be it brother, father, child, loved one or lover, it hates and reviles it. Its self-interest is to it father, brother, kinsman, country and God. Why, if we think the very Gods Themselves stand in the way of our self-interest, we curse Them, break down Their images, and burn Their temples. (Did not the great Alexander burn the temples of Asclepius when his beloved Hephaestion died ?) Hence if a man put into the same balance his self-interest, righteousness, honour, country, parents and friends, all will be well ; but if he put his self-interest

[1] See Book III, Ch. xx, p. 158.
[2] See Book IV, Ch. v, p. 236, and *Manual*, 31, p. 301.

into one balance and friends, country, kinsmen, and justice itself into the other, the beam will tip and everything except his self-interest will be lost. 'I', and 'mine', and 'my self-interest', inevitably weigh down the balance. If your self-interest is concerned with your good faith, your self-respect, forbearance, abstinence, co-operation, and social relations with your fellow-men, then you will be the friend, son, and father that you ought to be; but if you put what is yours into one scale and all that is honourable into the other, then there is indeed truth in the assertion of Epicurus that 'honour is naught but what people covet'.

It was from ignorance of this that the Athenians and Lacedaemonians quarrelled and the Thebans with both of them, the Great Persian King with Greece, and the Macedonians with both of them; and later the Romans with the Getae—and earlier, that there was the siege of Troy. Alexander (Paris) was Menelaus' guest, and if any one had seen how friendly they were towards one another, he would assuredly have named them 'friends'. But a morsel —a pretty woman—was thrown between them, and to win her there was war. So now when you see two brothers or so-called 'friends', do not be quite so sure that they are really friends, seem they never so friendly. It is vain to ask, as most men ask, if the twain are brothers, if they were brought up together, if they were educated at the same school. Ask rather —for it is the only thing that really matters—on what they base their self-interest. If on externals, then you can no more call them 'friends' than you can call them 'faithful', 'reliable', 'brave', or 'free'. In fact (to tell the truth) they are not really even

human ; for no real human being reviles or litigates or is a profligate, an adulterer or a corrupter. There is, indeed, only one explanation why men commit such crimes against one another, and that is because they put themselves, their possessions and their self-interest all into the category of things which lie outside the ambit of their moral purpose. But when you hear men assert in accents which carry conviction that they believe the ' good ' to lie within their moral purpose and in the right use of their sense-perceptions, then in truth there is no need to inquire further whether they be son and father, brothers, schoolmates or comrades, for whether they be or not, there is no doubt about the fact that they are ' friends ', just as they are also ' faithful ' and ' upright '. For where else can friendship be found save where there is fidelity, respect, and undeviating devotion to everything that is honourable.

Just because some one has made much of you for perhaps many years past, it does not necessarily follow that he loves you. He may merely have cared for you as he cares for his boots and his horse when he polishes the one and curries the other. Very likely when you have served his turn he will chuck you aside like a broken plate. Just because you have been married for so long, it does not necessarily follow that your wife still loves you. For how long were Eriphyle and Amphiarus married, and how many children had they, before a certain necklace came in between them ? And what was the significance of that necklace ? It was not the necklace itself, it was the false judgement of their minds about it that mattered. So if one of you wants to be friends with some one he must first learn to hate such false judgements and

eradicate them from his being. When he has succeeded in doing this, two results will automatically follow: *First:* he will cease reviling, struggling with and tormenting himself in the agonies of repentance, for he will have nothing to repent of; and *Second:* in regard to his friends: if his friend be like himself, he will always act straightforwardly towards him; while if he be unlike him, he will be tolerant, gentle and forgiving towards him, realizing that he is ignorant of, or mistaken about, certain very important matters. Further, he will never be harsh with anybody, for he will remember what Plato said: 'No man deliberately blinds himself to the truth.'[1] But if you fail to do this, you may do everything else that friends do—drink together, share the same tent, sail in the same ship, even be blood-brothers—aye, and so may snakes!—but they will never be friends, and nor will you!

xxiii

The better the handwriting in which a book is written, the more pleasure it is to read it. Similarly, it is less fatiguing and more profitable to listen to a well-expressed and delivered speech than to a slovenly one. So we may say that there is such a thing as a 'faculty of expression'. Indeed, it would be very wrong to deny its existence, for it is one of God's gifts and should not be despised any more than any other gifts of His, such as the faculties of vision, hearing and speech. God did not give you your eyes and light (without which everything would be useless) for nothing.

[1] See Book I, Ch. xxviii, p. 35.

So do not be ungrateful for these gifts of His, but thank Him for them all, including the gift of life itself and of those things that sustain life—dried fruits, wine and olive oil. And above all do not forget that He has given you one gift greater than all the rest—the faculty of being able to use all the rest and to judge and evaluate them. Subsidiary faculties, such as vision and hearing, are only of value as aids to that superior faculty, the moral purpose, which makes use of those impressions which reach us from the outside world through them. Without the faculty of the moral purpose, how would the faculty of sight know when to open or close the eyes, or to turn the eyes away from things they should not and direct them towards things that they should see? Or without it, how would the faculty of hearing operate, by means of which men may show their interest in or indifference to what they hear? We may, if we like, regard such subsidiary faculties as being in themselves blind and deaf, mere ministers to the superfaculty of the moral purpose, which alone sees and hears clearly and surveys not only all the rest, assessing the worth of each, but itself too. What else can the open eye do but see? It cannot tell whether or why it ought to see, for instance, somebody else's wife. What else can the open ear do but hear? It cannot tell whether what it hears is true or false, or what effect it should have upon the hearer. Only the faculty of the moral purpose can do that. And similarly the faculty of expression—if indeed there be such a separate faculty—can only ornament and deck out words, as barbers do the hair, but it cannot tell whether it is better to speak or to keep silence, and if to speak what to say—only the faculty of the

moral purpose can do that. It is this super-faculty that attends to everything ; that can, if it will, destroy the whole man by hunger, by a noose, or by hurling him from a cliff. By its very nature it alone is capable of checking itself. Whence it follows that the moral purpose when perverted is the only vice, and when unperverted is the only virtue.

When, therefore, one hears such statements as that 'the flesh is the most excellent of all things' (as oft-times it itself declares itself to be), we know that they are not true. How came it, then, that Epicurus said so in his works *On the Object of Existence*, *Physics*, and *On the Standard of Judgment*? Was it love of the flesh that made him a philosopher and prompted him on a death-bed of pain to write : 'I am spending my last day on earth and it is a happy one ! ? I ask again : What prompted him to write this—the flesh or his moral purpose ? You are not mad ; surely you see that there is something higher than and superior to the flesh ?

But this does not mean that we ought to despise our other faculties. No, indeed ! To say that there is no use in anything save in the faculty of moral purpose would be stupid, blasphemous and ungrateful to God. What we have to do is to assign to every-thing its proper value. An ass is not so useful as an ox, nor a dog as a slave, nor an ordinary citizen as a magistrate ; and yet asses, dogs and ordinary citizens have their uses. We are certainly not justified because some things are superior in despising humbler ones. So there is a certain value in the faculty of expression, though not so much as in that of moral purpose. But though a right moral purpose is the highest of all faculties, I repeat I do not want you to neglect the

faculty of expression any more than I want you to neglect your eyes, ears, hands, feet, dress, or shoes. All I want you to do is to realize that it is the faculty of the moral purpose, when it becomes a right moral purpose, that is the highest faculty, and that it is it that makes use of all the other faculties, both great and small, including the faculty of expression. It is through the faculty of the moral purpose, if it be right, that a man becomes good, and if wrong, bad ; it is through it that we are fortunate or unfortunate, get on with or fail to get on with one another ; in short, it is that which when neglected causes misery, which when cultivated brings happiness.

But to pretend that there is no such thing as a faculty of expression, or unduly to minimize its importance, is both ungrateful and cowardly. Some people seem to dread that a mere admission of its existence will make them attach undue importance to it. Some people are very silly. I have even heard of people maintaining that there is no difference between beauty and ugliness—that the same emotion would be provoked by gazing at a Thersites or an Achilles, at a Helen or at some quite ordinary woman. Which, of course, is absurd. The whole point is this : to learn which is the highest faculty and which the secondary ones, and then to cultivate the highest faculty to the utmost of one's ability while at the same time cultivating the subsidiary ones for the sake of the highest. For how can the highest attain its full perfection if we neglect the others ?

Too often men behave as a man returning home from a far country on furlough, who chances *en route* upon a really comfortable hotel with which he is so pleased that he stays on and on at it and never gets

home at all, forgetful that he was not travelling *to* it but had meant just to break his journey there. And you may chance on plenty of others just as comfortable and just as suitable for breaking your journey at, but not for lingering in indefinitely. Your job is to return home and relieve the anxiety of your people, to do your duty as a citizen, marry, bring up children, and hold the customary public offices. You did not come into the world merely to live in pleasant places, but to do your duty in that country where you were born and of which you are a citizen. So, too, in the matter of the faculty of expression which we have been talking about, you can only advance towards perfection through the spoken word and such teaching as you get here, and by purifying your moral purposes and educating the faculty which makes use of the impressions of the outside world you receive through your five senses. And as of necessity such teaching must be given according to certain rules and in an attractive and appropriate style, we find some paying more attention to style than to matter, and concerning themselves almost entirely with syllogisms, with arguments based on hypothetical premises and other devices of the kind, lingering over them as though they were themselves the goal of education and not a mere resting-place on the road to higher things.

Remember, your real aim is to become competent to use in conformity with Nature the impressions of the outer world you receive through your senses, to learn how to get what you want and to avoid what you do not want, how never to suffer any evil fortune, how to be free, unhampered, unconstrained, subject only to the will of God, gladly obedient to His com-

mands, blaming no one, accusing no one, and able to say with your whole heart the verses beginning—

Lead Thou me on, O Zeus and Destiny ! [1]

Remember, I say, this real aim of yours, and do not be caught by some pretty tricks of style or such-like and linger unduly over them. They are good enough of their kind, but they are only a means to an end—as an hotel is only a temporary resting-place, not a home. For you may be as eloquent as Demosthenes and yet be unhappy, or as expert in resolving syllogisms as Chrysippus and yet wretched, sorrowful, envious and not at peace.

Now some people think that I want to depreciate the study of oratory and of rules for proper expression, but this is not so. I merely want you to realize that such things are only a means to an end. If I am doing harm by insisting on this, then I am doing harm, that's all. But when I know that one thing alone is of supreme importance, I am not going to say that something else is ; no, not to please anybody !

xxiv

Some one once said to Epictetus : ' I have attended many of your lectures, but I have never yet heard anything that I wanted to know. Can't you teach me something useful ? '

And Epictetus answered him :

Epictetus : Do you believe that there is such a thing

[1] First line of ' Hymn of Cleanthes ' : also quoted in Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 231 ; and with the second and third lines in *Manual*, 53, p. 310.

as an art of speaking, so that a man possessing this art is a good speaker, while one who has not got it is a bad one?

Inquirer: I do indeed.

Epictetus: And that he whose words do good both to himself and to others is a good speaker, while he whose words do harm is a bad one?

Inquirer: Yes.

Epictetus: And are there not arts in doing many other things? For instance, does not a musician show his art by getting the most he can out of the instrument he plays on, and a sculptor his by his skill with his chisel?

Inquirer: Certainly.

Epictetus: And haven't the audience in a concert hall and the visitors to a sculpture gallery their arts too—the arts of being intelligent enough to appreciate what they hear and see?

Inquirer: I agree.

Epictetus: I think, then, it is pretty clear that any one expecting to benefit by listening to lectures on philosophy needs at least some practice in the art of listening. Don't you think so? . . . Now you ask *me* to teach you something; I ask *you* what you are capable of learning? Could you learn, for instance, about 'good' and 'evil'—not good and evil for a horse or an ox, but for a man? But first of all—do you know what a man is, his nature, his way of thinking? Do you know what Nature is? Have you any idea what I am talking about? Would you like me to prove something to you? But how can I unless you know what is meant by 'proof' and can distinguish between real proof and something that merely apes it and is in reality no proof at all? Can you tell

truth from falsehood? Do you want me to try and interest you in philosophy? But how am I to explain to you why men disagree on such matters as 'good' and 'evil', 'advantage' and 'disadvantage', when you do not even know the meaning of these terms? How indeed under such circumstances can we discuss anything profitably at all? If you want me to discuss anything with you, you must first arouse my interest. A sheep's interest is aroused when you offer it something it likes to eat—some grass, for instance; its interest wouldn't be aroused by stones or bread. So, too, my interest is only aroused and I can only talk to a listener who has succeeded in inspiring me. But when a would-be listener is to me like stone is to a sheep, how can I be expected to talk or teach? A vine does not have to ask a gardener to tend it; its mere appearance, suggestive of future profit, invites him. The mere sight of pretty lively babies tempts one to go down on all fours and play with them and talk baby-talk to them; but the appearance of a little donkey does not make any one want to frolic and bray with it!

So you see, I have nothing to say to you; at least only this—that the man who does not know who he is, what he was born for, what sort of world he lives in, and with whom he shares it; who does not know what things are noble and good and what are base and evil; who cannot follow reasoning and proof; who cannot distinguish truth from falsehood; who does not exercise his likes and dislikes, his choices and aims in conformity with the dictates of Nature; who does not assent, dissent, or suspend judgement: such a man is both deaf and blind, and whatever he may in his folly imagine himself to be, he is in fact a nobody.

Now this is not a newly-discovered truth; it has been true ever since the race of men existed. Every error and every misfortune that has ever been has been due to this kind of ignorance. It was because they did not know what things were expedient and what inexpedient that Agamemnon and Achilles fell out. One of them, you will remember, said it was expedient to give the Lady Chryseis up to her father, the other that it was inexpedient. Again, one of them said he ought to have some one else's share of the spoil, the other that he shouldn't. It was this ignorance that made them forget who they were and why they had come to Troy. Hadn't they gone there to fight the Trojans—not to get sweethearts? Then why did Achilles turn his back on Hector and his duty and draw his sword against his own King? And why did King Agamemnon, the best of men,

In whose dread hands his people's fortunes lay,[1]

turn his back on *his* kingly duties and for the sake of a chit of a girl come to fisticuffs with the most eminent soldier amongst his allies, a man whom he ought to have honoured and cherished in every possible way?

My friend, you may be rich, but you are not richer than Agamemnon was; you may be handsome, but no handsomer than Achilles. You may have a fine head of hair, but Achilles had golden hair, finer than yours, and most becomingly dressed. You may be strong, but you couldn't lift rocks like the ones Hector and Aias lifted. You may be nobly born, but your mother is not, I imagine, a goddess, nor your father of the seed of Zeus. You may be an orator, but you are not a better one than Achilles, who confounded

[1] *Iliad*, II, 25.

Odysseus and Phoenix, the two subtlest of all the Greeks.

That is all I have to say to you, and even for this I have had no heart, for you have not inspired me. Horse fanciers are excited when they look at thoroughbreds. But what is there in you to inspire me when I look at you? Your body? You have ruined its shape by laziness and self-indulgence. Your clothes? You are over-dressed. Your good looks, your manners? No! No, when you want a philosopher to teach you something, do not ask him to teach you. Just show him that you are capable of learning and you will see how quickly he will respond!

xxv

Some one once asked Epictetus to prove to him the value of logic. 'You want me to *prove* it?' said Epictetus; 'very well, then; but I can only prove it by proceeding strictly in accordance with rule, otherwise you would not be certain whether I had proved it or not, would you? But the strict rules of proof are precisely what logic teaches. So to satisfy you I must make use of logic.' And the man had no answer to make.

xxvi

People do not do wrong deliberately[1]; they want to do right, and if they make a mistake they are not doing what they want to do. What, for instance, does a thief want? Surely to gain something. But if he lose by his thieving he is certainly not getting

[1] See Book I, Ch. xviii, p. 21.

what he wants. Now every mistake is the result of some internal strife and inconsistency, and every rational person dislikes being inconsistent. So long as a man is unaware that he is inconsistent there is nothing to prevent him from going on being so; but when he realizes his inconsistencies he cannot but abandon them, just as we all renounce the false when we are convinced of its falsity.

A man will, therefore, go on making mistakes till you point out his inconsistencies to him. Then his faculty of reason, which governs his actions, will instinctively set him right, just as the beam of a balance inclines correctly and automatically. Socrates who had confidence in Man's faculty of reason used to say: 'I never call in outside evidence to support my contentions; I am satisfied with that of the person with whom I am arguing.'

However, if you refrain from pointing out his inconsistencies to the man guilty of them, he will persist in the error of his ways, and you must blame yourself, not him.

BOOK III

i

EPICTETUS once had the following conversation with a young law student, his hair elaborately curled and in general somewhat over-dressed, who had come to see him :

Epictetus : Some horses and dogs are beautiful, are they not ?

Student : Indeed they are.

Epictetus : And some men handsome, or the reverse ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : Now, why do we call them beautiful and handsome ? Is it not because each has attained the utmost excellence its nature is capable of ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : And as the nature of each is different, so each is beautiful in a different way ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : So that the qualities which make a horse beautiful may make a dog ugly, and vice versa ? And similarly those which befit a boxer do not necessarily become a wrestler and might make a runner quite ridiculous in appearance ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : Now dogs and horses are beautiful when they display the canine and equine races respectively at their best ; and a man is handsome when he

displays the highest qualities of the human race. So, my young friend, if you want to be good-looking, strive to display such qualities.

Student: What are they?

Epictetus: Just think a moment! Which do you admire most—justice and self-control or injustice and licence?

Student: Oh, justice and self-control, of course!

Epictetus: Then be just and self-controlled yourself, and you may be sure that if you are you will be handsome too; but if you aren't, no cosmetic art will make you anything but hideous. . . . Now dare I say something else to you that is in my mind? The trouble is this: if I do I may offend you, and then perhaps you will walk out and never come back; while if I don't I shall be failing in my duty, for you have come to me—a philosopher—for me to teach you, and I shall not have taught you. Besides, would it not be unkind for me not to tell you any faults I see in you? Some day later on when you have found your bearings a bit better, you might reproach me, and rightly so, saying: 'Why was it that Epictetus never said a word to me when I went to see him, though he must have seen the unhappy condition I was in? Surely he did not think I was so depraved as to be incapable of reformation? After all, I was only a boy, and I would at least have listened to what he had to say. Plenty of other young chaps make the same sort of mistakes. Why, there was Polemo,[1] who got drunk and was insolent to Xenocrates, but Xenocrates got hold of him and turned him into a very decent fellow. I don't think I ever did anything quite as bad as Polemo did, nor do I

[1] See Book IV, Ch. xi, p. 266.

suppose for a moment I should ever have become so fine a man as he eventually became, but Epictetus might at least have persuaded me to do my hair properly, to give up wearing jewellery and to stop plucking my eyebrows. But although he saw me looking like a—well, you know what—he said nothing.' Now *I* am not going to say what you look like ; I will leave it to you to say it to yourself when you realize things a bit better. But suppose, as I say, I were to keep silence now, and one day you were to reproach me for my silence, what defence could I put up to such just reproaches ?

Then there is another possibility—that if I do speak out my thoughts you may pay no heed to them. But that is no reason for my not speaking. Apollo told Laius the truth when He warned him not to beget a son ; but Laius got drunk and went away and begot the ill-starred Oedipus. Apollo knew perfectly well all the time that Laius would not obey Him, but that did not prevent Him from speaking out.

Student : Why not ?

Epictetus : Because He was Apollo ; because He pronounced oracles and because He prophesied what He knew to be true so that all men might come to Him to know the truth. Men may disbelieve and disobey Him if they choose ; in fact they generally do. For instance, on the front of His temple is graven the command : ' Seek to know what you really are.' [1] But who does ? Or take another instance—that of Socrates. Socrates tried hard to persuade every one who came to see him to improve themselves, but in how many cases (do you suppose) did he succeed ?

[1] Cp. Fragment i, p. 273.

Not in one in a thousand! But that did not prevent him from going on trying. As he himself said, he had been appointed by God Himself to this special duty, and he never shirked it. Remember his words to his judges: 'If my acquittal is dependent on my giving up my present practices, I refuse acquittal on such terms, and you may rest assured that I will never cease questioning young and old alike in the way I have done heretofore, and that if I make any difference at all, it will be to redouble my questioning of all who are my fellow-citizens and kinsmen for the very reason that they are my fellow-citizens and kinsmen, and because I wish to prevent them from being bad fellow-citizens and kinsmen.'[1] Socrates could make the bold claim that he was one 'who loved his fellow men'.[2] In every species of living beings—cattle, dogs, bees, horses, men—Nature sometimes produces an outstanding individual who is, as it were, the red thread in the mantle.[3] Socrates was such a one. I do not pretend to be one myself; still, somehow or other, it has become my lot to wear the grey beard and rough cloak of a philosopher, and as you, my boy, have come to me to be taught, I do not propose to treat you unkindly or as though I despaired of you. So listen to what I am going to say to you: If you want to be handsome, first learn what you are, and then, in the light of that knowledge, adorn yourself. In the first place you are a human being, i.e. a mortal animal endowed with reason. The superiority of Man lies not in his body nor in his ability to make use of his sense-perceptions, but in his power of reasoning. So that is what you have

[1] Plato: *Apology*. [2] Cp. Leigh Hunt: *Abou ben Adhem*.
[3] Cp. Book I, Ch. ii, p. 3.

to adorn, not your hair. Next, you are a man—not a woman. A woman's skin is soft and hairless, and if by any chance she be hairy, she is exhibited as such at some show in Rome. And if a man be not hairy, he, too, is a monstrosity. But what on earth are we to call a man who is hairy but who tries to turn himself into a woman by plucking out his hairs? Surely men who do that sort of thing hardly realize what they are doing. Don't they want to be men? Do they think every one ought to be born woman? But if there were only women in the world, there would not be much point in adorning yourself, would there? But, you say, you don't like being hairy. Very well, then, the best thing you can do is to take drastic steps and get rid once and for all of . . . of the cause of your being hairy. It would be better for you to do that than to be a sort of hermaphrodite.

Student: But some women prefer smooth men.

Epictetus: Oh, do they? And if they preferred sexual perverts, would you become one to please them? Do you imagine that you were created to be the toy of loose women? Is that the type of man who is needed as citizen of Corinth, and perhaps even in public offices such as Traffic Superintendent, Curator of Youth, General, or Director of Public Sports? When you are married, will you go on plucking out your hairs? And are your future sons going to be plucked too? No, no! don't be so silly! Just go and think things over and say to yourself: 'Of course, it was not really Epictetus who said all this to me; he is not clever enough to have thought of it. It must have been some kindly God speaking through his mouth, and Him I must obey lest He be wrath with me.' For when you get a sign through

the croaking of a raven, it is not the raven that gives the sign, but God through the raven. And in the same way, when you receive a message through the human voice, it is not the man himself who is speaking to you, but God through him. Sometimes, in matters of gravest import, God sends a special messenger. You remember how Zeus warned Aegistheus—you can read His very words in the *Odyssey* :

> See how Aegistheus, conscious, made his doom
> Far deeper than that ordained by Destiny
> When impiously he wedded one a wife
> And slew her husband scarce returnèd home.
> *Yet We had warned him by our messenger*
> *Swift, keen-eyed Hermes,* who forbade him straight
> To murder Atreus' son or rob his bed,
> Foretelling certain vengeance that should come
> When years should bring Orestes to a man
> And hunger for his country bring him home.[1]

Now, just as Zeus sent Hermes to warn Aegistheus, so too He sends you this message through me : ' Leave well alone. Let man be man and woman woman ; let the beautiful be beautiful and the ugly ugly.' I have not dared to hint to you that perhaps you are not quite so good-looking as you think you are ! *You* are not merely so much flesh and hair—the real *you* is your moral purpose. Make that beautiful and you will indeed be handsome. Remember what Socrates said to Alcibiades who physically was perfect. ' Try ', he said, ' to be handsome. . . .' Now, wait a moment ! What did he mean by that ? That Alcibiades was to curl his locks and pluck the hairs out of his legs ? No ! a thousand times no ! ' Try ', he said, ' to be handsome . . . by making your moral

[1] *Odyssey*, I, 35–47.

purpose beautiful and by eradicating all your false opinions.'

Student : Must I then entirely neglect my body ? Can't I even wash it ?

Epictetus : Of course, silly boy, you must wash your body and look after it properly, as Nature bids. But to curl your locks and pluck the hairs out of your legs is as bad as it would be to pluck out a lion's mane or a cock's comb. Your chief concern, however, and that of every man, woman, and child, should be to keep your true self, that is your moral purpose, spotless before God.

ii

If you would be perfect you must be trained in the three fields of study. The first field is concerned with our inclinations, i.e. our likes and dislikes, so that we may learn how always to get what we want and how never to get what we would avoid. The second deals with choice and refusal, whereby we learn to act orderly, carefully and with sufficient reason, not coldly like statues, but fulfilling our social duties both to our relatives and to our friends as a religious man, a son, brother, father, and citizen ought to do. The third embraces avoidance of error, rashness in judgement, and assent generally, and in particular those cases in which strong emotions come into play ; for a strong emotion only arises when we have failed in getting what we wanted or in avoiding what we didn't want. It also covers all mental storms and inner conflicts, all misfortunes and calamities, all sorrows and unhappinesses, all envies and passions which make it impossible for us even to listen to reason. This third

field, however, concerns only those who have made some progress in philosophy, for it is through its study that we gain the assurance that it is impossible for us to be taken unawares or to be defeated by some sudden and as yet untested sense-perception—no, not even though we be asleep, drunk or mad.

Philosophers nowadays are apt to pass by the first two fields of study and to concentrate upon the third, which also includes devices of logic such as syllogisms, hypothetical premises and the like, and dilemmas such as 'The Liar'.[1] But, as I have said, it is only one who has achieved a certain measure of progress by mastery of the first two fields who ought to embark upon the third. Have you all mastered the first two? Are you above petty pilfering? Can you all look at a pretty girl without an evil thought? Can you all hear of a neighbour getting a legacy without being envious of him? Be frank with yourselves. Aren't you—even in the very act of studying these topics—worried lest somebody should undervalue you or be discussing you? And when any one flatters you by saying that you are the only real philosopher he knows, doesn't your poor little soul swell with pride; whereas if some one else happens to remark: 'Nonsense! what's the good of listening to *him*? *He* knows nothing but the mere rudiments of philosophy!' don't you grow pale with anger, lose your temper and growl: 'Rudiments, indeed! I'll larn him!' And yet it is just these emotions and actions of yours which reveal to you how much or how little progress you have really made. That was how Diogenes exploded a certain Sophist's pretensions to being a

[1] See Book II, Ch. xvii, p. 84, Ch. xviii, p. 87; Book III, Ch. ix, p. 141.

philosopher ; he pointed at him derisively with his finger, and all that Sophist's philosophy could not prevent him from flying into a rage.

If you haven't yet mastered the first two fields, what profit can you expect by a premature study of the third ? Take your judgements, for instance. What value do you set on your moral purpose when you constantly worry yourself about things that lie outside its ambit, such as what So-and-so will say, what impression you will make, whether men will recognize you as a scholar learned in the works of Chrysippus, Antipater and Archedemus, and so forth ? Why, the mere thinking of such thoughts proves you to be selfish, captious, touchy, faint-hearted, discontented with everybody and everything, restless, a boaster. The philosopher Crinus was also learned in the works of Archedemus, but that didn't prevent him from dying of an apoplexy when he was suddenly frightened by a mouse. Such things as fall within the third field are as yet no concern of yours and you had better leave them alone. They are a meet subject for those who can study them dispassionately and who can say honestly : ' I do not give way to anger, sorrow or envy ; I am not subject to restraint or compulsion ; I have leisure and peace of mind. What do I still lack ? Let me consider how one should deal with hypothetical premises in argument, and how one may adopt an hypothesis and yet not be led to an absurd conclusion.'

iii

In the same way as physicians and masseurs are chiefly concerned with the human body, and farmers

with their crops, so too the good man is chiefly concerned with his mind which enables him to deal, in accordance with Nature, with the impressions he gets of the outside world through his five senses. Now we know that every mind naturally assents to what is true, dissents from what is false, and suspends judgement in doubtful cases [1]; and that it is naturally inclined towards good, away from evil, and to be neutral towards things that are neither good nor bad. Hence a man's mind will never refuse any sense-perception of the outside world provided it seem to be good; i.e. good for it, for good attracts, evil repels, the mind. 'Good for me' is the stimulus that prompts all actions, not only men's but God's too. Sense-perceptions that seem good to it are, as it were, the coinage the mind prefers, the legal-tender it will not and cannot refuse (any more than a banker or a tradesman can refuse Caesar's coinage which is the legal tender of commerce).

The trouble is that all of us have different views as to what constitutes 'good' or 'good for us', and so we all prefer different coinages. If we define 'good' or 'our good' as 'a right moral purpose' our difficulties will vanish, for the preservation of the relationships of life will automatically become a 'good' and we shall cease being worried about things outside the ambit of our moral purposes. Then if your father takes your money, or your brother helps himself to the lion's share of the family estates, you will willingly let them have them, for you will realize that they are not doing you any harm, for they are not robbing you of anything that really matters—of your modesty, fidelity or brotherly love, for instance.

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. vii, p. 8, and Ch. xxviii, p. 35.

Of such things, in truth, they cannot rob you. Why, not even God Himself could rob you of them, no, not even if He wanted to, for He has put all such things under your sole control.

To obtain something from a man who does not thus define his 'good', you must pay him in the coinage he desires, the only one which he recognizes as legal tender. Thus, you will have to pay the unscrupulous Governor of a Province in coin of the realm, an adulterer with a girl. The price of others may be a boy, a horse or a dog. But pay them in their favourite coin and they will give you what you want.

God has ordained that every one shall prefer what he regards as 'good' to everything else. The fault lies in making a wrong choice of what is to be regarded as 'good'. Do not you make this mistake. Always apply the rule : Is the thing—your external or sense-perceptions—within the ambit of your moral purpose or not? If not, it is no concern of yours. For instance, when you go out after breakfast, suppose the first thing you see is a handsome man or a pretty woman. Apply the rule. Are they within or without the ambit of your moral purpose? Without, of course. Then they are no concern of yours. Suppose next you see some one weeping over a dead child? Ask yourself : 'Is Death within or without the ambit of my moral purpose?' Of course it is without. Then it is nothing to you. Next, you may meet some Governor. Apply your rule : Is a Governorship within the ambit of your moral purpose? No ; it isn't. Then it does not fulfil the test ; it is nothing to you. . . . Now, if only you would act like this, and keep on doing so every day from morning till

night, you would soon make definite progress. But, in fact, what do you do? You just gape at every sense-perception you get, and only remember the rule for a few moments while I am lecturing to you about it; and then as soon as my lecture is over, off you go, and if you happen to see a man in trouble you promptly exclaim: 'That's the end of him!' or if you meet a Governor: 'Lucky chap!' or an exile: 'Poor devil!' or a pauper: 'I'm sorry for him; he's no money, so he's bound to starve!' There are some pretty examples of wrong-headed judgements for you—for all these things—tears, lamentations, misfortunes, strife, quarrels, fault-findings, accusations, impieties, foolishnesses—are judgements of the mind, and judgements about things that lie outside the ambit of our moral purposes, and which we wrongly assume to be either good or bad. It is just such muddled judgements as these that we ought to concentrate on weeding out of our minds. What we have to do is to confine our judgements to things that lie within the ambit of our moral purposes. If only you would do that, you would be as firm as a rock whatever happened.

The mind is like a bowl of water, our sense-perceptions like rays of light shining on the water. If the water be troubled, we might imagine it to be due to the rays of light, but rays of light have no power to trouble the water. So, too, if the mind be troubled, it looks as though it were due to our sense-perceptions. But it isn't. Our sense-perceptions have no power to trouble the mind.

iv

The Governor of Epirus on one occasion showed so much partiality in favour of a certain comedian that he incurred sharp criticism at the hands of the Epiriots, and being much annoyed thereat came to Epictetus and complained bitterly at the lack of respect such criticisms implied. 'But I can't see what you've got to grumble about,' said Epictetus; 'after all, they were only taking sides, just the same as you were. What else can you expect? When they saw *you*—their Governor, the friend and representative of Caesar—taking sides, naturally they did the same. They only imitated you. It is very natural to imitate one's superiors. I can well imagine one of them saying: "If Caesar's Deputy storms and bounces up and down at the theatre, I will too; and as I haven't got a claque to barrack for me, I'll barrack all the louder myself to make up for it!" You must realize that when you go to the theatre, it is *you* who set the standard of behaviour. And as for the criticisms you resent, they are easily explained. We all hate anything or any one that stands in our way. Now they wanted their man to win the prize and you wanted yours; so they were standing in your way and you in theirs. And as you happened to be the stronger they did the only thing they could, viz. they abused the obstacle to their wishes—you. You do not seriously think, I suppose, that *you* ought to be able to *do* what you want and that *they* should not be able even to *say* what they want? That would hardly be reasonable, would it? Why, you know that farmers and sailors vilify even God Himself when He does not give them exactly what they want,

and that men are constantly abusing Caesar. Do you suppose God doesn't know this, or that Caesar never hears of it? But Caesar doesn't worry—he knows quite well that if he were to punish every one who abused him, the prisons would be so full that there would be no one left outside for him to rule over. No! you have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. What you ought to have said to yourself was: not "I want Sophron to win", but "I want the winner to win"; then your wish would have been gratified.[1] But if nothing will satisfy you but that Sophron should win, all I can suggest is that you should let him give some private performances at your house and you can then award him as many prizes as you like. But you can't arrogate to yourself the right of awarding public prizes, and if you do you must expect to be criticized unfavourably, and you had better make up your mind to grin and bear it. That will be the inevitable result of lowering yourself to the level of other people.'

V

One of his students once complained that he never felt really well in Nicopolis, and thought he had better go home. And Epictetus said: 'Were you always well at home before you came here? Have you, then, given up all idea of continuing your studies? Of course, if you find that what I teach you is of no use to you, it is a pity you ever came at all, and you had certainly better go home and look after your father in his old age, and your family estates, and become a local magnate as best you can, with the

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 33, p 303.

knowledge you have, such as it is. But if you had, as it is obvious you haven't, learned what I have been trying to drum into you, that you are here to weed certain mistaken ideas out of your mind and to replace them with right ones, and that the only things that concern you are those which lie within the ambit of your moral purpose, you would certainly not be upset by such a trifle as not feeling particularly well. My dear boy, surely you know by this time that sickness and death come to all of us wherever we are or whatever we do ; they overtake the farmer in the fields and the sailor on the seas ; and one day they will overtake *you*, and what do you propose to do about it? Personally, I hope that when death overtakes *me*, it will find me busily engaged in trying to make my moral purpose calm, independent, unconstrained and free, so that I may be able to say to God : " Have I ever transgressed Thy laws ? Have I ever misused the talents Thou gavest me, prostituted my five senses, or been false to those instincts that Thou didst implant in me ? Have I ever cavilled at Thee or questioned Thy will ? Nay, when it was Thy will I fell sick—as did other men—but I gladly. I have held no public office because Thou willedst me not to ; nor have I even desired to hold office, or been grieved because it did not come my way. I have ever come before Thee with a cheerful countenance, eager to execute Thy commands. And now that it is Thy will that I should leave the banquet of life, I leave it full of gratitude to Thee for having thought me worthy to share in it, to behold Thy works and how Thou dost order them." Such be my thoughts when death shall overtake *me* ! '

Student : But if I stop on here when I am ill, how

can my mother look after me? I always get better quicker if she nurses me.

Epictetus: Don't be so soft!

Student: Besides, at home I have a really comfortable bed, whereas at my lodgings here . . .

Epictetus: Oh, really, I have no patience with you! Get home to your comfortable bed! You're the sort of person who would want a comfortable bed even when he was well, and obviously your bed is more important—to you at any rate—than anything you are likely to learn here. I wonder if you remember what Socrates said? 'As one man delights in improving his farm and another in improving his stud, so my daily delight lies in trying to improve myself.'

Student: How? In little philosophic phrases and fancies, I suppose?

Epictetus: Are you serious?

Student: Well, I can't see what else philosophers do all the time.

Epictetus: No? Then such things as never to blame or grumble at any one, either God or man; as always keeping an impassive face; mean nothing to you? And yet these were the things that Socrates knew, though he used to say he knew nothing and never taught anybody anything, and whenever any one came to him to learn what you call 'little philosophic phrases and fancies' he used to send him to Protagoras or Hippias, just as if any one had come to him for fresh vegetables he would have sent him to a greengrocer. 'My daily delight lies in trying to improve myself.' Which of you, young men, has that same aim that Socrates had? Why, with it, any one would be glad to be ill, to be hungry, even to die!

vi

(*a*) When some one asked him why it was that whereas in olden days progress in logic was rapid and striking, now, in spite of all the work being done on it, progress seemed to have slowed down almost to vanishing-point, Epictetus replied : ' It depends on what you mean by " progress in logic ". Our ancestors concentrated on one branch of logic, viz. the inquiry how to bring Man's moral purpose into harmony with Nature, and in this they were remarkably successful. We moderns, on the other hand, have been much more interested in another branch—the solution of syllogisms, and in fact we have made notable contributions to knowledge in their regard. And, perhaps, in our enthusiasm, we have rather tended to neglect the former and more important branch of the two. Still, those of us who have tried to keep themselves in conformity with Nature have made progress in this regard also.'

. . . . .

(*b*) The good man is unconquerable. Naturally, for into whatsoever struggle he enters he is the stronger. ' If you want my worldly goods,' he says, ' or my servants, or my public offices, or even my body, take them and welcome ; but you can't prevent me getting what I want or failing to avoid what I don't want.' This is, in fact, the only struggle into which a good man enters ; viz. the one concerned with those things that lie within the ambit of his moral purpose. So he can't help winning every time.[1]

. . . . .

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 19, p. 293.

(*c*) When some one asked him for a definition of 'normal intelligence', he replied: 'A man who has normal hearing can naturally tell one sound from another, say a dog's bark from a cat's miaul. To acquire a more specialized hearing—the sort, for instance, that can distinguish between tones, i.e. qualities of sound, needs education and practice. In the same way, a man with normal intelligence instinctively understands simple things without special training or practice.'

. . . . .

(*d*) A fisherman cannot catch a jelly-fish on a hook—it is too soft. And I can't catch and persuade soft and stupid young men to pay any attention to what I try to teach them; whereas those with real intelligence seize hold of my teachings, and if I were to try and fob them off, they would hold on to them more tenaciously than ever. In fact, Rufus used this very device to distinguish the clever from the stupid. He used to say: 'If you throw a stone up into the air it inevitably falls back to earth; and similarly if you put obstacles in the way of a really clever man, his superior intelligence will make him all the more determined to overcome them.'

vii

When the Imperial Bailiff, who was an Epicurean, came to call upon him, Epictetus said: 'It is only right and proper that we laymen should ask you philosophers to instruct us what is the best thing in the world, so that we may try and get it. Now I suppose nobody denies that Man has body, soul, and property. So all you have to do is to tell us which

of the three is best. Is it body—the flesh ? If that be so, no doubt it was because the flesh is best that Maximus, braving the seas of winter, accompanied his son on his voyage as far as Cassiope.'

Bailiff : Oh, no !

Epictetus : Still, you agree that one's motives should be inspired by the best, not by the second best ?

Bailiff : I do, most certainly.

Epictetus : What, then, is better than the flesh ?

Bailiff : The soul.

Epictetus : Ah ! then you believe that the possessions of the soul are of more value than those of the body ?

Bailiff : Yes.

Epictetus : Now the soul's possessions lie within the ambit of the moral purpose, do they not ?

Bailiff : They do.

Epictetus : And whatsoever delights and pleases the soul also lies within the ambit of the moral purpose, is that not so ?

Bailiff : Yes.

Epictetus : But that which delights and pleases the soul must come from somewhere. What is its origin ? It could not have created itself. So we are forced to predicate the existence of something prior which inspires the soul to delight in good things.

Bailiff : I agree.

Epictetus : No, no ! you can't agree ; you are an Epicurean. If you agree with me you will be saying something inconsistent both with your Master Epicurus and with all his teachings. In fact, *you* must maintain that pleasure of soul is due to pleasure in things of the flesh, from which it follows that the ' good ' is to be found in the things of the flesh. And so you were wrong about Maximus. Maximus, who of course

was inspired only by the very best motives (and he would have been very foolish to have been otherwise), undoubtedly made his voyage for the sake of the things of the flesh. And you must maintain further that any judge having the opportunity to appropriate to himself somebody else's property would be an idiot if he neglected his opportunities. And again, that though it is true that Epicurus said, 'Thou shalt not steal,' he said so not because he regarded the act of stealing as being in itself evil, but because of the risk of being found out. But we know that if we commit our thefts with a certain amount of intelligence the risk of discovery is really negligible, and that even if by any ill-chance we are caught, we have influential friends in Rome to help us out of the mess. So why be so silly as to refrain from doing something which will be for your own advantage? Really, if you assured me that you never stole anything I couldn't believe you. For just as it is impossible to assent to what one knows is untrue and to refuse to believe what one knows is true, so too it is impossible to reject what appears to be good. Now, money is clearly very good indeed, for it buys innumerable pleasures. So why shouldn't you grab as much of it as you can? And why shouldn't we seduce our neighbours' wives, provided of course that we can do so without being found out? And if unluckily we are discovered and their husbands begin to talk nonsense, why shouldn't we break their silly heads into the bargain? Of course, if you are a real philosopher and make your actions match your theory, you naturally do all these things; and if you don't—well, all I have to say is, you are no better than we poor Stoics; for we talk virtue and act basely, while

you invert the perversity by enunciating rotten doctrines and then behaving as if you were saints !

Now, speaking seriously ; can you imagine a state run on Epicurean lines in which men would not get married nor beget children, nor perform the duties incumbent on citizenship ' because they oughtn't to ' ? What do you think the result would be ? Where would the next generation come from ? Who would bring them up ? Who would be Curator of Youth or Director of Public Sports ? And what would they teach their pupils ? Imagine, if you can, what a young man brought up on and practising your doctrines would be like ! Not like the young men of Lacedaemon or Athens anyhow ! No, your doctrines are definitely bad, subversive of the State and destructive of the family. You had better drop them. Remember that you are member of an Empire and that it is your duty to hold public office, to be a just judge and to respect other people's property. The only woman who should appear beautiful to you should be your wife ; boys, silver, gold, should have no attractions for you at all. And the only doctrines you should uphold are the ones that inspire you to act as I have said.

Is not the craftsmanship of a piece of plate worth more than the silver of which the plate is made ? Are not the works of the hands of more value than the flesh and blood of which the hands are formed ? So, too, in Man ; it is not his body or his possessions that we should esteem, but his acts—the way he conducts himself as citizen, his marriage, his begetting of children, his reverence for God, his care of his parents ; in short, his likes, dislikes, choices and refusals all in harmony with Nature. Man should be free, noble,

self-respecting. What other creature can blush or show a sense of shame? Man should subordinate pleasure to duty.

Bailiff: But I am rich and need nothing.

Epictetus: Then why pretend to be a philosopher? If your hoards of gold and silver content you, what need have you of the doctrines of philosophy?

Bailiff: Because I am a Judge.

Epictetus: What qualifications have you for being a Judge?

Bailiff: I hold Caesar's commission.

Epictetus: If Caesar issued you commissions to judge music and literature, would they make you competent to do so? I wonder how you managed to get your commission as Judge? Was it, by any chance, by a little influence or palm-oil?

Bailiff: That is not the point. The point is, I *am* a Judge, and can imprison and even pronounce death sentences.

Epictetus: The way to govern men is not by threatening them with imprisonment and death should they not obey you, but by pointing out to them what is right and what is wrong. Then they will do the former and avoid the latter. For men are rational beings and should be treated as such. Do as Socrates did—make them admire you and want to be like you. Men so loved him that they were willing to subordinate their inclinations, their likes, dislikes, choices and refusals as he taught them. So if you want to govern properly, eschew all threats and content yourself with warning your subjects that they should do this or that 'because God wishes them to', and that if they disobey Him they are bound to suffer for it. And their punishment will be that they will not have done

what they should have done. That is indeed the greatest of all punishments, for it means that they will have lost their sense of fidelity, decency and honour.

viii

In the same way as we practise finding answers to the riddles of the Sophists, so too we ought to practise finding answers to the varied problems propounded daily to us by our sense-perceptions. Let us consider a few of them : ' So-and-so's son is dead.' ' So-and-so has been disinherited by his father.' ' Caesar has condemned him.' Now all these are outside the ambit of the moral purpose and so are not evils. But, ' He was grieved at what had happened ' does lie within the ambit of the moral purpose, and so is an evil ; while ' He has borne up under it manfully ' is also within the ambit of the moral purpose, and so is a good.

Now, if we were to make a habit of analysing all our sense-perceptions like this, we should soon make progress ; for we should then never assent to any sense-perception unless it was self-evidently true. For instance : ' His son is dead ' ; ' His ship is lost ' ; ' He has been arrested ' ;—you can assent safely to any of these. But directly you add, ' Poor chap ! ' you are adding an indefensible judgement.

It is no use saying that God should not allow such things to happen. Why shouldn't He ? Why do you suppose He made you high-minded and capable of patient endurance ? Was it not to rob such happenings of any sting, so that you might endure them cheerfully ? Besides, has He not left a door of escape open for you ? Use it if you will, but do not grumble.

. . . . .

Would you like to know what the Romans think of philosophers? I happened to be present when a Roman named Italicus was being urged by his friends to bear some piece of ill-fortune philosophically. '*Philosophically!*' he shouted, purple with rage; 'do you want me to be a second Epictetus?!'

ix

One day a Cretan gentleman who was on his way to Rome called, and when Epictetus inquired the object of his trip, he replied that it was to attend the hearing of a Petition there in regard to his recent election as President of Cnossos, and that he would be glad of Epictetus' opinion about it. 'If you ask me', replied Epictetus, 'whether I think you will win your case or not, I cannot tell you, for I haven't the slightest idea; but if you want to know whether your trip will be a success or not, well, it all depends upon yourself; i.e. upon the judgements of your mind. If your judgements are sound, everything will turn out well; if they are unsound, nothing will turn out well. A man's success or failure depends entirely upon his judgement. It was your judgement that made you a candidate for the Presidency of Cnossos in the first place; it is your judgement that impels you now, regardless of weather, cost and other inconveniences, to go to Rome. The question is—has your judgement been right and wise? No doubt you think it has; but no doubt the petitioners, who are trying to invalidate your election, think theirs is too. You both think you are right, and yet you can't both be right, and why should one be right rather than the other? Merely to think you are right is

no proof that you are. Lunatics think they are right. But what I should like to know is whether you have ever reflected about your judgements and tried to improve your capacity for making right ones? Not being satisfied with the honours you already have and aspiring to new and greater ones, you don't mind the expense and trouble of a journey to Rome. But have you ever, so to speak, made a journey in order to study your judgements, so as to be able to reject any that are unsound? Have you ever consulted any one on the subject, and if so, whom and when? Just cast your mind back over your past life—you needn't tell me details if you'd rather not—and think of your boyhood : did you ever examine your judgements when you were a boy? or when you were a law student? or, later on, when you were called to the Bar and cases began to roll in thick and fast and you began to launch out into politics? Did you submit, would you have submitted, at any of these periods or under any circumstances, to be cross-examined as to whether your judgements were sound or not? No, I'm sorry, I can't say anything about your lawsuit ; such matters do not concern philosophers. If you want advice about it you must consult a lawyer, just as if you wanted some potatoes you would go to a greengrocer, or to a cobbler for a pair of boots and not to me. Philosophers are concerned only with Man's governing principle and how to keep it constantly in harmony with Nature—a very much more important matter, I may remark, than any election petition ; and if you want any help from me about yours, well, I will do my best for you, but I do not know how you can hope to learn much about it in the course of an afternoon call

made out of curiosity to see me and hear what I have to say and just to wile away an hour or two before your ship sails. I suppose now you will go off and tell your friends that I had nothing to say at all! No! if you want help from a philosopher, you must submit your judgements to him for analysis and criticism, comparing yours with his, with the determination to discover and eradicate any false ones.'

Visitor: If I were to devote myself to such matters, I should soon be as poor as you are, and find myself minus my farms, my cattle and silver plate.

Epictetus: Personally, I should hate to own any of them; but you, though you own all three, are not satisfied and want more. And yet in spite of all your wealth you are not so rich as I am.

Visitor: I am afraid I don't quite follow you.

Epictetus: You are poorer because you lack steadfastness, because your mind is not in harmony with Nature and your spirit is unquiet. What do *I* care if I lack powerful friends, or what Caesar thinks of me? But *you* care a great deal. My peace of mind more than compensates me for any amount of gold and silver. Your furnishings may be of solid gold, but your reason, your judgements, assents, choices, and inclinations are all, as it were, of clay. But mine are now so nearly in harmony with Nature that I am thinking of completing the third field of study and taking up logic as a sort of hobby. For now that my mind is no longer distracted, I have plenty of time on my hands. So while you and those like you, when you have nothing to do, are restless, go to the theatre, roam up and down aimlessly, or try to amuse yourselves with your collections of glass and china, we philosophers find our occupation and

pleasure in developing our powers of reasoning, and so study problems like those called 'The Liar' [1] and 'The Denier'.[2] Although you own so much, your possessions seem in your eyes all too few and worthless, for you covet still more ; whereas I, who have little, value everything I have. There is no end to your wants ; mine are already more than satisfied. You remind me of a little boy who passes his bare arm down the long narrow neck of a jar which is full of figs and nuts so as to grab as many of them as he can, and who then, when his hand is full, finds he can't get it out again. And then he begins to cry and has to drop some in order to get anything at all. Don't you see that if you try to get everything you may end by getting nothing? So why not drop some of your numberless wants and then perhaps you will get something.

X

We ought to have our principles cut-and-dried and ready for instant use on any and every conceivable subject. Remember the GOLDEN VERSES which some say were composed by Pythagoras,[3] and which run :

> At night, before you close your eyes in sleep,
> Recall to mind each hour of the now dead day,
> Reviewing all your deeds and words and thoughts,
> Asking : 'Where went I wrong? when was I right?'
> And, as your conscience judges yea or no,
> Repent the bad, rejoice at all well done.

These are practical verses and are meant for use.

[1] See Book II, Ch. xvii, p. 84, Ch. xviii, p. 87 ; Book III, Ch. ii, p. 122.

[2] Unknown.

[3] Cp. Book IV, Ch. vi, p. 243.

So whether you be at lunch, at the Public Baths, or in bed, whether you be well or ill—be always ready. An illness indeed would give you an excellent opportunity for practising your professed philosophy. So next time you are ill, don't postpone its application and merely go away for a change. Illness cannot be avoided by change of residence. Surely the very essence of philosophy is self-preparation to enable us to face anything that may come upon us. It is silly to be daunted by the difficulties of life ; you ought rather to rejoice at them, saying : 'Why, it was to be able to endure just this very thing that I have been training myself for so long and practising so hard !' To postpone the application of one's philosophy, or to give up being a philosopher altogether, merely because fortune is a little contrary, is as if a boxer were to give up boxing because some one had hit him—worse indeed, for the boxer would at least escape a drubbing, whereas you wouldn't escape your ill-fortune, you would merely have put yourself in a worse position to bear it ! So when you have a dose of fever, when you are thirsty or hungry, bear these ills as a man should. It's no use saying you can't ; you can ; who can stop you ? Your doctor may forbid your eating or drinking, but he can't prevent you from bearing hunger and thirst uncomplainingly.

Student : But I am a student.

Epictetus : And why did you become a student ? Was it not to learn how to feel secure, how to be happy, and how to live in harmony with Nature ? You must so live, not part of the time only, but all the time, whatever you are doing, whether you be walking, on a voyage, on a journey, or ill. When you go for a walk, walk in the right way ; when you

are ill, be ill in the right way.[1] And the right way in which to be ill is to be ill patiently ; not to grumble at God or man ; not to be crushed by your sufferings ; to await death fearlessly ; not to be afraid of what your doctor may say when he visits you ; not to be over-elated if he says, 'You are better to-day,' nor unduly depressed if he shakes his head and says, 'Hum hum !' For even if you are very ill, it only means that you are a little nearer separation of soul from body, and what is there in that to affright you ? If the separation does not take place now, it will inevitably do so a little later on, and when it does the Universe will go on just the same. Nor will it help you to try and flatter your doctor, any more than it would to flatter your boot-maker or your builder. Your doctor will, no doubt, do all he can for your body—a poor thing at best, which does not even belong to you, and which, when all is said and done, is only temporarily alive.

These, then, are the things a man who is ill should do, and which he naturally will do if he is a real philosopher. For the real philosopher is not over-concerned with material things—his wine, oil, body—he just does the best he can with them ;[2] his real concern is his governing principle. So what is there left for a sick man to be afraid of or annoyed about ? Keep these two principles always ready to hand for instant use : *First :* 'Nothing that lies outside the ambit of the moral purpose is either good or bad.' *Second :* 'Obey, do not try to order events.'

Student : My brother ought not to have treated me as he has done.

[1] See Book III, Ch. xx, p. 159, and Ch. xxii, p. 169.
[2] See Book II, Ch. v, p. 49.

Epictetus: Perhaps not; but that is his affair. Your business is to observe all your relations with him properly, no matter how he treats you. Your own behaviour is under your own control, and no one can interfere with you. His behaviour is not under your control and is no concern of yours.[1]

xi

(*a*) He who regards anything outside the ambit of his moral purpose as being either good or bad shall be punished by becoming subject to envy, dissatisfaction, discontentedness, sorrow and unhappiness. That is God's law. We know it. We know what will happen if we break it—and yet we go on breaking it!

. . . . .

(*b*) Remember what Homer says about our duties to foreigners:

> I have no right to insult a foreigner,
> Whether yourself or any worser man,
> For they, and beggars too, are sons of God.[2]

Nor should we insult fathers or brothers or relations or friends, or indeed anyone—for all are sons of God.

xii

We must so school ourselves that one day we shall be able to gratify our inclinations (i.e. our likes and dislikes) freely, and so always get what we want and never get what we don't want. To achieve this our training must be systematic and thorough; but there is no need to search out rare and unusual trials. For

[1] Cp. Book I, xv, p. 18. [2] *Odyssey*, IV, 56.

instance, it is difficult and dangerous to walk a tight-rope or to climb up a greasy pole. Diogenes, it is said, used to harden himself by embracing statues nude and in cold weather.[1] Such recondite ordeals are quite unnecessary for us. What we want to be is philosophers, not mountebanks. No, it is not danger and difficulty that render a thing suitable for our self-discipline ; it is the association it has with the object we have in view. Of one thing, anyway, I warn you : if you let your training trend towards those things that lie outside the ambit of your moral purpose, especially if such trend become habitual, you will indubitably fail.

You must strive that your inclinations be concerned only with those things that lie within the ambit of your moral purpose. If you are too fond of amusements, deliberately forgo a few ; if you dislike hard work, make yourself work all the harder ; if you are inclined to be ' county and up-stage ', teach yourself to bear insults and even blows with humility. Train yourself to use wine with moderation, so that eventually you will be able to do without it altogether. Teach yourself to dispense with all but the plainest food, and to abstain from the love of women. And then, later on, when a real test comes to you, you will realize how far you have progressed in mastering your sense-perceptions. For the moment, however, as you are only beginners, I would advise you whenever you encounter some strong temptation to fly from it—the temptation, for instance, of a pretty girl to a young student in philosophy might well prove too much for him. If earthenware and brass pitchers are carried together to the well, it's odds on that some of the earthenware ones will be broken.

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. v, p. 234, and *Manual*, 47, p. 308.

When you have learned how to manage your inclinations, you can then proceed to the second field of study, that dealing with choice and refusal. In this you have to learn to be obedient to reason, and how not to choose or refuse at the wrong time or place or in the wrong way.

The third field of study is concerned with assent, especially in regard to plausible and attractive sense-perceptions. As Socrates bade us subject ourselves to constant self-examination,[1] so too we ought not to assent to any sense-perception till we have examined it, carefully inquiring what it is and whence it came (just like a night police patrol may demand our identification papers).

I may add this : all methods used for training and keeping our bodies physically fit may also be of service in training us to make proper use of our inclinations, unless indeed such methods tend towards mere display, which, of course, falls outside the ambit of our moral purposes. Which reminds me of the admirable 'Receipt for self-discipline' of Apollonius : 'Take a mouthful of iced water on a hot day when you are very thirsty—spit it out—*and don't tell anybody* !'[2]

xiii

Epictetus : A man is not lonely merely because he is alone ; he may be lonely even in a crowd. If we lose a brother, or a son, or some close and dear friend, we say we are lonely, even though we are actually in the thronged streets of Rome, in a large hotel, or

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxvi, p. 34 ; Book III, Ch. xiv (*c*), p. 149, and Ch. xvi, p. 154.

[2] Cp. *Manual*, 47, p. 308.

surrounded by troops of servants. The expression ' a lonely man ' seems sometimes to imply, too, a certain degree of helplessness. Loneliness is not banished by the mere presence of other men, but only by that of congenial ones. If one were on a solitary journey, one's loneliness and sense of helplessness would hardly be abolished by the sudden appearance of footpads ! If the mere fact of being alone were sufficient to make one feel lonely, I suppose that even Zeus Himself could hardly escape feeling so when all perish—men and Gods alike, all save He—at the periodic Conflagration of the Universe. Indeed, some assert that He does, for they cannot conceive the possibility of an absolutely solitary life seeing that Nature Herself appears to rule it out by her laws of community of interest, mutual affection and pleasure in intercourse that bind men. Still, we ought to train ourselves to be self-sufficient. As God needs no aid, but communes with Himself and serenely contemplates all his creations, so too we should rely on ourselves and not on others, commune with our own hearts, and spend our time in the study of God's ordering of the Universe and our relationship thereto, in watching the progress we are making in dealing with our sense-perceptions, in noting where we still fail, and in seeking how to remedy our failures and to perfect our actions by a better use of our faculty of reasoning.

Thanks to Caesar, we now live in an era of profound peace. There are no more wars, there are practically no highwaymen or pirates left, and as a result we can travel securely all over the world by land and by sea from the rising to the setting sun. But can Caesar preserve us also from fever, shipwreck, fire, earthquake and lightning ?—or from the pangs of love, sorrow and

envy? Indeed he can't. But you can be preserved from them, too, if you will only obey the teachings of philosophy, which are the teachings of God made apparent to us through our faculty of reason. And then you will never feel pain, anger, compulsion or hindrance, but will lead peaceful lives in complete freedom. Enjoying such peace and security no man will ever feel lonely, for he can assure himself: 'No evil can now befall me. So far as I am concerned, highwaymen and earthquakes do not exist; everything is full of peace; all roads, cities, fellow-travellers, neighbours and companions are harmless. God gives me my food, my clothes, my five senses, my instincts; and when He thinks fit he will withdraw these necessities of existence and open a door for me through which to make my exit. Whither? To no place that need alarm me—only back to whence I came, my former home. In a word, I shall be resolved once more into the friendly elements.[1] What there was of fire in me will return to fire, of earth to earth, of water to water, of spirit to spirit. There is no Hades or Hell, but all things are filled with God.' When one has all this to meditate on, and when one can look upon and enjoy sun, moon, stars, land, and sea, how can any one ever be either lonely or helpless?

Student: But if some one were to attack me when I was alone and murdered me?

Epictetus: No one can murder *you*; he can only kill your body, and that is worth little. . . . What then is left of our supposed loneliness and helplessness? Surely we are not as feeble as little children? Even they, when they are left alone, are not lonely, for they fill up their time by collecting bits of broken crockery

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 247.

and mud and making mud pies, and then they knock them down and make some more. If any of you lads were to go away, would you expect me to cry and feel lonely? Couldn't I make mud pies too? If the ignorance of children leads to happiness, surely the wisdom of adults should not lead to misery!

xiv

(*a*) A good chorus singer is not necessarily a good soloist. Similarly some men are at their best when with other men, and seem quite unable to endure being alone. The best type of man, however, is perfectly satisfied with his own company and does not in the least want to merge himself in the crowd. He doesn't mind appearing singular or being laughed at; indeed that kind of thing shakes him up and makes him realize better who and what he is.

(*b*) Only too often when a man gives something up —drinking wine, for instance—he begins bragging about it to everybody, saying: '*I* only drink *water*!' If you prefer drinking water, drink it by all means; but it is absurd to give yourself airs about it; and it is positively wrong to say it *at* people who have no sympathy with teetotallers just to try and irritate them.

(*c*) We must avoid conceit on the one hand and undue diffidence on the other. Conceit is the belief that one is so superior that there is no room for any improvement; diffidence, that one cannot hope to win peace because one is not strong enough to cope with the difficulties of life. We can overcome conceit by the constant self-examination [1] that Socrates advised;

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxvi, p. 34; Book III, Ch. xii, p. 146, and Ch. xvi, p. 154.

we can overcome diffidence by remembering our lineage—that we are all sons of God.

(*d*) [1] How often do we hear people boasting : '*My* father was Consul !' '*I* have been Tribune ; you haven't !' If such people had happened to have been born horses instead of men, I suppose we should have heard them neighing : '*My* sire won the Derby !' '*I* am fed on barley and corn, and all the metal of my harness is real silver !' To which another horse might well retort : 'The best horse is the swiftest—we can easily see which is the better of us two by having a race !' How are we to test which is the better of two men ? Surely by seeing which of them has the most reverence and faith and the highest sense of justice. One couldn't claim to be superior to the other because his legs are more muscular and he can therefore kick better. Donkeys can kick better still.

XV [2]

Before embarking on any new enterprise, consider carefully its probable cost and results, otherwise the light-hearted enthusiasm with which you began may fizzle out ignominiously. Suppose, for instance, you suddenly thought how nice it would be to be one of the winners at the Olympic Games.[3] No doubt it would be. But remember that before you could even enter your name as competitor, you would have to train, and that means strict discipline, strict diet, no sweets, going to bed and getting up early, fine or wet, warm or cold ; not drinking cold water ; only drink-

[1] Cp. Fragment xviii, p. 280.
[2] Textually the same as *Manual*, 29, pp. 297–299.
[3] See Book III, Ch. xxv, p. 194.

ing wine with your meals—in short, handing yourself over to your trainer just as completely as you would to your doctor if you were ill. Then, at the actual Games, you might very well meet with some accident ; you might, for example, fracture your wrist or ankle, and anyhow you would inevitably swallow quantities of sand as you wrestled, and that is always disagreeable ; and if you happened to commit a foul you would be punished for it with a whipping. And at the end of it all you might lose your match ! Well, if you are prepared for all this, by all means go in for it ; but don't start and then give up half-way. That is what children do ; at one moment they play at athletes, at another at gladiators, then they blow their trumpets, and then act something that has struck their fancy. And some of you do much the same—successively you are athletes, gladiators, philosophers, law students, but all of them half-heartedly. Like monkeys you mimic everything you see, are always attracted by the latest novelty, and familiar things bore you.

Similarly, the seeing and hearing of a philosopher such as Euphrates might well inspire any one to want to be a philosopher. But before embarking on such a career, consider what it would involve to become one and whether you have the ability and pertinacity to do it. It is not every one whose aptitudes lie that way. (Natural abilities vary. To become a wrestler you must have natural aptitude as well as strong shoulders, thighs and legs.) You would have to behave very differently from the way you do now ; you would have to eat differently, drink differently, cease giving way to irritation and anger ; you would have to keep vigils, work hard, master carnal desires, lose the

affection of your family, become the object of derision to slaves, be laughed to scorn by all you meet, in everything—whether in office, dignity or at law—always be the loser. If after careful reflection you decide that the game is worth the candle, and that the attainment of peace and freedom is worth the price I have named, go ahead and study to become a philosopher. But if not, do not attempt it. Above all, do not behave like a child and be at one moment a philosopher, at another a tax collector, then a lawyer, and then a civil servant. You cannot be all of them at once—they don't accord. You must be either a good man or a bad one; you must either try to improve your governing principle by learning how to control your sense-perceptions, or concentrate on worldly matters which lie outside the ambit of your moral purpose. In a word, you must either be a philosopher or not be one.

xvi

Put a live coal alongside a dead one and either the live one will kindle the dead one or it will itself be extinguished. Similarly, if you frequent the society of one particular person, be it for pleasure in his conversation, as a boon companion, or for any other reason, either you will take colour from him or he from you. This being so, we philosophers should be very careful whose society we frequent. He who brushes up against a chimney-sweep is apt to get smudged with soot. Supposing your friend is not a philosopher and that his whole conversation is about gladiators or horses or sport or mere gossip—'So-and-so is one of the best!' 'That was a little bit of all right!' 'Bad egg!'—or, worse still, ill-natured malicious scandalous

gossip—what are you going to do about it? You know how a musician by merely fingering his harp strings can tell which ones are out of tune and can put them right? Can you instantaneously detect the faults of your friends and set them right? You know how Socrates convinced everybody he conversed with? Can you do the same? I doubt it; in fact, I think your non-philosophic friends would be much more likely to convince you.

Now, why should I think that? I will tell you. Rubbish as it is they chatter, it is at least in a way based on the judgements of their minds, whereas all your fine talk comes merely from your lips. Your talk about virtue is flabby and dead, and to listen to it makes me feel sick. And as judgements of the mind can only be upset by better judgements and yours are not as good as theirs, it is fairly clear that it is they who will talk you over, not you them. And so, until your philosophy has rooted itself a little more deeply in your fibres and you can therefore feel reasonably sure of yourself, I advise you not to risk having arguments with the profane; otherwise the notes on philosophy you make at my lectures will melt out of your minds as quickly as the wax tablets you write them on melt in the sunshine. Keep your philosophy in the shade, then, like you keep your tablets, so long as it is soft like wax.

This is the reason philosophers bid us dwell for preference in some foreign land. They know how when we are at home we are handicapped in the endeavour to form new and better habits by the distractions of our old ones and by the sneers of our friends and relatives. 'Look at him aping the philosopher,' they cry; 'who'd ever have thought it of

him?'[1] This is why, too, so many doctors send patients suffering from chronic disorders abroad for change of scene and climate so as to acquire new habits of health. And both philosophers and doctors are right. You, too, who are my pupils, should try and acquire new ideas and habits and implant them firmly in your natures by constant practice. Unfortunately you don't go the right way about it. When you leave my lecture room, where do you go? To a show, a fight between gladiators, some gymnasium or a circus. And then you come back here; and then back again once more to them. And all the time you remain exactly the same persons that you were at the start. And so you get no new and better habits, and you make no attempt at self-examination[2] by asking yourselves: 'How do I deal with my sense-perceptions—in conformity with Nature or not? What is my reaction to them—a right or a wrong one? Do I steadfastly ignore all those things that lie outside the ambit of my moral purpose?' If not, well, the sooner you do, and the more you avoid the profane, the better it will be for you!

xvii

Epictetus: If when you feel inclined to grumble at the dispensations of Providence you would only reflect for a few moments, you would realize that they are in strict accord with reason. Does it at first view appear to you that the bad man is better off than the good?

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 22, p. 294.

[2] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxvi, p. 34; Book III, Ch. xii, p. 146, and xiv (*c*), p. 149.

In what respect is he better off? Because he has more money? Naturally he has more—but to get it he has to become a shameless sycophant and lie awake scheming a'nights. But he is not richer than you in qualities such as faithfulness and consideration for others.

A man I know resented Philostorgus' 'luck' (as he called it) in having been able to persuade Sura to let him keep him. 'Do you want Sura for yourself?' I said. 'Good heavens, no!' he replied, deeply shocked at the suggestion. 'Then why', I asked him, 'do you object to Philostorgus getting what he pays for? Why do you call him lucky merely because he can buy his desire—a proceeding which is abhorrent to you?' Providence, I told him, rightly gives the best things to the best men and had given him qualities such as faithfulness and consideration for others that Philostorgus lacks; so he was the better off of the two and had nothing to complain about.

It is a law of Nature that the superior, because it is superior, shall always prevail over the inferior.[1] I want you all to remember this truth.

Student: But my wife treats me badly.

Epictetus: Is that all?

Student: Yes.

Second Student: And my father is as mean as they're made.

Epictetus: Is that all?

Second Student: Yes.

Epictetus: I have no fault to find with these statements of fact so long as you don't embellish them by adding, even mentally, that such things are evil. For that, of course, would be untrue. Nor is poverty an

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173.

evil. It is evil, however, to regard poverty as an evil, and so long as you do you will never be contented.

xviii

Never allow yourself to be upset by what is popularly termed ' bad news ',[1] for ' news ' never falls within the ambit of your moral purpose. Could any one bring you ' news ' that one of your inclinations is evil? That would be bad news indeed, were such a thing possible. But to hear that some one is dead or has slandered you, or that your father is taking steps to disinherit you, or that you have been convicted on a charge of blasphemy, cannot affect *you*. Consider: if your father disinherits you unjustly he is injuring, in the first place, not you but your property (which lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose), and secondly, himself—for he is not acting as an affectionate and patient parent should act. Do not, however, revile him for it; he is rather to be pitied, for one error is apt to lead to others. On the other hand, you are certainly entitled, indeed it is your duty, to defend yourself; only do so quietly, respectfully and dispassionately, otherwise you will injure yourself by not acting as a straightforward and dutiful son should do. Again: if you are convicted on some charge, remember that a judge runs quite as great a risk as the prisoner at the bar.[2] His decisions, if wrong, injure himself, not you. All you have to do is to put up a proper defence. If he condemns you unjustly, I am sorry for him. His judges condemned Socrates—poor devils!

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxiv, p. 183.
[2] Cp. Book II, Ch. v, p. 51.

xix

The man who is not a philosopher says : ' Alas, for my child, my brother, or my father ! ' But you would find it difficult to get a philosopher to say ' Alas ! ' at all ; and if he did he would assuredly add . . . ' for myself '. For nothing that lies outside the ambit of the moral purpose can hamper or injure it ; nothing can hamper or injure it but itself. If then when we err we are careful to blame nobody or nothing but ourselves, and remember that if our peace of mind is upset it is due to some false judgement of our minds, we shall most assuredly be making progress. Unfortunately that is just what we don't do. Why, even while we were still children, if we happened to be wandering along gaping vacantly and bumped into a stone, our nurses used to blame the stone and not us, as if they expected it to get out of our way ! And when we clamoured for refreshment immediately after a swim, didn't our servant scold the cook instead of bidding us be patient ? The result is that now that we are grown up we still only too often behave like children.

xx

Epictetus : The almost universal consensus of opinion is that ' good ' and ' evil ' lie not in material things but in ourselves. One cannot term statements such as ' it is day ' good, ' it is night ' evil, ' three is the same as four ' very evil. But we can say that knowledge is good and error evil. We can also say that to know that the false is false, is good ; but we must not say that health is good or sickness evil, but only

that health if properly employed is good, otherwise that it is evil.

Student: You mean that we may benefit even from being ill?

Epictetus: I mean that we may benefit even by dying. Do you not remember how Menoeceus sacrificed his life to save Thebes, so proving himself a true patriot and a man of the highest principle and honour? If he had saved his life instead, he would have been a traitor and a coward. So obviously he got something out of his self-sacrifice. And we may also lose by living, as Pheres,[1] father of Admetus, did. And yet, though he would not die for his son but preferred a few more years of ignoble life, he had to die eventually. I entreat you to give up caring for and enslaving yourselves to worldly possessions, and not only to them but to those who can procure them for you.

Student: Can't we get any benefit at all from worldly possessions?

Epictetus: Indeed we can—from all of them, even from those that are definitely evil in their nature.

Student: What benefit can I derive from a man who blackguards me?

Epictetus: The same kind of benefit as a boxer gets from his sparring partner. A boxer wouldn't get very far without sparring partners, would he? The man who blackguards you acts as a sort of sparring partner to you. He exercises your patience, your tolerance, your courtesy. A bad neighbour or a bad father will exercise your forbearance and your reasonableness. You know that it is said that the magic wand (or *caduceus*) of Hermes will turn whatever it touches into gold. I have a *caduceus* too. Bring me whatever you

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. xxii, p. 101.

like, no matter how evil it be—an impending sentence of death, abuse, poverty, sickness, death itself—and I will turn them into good [1] and make them blessed, majestic, desirable and sources of happiness.

Student: How would you make sickness desirable?

Epictetus: Sickness enables us to display courage and patience,[2] so that we neither cringe to our doctors nor pray for death.

Student: And death?

Epictetus: Death is a glorious opportunity to show how a man who has tried to live in harmony with Nature can die. I wish you would get out of the way of saying: 'Take care you don't fall ill—it would be terrible if you did!' It is as silly to say that as to say: 'Take care you never think that three is the same as four—it would be terrible if you did!' If you would only look at things in the right way you would see that all you call 'terrible'—poverty, for instance, sickness, failure to obtain public employment, and so forth—may really be extremely helpful to you. Unfortunately you do not take these truths home with you but leave them here in the class-room, and the moment you get outside you begin 'straffing' your lackey, criticizing your neighbours, and telling any one who smiles at you exactly what you think of them. Personally, I am very grateful when any one, even one of my pupils (yes, I am referring to you, Lesbius!), laughs at me, and daily reminds me that I know nothing!

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. x, p. 258; *Manual*, 18, p. 293, and 32, p. 302.

[2] See Book III, Ch. x, p. 143, Ch. xxii, p. 169.

xxi

If you bolt your food, you will be unable to digest it and it will probably make you sick. Do you think you can bolt the principles of philosophy any more successfully than you can your food ? Well, you can't ! You must digest them properly, and when you have there will be a change in your governing principle that will be apparent in your actions, so that you will eat and drink, dress, marry, beget children, be a decent citizen, bear with abuse, and be tolerant to an unreasonable brother, father, son, neighbour or fellow-traveller, as a man should. When you are in that happy position, then, and not till then, will you be qualified to become a lecturer on philosophy.

To be able to expound the doctrines of Chrysippus, even if you can do so better than any one else in the world, is a perfectly futile accomplishment. That is not what young men leave their homes and their parents for—to listen to you splitting hairs over some dialectical quibble. What they want is that when they have returned home they shall have learned to be broad-minded, to be ready to help others, to have their minds at ease so that throughout the journey of life they may be able to face calmly and creditably whatever may hap to them. You can't teach them this if you haven't learned it first yourself. Lecturing to young men is a serious matter and should only be undertaken by a man of a certain age who has lived a good life and who takes God as his guide. He must be a wise man, and yet mere wisdom is not enough. He needs, too, a certain aptitude and flair, he even needs a certain physique,[1] and above all he needs to

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 172.

be convinced that he has a ' call ', just as Socrates was called by God to cross-examine, Diogenes to rebuke, and Zeno to teach his fellow-men. A man doesn't set up as a doctor merely on the strength of having a few drugs in his possession ; he must also have a knowledge of their use. If you set up as a lecturer on philosophy to young men without the qualifications I have just mentioned, I warn you that you will be trifling with a very serious matter, and that you will bring disgrace both on yourself and on philosophy.

xxii

One of his acquaintances once told Epictetus that he was thinking of becoming a Cynic, and asked him to describe the sort of man he thought a Cynic ought to be. And Epictetus answered him and said :

Epictetus : Let us consider this question at leisure. But, first of all, let me emphasize one thing. Any one who embarks on so serious an undertaking as to become a Cynic without God's blessing is abhorrent to Him and a public disgrace. Now you know that every well-appointed establishment has a major-domo in charge of it. But it is not every one who has sufficient ability to be an efficient major-domo ; and if by chance some one is appointed who proves to be inefficient he is soon sacked. Similarly, God assigns to each and everything his and its place in His Universe. ' You are the sun,' He says to one, ' and to you I give power as you circle the heavens to regulate the year and the seasons, to make grow the kindly fruits of the earth, to raise and calm the winds, and to give genial warmth to men. Go forth on your rounds, and give birth to

all things great and small.' '*You* are a calf,' He says to another, ' and when you encounter a lion remember to act according to your nature—act contrariwise at your peril ! ' And to a third : ' *You* are a bull ; you are strong and it is your nature to fight ; act according to your nature.' And to others : ' *You* could lead an army against Ilium ; do so ; your name shall be Agamemnon.' ' *You* could stand up in single combat with Hector ; do so ; you shall be Achilles.' But if Thersites had proposed himself as commander in place of Agamemnon, either God would not have appointed him, or if He had, he would have ended by completely disgracing himself. Now, what does God say to *you* ? . . . So the first question you have to ask yourself, is : ' Would God think me worthy of so high a calling as that of a Cynic, and have I it in me to follow it ? '

Now, I wonder what your idea is of what it really entails to be a Cynic ?

Would-be Cynic : I should have to wear a coarse cloak and sleep on a hard bed (both of which things I do already) ; carry a wallet and a staff, walk about begging, and reprove any persons I came across who were dolled up and over-dressed.

Epictetus : Well, if that is your idea of a Cynic's life, I can only assure you that it is very wide of the mark and advise you to abandon all intention of trying to become one.

What, in reality, you would have to do is this : You would have to make a complete alteration in your present mode of life ; cease grumbling at both God and man ; suppress all desire ; concentrate your dislikes exclusively against those things that your governing principle tells you are evil ; never lose your temper, nor take offence, nor feel envy or pity. No

pretty girl, no bubble reputation, no boy friend, no dainty food must attract you. Further, whereas ordinary men may screen their deeds in the shelter of their houses, or under cover of darkness, or ensure their privacy by instructing their servants to say they are ' not at home ' or too busy to receive callers, the Cynic has nothing to screen him but his integrity. His integrity is for him house, door, door-keeper and darkness. Indeed, if he merely wish in his heart to conceal something, he ceases automatically to be a Cynic (the free man, the out-of-doors man), for his wish to conceal something springs from fear of something, and no man with fear in his heart can possibly continue single-heartedly to supervise the conduct of his fellow-men.

You must, then, first of all make your governing principle pure, and resolve as follows : ' The rest of my life I will devote to the training and development of my mind, working on it like a carpenter works on wood and a shoemaker on leather, for my aim is to make a proper use of my sense-perceptions. As for my body, neither it nor any part of it is anything to me ; as for exile, who can exile me from the Universe ? Wherever I go there will be sun, moon, stars, visions, signs from and communion with God ; while as for death, let it come to me when it will.'

But the real Cynic will not be content even with this. He must also have the certitude that he is a messenger from God to point out to men their errors in regard to ' good ' and ' evil ' and how they seek them where they are not, and also (to use the expression of Diogenes when he was led before Philip of Macedonia after the battle of Chaeroneia) that he is ' a scout '.[1] The Cynic is in sober truth a scout, and his duty is

[1] See Book I, Ch. xxiv, p. 28. Battle of Chaeroneia, 447 B.C.

to find out what things help, what are impediments to men, and he must do his scouting conscientiously, and on his return make a faithful and unbiased report. He must, therefore, if occasion require, be able to lift up his voice and speak as Socrates used to do : ' My poor friends, do you realize what you are doing and whither you are drifting ? You are indeed stumbling about like blind men, and you have wandered off the true path. You are looking for peace and happiness where they are not.[1] For they are not in the body, as you may realize if you think of Myron and Ophellius,[2] nor are they in riches—think of Croesus and our present-day millionaires and the wretched lives they lead ; nor are they in the holding of public office, for if they were, would not they who have been twice and thrice elected consuls be happy men ? But as we know quite well, they aren't. Be not deceived by the outward appearances of happiness ; listen rather to what such men say about themselves. Hark to their repinings and regrets, and how they complain that their lot is much the worse *because of* their consulships, their dignities and their position. Nor are they in royalty, or Nero and Sardanapalus would have been happy, which they certainly weren't. Why, not even Agamemnon was a happy man, though he was probably far happier than either of the other two. Remember what Homer says about him :

Then rent he many a lock from out his head.[3]

And Agamemnon himself spoke of ' wandering ' and of how he was ' tossed to and fro ' and of how his heart was ' leaping from his bosom '. Your troubles, my

[1] See Book II, Ch. xvi, p. 80. [2] Unknown.
[3] *Iliad*, X, 15.

poor friends, have nothing to do with your material possessions or your bodies ; they result from the mistake you have made in neglecting and so subverting the governing principle within you, thanks to which you are able freely to express likes and dislikes, avoid errors, choose and refuse. From which it follows that your governing principle is still in ignorance of the true nature of ' good ' and ' evil ', and of what properly belongs to it and what doesn't. As a result, whenever anything goes wrong about something with which it is in no wise concerned, you immediately start talking like Agamemnon, who cried : ' Alas ! my poor Greeks are in dire peril ; they will assuredly perish, slain by the Trojans ! ', forgetting that even if the Trojans did not slay them they would have had to die anyway—a little later, perhaps, but some time. And if death be an evil, what did it matter when ? After all, what is death but the divorce of soul and body ? Besides, if all the Greeks had perished, could not Agamemnon have died too ? Why should not Kings be unfortunate the same as common men are ? Rightly was Agamemnon styled ' Shepherd of his folk ', for he whimpered over his men just like shepherds whimper when wolves carry off some of their flocks. But why did Agamemnon go to Troy at all ? Was it because he wanted to perfect his governing principle and learn how better to exercise his likes and dislikes, avoid errors and choose and refuse more rationally ? Oh dear no ! But to try and recover a frail adulterous woman just because she happened to be his brother's wife ! There's a good reason for you ! One would have thought he would have been only too glad to have got rid of her ! And another of his ' reasons ' was that he and the rest of the Greeks were afraid the

Trojans would look down upon them ! Such a reason would be comic were it not tragic. For consider : the Trojans were either wise men or fools. No one has any business to war with wise men, and it is worth nobody's while to war with fools.

But if ' good ' does not lie in any of these things—the body, riches, public office or royalty—in what does it lie ? It lies where I fear you have never suspected and where if you had suspected you would not have wanted to look for it, for if you had really wanted to find it I am sure you would have found it—within yourselves. Turn your thoughts inwards for a few moments and reflect on your instincts. What sort of a thing do you imagine ' good ' to be ? Surely something naturally great, precious and helpful such as peace and freedom. Now, where can we find peace and freedom ? It must be in something that is itself free. Not in the body, for that is slave to disease, despots, fire, sword and anything stronger than itself. Besides, how can anything like the body, which is naturally lifeless, being composed of earth and clay, be great and precious ? Think again : what have we that is naturally free ? Surely it is our disdained governing principle—the one thing we hold cheap and neglect ! Who can compel us to assent to what appears to be false, or to dissent from what seems to be true ; to like, to dislike, avoid, choose, refuse, prepare or set before oneself as an aim and end, unless our governing principle first decides that it is right, fitting and profitable for us ? No one, not even God Himself. So you see there *is* something within us that is naturally free, viz. our governing principle, and it is this that we must develop, and it is in it that we must seek our good.

And if you ask how a man with no possessions, who is naked, and without a slave or even a country to call his own, can live in peace, the Cynic will reply : 'Look at *me*, for God has sent me to you as a witness that all these things are indeed possible. For I have no home, country, property nor slave ; [1] I sleep on the bare earth ; I have no wife or children ; I have no pretentious official residence, but only earth and sky and one rough cloak. Yet what do I lack ? I am not subject to pain and fear. I am absolutely free. When has any one of you ever seen me fail to get what I want or avoid what I don't want ? When have I ever grumbled at either God or man ? When have I ever blamed any one ? Do you ever see me with a gloomy countenance ? And how do I face those before whom you stand in awe and trembling ? Do not I face them as I would face my slave if I had one ? And do not they when they see me before them feel that they are beholding their lord and master ? '

Such is the kind of talk that befits a Cynic, such his character, such his scheme of life. You must admit it is very different from your original idea that all that was necessary (to become a Cynic) was to have a wallet and staff, to beg, and on every possible occasion to find fault with the people you met—a most tactless thing to do, I may observe. You must realize that you would not be, as it were, entering some village sports, but an Olympic contest ; and, as you know, at the Olympic Games a competitor has to go through a very severe training indeed—he has to endure thirst and scorching heat, he has to swallow quantities of sand while wrestling, and then if he loses his tie he is disgraced in the sight of the whole

[1] See Book IV, Ch. viii, p. 253, and Ch. xi, p. 265.

civilized world, and if he fouls some one or is adjudged not to have done his best, he is flogged into the bargain.

So think the matter over very carefully, and study yourself and your capabilities, and ask God for guidance, and do not attempt such a stupendous undertaking without His blessing. For if God bids you do so, you may be sure that He either destines you to become great or to suffer many stripes. For this is one of the pleasant strands woven into the pattern of the Cynic's life ; he must needs be flogged like an ass and all the time he must love the men who flog him as though he were their father or brother. I rather imagine that if *you* were sentenced to the lash you would promptly appeal against it to the Proconsul. But it would never occur to a Cynic to appeal. What are Proconsuls or even Caesar himself to one who serves no one save Him who sent him into the world ? He appeals to no one but to God, for he knows that whatever he is called upon to bear is part of his training ordained by God. When Herakles was performing his labours for Eurystheus he didn't consider himself to be unhappy, and he used to do without the slightest demur everything Eurystheus ordered him to. No Cynic could possibly complain at any trials imposed upon him by God by way of training, for if he did he would not be a Cynic or worthy to bear the staff of Diogenes. Hear the words of Diogenes to the passers-by as he lay sick of a fever : ' Have you no sense ? ' he cried ; ' you don't mind going all the way to Olympia to see some athletes wrestle with one another, but you won't spare a few minutes to watch how a man can wrestle with a fever ! '

The ordinary man with a fever reproaches God

(who made him) for ill-using him ; but Diogenes was glad to be ill, and anxious that others should see his gladness. *He* knew he had nothing to reproach God with ; on the contrary, he was thankful for the opportunity of proving the efficacy of his training.[1] You know what Diogenes said about poverty, hardships and death, and you know how he said that even the Great King of Persia was not so happy as he, for the Great King was subject to shocks, grief, fear, thwarted desires, getting what he would fain have avoided, envies and jealousies, and where these are there can be no happiness. When the judgements of a man's mind are faulty, all these passions must necessarily possess him.

Would-be Cynic : Could a Cynic who has fallen ill accept an invitation from a friend to stay with him so as to get proper medical attention and nursing ?

Epictetus : But what friend could a Cynic have unless indeed it were another Cynic ? No one but another Cynic would be worthy to be his friend. Diogenes had two friends, Antisthenes, his Master, and Crates, his disciple ; both were Cynics, and both were worthy of him and of each other. You must not think that just because some one would like to be his friend a Cynic will accept him as such. It is essential that such a one should be willing and able to share the Cynic's staff and wallet, his way of life, and his abode—which may be only such shelter as a dunghill affords against the north wind.

Would-be Cynic : Would a Cynic think it right to marry and beget children ?

Epictetus : In an ideal community consisting ex-

[1] See Book III, Ch. x, p. 143, and Ch. xx, p. 159.

clusively of wise men (if we can imagine such a thing) there could be no objection to his doing so, for his wife, his father-in-law and all his relatives would be Cynics too, and his children would be brought up as Cynics. But in the ordinary human community as we know it, it would probably be better for him to be free from such distractions so as to be able to devote himself solely to God's service. For if he were to be bound by family relationships and obligations which no honourable man could avoid, how could he be free to go about among men as God's scout and messenger? All married men, including Cynics, have to look after their wives and their wives' families, and their own families too. They have to boil the water for baby's bath, bathe baby, provide wool, oil, a cot, cups and what not for the wife; see that the other children get off regularly and in good time every morning to school with their lesson books and writing materials, and make their little beds for them ready for when they come home at night. Children, you know, have to be looked after and trained—they are not born little Cynics. (And if he didn't do all this he would be well advised to expose them at birth rather than destroy them later by neglect.) Tied down by such duties of everyday life, what time would he have left for his duties as Cynic? How could he continue to oversee the welfare of his fellow-men, visit and prescribe for them as a doctor does his patients?

Would-be Cynic: But Crates was married.

Epictetus: True; but his was a special case, and you must not draw general inferences from special cases.

Would-be Cynic: If then Cynics are not to marry

and beget children, where is the next generation coming from ?

Epictetus : Now do be sensible : which, do you think, does mankind the greater service—he who brings into the world two or three ugly bratlings, or he who to the best of his ability supervises his fellow-men observing how they spend or mis-spend their lives ? Who did the Thebans the greater service, those who merely left children behind them, or Epaminondas who left none ? Who contributed more to the common weal, Priam who left fifty sons, all rogues, or Homer ? If in order to give their best a great soldier and a great poet found it necessary to forgo marriage, how much more will a Cynic find it necessary ? All mankind are the Cynic's children ; the men are his sons, the women his daughters. That at any rate is how he regards them, and it is in that spirit, as a father, a brother, and as servant of God who is Father of us all, and in no spirit of impertinent meddlesomeness, that he supervises them and strives for their welfare.

Would-be Cynic : And what about politics ?

Epictetus : Isn't he engaged in politics—in the noblest form of politics ? There are any number of people who are qualified to busy themselves over minor matters such as finance, peace, and war, but how many can deal profitably with such supremely important topics as happiness and unhappiness, success and failure, slavery and freedom ?

Would-be Cynic : What about his holding public offices ?

Epictetus : He could hardly hold any more important public office than the one he holds already, could he ? . . . But in addition to what I have

already said, I should add this : a Cynic must have a certain presence and physique,[1] for if he be infirm of body—if he be, for instance, thin and pale like a consumptive—he will not have so much influence. Further, it is not sufficient to prove to the unregenerate that nobility of soul can dispense with all those material possessions on which they set such store ; he must also prove by his bodily fitness that the plain simple life in the open air is good for the body's health. Thus, both his way of life and the appearance of his body will combine to convince his hearers of the truth of his assertions. Diogenes used to go about with pink cheeks, and the perfect health of his body was manifest to all. A Cynic whose appearance excited pity or disgust would be regarded merely as a beggar and as such be avoided. So a Cynic should be particularly careful always to look and to be clean. He should make his poverty attractive. Again, a Cynic must possess a great natural charm, wit, and readiness of repartee. Remember how when somebody said to him : 'You don't believe in God, do you ?', Diogenes replied : 'I believe in Him sufficiently to believe that He dislikes people like you !' And when Alexander the Great stood over him as he lay asleep and woke him by quoting Homer : 'To sleep all night through beseemeth not one who is a counsellor . . .,' Diogenes, still half asleep, completed the quotation, '. . . to whom peoples are entrusted and so many cares belong.'[2]

But above all, the Cynic's governing principle must be purer than the sun. He would not be a Cynic if, while he reproved his fellow-men for their sins, he himself gave way to sin. The Kings of this world

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxi, p. 160. [2] *Iliad*, II, lines 24, 25.

are able to warn and punish evildoers by their armed servants even though they themselves may be worse sinners than those they punish. The Cynic has no armed servants ; he has only his conscience to rely on. It is this that gives him courage to speak his mind freely to his brethren and children and kinsfolk, this and the knowledge that he has watched over them, toiled for them, and that all his thoughts are those of a servant and friend of the Gods, being as he is, one who shares in the rule of Zeus, and who constantly remembers those verses beginning :

Lead Thou me on, O Zeus and Destiny ![1]

and the words of Socrates : 'As God will, so be it !'[2]

Finally, the Cynic must have such a spirit of patient endurance that he appears to be, like a stone,[3] without feeling, so that if any one abuses or assaults or insults him he will not have the satisfaction of seeing him wince. He takes no thought for defending his body against assault, for he knows that the inferior, because it is inferior, must needs be overcome by the superior,[4] and that therefore his single body is physically inferior to, i.e. weaker than, the combined strength of a crowd. So he never attempts to combat the resolution of the crowd, but cheerfully surrenders to it all those things that do not belong to him, viz. material possessions that are not under his control. But in regard to all those things that lie within the ambit of his moral

[1] Also quoted : Book II, Ch. xxiii, p. 109 ; Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 231 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 310.

[2] Also quoted : Book I, Ch. iv, p. 5, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book VI, Ch. iv, p. 228 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 311.

[3] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxv, p. 32.

[4] Book III, Ch. xvii, p. 155.

purpose and over which he has control, and in respect of his sense-perceptions, he has so many eyes that you would say Argus[1] himself was blind compared to him. Where such matters as rash assent, reckless choice, futile likes and dislikes, incompleted aims, fault-findings, self-disparagement or envy are concerned, he is full of attention and energy; but in regard to other things—his body, material possessions, offices and honours, he is simply not interested in them, and so far as they are concerned he, as it were, 'lies flat on his back and snores like a porter'. Any one can steal them who likes, but he knows that no one can steal or 'boss' his moral purpose. And if any one is silly enough to try and influence him by material considerations, he laughs at them and says: 'Pooh! you may scare children with bogeys, but you can't scare *me*!'[2]

So now I have answered your question and told you the sort of man I conceive a Cynic to be; and I sincerely advise you not to decide in a hurry to try to become one. Consider first what your qualifications are; and remember what Hector said to Andromache:

> Go in and superintend the house's work—
> The loom and spindle; fighting is for men
> And of men most for me . . .[3]

Hector knew what he could do, and what she couldn't.

[1] Who had a hundred eyes, only two of which slept at a time.
[2] Cp. Book II, Ch. i, p. 44.
[3] *Iliad*, VI, 492. See also *Odyssey*, I, 356.

xxiii

Advice to a fashionable lecturer

The first thing we all have to do in life is to decide what kind of men we want to be, and then shape our course accordingly. That is pretty obvious when you come to think of it, isn't it? It is only what athletes, for instance, do; they have to decide first of all what kind of athletes they want to be—long-distance runners, sprinters, boxers or wrestlers, for all of which naturally the training and diet differ. Similarly, to become carpenters or blacksmiths, people have to undergo different forms of training. Secondly, all forms of training must be systematic or they will be useless. As regards our training so that we may become decent human beings, that must be both general and individual; general, to learn to act as men, i.e. neither stupidly like sheep nor destructively like wild beasts; individual, to learn to behave as one of one's particular occupation or profession should —the harpist as a harpist, the carpenter as a carpenter, the philosopher as a philosopher, the lecturer as a lecturer—and to preserve one's moral purpose untainted.

Now, you are a lecturer, and I want you first of all to ask yourself what your real object in lecturing is—is it to do good to your hearers or simply to win applause? You should of course be able to say sincerely that plaudits mean nothing to you, any more than they should to a musician *qua* musician or to a geometrician *qua* geometrician. But if your object be simply to do good, I want you to realize that you will never succeed unless you know what 'good' means,

any more than men ignorant of carpentry and boot-making could teach others to make tables or boots.

Do you in fact know what 'good' means? Examine the judgements of your mind. Are your likes and dislikes such that you always get what you want and avoid what you do not want? Now, be honest about it! Am I not right in saying that the other day when your lecture was received in stony silence you walked home feeling very dejected, but when, a few days later, you got several rounds of applause, you strutted up and down afterwards asking people what they thought of it, and how they liked this and that passage—particularly the one about Pan and the Nymphs—and preened yourself each time somebody said 'Marvellous!' or 'Superb!'? You did, didn't you? Yes! and that is what you call bringing your likes and dislikes into harmony with Nature! Come, come! you must tell that story to the horse-marines! And didn't you—not so very long ago—tell a certain gifted young Senator that you only hoped your children would grow up like him? Now, why did you tell him that particular lie? I'll tell you: because you want to get something out of him. But surely you realize that people whom you butter up like this see your little game and despise you for it? When a man who knows perfectly well that he has never had a noble thought or done a kind action is solemnly told by a professed philosopher that he is misunderstood and unappreciated, he naturally says to himself: 'What does this fellow want?' Surely you don't expect me to believe that you weren't trying to flatter him at all and that you really meant what you said? What glimmerings of unsuspected goodness, then, did you see in him? You have cer-

tainly had ample opportunity for observation, for he has been attending your lectures regularly for some time past. Tell me : has he come to a full realization of himself and of his natural capacities ? Does he realize the evil case he is in ? Is he now humble instead of being conceited ? Is he anxious to learn the proper way of life ? Are you sure that he wants to learn something more than the mere art of elocution ? I press these questions upon you because it so happens that I overheard a few remarks of his the other day and they had nothing to do with matters such as respect or faithfulness or peace, but were about artistic style—in point of fact he was comparing yours favourably with that of another fashionable lecturer, your friend and rival—Dio. I should very much like to have the opportunity of putting a few questions to your Senator friend about faithfulness and kindred subjects so as to find out how much you have taught him. Not very much, I fear. I fear it because I see that you are yourself in evil case, seeking as you do the applause of men and counting how many people come to your lectures. I have heard you talking something like this : ' I had a much larger audience to-day—five hundred at least '—(Why didn't you say a thousand and have done with it ?)—' Dio never had so many—and how quick they were on the uptake ! ' I don't deny that you are an excellent lecturer, but if your real object is to do good to your hearers, it is no use lecturing to them on literary or artistic style or technicalities. Your text should be something like those words of Socrates : ' Anytus and Meletus may kill me, but they cannot harm me,' [1] or,

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book II, Ch. ii, p. 46 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 311.

'I am as I always have been, a man who will only listen to the voice of reason.' [1] But I am afraid you are not likely to take any sayings of Socrates as texts for your lectures, for you are a different type of man from him. Who ever heard Socrates assert that he knew anything or that he taught anything? On the contrary, people used to ask him to introduce them to *real* philosophers who gave lessons, and he used to do so willingly. The very last thing he would have done would have been to do what you do—invite people to come and hear him lecture.

Why should I come and hear you lecture? I know already that you are an able speaker. I give you full marks for that. But what is the use of even the most ingeniously constructed and eloquently delivered discourse if it teach its hearers nothing worth knowing? Some, I believe, even pride themselves on being so clever that no one can understand what they mean! But what did Socrates say about that sort of thing? 'It is not consonant with either my age or my dignity to try and be clever *like some lad*.' [2]

Should a philosopher invite people to hear him lecture? If his lecture were worth hearing, people would come without being invited. Do doctors ask people to come and be cured? As a matter of fact, I believe doctors in Rome nowadays *do* advertise, but in my time they waited to be called in. Supposing a philosopher were to advertise, how would he word his advertisement? Something like this, I suppose: 'Come and hear what a bad way you are in; how you busy yourselves with everything except what you should; how you know nothing of either "good" or "evil"; in short, how wretched and miserable you

[1] Plato, *Crito*, 46. [2] *Ibid.*, *Apology*, 17.

are ! ' Not very attractive, is it ? And yet if his lecture failed to make his audience realize that such is indeed their plight, it would be a rotten lecture. Rufus used to say : ' If any one congratulates me on my lecture, I know I have done him no good.' As a matter of fact, after one of Rufus' lectures, we all used to feel that he must have had some private information about our individual shortcomings, so vividly did he bring before each man's eyes his own particular weaknesses.

The lecture room of a philosopher is, or should be, a hospital. Men come to it for treatment of their several maladies, and treatment involves pain. I don't want you to go out of here just the same man as you were when you came in. I could win your plaudits by a string of fine words, but I don't want them. Did Socrates, Zeno and Cleanthes cure men's souls with pretty speeches ?

But there is, I agree, a right and a wrong style for exhortation, just as there is a right and a wrong style for refutation and instruction. The right style for exhortation is the ability to show clearly to all listeners the illogical inconsistencies of their thoughts and actions, as a result of which they run after everything except what they really want. For their real wants are those things that conduce to happiness, but they keep looking for them in the wrong place. And they will not be helped to look for them in the right place by your advertising a Grand Lecture with a thousand seats for sale, and by your donning the scarlet robes of a doctor of philosophy and declaiming from your rostrum a poetical account of—say, how Achilles died. That sort of thing merely brings discredit on true philosophy. It is not the right style

for exhortation ; it is the style of display. The right style for exhortation will be much reinforced if the lecturer is himself inspired by his audience. And he will be inspired if he feels that he is shaking them out of their self-complacency, and that they will go away discussing what he said, saying to one another : ' I never realized before the state I am in ; it is all most disturbing ; he brought it home vividly to me, and one thing is certain—I must amend my ways.' I wonder how often your hearers go away talking like that ? I am afraid the kind of thing one might expect to hear them saying as they troop out would be : ' Wasn't that a beautiful passage—the one about Xerxes, I mean ? '—' Oh, *I* preferred his description of the battle of Thermopylae.'

xxiv

Epictetus : Other peoples' errors and the misfortunes that result therefrom are their own affair, and it is they, not you, who have to bear the consequences. God, who watches over and protects us like a father, wishes men to enjoy peace and to be happy, and to help them to be so He has given them certain things —the knowledge of ' good ' and ' evil ' and their reasoning faculties and wills, putting them under their own unfettered control. Nothing else really belongs to us or is under our control.

Student : A friend of mine is very upset because I have gone away from home and left him.

Epictetus : Because he has made the mistake of thinking you belonged to him and were under his control. He should have remembered that any one may have to leave home or even die. So his grief is the penalty he has to pay for his mistake. And if

you are upset about leaving him, you are making the same mistake, and your upset is your penalty. No one can expect to enjoy his surroundings, friends and way of life for ever ; and when you lose one or other it is futile to distress yourself about it. Crows and ravens, which can fly away whenever they please and change their nests and even cross the seas, don't fret themselves for the place where they were hatched.

Student : But birds are not rational creatures and so don't suffer from unhappiness.

Epictetus : Then you think that God gave us the gift of reason in order that we may be miserable ! Men are not immortal, nor can you expect them to remain at home all their lives, rooted in their native soil like plants. If we shed tears just because a friend is going away, and give way to extravagant joy when he returns, we are behaving like children. Surely by this time you should be weaned and able to digest the teachings of philosophy—that this Universe is one homogeneous whole in which at times some things give place to others, some being resolved so that others may come into being ; that everything, both divine and human, is beneficent ; and that some we love must remain with us while others are separated from us, and that we should rejoice in those we still have and not grieve for those we have lost. Man is not only by nature high-minded and capable of disregarding everything that lies outside the ambit of his moral purpose, but he has also the power of migration whether for pleasure or business. Odysseus, you remember,

> Wandered far and wide through all the world
> Seeing the towns, searching the hearts of men.[1]

[1] *Odyssey*, I, 3, 4.

And before him Herakles travelled through the whole of the inhabited earth,

> Seeing all men, and the good and bad of them,[1]

clearing away the bad and replacing it by good. And he must have had innumerable friends in Thebes, Argos, Athens and in the other places he visited on his travels, especially as he begat many children wherever he went whom he never saw again. But though he abandoned them he knew they would not be orphans, for no human beings are ever orphans—they always have their Father, God, who cares for them. Herakles knew full well that God is the Father of men, and he always thought of Him as his own Father and called Him so, and in all that he did he looked to him. And so he was always happy wherever he was. But you can't be happy if you are always pining for the absent to be present. If you have everything that lies within the ambit of your moral purpose, and that is under your control, you will be happy and will want nothing more, just as a man who has eaten and drunk well is satisfied and needs no more food.

Student : But Odysseus pined and wept for Penelope.

Epictetus : So Homer says, and if he is correct, then Odysseus was unhappy, and no man who is unhappy can be a good man. But perhaps Homer was mistaken. If God does not make the citizens of His own Universe happy, then we must accuse Him of mismanaging His Universe—a blasphemous thought. To long for what is not possible—and it is impossible for one human being to be always with another—is

[1] *Odyssey*, XVII, 487.

foolish and wrong. It is a pitting of one's own wishes against the will of God.

Student: My mother is always unhappy when I am away from home.

Epictetus: Yes, because she has not learned the lesson I am trying to teach you. I do not mean, of course, that you should always follow your own whims regardless of her feelings. I only mean that she ought not to allow herself to want something that is not hers or under her control. You can master your own grief, for it is under your own control; you cannot cure your mother's grief, for that is not under your control. All you can do, or that you ought to do, is to avoid as far as possible giving her needless occasion for grief. You can do no more than that, lest peradventure you find yourself fighting against God and setting yourself up against Him in His administration of the Universe. And the penalty for such disobedience to Him would be paid by you yourself when you were racked by anxiety day and night and were frightened even to open your letters lest they should contain 'bad news'.[1] Letters from Rome, letters from Greece . . . if only they contain no 'bad news'! But how can anything bad for you happen in Rome or Greece if you are in Nicopolis? Isn't it enough for you to be miserable here without wanting to be miserable everywhere else, beyond the seas and even by letter?

Student: But if some of my friends at home should die, am I not to sorrow for them?

Epictetus: Are not all men mortal? Do you expect to reach old age yourself and not to see any you love die? As the years roll on your loved ones will die

[1] See Book III, Ch. xviii, p. 156.

one by one, some of sickness, others slain by pirates, in revolutions, of cold or heat, of poisons, of perils by land and sea, hurricanes, all manner of accidents, in exile or in high positions, on the field of battle. Are you going to work yourself up into a ferment at each of these happenings and let your happiness or unhappiness depend not on yourself but on the millions of chances and uncertainties of life? Is that what philosophy has taught you to do?

Life is a campaign. Like soldiers one man has to do sentry duty, another to go on a reconnaissance, a third go out to fight. They cannot all be doing the same job at the same time and in the same place. If every one grumbled at the orders of the Commanding Officer and neglected to carry out the duties assigned to him, what would become of the army? There would be no trenches dug, no barricades erected, no watch kept, no fighting done. Or, if you were a sailor, what ship's master do you think would tolerate your refusal to climb the rigging or take a spell at the wheel? You would soon get 'fired' as a nuisance and a bad example to your fellow-sailors. So, too, in life. Each man's life is a long and arduous campaign. You are, as it were, a soldier, and everything you do should be in obedience to your Commanding Officer's orders, which you should if possible try to anticipate. And remember that this Commanding Officer is far more important in every way than an ordinary Commanding Officer. He has given you an exacting and permanent post, and if you are to do your duty properly you will have but little time to spare for private affairs: most of it will be taken up with giving or obeying orders, special service, fighting or administering justice. But I know what

you want—you want to spend your whole life at home rooted in your native soil like a plant.

Student : It would be nice if I could.

Epictetus : Nice ! Lots of things are nice—soup is nice, pretty girls are nice. You talk like one of the Epicureans, and they are rogues. Your mouth may be full of quotations from Zeno and Socrates, but your beliefs and behaviour are those of a disciple of Epicurus. Fling such false beliefs far from you—they do not suit you. What is the sort of life that appeals to Epicureans ? To sleep when they want, and when they are weary of sleeping to yawn and get up and wash their faces ; then to write and read a little, talk a little, then have a little stroll with a bath to follow ; and then dinner, and so to bed again. Now tell me, you who profess to be followers of truth, of Socrates and Diogenes, tell me truthfully, is that the kind of life that appeals to you too ? If it is, why do you call yourselves Stoics ? You know that those who claim falsely to be Roman citizens are severely punished ; don't you think that those who claim falsely to be Stoics should be punished even more severely ? Perhaps you think you will escape punishment ? But you won't. You cannot escape the divine law which ordains that he who sins most shall bear the heaviest punishment. ' He who shall claim falsely to be what he is not shall be punished by becoming a wretched braggart, subject to sorrow, envy, pity and all those passions that are the enemies of peace !

So why go on regretting the old familiar peaceful haunts ? In a little while you will find the ones here will become equally familiar and just as peaceful . . . though I suppose that when you come to leave here you will start regretting these too !

Student: Do you think I ought to call on him?[1]

Epictetus: Why not—if you think you ought to for the sake of your country, your relatives or mankind in general? You don't mind calling to see your bootmaker when you want a new pair of boots, or a greengrocer when you want a lettuce, so why mind calling on a rich and influential man when you want something he can give you?

Student: But I don't have to defer to and flatter bootmakers and greengrocers.

Epictetus: You don't have to defer to or flatter your rich and influential friend either.

Student: I shan't get much out of him if I don't!

Epictetus: I am not suggesting that you should go in the hope of getting anything out of him, but because you ought to go.

Student: Then what's the good of my going?

Epictetus: Because by going you will be doing your duty. Besides, you are really only going to see another and rather superior greengrocer who has nothing of any particular value under his control that he can sell you. The mere fact that he sets a high value on his wares does not of course make them valuable. You are only going, as it were, to buy a few heads of lettuce which are worth a few coppers. For such minor matters it is worth your while to go to the trouble of paying a call, but it is certainly not worth your while to defer to or flatter him. That would be the same as paying pounds instead of pence for lettuces. Further, by flattering him you would degrade yourself.

[1] See Book II, Ch. vi, p. 52; Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 247; and *Manual*, 33, p. 304.

Student : If he doesn't do anything for me, every one will think he has a very poor opinion of me.

Epictetus : What has that got to do with it ? What other people think is a matter of no importance ; the only thing that matters is for you to do what you believe to be right.

Student : But what good do I get from doing right ?

Epictetus : The same good that you get if you spell somebody's name correctly instead of incorrectly—the satisfaction of having done right.

Student : Is that all ?

Epictetus : What more do you want ? What greater reward could you have for doing right than the knowledge that you have done right ? Victors at Olympia are more than satisfied merely with having won. Indeed, it is no small thing to have done right, for then one is really happy. Never forget that you are a man and have a man's work to do and a man's life to live. Don't behave like a baby. Grown-ups who behave like babies make themselves ridiculous. So by all means go and call on your friend, but do not go as a suppliant humbly, or hoping to get something out of him. You must go in the right frame of mind, that is to say, indifferent to everything that lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose and which, consequently, does not belong to you, and esteeming only those things that lie within it, such as right judgements, thoughts, choices, likes and dislikes. Then you will have no occasion for flattery or undue deference.

. . . . .

Student : Tell me the proper way of showing one's affection.

Epictetus : There are certain things you must remem-

ber : true affection cannot be expressed by a mean or broken spirit, nor by one who is always grumbling at God or his fellow-men, but only by one who is noble in spirit and who has achieved happiness ; it is no use being affectionate in any sense of the word if it is going to make you miserable ; never let your love forget that the object of your affection may at any time die or have to leave you.

How did Socrates love his children? He loved them truly, but he loved God more. That is why he was always successful, first as a soldier and later in the defence he made at his trial. Most of us are never at a loss for some excuse for our wrong conduct —we blame child or mother or brother as the case may be. We have no right to be unhappy on anybody's account ; on the contrary, we should be happy on everybody's account, and especially on account of God who created us in order to be happy. Didn't Diogenes love everybody—Diogenes the gentle and kind-hearted, who gladly endured great troubles and physical hardships for the common weal? And how did he love? As a servant of God should, caring indeed for men but loving God most. That was why he regarded not one particular place but the whole world as his fatherland. When he was taken prisoner by pirates he did not mope because he could no longer live in Athens or see his friends, but straightway proceeded to make friends with his captors in the hope of teaching them something. And later on when he was sold into slavery at Corinth, he went on living there just the same kind of life as he had formerly lived at Athens. Yes, and if for some reason he had found himself amongst the Perrhaebians (in Thessaly) he would have done just the same. That is

the way to win freedom. As he used to say : 'My master, the philosopher Antisthenes, set me free from slavery.[1] He taught me what was mine and what was not mine ; that material possessions, relations, servants, friends, reputation, familiar haunts, converse with men, none of them belonged to me and that all I owned was the power to deal with my sense-perceptions, but that this power I possessed unfettered and unconstrained, for no one could compel me to deal with them otherwise than as I willed. So who has any power over *me*? No one, not Philip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, Perdiccas, nor even the Great King of Persia. How could they have? Before a man can fall into the power of some other man he must first become slave to his material possessions.' And so the man over whom nor pleasure nor evil nor fame nor wealth have any power, and who can act like Anaxarchus (who when Nicocreon ordered his tongue to be cut out, bit it off with his teeth and spat it in his face) and die, cannot possibly be any one's subject or slave. But if Diogenes had preferred a soft life in Athens, his fortune would have been at every one's mercy and any one stronger than himself could have made him miserable. And then he might even have become capable of entreating the pirates instead of selling him to a Corinthian to sell him to some Athenian so that he might once more see fair Piraeus, the long walls and the Acropolis! Are *you* free?

Student : I am.

Epictetus : I wonder! Prove it to me. Suppose you were captured by pirates and sold into slavery, would you still be free like Diogenes? Or would you fall down on your knees and beg them to send

[1] See Book IV, Ch. i, p. 215.

you back to Athens? Man, you ought to be able to live anywhere, even in prison, perfectly contentedly. What will you do when the time comes for you to die—weep because you will never see Athens or stroll in the Lycaeum any more? Why did you leave home, brothers, country, friends, and relatives? Was it to learn how to resolve syllogisms and criticize hypothetical arguments, or was it to acquire constancy of character, peace of mind, security, to learn how not to grumble and fault-find, and how to make it impossible for anyone to wrong you and so maintain your relations with your fellow-men in freedom? Presumably you left home because you wanted to learn how to be happier. But if the only result of your studies is to make you less happy, if new friends and acquaintances and the learning to love new lands are merely for you so many fresh occasions for grief, well, really, you will have seriously to consider whether life is worth while your living it! If that is what your affections lead you to, you would do better without them.

The first and principal rule of affection is this: Whenever you grow attached to something, regard it as though it were a delicate glass vase that may be broken at any moment and of which you will then have only the memory. So when you kiss your child, your brother or your friend, never let yourself 'go' but keep a rein on your love. Always remember that they are mortal and that they do not belong to you save for a season. They are like figs or grapes that are given us in summer but which we cannot reasonably expect to have all the year round. If you yearn for your son or your friend at a time when he is not given to you, you are asking for figs in winter

—which is silly. So when you kiss your child or friend whisper to yourself (as slaves stand behind victorious Generals in their Triumphs and whisper to them, 'You are only mortal!'), 'To-morrow you may die!' or 'To-morrow you may go abroad and I may never see you again!'[1]

Student: Those would be words of ill-omen.

Epictetus: Lots of words may *seem* to be ill-omened —cowardice, for instance, a mean spirit, grief, sorrow, shamelessness—but they are not so ill-omened as the things they represent. Never mind the words so long as you can avoid the things. Would you say that to speak of the harvest is ill-omened for the corn because it implies its destruction, or that to speak of the fall of leaves or of the drying of figs and grapes is ill-omened for them? No, you must take a wider view than that. Such changes do not spell death but only a natural development from one state to a more advanced one. That, too, is what going abroad signifies—a slight natural development; that, too, is the meaning of death—a greater natural development.[2]

Student: When I am dead, shall I cease to exist?

Epictetus: You as you are now will no longer exist, but the being you have developed into will. Remember, you were created not when you wanted but when God had need of you in His Universe. At different times He needs you in different stages of development.

And so the good man remembering who he is and whence he came and who created him is concerned with one thing only—to do his duty in that sphere of life in which God has placed him. He says: 'If it be Thy will that I should go on living, I will go on living, occupying myself solely with those things that

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 3, p. 289. [2] Cp. Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 247.

Thou hast placed under my unfettered control. And when Thou hast no further use for me here I will depart at Thy command. I only await Thy command. And I will depart as I have lived, a free man, Thy servant, who knows both what is lawful and what is unlawful ; but while I live I will never cease serving Thee. I will be whatsoever Thou dost ordain —a public servant, a private citizen, a senator, one of the people, a General, a private, a teacher or the head of a family ; and whatsoever post Thou dost assign to me " I will die " (as Socrates said) " ten thousand deaths rather than abandon ".[1] And I will live wheresoever Thou dost bid me—in Rome, Athens, Thebes or Gyara. Only, I beseech Thee, wherever I may be, never forget me. And if Thou shalt send me to some place where life in harmony with Nature is impossible, I will take it that Thou hast given me the signal to depart, and I will depart this life—in no spirit of disobedience, from no wish to abandon my post—of such I would never be guilty—but because I shall know that Thou hast no longer any need of me here. But in all places where Thou dost set me where I can live in harmony with Nature, there I will remain content both with it and with the companions whom Thou dost give me there.'

Always think, write, read, talk thoughts like these, and discuss them with any one you think may be able to help you in regard to them. And then, when something happens that any ordinary man would regard as a misfortune, at least it will not take you by surprise. You will find it a great help in bearing your burden to be able to say : ' *I have always known* —that my son must die some day—that I must die—

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. ix, p. 11.

that I might have to go abroad—that I might be banished—that I might have to go to prison.' And you will find further help in remembering that all such happenings lie outside your control and the ambit of your moral purpose and so do not really concern you. But the greatest help of all is to remember who sent you this thing to bear. It is an order from Prince, General, State or Law, and you must always obey the law in every detail. Do not under any circumstances surrender to the seductions of your imagination. If you are at Gyara, do not picture to yourself life at Rome with all its attractions ; or if you are at Rome, that of Athens ; but remember that it is God who ordered you to live where you are and that it is your duty to live there manfully and to make the best of it.

Then you will have the satisfaction of knowing that while others talk virtue you are actually practising it. And you will be able to say to yourself : ' God sent me this trial so that I might realize how easily I can defeat it, and also because He wanted to see that I really am one of His loyal soldiers, a decent citizen, and a worthy witness to all men that those things that lie outside the ambit of the moral purpose do not concern them.' (' Your treasures lie ', says God, ' not in material possessions but in your hearts.') ' God sends me hither or thither, brings poverty, sickness or imprisonment upon me, deprives me of office or sends me far away to Gyara—not because He hates me ; no, indeed ! how could He hate the most loyal of his servants ?—not because He neglects me, for He never neglects even the humblest of His creatures—but because He is training me and using me as a witness before men. So having been nomin-

ated to so important a post, how can where I am or with whom I am, or what men say of me, possibly concern me? My only concern is to obey God's commands.'

If you habitually think thoughts like these you will never need either help or consolation from any one. Once you are secure against fear and grief, you will not be concerned as to where your food is coming from, or what good or harm people in powerful positions can do you; you will feel no envy when others get lucrative appointments—for your own appointment given you direct by God is far more important than any other. Only do not brag or preen yourself about it. Just do justice to it by your actions, and if no one seems to realize that you hold it, be content to live in health and happiness.

XXV

Memories of successes, memories of mistakes; pleasant memories, painful ones; memories of long-forgotten things—all may be profitable to us. Life is a struggle—not a mere boxing match or wrestling bout, in which indeed failure or success may mean much to us—but the greatest of all struggles, in which we should bear the buffets of fortune unflinchingly, for the prize of the victor is happiness. At the Olympic Games a defeated competitor has to wait four years before he can enter again; but in the struggle of life there is nothing to prevent us from renewing the struggle immediately after a bad defeat, or even after a second bad defeat. And if once you win a victory, you are as though you had never been defeated at all. But don't allow yourselves light-heartedly to make the same

mistakes over and over again, or you will develop a bad habit. Fighting-cocks that have once been beaten rarely win afterwards. It is no excuse for succumbing to-day to the temptation of a pretty woman to plead that you succumbed last week, or for having been disagreeable to a subordinate that you have often been so before. Excuses like these merely prove that you are deteriorating. If your doctor forbade your bathing you wouldn't say : ' Oh, but I did bathe the other day ! ' because he would then probably remind you of how your temperature went up afterwards and you had a headache. Only mean people are discourteous to their subordinates, and if you try to excuse yourself by saying you simply behaved as you always behave you are riveting your bad habit more firmly on you, as you do, too, when you plead you yielded to your temptress because it ' wasn't the first time '. Past mistakes do not excuse but should serve as warnings against fresh ones ; and that is why it is profitable to remember them. It is a pity that mistakes are not as painful as lashes, for then you would remember them as slaves remember their floggings.

xxvi

Epictetus : Have you ever heard of a runaway slave dying of hunger ? [1] When slaves abscond they always manage to get food somehow, at first probably by stealing, then by begging, doing odd jobs, making shift in one way or another ; all of which needs some pluck. Don't you think you might show as much pluck as they ? But you don't show any when you lose your sleep worrying as to how you are to earn your living. Suppose you can't earn your living in any way, what

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. ix, p. 10.

is the worst that can happen to you? Death from starvation. But you can't do more than die from an illness or from a stone falling on your head. And how often have you professed not to be afraid of death?

Student: I wouldn't mind starving myself as long as my family didn't have to starve.

Epictetus: But if your family starved, the worst that could happen to them too would be death. The rich and mighty have to die as well as the poor; the only difference is that the poor die hungry while the rich die from overeating and overdrinking. As a matter of fact, most beggars are old men; they may be as poor as you like, old, infirm, without shelter and with only the minimum of food, but they manage somehow to survive. If they can survive, surely you who are young and strong and healthy, and have the full use of your hands and feet, need not fear starvation. Why, there are all sorts of jobs open to you to earn enough to buy a little food with . . . you could become a water-carrier, a letter-writer, or escort boys to and from school, or become a hall porter.

Student: Those are all menial occupations.

Epictetus: Do you think a philosopher minds doing menial work? Don't you dare to call yourself, or let others call you, a philosopher so long as you think that! Nothing is derogatory to a man that happens to him accidentally and through no fault of his own; e.g. a headache, an attack of fever, or being the son of poor parents. You can't help your parents having been born poor, or if rich, having disinherited you or refusing to help you during their lifetime. The only derogatory things are things that are disgraceful. You didn't make your father what he is, nor can you alter him. It is not the slightest use relying on other people;

you must rely on yourself. And if you don't, then you will have to reconcile yourself to being miserable, to eating every meal as though it were to be your last, to constant apprehensions that your slaves may thieve or run away or die. You can't expect anything else from the mere lip-service you pay to philosophy. And in fact philosophy owes you no thanks for pretending to be a philosopher while by your actions you do your best to discredit its principles in the eyes of the profane. The truth is, you have never really wanted stability, serenity and peace of mind ; all you have wanted to learn about are things like syllogisms. You have never sought to test your sense-perceptions by asking : ' Am I strong enough to bear them ? What will be the next one ? ' But skipping over the first two fields of study you embark prematurely on the third and expect to make impregnable—what ? Well, I don't know precisely what you expect, but what you actually do succeed in making impregnable is your cowardice, your base character, your love of riches, your failure to get what you want and to avoid what you do not want !

How can you expect to make your soul impregnable unless you first train your reasoning faculty ? You can't have a cornice unless you first build a wall to put it on ; you can't be a door-keeper if you have no door to guard. Your training and education are directed towards learning how to expound clearly and how not to be entrapped by specious fallacies—but what is it that you should be able to expound clearly, what sort of specious fallacies are they that you are to be saved from ? That is the important thing. It is not the scales or measure that matter, it is the thing weighed or measured. You must weigh or measure something worth while—not mere dust and ashes. So,

too, you must expound something worth expounding —the way to become happy, so that men's affairs will prosper in the way they wish and they will have no need to reproach or find fault with any one, but be content with God's governance of the Universe. But it is not worth any one's while merely to expound syllogisms, for syllogisms are only measuring instruments. It is because you busy yourselves over what are comparatively unimportant measuring instruments and neglect the supremely important things to be measured that you are fearful, can't sleep, and are distressed if your schemes do not win the approval of the friends you consult.

And then you imagine you are afraid of starvation. But what you are really afraid of is not starvation at all, but of being without a proper chef, without a competent buyer to scour the markets for you for delicacies, without slaves to lace your boots, dress you, massage you, escort you to the public baths, cook for you, wait on you and clear away afterwards ; in short, you are afraid you may be unable to lead the life of an invalid. Why can't you live a healthy life—the kind of life lived by slaves and workmen and real philosophers like Socrates (who had wife and children), Diogenes, and Cleanthes (who used to pump water for a living) ? You can have that kind of life anywhere and be free from all fear of starvation, relying in full confidence on the only thing on which one can fully rely, and that is on one's moral purpose—for that is constant, unfettered, and no one can rob you of it. Why make yourself out to be useless and worthless ? Who wants a useless and worthless person in his house, or indeed to have anything to do with such a one ? If you are going to be a dead weight and constant loss, people

would prefer a dog or a rooster to you, and so far as I can see, there would not be much point in your continued existence.

Do you think a good man really fears starvation? If the blind and halt find food, will a good man lack for it? Efficient soldiers and labourers and cobblers can always get paid for their work. Shall not a good man get paid too? Does God neglect His own creatures, His servants and witnesses, whom He uses to teach the ignorant and to prove to men that He does in very truth exist and rule the Universe, and that He does care for Mankind and that no real evil can ever befall a good man either in life or death?

Student: But if God does not provide food?

Epictetus: Then you may take it that, like a good general, He has sounded the recall for you, and you should obey Him joyfully and praise Him for His goodness. For we came into this world when He thought fit and we must leave it at His pleasure, and while we are here we must glorify Him. God has not given *me* more than is strictly necessary, for He does not wish me to live in luxury. He gave His own son Herakles very little too, except hard work and discipline. He did not make him King of Argos and Mycenae; He made Eurystheus that, though in truth Eurystheus was not king of either, for he was not even king over himself. But Herakles was the real king of the earth, for he purged it of wickedness and lawlessness and substituted in their place justice and righteousness. And all this he did naked and alone. Again: when Odysseus was shipwrecked and cast ashore, how did he behave? He was not crushed by his misfortunes but swallowed his pride and did what he thought was right, even though it went sore against the grain to do

it, and frankly asked Nausicaa and her maidens for food. What did Odysseus rely on? Not on reputation, money or position, but on his own strength; i.e. on his judgements, about those things that were and those that were not under his control. As I have so often told you, it is only by right judgements about such things that a man can become free, unhampered and self-reliant, and be in a position to look rich and mighty alike fearlessly in the face. And it is only philosophy that can teach you how to do this. I am afraid, however, that if things like clothes and silver plate and food still cause you anxiety, you have wasted a good deal of your time and have so far learned precious little philosophy.

Student: But if I fall ill?

Epictetus: Then be ill like a man.

Student: Who will look after me?

Epictetus: God and your friends.

Student: Suppose my bed is uncomfortable?

Epictetus: You will have to put up with it.

Student: Suppose I am away from home?

Epictetus: Then obviously you will be abroad.

Student: But who will give me food?

Epictetus: Some one no doubt will give you something. Even slaves are fed, you know.

Student: Suppose I die?

Epictetus: Then you will be dead. Death is not the worst of human evils—the worst is to be afraid of death.[1] Try to steel yourself against the fear of death, drill your thoughts, discipline your reason, direct all your reading to this end—till you are free from this fear; for it is only when you are free of it that you will achieve real freedom.

[1] See *Manual*, 5, p. 289.

BOOK IV

i

ON FREEDOM

EPICTETUS : A man is free when he can live as he wants to live, when no person or thing can force him to do what he does not want to do or prevent him from doing what he does, when he has complete liberty of choice, when he can gratify all his desires, and when he can avoid everything that he dislikes. So naturally every one wants to be free.

Student : Naturally.

Epictetus : Now, can you imagine any one wanting to live all his life in a state of ignorance, with an uncontrollable temper, incapable of being fair to others, always discontented, and with the instincts of a parasite?

Student : No, I can't.

Epictetus : And a person such as I have described would be a bad man, would he not?

Student : He would indeed.

Epictetus : Then, clearly, bad men do not want to be bad, and are not living the kind of life they would like to live. And that is hardly surprising, seeing they are subject to sorrow, fear, envy, pity, and never get what they want but always get what they don't want. In short, a bad man is not a free man.

Now, suppose you were to tell some one who had been consul several times that he is no more free than

any slave standing for sale in the slave-market, he would probably consider himself insulted. 'What do you mean', he would ask, 'by saying I am no better than a slave? Both my parents were freeborn and no one holds a deed of sale for me. Besides, I am a Senator, a personal friend of Caesar's, I have been consul as you know, and I own many slaves.' All of which, of course, may be perfectly true; notwithstanding which it is quite on the cards that his parents and grandparents and indeed all his ancestors may have been slaves, and even if they weren't that doesn't prove that he isn't. They may all have been noble, brave and self-controlled, but that is no guarantee that he is not mean-spirited, cowardly and without self-control.

Student: But what has being mean-spirited, cowardly and lacking in self-control to do with being a slave?

Epictetus: Surely a man who is doing something he doesn't want to do—and we have agreed that no one wants to be mean-spirited and cowardly—is not free?

Student: I agree that in that sense he may be said to be a slave; but he is not a slave in the sense of having a master who can order him about.

Epictetus: Can't Caesar order him about? Of course he can. So you see he has a master after all. It makes no difference that Caesar is lord of all—it only means that every one has at least one master, viz. Caesar. So, when the good citizens of Nicopolis shout that by Caesar's grace they are free men, it is only another way of proclaiming that they are Caesar's slaves! But apart from Caesar, tell me this: were you never smitten with any one—a pretty girl, a nice-looking boy, a slave, a freedman?

Student: What has that got to do with being either slave or free?

Epictetus : Hasn't your sweetheart ever made you do something you didn't want to do ? Haven't you ever given in to your pet slave ? Haven't you ever kissed his feet ? But if Caesar made you kiss *his* feet, I suppose you would say it was an abominable piece of tryanny ! Haven't you ever been driven into going out somewhere at night when you didn't want to go ? Haven't you ever been wheedled into spending more money than you wanted to spend ? Haven't you ever had something to complain about ? Haven't you ever been insulted or had somebody's door shut in your face ? Well, perhaps you don't like admitting that any such thing has ever happened to you, so I will just remind you that Thrasonides—a man who has spent his life soldiering—admitted that when he had to go out at night his beloved Geta, who is afraid of the dark, absolutely refused to accompany him, and that if he had insisted there would have been such a row that they would probably have had a final split. In point of fact he was Geta's slave, not Geta his.

And what about animals, are they free or not ? Tame lions in a cage are obviously not free. You may perhaps think they ought to prefer living in nice comfortable cages with regular meals, but which of their untamed brethren of the forests would willingly change places with them ? And do you think birds like being cooped up in cages ? Isn't it their nature to fly about where they want to and sing and live in the open air ? They love their freedom just like lions and human beings do, and if they are prisoned in a cage they do their best to escape, and if they can't they mope and pine away and die, regaining their freedom through death.

Indeed, death is sometimes the only way in which

man or beast may regain his freedom. Diogenes said : ' The one sure way of obtaining freedom is to die.' And do you remember what he wrote to the Great King of Persia ? ' You can no more enslave the Athenians than you can enslave the fish of the sea, for if you catch a fish it will die, and if you catch an Athenian he will die too. So if your armies capture Athens you will be no better off.' That was Diogenes' opinion, and as he had studied this question of ' freedom ' seriously, we may be pretty sure that he knew what he was talking about. But of course if men look for ' freedom ' in the wrong place, naturally they will not find it.

What is a slave's dearest wish ? Is it not to be given his freedom ? And why, do you suppose, he wants freedom ? Because he feels unhappy under restraint. ' If only I could get my freedom ', he argues, ' I should be perfectly happy, for I should then be as good a man as the next, I should be able to pick my friends and go where I wanted when I wanted.' And then one day when his wish was gratified and his Master had freed him, he would suddenly find that he had to earn his own living and provide his own food, and deciding that the easiest way of doing so would be to become a parasitic hanger-on to some wealthy man, or a pimp, he would do so and would then presently discover that both those professions entail far more slavery than anything he had hitherto experienced. Or if perchance he prospered and became well-to-do, he would almost certainly be caught by some hungry female who would make his life a burden to him. And then he would lament : ' Why didn't I realize when I was well off ? I used to have no bother about clothes or boots or food ; my Master supplied everything, and

when I was ill he had me nursed, and in return for all that I had really very little work to do for him. But now, instead of one master I have at least half-a-dozen. Still, if only I could get knighted, then I should be quite all right ! ' And so to achieve his latest ambition he would have to submit to—what he deserved. And then to mount still higher in the social scale, he would have to serve in three campaigns and endure all the miseries of active service, which are far worse than anything even a convict has to put up with, and when at last he crowned his ambition by becoming a Senator, he would simultaneously have become one of the prettiest slaves in the world !

What a fool ! Well, we must be careful not to imitate him. We must, as Socrates said, learn ' what each several thing means ' and not apply our innate preconceptions blindly. All men's troubles arise from their inability to apply their general ideas to particular problems, as is proved by the frequency with which they arrive at different solutions, one man deducing that he is ill, another that he is a pauper, a third that his parents are unreasonable, a fourth that Caesar dislikes him. All such fanciful deductions arise from ignorance of how properly to apply one's preconceptions. For instance, we all have an instinctive preconception or instinct of what ' evil ' is—that it is something harmful and to be shunned. Then what about Caesar's personal dislike ? Is that evil ? Of course it isn't, for even if we not only avoid his dislike but actually win his regard and become his personal friends, we still have not got what we really want. What is it that we all want ? Surely it is to live in security, to be happy, and to have power to do just what we like without pressure from any one. You

won't get all that merely by becoming a personal friend of Caesar's. However, if you have any doubt about it, get hold of one of his intimate friends and ask him if his august master's friendship makes him sleep any the easier, and I bet he will tell you not to laugh at him. He will say that you have no idea what a wretched life he leads ; that he can now never get a decent night's sleep what with one person and another constantly coming in and saying that Caesar wants this or Caesar wants that ! And if you suggest that at any rate he must enjoy the Imperial banquets, you will discover that sometimes he is not invited—and then he feels hurt—and that when he is invited his meal is completely spoiled by the fact that he has all the time to be on his best behaviour lest he should say or do something that he shouldn't. In point of fact, he is a slave dining at his master's table. And all the time he is afraid—not of being flogged like an ordinary slave—it would be too much for him to expect to get off as lightly as that !—but, as befits a slave of his importance, of losing his head. Ask him further if he now bathes in greater peace or exercises at greater leisure, in short, whether he really prefers his present life to his former one, and you will hear some pretty plain speaking. He will tell you very definitely that the friendlier one is with Caesar the worse off one is.

As therefore neither the friends of Kings, nor even Kings themselves, can live as they would, whom can we call free ? Seek the answer to this conundrum and you will find it, for Nature has given you the means for discovering the truth, and if you are unable to discover it yourself, you can at least avail yourself of the experience and researches of others. Tell me : do you regard freedom as a ' good ' ?

Student : As the greatest of all ' goods '.

Epictetus : Can a man who is really free be either unhappy or unfortunate ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : When, then, you see a man who is unhappy, unfortunate and full of complaints, you may be perfectly certain that he is not free, no matter whether he be a man of consular rank or even the Great King of Persia himself. Now tell me further : do you consider freedom to be a great, noble and precious thing ?

Student : Of course.

Epictetus : Can a man of mean spirit possess it ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : Then no man who kowtows to another or who flatters him untruthfully or without meaning what he says, whether it be for a breakfast or a billet, is free. People who do that sort of thing are nothing but slaves, humble or grand (as the case may be). Now tell me further : is freedom something that is self-sufficient and self-controlled ?

Student : It is.

Epictetus : Then a man who can be ordered to do or not to do something by somebody is not free. The question whether his ancestors were free men or slaves or whether he himself is a free man or a slave has nothing to do with it. If he recognizes some one as his master either by calling him such or by behaving as if he were, he is a slave even though he be a consul. Further, any man who gives way to grumbling or complaints, or who is unhappy, or whose judgements are subject to compulsion or hindrance and whose desires are centred on things over which he has no control, which do not belong to him and which may

therefore be taken away from him, is a slave whatever his rank. Most of us indeed have many masters, not only other men in positions of authority over us, but circumstances and those who can sway circumstances. It is not Caesar himself that men fear or love (unless he be a very exceptional man) but what Caesar can do—sentence to death, banish, confiscate estates, imprison, disenfranchise—or promote to wealth and high office. When we fear or love such things, the persons who can give or withhold them automatically become our masters, and we instinctively tend to elevate them in our esteem to pinnacles almost of divinity, and the greater their powers the more divine they seem to us. 'Those in whose power it is to confer the greatest boons are divine,' we say; 'now Caesar' (or whoever it may be) 'can bestow the greatest boons, and so unquestionably he is divine.' But, of course, as the minor premiss—that Caesar can bestow the greatest boons—is obviously untrue, the conclusion that he is divine is equally false.

What then is it that makes a man free and his own master? It is not wealth nor consular rank, high office such as a Governorship nor Kingship. What is it? I will tell you. It is the knowledge of how to live properly. That and that only can make a man free. Now, of course, you know that as a general principle. Let us see how we can apply the general principle to particular cases. Must not a man who concerns himself with things that are under other people's control be subject to hindrance and restraint?

Student: Yes.

Epictetus: Then such a man is not free. Now, if we divide things generally into two categories, those which are under our own sole control and those which are

under other people's control, under which category are we to place our bodies ? Can we control their health, their living and dying ?

Student : No, we can't.

Epictetus : Then our bodies do not belong to us but are under the control of everybody stronger than we are. And the same is true of our farms, slaves, clothes, houses, horses, children, wives, brothers, and friends. Now, what things—for there are some—are under our own control and which therefore do belong to us ? Consider : can any one force you to assent to something you know is untrue ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : Then so far as assent is concerned you are free ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : Can any one make you choose something you don't want ?

Student : Yes, I might be compelled to choose between imprisonment and death.

Epictetus : But if you don't mind being sent to prison or dying there would be no hold over you.

Student : No.

Epictetus : And it is for you to determine, i.e. choose, whether you will or will not fear death ?

Student : Yes. But suppose I want to go for a walk and somebody stops me ?

Epictetus : He may stop your body but he can't stop your wish to go.

Student : No, but I should lose my walk all the same.

Epictetus : Because, as I have already told you, your body does not belong to you ; it is not under your control, and so any one stronger than you can compel it or put obstacles in its way. But your desires are

under your own control, and no one can compel or prevent them any more than they can interfere with your plans and aims or the way you deal with your sense-impressions.

Student: May I wish for good health?

Epictetus: Certainly not; you must not wish for it or for anything else that does not belong to you. If you even admire something that is under somebody else's control, it will make you into a slave.

Student: Does not even my own hand belong to me?

Epictetus: Indeed it doesn't. Your hand is a part of your body, it is made of earth and is subject to hindrance and compulsion by anything stronger than yourself—as indeed is your whole body. You should regard your body as a poor over-loaded little donkey and make the best you can of it for as long as you can. If you had a real donkey and some soldier came along and commandeered it, you would be well advised to let him have it with good grace, for if you started grumbling and resisting he would probably not only take your donkey but knock you down into the bargain. And you should act similarly in regard to your body. While as for all those things that the body needs or uses, regard them as the equivalents of your donkey's bridle and saddle and fodder, and let them go even more readily than your donkey and your body.

Once you have trained yourself to distinguish between what is yours and which is therefore free from hindrance of any sort, and what is not yours and which is subject to hindrance, and have learned to ignore the latter, what is there left for you to fear?

Student: Nothing.

Epictetus: No, nothing; for clearly no one can interfere with the things that do belong to you any

more than they could interfere with God ; while naturally nothing can happen to your material possessions or to your body which can in any way disturb you, because they don't belong to you, are not under your control, and cannot be of any great importance to you. This is the lesson you went to philosophers to learn. If you fail to learn it you will never be free from fear and worry, and, I may add, pain—for the fears of anticipation lead to the pains of realization ; but if you learn it thoroughly you will find no one will ever frighten you again.

What is there indeed in any man, in his appearance, conversation or behaviour, that can inspire fear in another, any more than there is in a horse, dog or bee to inspire fear in another horse, dog or bee? In fact, it is not men who frighten other men, but *things*. A man can only inspire fear when he is in a position to give or take away something from some one.

The citadel of Man's soul is captured not by sword and flame but by right judgements. If we capture ours we are masters of everything, including sickness and our passions, and there will be no more tyrants installed in it to lord it over us. No longer shall we be dominated by our bodies and their members, by our faculties, material possessions, reputations, position, honours, children, brothers or friends, but for ever thereafter we shall be able to do what we want quite free from any compulsion or impediments, because we shall exercise our choices in conformity with the will of God. If He wishes us to be sick, we too shall want to be sick ; if He wishes us to want something, to obtain something or not to obtain it, to be tortured or to die, we shall wish exactly the same. And so no one will be able to thwart or constrain us against our

wills any more than they could thwart or constrain God.

Consider the steps a prudent traveller takes to ensure his safety. He has heard, perhaps, that the route he proposes taking is infested with bandits, and so, not venturing to go alone, he awaits an opportunity of joining forces with some important personage (like an Ambassador or a Governor) and in his company reaches his destination safely. The wise man will take similar precautions in respect of his journey through life. He will say to himself: 'In life I shall encounter many bandits, bullies, storms, difficulties, and heavy losses. Where am I to find safety? How shall I protect myself against robbery? Shall I wait for and attach myself to some one stronger than I? But to whom? It is quite useless attaching myself to some rich or important person, for such cannot defend themselves, let alone me, and besides, they are more than capable of betraying me and robbing me themselves. It would be equally futile attaching myself to, say, Caesar, for the trouble I should have to go to in order to become one of his friends would be far more than his friendship is worth, besides Caesars sometimes turn enemies or die young. Is it then impossible to find any one whom I can trust, who is strong, faithful and incapable of treachery? And after reflection he will realize that there is only one such Person and that is God, and that if he wants to pass unscathed through the world he must attach himself to Him.

Student: What do you mean precisely by 'attaching himself to God'?

Epictetus: I mean that he will always want what God wishes him to want, neither more nor less.

Student: But how will he know what God wishes?

Epictetus : By observing the way in which He orders His Universe. You know now that He has given you certain things for your very own, placing them under your absolute and unrestricted control ; viz. everything within the ambit of your moral purpose ; whereas things like your body, material possessions, furniture, house, children, and wife, have not been given to you outright but have only been lent to you temporarily and conditionally. He who gave them to you may also take them away, and it would be not merely foolish but wrong to object. It is no argument to say that your material possessions came to you from your father, for who gave them to him ? God, of course, the Maker of sun, fruits of the earth, seasons and men.

And so, seeing that all you have, including yourself, comes from God, do not complain if He sees fit to withdraw some part of it from you. Reflect who you are and why you were born. It was God who brought you into the world and let you see the light, who gave you your fellow-workers, your five senses and your power of reasoning. He caused you to be born as a mortal man destined to live in the flesh for some few years in order that you might witness how He controls and rules the Universe and share His pleasure in the pageantry thereof. Don't you want to do so ? And when He thinks you have had enough, you should accept His decision cheerfully, do Him homage and give Him hearty thanks for all you have seen and heard. ' Ah, but ', you say, ' I should have liked to stop a little longer ! ' Yes, and no doubt when the Games at Olympia are ended, some of the spectators say that there should have been more competitions and that they have not seen enough. But it would be more becoming in them to be grateful for what

they have seen and to go away contentedly. And we should do the same when our time comes, and depart gratefully and contentedly, making room for others. For others have to be born just the same as you were, and once born they will want lands and houses and food ; and if the first-comers do not move on there will be no room for their successors. You must not be greedy and grasping and overcrowd the world.

Student : Yes, but I want my wife and children with me.

Epictetus : But they don't belong to you ; they belong to Him who gave them to you and who made you yourself. Won't you yield up what is not yours to One who is stronger than you ?

Student : Why did God cause me to be born fettered by such conditions ?

Epictetus : If you don't like the conditions you need not stop. God does not want the witnesses of His works to be mere fault-finders. He wants them to share His pleasure in them, to applaud them, glorify them and sing their praises. Grumblers, the soured, the unappreciative, those incapable of sharing His pleasure, those with long faces who are always dissatisfied and discontented and who are insensible to the boons showered upon them, and who use their faculties not for cultivating what they ought to, viz. highmindedness, nobility of character and courage, so as to attain to freedom, but the opposite, are of no use to Him.

Student : Why, then, did God give me things that I cannot control ?

Epictetus : He lent them for you to use.

Student : For how long ?

Epictetus : For as long as He thinks fit.

Student : But suppose I can't get on without them ?

Epictetus : Do not over-value them, do not regard them as indispensable, and you will find that you can get on quite well without them. Indeed, you ought constantly to practise doing without things. Start with the things you value least and which are soonest broken—pots and cups and such-like—then go on to clothes, dogs, horses, fields ; till at last you will come to yourself, your body and its members, your children, wife and brothers. And every day as you practise say to yourself, not : ' Now I am behaving like a real philosopher '—that would savour of pride—but : ' I am a slave going through the formalities of emancipation so that I may be really free.' This was how Diogenes won his freedom through Antisthenes,[1] and he won it so effectually that it was not possible for him ever again to be slave to any man. And so when, later on, he was captured by pirates, he neither called them his masters nor—what would have been worse —treated them as such. He even reproved them for giving bad food to their captives. And when they sold him, did he care to whom he was sold ? Not a bit. He was not looking, you see, for a master but for a slave. A well-educated man always has an advantage over an uneducated man, and a man who has learned the proper way to live is always master of those who haven't. And so Diogenes the ' slave ' was in reality master of his ' master ', and he naturally took the first opportunity of telling his new owner a few home-truths—about his clothes, how he did his hair, and how he was educating his children. In short, he employed his ' master ' for all he was fit for, and that was to be his slave. And if his ' master ' had happened

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxiv, p. 189.

to be a really efficient gymnastic trainer or physician or architect, no doubt Diogenes would have utilized his abilities—which in any case would have been far inferior to his own—to the best possible advantage.

Now, tell me, who is the master in a ship?

Student: The captain.

Epictetus: Yes, and being the master, if any of the crew disobey him he can punish them.

Student: Yes, and masters of slaves can have them flogged.

Epictetus: But not with impunity.

Student: There is nothing to stop them.

Epictetus: Oh, yes, there is! No man can do wrong with impunity.

Student: What can happen to a man who punishes his slave undeservedly?

Epictetus: The knowledge that he has done so. The true nature of Man is not that of a wild beast but that of a tame animal. If he acts contrary to his nature, if he maltreats instead of treating kindly, he is injuring himself more than his victim.

Student: Then you think Socrates' judges and prosecutors suffered more than Socrates himself?

Epictetus: There is no question of it.

Student: And Vespasian more than Helvidius whom he put to death? [1]

Epictetus: Of course.

Student: Why?

Epictetus: Which is the worse off—the badly injured cock which has won its fight or the loser which is unmarked? Which is the happier—the dog that is hot and sweating and weary from hunting or the sleek, overfed pampered lapdog? Everything contrary to

[1] See Book I, Ch. ii, p. 4.

Nature is evil ; that is true of animals and things, and it is equally true of men. The true nature of man is to be gentle, affectionate and loyal, and if he bears everything nobly, even flogging, imprisonment or death, he profits by such experiences, whereas his oppressor, by acting contrary to his nature, degrades himself, and his character inevitably deteriorates till he sinks from the level of a human being to that of wolves, snakes or wasps.

And now let us recapitulate the points on which we are agreed. The man who can neither be prevented nor obliged, but who can do precisely as he wants, is free ; whereas the man who can be prevented or obliged, and who consequently cannot do what he wants, is a slave. And the free man is he who concerns himself solely with what belongs to him and ignores everything that does not ; viz. everything not under his control, or only partly and conditionally under his control ; e.g. his body and its members, and his material possessions. This is the only road to real freedom, the only way to escape slavery.

Suppose some highly placed personage required you to say something that you knew was untrue, would you say it ?

Student : I must think about that for a few moments.

Epictetus : Why ? What need is there for reflection ? Surely you have learned by this time to distinguish between what is good and what is evil and what is neither good nor evil ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : You know, for instance, that life is not good and that imprisonment and death are not evils, and that such things as churlish speech, lack of loyalty, betrayal of a friend and flattery are all evil ?

Student: Yes.

Epictetus: Then there is no need for you to hesitate about answering my question; you can answer it just as readily as you could answer 'Is black white?' or 'Is heavy light?'—by intuition. No, the fact is, you do not really believe that all disgraceful things are bad, and that imprisonment and death are neither good nor evil. On the contrary, imprisonment and death appear to you to be the greatest of all evils, while dishonourable words and deeds are not bad in your eyes but simply do not seem to matter. Or perhaps you think one thing in my lecture room and something quite different when you get outside when all my teachings seem in retrospect rather pedantic and silly. From that it is but a little step for the philosopher of the lecture room to slip down into the parasite of politics and the law courts, where men hire themselves out for money to make speeches in favour of things in which they do not believe. And yet, even while they are uttering them, they know in their hearts that they are doing wrong, for their judgements have been trained to know better. Watch your own behaviour when something goes wrong—not a big thing like the death of one of your children—but some little matter, say, of spilled oil or drunk-up wine—and note your unphilosophic agitation, which is quite enough to provoke caustic and ribald comments from the profane on the difference between what you profess and what you do. When you pick up some prostitute on the streets, do you entertain her with what I have taught you here?

Student: But what has all this got to do with freedom?

Epictetus: Everything—whether you like it or not.

Student : How ?

Epictetus : Consider : is not Caesar your Master ? Don't you hang on his slightest gesture ? Don't you turn pale if he frowns ? Don't you toady to your rich uncles and aunts and say : ' Oh, they wouldn't like me to do *that* ! ' Do you call that freedom ? One can to a certain extent sympathize with and even respect a man who, being desperately in love, does things that he does not really mean to do and contrary to his better judgement, for he is in the grip of something so strong that it needs almost more than human strength to resist it. But who can sympathize with or respect a person who fawns on old men and women, trying to ingratiate himself with them by giving them presents, and all the time praying for their death (and making anxious but discreet inquiries of their doctors as to when that happy event may be expected), so that he can step into their shoes ? Who can respect one who, in order to get some post of honour, licks the boots of great men's secretaries—the slaves of men who are themselves slaves—and who, if he succeeds, struts about full of dignity, a praetor or a consul ? Is that freedom ? I know how consulships are won ; but personally, if I had to owe my life to a person like Felicio, rather than put up with his insolence and arrogance I would prefer to die. I don't like beggars on horseback.

But perhaps you feel inclined to ask *me* if *I* am free ! Indeed I want to be, and I trust that I may become so, but, alas ! I must admit that I am still unable to look my master in the face ; and that I still pay far too much attention to my worthless body and take far too much trouble to keep it in good condition, though it is in any event unsound. But if you want

to know what a free man is really like, think of Diogenes. He was a free man if ever there was one ; not because he was the son of free parents, for he wasn't, but because he had got rid of all those handles by which men lay hold of their fellow-men in order to enslave them. Everything he had was, so to speak, so loosely attached to him—as though lightly tied, not sewn on—that if any one grasped it, it came away at once in his hand without hurting Diogenes in the least. Thus, if any one seized his material possessions, his leg, his body, his kindred, friends or country, they came away at once and he made no effort to prevent them. For he knew whence he had received all these things and who had lent them to him and the conditions on which he held them. He knew, too, that his true ancestors were the Gods and his real fatherland the Universe, and he would never have forsaken one or other of them, nor would he ever have allowed any one to surpass him in deference and obedience to Them, nor would any other man have died more cheerfully than he for his fatherland He never, however, made any display of his efforts on behalf of the Universe, and he never forgot that the Universe is the source of everything that is and that it itself came from God. Being therefore completely free, he—the son of a slave—was able, as he himself said, to converse on equal terms with Kings, with Archedemus, King of the Lacedaemonians, and even with the Great King of Persia. Contrast with him the Athenians, Lacedaemonians and Corinthians, who, for all that they boasted themselves to be free men, were quite unable to converse with these monarchs without fear and flattery.

But lest you think that perhaps Diogenes was free because he had no wife, children, country, friends or

kinsmen, take Socrates, who was a married man with a family and a country. What was his mode of life? He recognized that his wife and family were only lent to him, and that he had certain obligations in regard to his country. And so, when it was his duty to fight for Athens, he was the first to report to his Commanding Officer, and he was always in the forefront of the battle. But when he was ordered by the Thirty Tyrants to go to Salamis and bring back Leon so that they might murder him,[1] it never even occurred to him to obey them, though he knew perfectly well that if he didn't they would probably murder him instead. But that possibility meant nothing to him, for he had something to preserve far more important than his life, namely his honour, and no one can look after that save a man himself. And later on, when he was being tried on a capital charge, he did not let the circumstance that he was a married man with children influence him in the least; and finally, when he was sentenced to death, and might have saved his life if he had listened to Crito's pleadings that he should escape for his children's sake, what was his reply? He said that all he wanted to do was what was right and that no other considerations mattered to him at all, least of all the mere preservation of his body from death; that he must and would preserve that part of him which is improved by right and deteriorated by wrong conduct. Was it indeed likely, or even possible, that the man who had refused to yield to popular clamour and put an illegal motion to the vote of the Assembly,[2] the man who had flouted the Thirty Tyrants, the man who had said such noble things about virtue and moral

[1] See Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 249, and Plato, *Apology*, 32.
[2] Plato, *Apology*, 32B.

excellence, would save his life at the expense of his honour? Like a good actor who wisely retires at the height of his reputation and before his powers fail, Socrates was saved not by flight but by death. When his friends promised that if only he would escape to Thessaly they would look after his children for him, he laughed and said they would be poor friends if they would not do as much for them and him now that he was going on a longer journey than the one to Thessaly.[1] Death merely made him smile. I wonder what you and I would have said and done under similar circumstances? Should we have sworn revenge? Should we have tried to salve our consciences by arguing speciously: 'If I save my life I may still be of some use, whereas, if I die, of what use can I be?' Should we, if we could have found any hole to creep through, have crept through it into safety? No, believe me, the memory of how Socrates died is of even greater use to men than the things he did and said while living.

If you really want to be free, reflect on all I have said and on the arguments and examples I have put before you. Freedom is a very precious thing, and it is worth paying a big price to get it. For what they have mistakenly believed to be freedom, men, yes, and whole cities, have perished. Will not you, in order to obtain real freedom—a freedom which can never be taken away from you—surrender gladly to God what He Himself has lent you when He asks you to? Will you not (as Plato says) study how to bear banishment, flogging, torture, even death itself—in short, to surrender everything that does not really belong to you—if thereby you can win freedom? If you won't, then

[1] Cp. Plato, *Crito*, 54A.

you will always be a slave amongst slaves, even though you be consul ten thousand times—even though you be Caesar himself. Cleanthes spoke truly when he said : 'You may think philosophers are wrong, but they are right,' and experience will teach you that they are right when they say that none of those things that men long for and strive after satisfy them when they obtain them, but they remain discontented. Freedom is won not by getting what you want but by ceasing to want. You have all wasted much time and labour in trying to find freedom through the satisfaction of your mundane desires, why not test the truth of what I tell you by expending an equal amount of time and labour in cultivating right judgements and in frequenting the society of philosophers instead of that of rich old men, and see if you can't get freedom that way? There can be no harm in trying, and I assure you that if you do your reward will be great.

ii

You must take the very greatest care never to get too intimate with loose characters, lest you sink to their level and become like them ; and if you have accidentally become acquainted with such a one, cool off at once and never mind if he thinks you a churl. The breaking off may be unpleasant, but whatever it costs you, do it. Nothing worth having is ever won without effort.

I presume you don't want to remain exactly as you are for the rest of your life, but to improve. If you want to remain exactly as you are, you will have to go on behaving exactly as you do now, and then no doubt you will be able to retain the liking of your

low friends, whereas if you improve yourself you will probably lose it. Before you started studying philosophy, and while your ideas were still vague and your aims in life indefinite, you went in for hard drinking and a life of pleasure, and so were a welcome boon-companion ; but now that you have forsworn such things, your companionship will not be so attractive to your former associates. The fact is, you can't have it both ways. You must make your choice—either to remain stationary and continue with your low companions, or to improve your character—in fact, to make progress—which means renouncing your former mode of life and giving up all claim to being considered a ' good fellow '. The two things don't mix. You can't be both a hump-backed bald Thersites *and* a tall, good-looking Agamemnon.

iii

When you lose something always reflect whether you have not perhaps acquired something better worth having in its place. For instance, if you lose an ass and get a horse, or lose a sheep and get an ox, you have little to complain of. Similarly, you can well afford to lose a trifle of money if you do a good action, you can dispense with quantities of silly chatter if in its place you can have a quiet mind, and you can well do without bawdy stories if you have self-respect. Remember this and you will preserve your character at its proper level ; but if you don't you are wasting your time and pains. The slightest mistake may have the most ruinous consequences. A helmsman requires much less preparation to wreck his ship than he does to preserve her—a little bit too much in the wind and

over she goes—and this fatal issue may be the result not of intent but of mere thoughtlessness. Similarly in life, if you relax for an instant, that instant's relaxation may cost you all your previous gains. Watch ceaselessly, therefore, over your sense-perceptions, and remember that what you have to guard is no less than your self-respect, fidelity, constancy, serenity of mind, the power to overcome pain, fear and uncertainty—in short, your freedom. If you lose any of these, what can you get in exchange that will compensate you? Would a tribuneship make up for lost modesty, or a praetorship for one's self-respect? Be quiet in demeanour ; do not put yourself unnecessarily in evidence. Remember that you are a free man and a friend of God and that you serve Him of your own choice. Claim nothing that you should not claim—body, material possessions, office or reputation—for if God had wanted you to have them He would have given you them, and as he has not given you them you should not ask for them. In all that you do, set your supreme good in the foreground, and as for the rest, take gratefully what God gives you and enjoy it simply.

These are God's laws and ordinances. If you obey them you will always be successful ; if you don't you will never be successful.

iv

Epictetus : Men truckle to other men for all sorts of reasons—to get a good appointment, for money, for quiet and leisure for study, for public office and promotion to Senatorial rank, to avoid public office and honours, to get more time for reading or not to have to read so much—but whatever the reason,

the more a man wants it the more he will truckle to get it.

Now let us consider some common wants—want of occupation, for instance. If you will reflect for a few moments you will find that in reality you have plenty to do. At home you have to be very careful never to fall short of the highest standard of your moral purpose, to preserve your self-respect, never to jeopardize your security, to exercise your likes and dislikes in the right way, and, further, you must constantly observe the actions of your fellow-men, in no censorious spirit, with no desire to ridicule them, but to see what mistakes they make so that you may avoid making similar ones. I am only telling you to do what I have done myself. I used once to make many mistakes ; now, thank God, I do so no longer.

I will give you a few rules for everyday life, and if you will follow them you will be far better off than you would be for any amount of reading. Whatever you are doing, whether you are eating, reading, bathing or taking exercise, do it with all your might. Do not let your behaviour and manners vary according to the station in life of the person you are dealing with—a servant is as much entitled to be treated with civility as Caesar is. Always behave quietly, imperturbably and with decorum. It is better to watch others than to push yourself into the limelight. Try to feel pleasure and not envy at other people's successes. Let motives mean more to you than results.

Now take another common want—more time for reading. Why do some people want that ? Do they read for pleasure or to learn a lot of new facts ? Neither is a good reason. The only valid reason for

reading is to attain to peace of mind, and if reading fails to procure this for one it is useless.

Student : My reading does procure me peace of mind, and when I am prevented from reading my peace of mind vanishes.

Epictetus : If such a trifle as being (for some reason or other) prevented from reading is sufficient to destroy it, then all I have to say is that the peace of mind you procure from your reading is not worth much. Real peace of mind cannot be disturbed by anything. Surely one only reads books as part of one's training how to live properly ? They are, however, only part of one's training in this regard.

As a trained athlete enters the ring for his match and is glad that the period of his training is accomplished and that the time of his testing is come, and has no need or desire to submit to any further training before the struggle, so too in life we should be glad that our training is so far advanced that we can cope instantly with all the many problems brought to us by our sense-perceptions (be they easy or difficult), and we should have no need or desire to read still more treatises about *Comprehension* or anything else.

In fact, our reading should be directed towards enabling us to deal practically and in accordance with Nature with our sense-perceptions. Unfortunately, that is just what it is not. We learn the theory of it from our reading so well that we can explain it clearly to others, but there we stop short. We should read treatises on *Choice*, so as to have not merely an academic knowledge of what choice is but to get practical assistance in making right choices. Similarly, we should read one on *Likes and Dislikes*, so that we may never fail to get what we want and avoid what we

don't want ; and on *Duty*, so that we may maintain our proper relations with our fellow-men as we should and never behave irrationally. And so instead of boasting, ' To-day I have read so much,' we should say : ' As a result of what I have read to-day I have not merely learned how to but I have actually succeeded in exercising my choices in the way philosophers teach, in suppressing evil desires, in avoiding those things that my moral purpose condemns, in not being scared or disconcerted by any one, in exercising my patience, my self-control and my friendliness, for all of which I thank God.'

Now as one is always inclined to smile a little at some one who is eager to obtain some public office, so too smile at yourself for wanting not to hold office. The one is like a man with fever who wants water, the other like a man with hydrophobia who is afraid of it. Of course, what you both should do is to say with Socrates : ' As God will, so be it.' [1] If Socrates had wanted *too much* to spend all his time in the Lycaeum or Academy arguing with young men, he would not have been able to go forth without regret on the various military expeditions in which he served, but would have complained bitterly about the discomforts of active service, contrasting them with the pleasures he had left behind.' And then he would not have been that Socrates who later wrote Hymns of Praise in prison. Never complain ; always be calm, free, untroubled.

The fact is, if you set store by those things that lie outside the ambit of your moral purpose, you will destroy your moral purpose. Outside its ambit lie

[1] Also quoted in Book I, Ch. iv, p. 5, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; and *Manual*, 53, p. 311.

both public office and freedom from office, both business and leisure.

Student : One thing I must have, and that is leisure and quiet.

Epictetus : What do you mean precisely by ' quiet ' ? Do you mean you don't like crowds ? But if you went to Olympia you would regard the shouting and jostling and the overcrowding at the baths as part of the fun, and would thoroughly enjoy it and be sorry when it was all over. Don't be too exigent in every-day *life.* Don't whine : ' I can't eat this—I don't fancy it—this vinegar is too sour ; there's too much wax in this honey ; I don't like having nothing to do ; I don't like being alone ; I don't like crowds—they make me giddy.' Why can't you make the best of things ? If circumstances compel you either to live entirely alone or with but few companions, say : ' I like a quiet life.' For a quiet life has many advantages. It gives you plenty of leisure for self-communion, for learning how to deal adequately with your sense-perceptions, and for developing your natural instincts. Or, if you find yourself one of a crowd, regard it all as a game, a fête day or holiday, and try and enjoy it. ' The more the merrier ' is the instinctive feeling of one who loves his fellow-men. We all like seeing troops of horses and herds of cattle and fleets of ships, so why should we dislike seeing crowds of human beings ?

Student : I can't stand the noise they make.

Epictetus : But their noise only affects your ears ; it doesn't affect your capacity for dealing with your sense-perceptions, nor does it interfere with the expression of your likes, dislikes, choices and refusals in conformity with Nature. No mere noise can do

that. Never forget general principles—what is yours, what is not yours, what God has given you, what He wants you to do or not to do. To start with, He gave you sufficient leisure for preparation by self-communion, reading, writing and listening; but you can't expect to go on training all by yourself indefinitely. The time has now come when He bids you face the struggle, to show what you have learned and the efficacy of your training—in short, you must now prove your metal by winning, or (like so many have to do) confess to defeat. After all, there is nothing in this for you to grumble at. We all have to face the music, and you can't expect a completely silent struggle. A number of different people are necessarily present—sparring-partners, officials, and so on—not to mention the crowds of spectators who have come to cheer you on.

Student: But I want to lead a quiet life.

Epictetus: The question is, are you or are you not going to obey God's commands? If you won't, then you will be, and you will deserve to be, utterly miserable, and you will always be subject to sorrow, envy and all sorts of misfortunes. Surely that is not the fate you want?

Student: No, indeed; but how am I to avoid it?

Epictetus: Have I not told you over and over again that you must entirely eradicate all evil desires, direct your aversions against those things that lie within the ambit of your moral purpose, and be ready to surrender everything that does not belong to you and which is not under your control, such as your body, material possessions, reputation, books, personal privacy, public office and freedom from public office? Unless you do so you will always be a slave subject

to impediments, pressure, and other people's control. Remember the hymn of Cleanthes, which begins :

Lead Thou me on, O Zeus and Destiny!

—whether it be to Rome, to Gyaros, to Athens or to prison—let them be all the same to you. Never yourself wish to go to any particular place, for if your wish be disappointed you will be unhappy, if it be gratified you may mistakenly attribute it to some merit of your own.

Student : But I should like to go to Athens ; Athens is a very beautiful place.

Epictetus : But happiness, freedom from annoyance, independence and peace are still more beautiful.

Student : Rome is too noisy and hectic.

Epictetus : If your mind is at peace, noise and similar little pothers will not disturb you. You must try and conquer unreasonable likes and dislikes, and try to bear your burdens lightly, not obstinately like an overladen donkey. If you don't, you will always be slave to some evil genius who can humour your fancies, or thwart them. Never forget that there is one way and one way only of attaining to peace of mind, and that is to surrender all claim to everything that lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose, never to assert ownership over any material possessions but to yield them all to God or to those whom He has appointed, to devote yourself exclusively to what really does belong to you, and to make your reading, writing and listening all conduce towards the same end. You must work hard at this. (I do not call the mere fact that you sit up half the night reading 'hard work' any more than I should call it 'hard work' if you lost your sleep over a woman.

If you lost your sleep for reputation's sake I should call you 'ambitious', if for money 'avaricious'; but if the object of your toil be the perfection of your governing principle, so that you may live all the time in harmony with Nature, then I should call you truly 'hard-working'.) I do not want you ever either to praise or blame any one for his good or bad actions,[1] but only for his judgements, for a man's judgements really belong to him, and according as they are sound or unsound his actions will be good or evil.

Remembering all I have said, rejoice in what you have and be content with what each day brings forth. If you see any of those things you have studied hard coming to fruition, as evidenced by improvement in your actions, you may congratulate yourselves. If, for instance, you have subdued an ill-natured spirit, a habit of sneering at others, a tendency to impertinence or foul-mouthedness, carelessness or negligence; if you are no longer tempted, or at least not so much, by things that formerly used to draw you, you may take courage, for you will then have far more cause for real satisfaction than if you were to be made a Consul or a Governor. For such things come to you from your own selves and from God. Never forget, then, who gave them to you, who you are to whom they are given, and the reason why they were given to you, and you will have no doubts as to how to please God or as to how you can become happy.

V

Epictetus: A good man never quarrels with any one and does his best to prevent other people quarrelling.

[1] See Book IV, Ch. viii, p. 251.

We have an excellent example of this (as of everything else) in the life of Socrates. In his *Symposium* Xenophon gives a number of instances of friction that Socrates smoothed over, and he also tells how patient he was with Thrasymachus, Polus and Callicles, and how uniformly gentle with his wife Xanthippe and his son Lamprocles, even when the latter cheeked him. Socrates never forgot that no one has any control over another person's governing principle and that we ought all to try and live always in harmony with Nature, minding our own business and not meddling with other people's concerns. It is no part of a man's duty to seek public office or marriage, but should office or a wife come to him, then he must do his duty by them ; but he has no power or control over wife or son to prevent them making mistakes. The true meaning of education is to learn what is yours and what is not yours.

When a man has learned this, he will have no reason for quarrelling. Nothing that happens to him will surprise him unless it be the unexpected moderation of those who wrong him ; so each time he is wronged he will be comforted by the reflection that things might have been much worse. If, for instance, he has been slandered, he will reflect that he might also have been knocked down ; if he was knocked down, that he might also have been stabbed ; if he was stabbed, that at all events he had got off with his life. He knows, of course, that Man is a tame animal whose nature it is to love his fellow-men, and that the punishment of being unjust is the capability of behaving unjustly. If your neighbour throws stones at you, he hurts himself far more than you ; if he breaks your windows, that can't

hurt *you—you* are not made of glass but of moral purpose.

How, then, you ask, are you to act when attacked like this? Well, if you want to act like a wild beast, you can bite back and throw stones yourself; but if you want to act as a man should, then examine the faculties God gave you when you were born. Did He give you faculties of brutality and revenge? Consider: when is a horse unhappy? Surely when he is deprived of his natural faculties—when he can't run, not when he can't sing 'cuckoo!' When is a dog miserable? Surely when he can't keep the scent, not when he can't fly. And similarly a man is wretched when he has lost his faculties of kindness and faithfulness, not when he can't strangle lions or (like Diogenes) embrace statues nude and in cold weather.[1]

We should, indeed, be sorry for the man who is unfortunate enough to lose the only things he really possesses—by which, as you know, I don't mean his family estates, his farm, house, inn or slaves (for none of these things really belong to him; they belong to and are under the control of others, to whomsoever God shall from time to time give them), but those qualities—gentleness, generosity, patience—which make him and by which we recognize him to be a man (even as we recognize good from spurious coin by the imprint upon them). If he has these qualities, then indeed he is our neighbour and fellow-traveller; but if he is bad-tempered, quarrelsome and querulous, and like the man who said, 'When I am in the mood I like punching people's heads', I do not regard him as a human being at all. The quality

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xii, p. 145; and *Manual*, 47, p. 308.

of humanity does not depend on having the external shape of a man. The lump of beeswax known as a 'cobbler's apple' has the same shape as an apple, but it isn't an apple ; to be an apple it would also have to taste and smell like an apple. So, too, a being may have the eyes and nose of a human being, but if he hasn't got the sound judgements of a human being he isn't one. If he won't listen to reason, admit it when he is in the wrong, if his sense of self-respect is dead, if he goes about looking for some one he can insult or kick, he is anything you like, a donkey or a wild beast, but not a man.

Student : But if I take everything 'lying down' people will despise me.

Epictetus : Not intelligent people—they never despise gentleness and self-respect. Possibly people without intelligence may despise you, but they don't matter and you needn't take any more notice of them than an artist would of the criticisms of those who know nothing about his art. Besides, how can any one hurt the real *you*, i.e. your moral purpose, or prevent you from utilizing your sense-perceptions in conformity with Nature ? So you see, if ignorant persons do abuse you, there is nothing for you to be disturbed about. So banish your fears and let everybody know that you propose to remain at peace with all men whatever they do, and that if any one tries to injure you, you will only be amused, for the stupid fellows won't know who you are or wherein your good and evil lie. All your real possessions will, of course, be far beyond their reach.

You are really very much in the same position as the garrison of a fortress, which, secure in its stout walls, ample munitions and supplies of all kinds, can

afford to laugh at its besiegers. What stout walls and munitions are to a fortress, sound judgements are to the soul of Man—they make it secure. Nothing else does. No walls are so strong that they cannot be breached, no body so mighty that it cannot be laid low ; there is no absolute security against theft ; there is no reputation so established that it cannot be attacked. All such things are doomed to perish, all may be taken by assault, and he who sets his heart upon them will always and inevitably be anxious, apprehensive, despondent and unhappy, and he will never get what he wants and will continually get what he doesn't want. That being so, why don't we avail ourselves of the one and only way of safety that is open to us, and surrender all those things that are transitory and set our hearts instead on those that are lasting and that we can use without let or hindrance ?

Remember that no man can do either good or harm to anybody else, but if his judgements are unsound he can do infinite harm to himself ; he may indeed destroy himself. It was because their wrong judgements about kingship and banishment—because they believed that kingship is the supreme good and banishment an intolerable evil—that Eteocles and Polyneices [1] were what they were. Every single being naturally pursues what it conceives to be its good and shuns what it imagines to be its evil, and holds that he who robs it of the one and involves it in the other, even though he be brother, son or father, is an enemy. We love nothing so much as we do what we consider to be our good. If then things that lie outside the ambit of our moral purpose, which do

[1] See Book II, Ch. xxii, p. 101 ; and *Manual*, 31, p. 301.

not belong to us and over which we have no control, are either good or evil, it follows that fathers, sons, and brothers may all be hateful to one another and that we live in a world of potential foes. But if the right kind of moral purpose and that alone be good, and if the wrong kind of moral purpose and that alone be evil, then there is no longer any occasion for bickering or quarrels. For what is there left for you to quarrel about? About things that don't interest you? And with whom will you quarrel? With the ignorant, the unfortunate, and those who are completely mistaken over their values?

Socrates knew all this and applied his knowledge to his everyday life at home, to his shrewish wife and obstreperous son. You remember how Xanthippe used to empty the water jug over his head and how she stamped on a cake Alcibiades had given him? If things that do not belong to us are as nothing to us, then incidents such as these are nothing either. Our real business is to develop our moral purposes aright, and if we do this, no single person, however powerful, no combination of persons, can compel us against our wills, for God has placed our wills under our sole and unfettered control. It is judgements such as these that create love in the home, concord in the State, peace among the nations, and that make a man grateful to God and serenely confident, knowing as he does that he is dealing with things that do not belong to him and to which he is indifferent.

Unfortunately, though we all accept this in theory we do not put it into practice. Like the Lacedaemonians who were said to be 'brave as lions in Peloponnesus but not as brave as foxes abroad', we are exceedingly valiant in our professions whilst in the

lecture room, but in our practice outside the veriest cowards.

vi

Student: I don't like people sympathizing with me.

Epictetus: What do they sympathize with you about? Have you done something which really merits sympathy, or are they abnormally soft-hearted? And anyhow, what are you going to do about it?

Student: No, I have done nothing to deserve sympathy.

Epictetus: Do you always behave in such a way as not to deserve sympathy?

Student: I believe so. At all events, I do not get it for what would really merit it, viz. for my mistakes; all I get it for is for being poor, not having a job, for being ill, and so forth.

Epictetus: I take it, then, that you maintain that none of the things you have mentioned are evil, and that it is possible for a poor man without either employment or position to be happy and to have no need of sympathy. You are quite right.

Now there are two ways of convincing people that you are in no need of sympathy. The first is to pretend that you are rich and highly placed. In order to do this you will have to borrow or somehow set yourself up with the trappings of a rich man—a retinue of slaves, quantities of silver plate with which to make as much display as you can, a wardrobe of swagger clothes and other fripperies; and you will have to pose as a friend of the upper ten and dine with them, or at least make other people think that you dine with them; and also you will have to

titivate your person, making use of all available adventitious aids—powder and paint and the rest of them—so as to appear younger, better-looking and of better birth than you actually are. That is one way ; it is the way of the waster.

The second way is more difficult—it is to try and do what even Zeus Himself has never succeeded in doing, and that is convince men of what things are good and what evil. That is a large order, especially as you have not yet succeeded in convincing yourself ! Which is surprising, for you have been living with yourself for a long time now and no one is more likely to be able to persuade you than yourself? Who likes and loves you more than you do yourself? How is it, then, that you have not yet taught yourself how to get rid of pain and worry and shame and so to be free ? You know quite well that there is only one way of doing this, and that is to surrender everything that lies outside the ambit of your moral purpose, confessing that they do not belong to you. But you don't. In what category do you place other people's opinions about you—as, for instance, that you are a fit object for their sympathy ?

Student : Amongst those things that lie outside the ambit of my moral purpose.

Epictetus : And which therefore mean nothing to you ?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus : But just now you were complaining that you resented other people's sympathy ! Well, as long as you are irritated and upset by other people's opinions about you, including their sympathy, you will not be able justly to claim that you have learned to distinguish good things from evil ones. Now you

know the teachings of philosophy and you must teach yourself how to apply them. You must be your own pupil. Never mind about other people; say to yourself: 'Whatever others may think or do, I know that no one is dearer to me than myself and that the most profitable thing for me to do from a purely selfish point of view is to lead a life in harmony with Nature. I say I know this truth, for I have been taught it by philosophers. But on self-examination I find to my surprise that I am no better off than I used to be; somehow my burdens are no lighter. Why should this be so? Am I too stupid? I don't think that can be the explanation, for in other matters—reading, writing, arithmetic, analysis of syllogisms, and in bodily sports such as wrestling, I have learned easily enough. Can it be that my mind has never really been convinced by the teachings of philosophy? No, it can't be that either, for I know quite well that I *am* convinced. From the very first my entire approval and concurrence was won, and the more I read and hear about such matters the more certain I feel. What, then, can be the explanation? Can it be that the old wrong judgements of my mind which I thought I had completely eradicated are still lurking in the background, and that the new judgements with which I thought I had replaced them are, like old pieces of armour that have been long stored away unused, rusty from lack of use, so that I can no longer make use of them or fit them to the facts of life? It may be so, and yet in other matters, such as reading and writing, I am not wont to be satisfied with having mastered the bare outlines, but I go over them again and again, considering all the difficulties I encounter from every

possible angle, filling in details, delving deeper, weighing arguments and fashioning new ones of my own. But I sadly fear me that in regard to these first principles of conduct which alone enable a man to rid himself of fear, grief, passions and all other impediments to freedom, I have been far too sketchy, that my study of them has been superficial and my practice of them—nil. And as a result, I find that I still worry myself about other people's opinions of me and that I still care whether they think me happy or unhappy, important or unimportant, deserving of sympathy or the reverse ! '

Now, if you were to speak those, or similar words, to yourself, would you not in fact be describing your real condition of mind ? Would you not at last be seeing yourself as you really are—how you think, like, dislike, avoid, choose, prepare, design and so forth ? And, if I have guessed right and put a true confession in your mouth, are you any longer surprised that people sympathize with you ?

Student : Yes, I am ; I really can't see that I have done anything that deserves sympathy, and I feel very hurt about it.

Epictetus : But surely people who feel hurt deserve sympathy ?

Student : I suppose so.

Epictetus : Then please accept my sympathy for feeling hurt. . . . Remember what Antisthenes said to Cyrus, King of Persia : ' It is the fate of Kings to be hated for their best deeds.' If people sympathize with me for being ill when in fact I am quite well, I simply smile quietly to myself ; and when they sympathize with me for being poor or for not holding office, I do the same, for my judgements in regard

to poverty and the holding of office are sound ones. People, of course, usually judge others by themselves ; they think that if they are subject to hunger, thirst and cold, every one else is too, and they sympathize accordingly. But so far as I am concerned, they are wrong. I am not subject to these things and do not need their sympathy. So when they sympathize I simply smile to myself and do not bother to set them right or to tell them that the only things with which I am concerned are sound and unfettered judgements ; for if I were to tell them that it would show that I attached some importance or value to their opinions —which I don't, for if I did, it would be a clear proof that my judgements are not really sound at all.

Student : I do not want other people to succeed more than I do.

Epictetus : It is very natural that those who apply themselves whole-heartedly to the attainment of their desire should achieve a greater measure of success than those who only do so lukewarmly or not at all. Those who pursue office and wealth will probably get what they want, and so will you if your chief aim be sound judgements and the dealing properly with your sense-perceptions. And then you can compare your respective results and see whose assent is more in harmony with Nature, who more often gets what he wants and avoids what he doesn't want, and whose designs, purposes and choices are the more successful, and which make the better men, sons, and parents.

Student : It seems to me that the mere fact that I do strive to make my judgements sound should qualify me to hold public office.

Epictetus : It is certainly *one* of the qualifications for

holding public office, probably the most important one, though not the most spectacular. But other qualifications are necessary too, e.g. a knowledge of law, and if you aspire to an appointment of that sort you must acquire that also. But the common saying is a true one, that no man can run two different jobs properly at one and the same time, and the business of acquiring sound judgements is a full-time one.[1]

Think how the man has to work who gets up at dawn in order to make himself agreeable to some minion of Caesar's, to find some one whom he can flatter or bribe, some ballet-dancer to gratify, some one to please with spiteful remarks about a rival. He prays and sacrifices only for the success of his schemes. He distorts the meaning of those lines of the Golden Verses of Pythagoras,[2]

> At night, before you close your eyes in sleep
> Recall to mind each hour of the now dead day,
> . . . . . .
> Asking: 'Where went I wrong? when was I right?'

making them apply to flattery—'Where went I wrong' in the way I flattered So-and-so?—and to life generally—'when was I right?' 'Well, obviously I wasn't right when I told So-and-so the truth—I ought to have lied to him, for even philosophers admit that lies are sometimes justified.' How could such a busy fellow have time to concentrate on forming sound judgements in addition to all his other activities?

But if you are, as you say you are, really striving to make your judgements sound and to make a proper

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. x, p. 261.
[2] Cp. Book III, Ch. x, p. 141.

use of your sense-perceptions, then you can improve upon the advice of Pythagoras and not merely

> At night . . .
> Recall to mind each hour of the now dead day,

but also every morning when you get up reflect what you still must do if you are to achieve serenity of mind and peace. Remind yourself what you are—not a mere body, property or reputation, but a rational being. And then ask yourself: 'Where went I wrong—in matters on which my serenity of mind and my peace depend? Have I been, even in the slightest degree, unfriendly, unkind or selfish? Have I failed to do anything that I should have done?'

You see, then, that there is a world of difference between what most men desire and do and pray for and the aim you say you have. It is no use hoping to succeed in both—it simply can't be done. You will never be as successful as they are in the pursuit of wealth, honours and positions, for you have not studied how to get them as much as they have; so they are bound to outstrip you in this regard, and then, very naturally, they will extend you a sort of patronizing sympathy. Is that surprising? And do you really mind? They wouldn't mind if you sympathized with them, because they are quite convinced that what they have got is the best that can be got. Your trouble is that you are not equally convinced that the best is not their best but actually lies in sound judgements and the right use of your sense-perceptions, for if you really believed this you would not want what they have as well as what you have, nor would you pay the slightest attention to anything they say about you whether by way of sympathy or otherwise.

vii

Epictetus : Why do men fear despots ?

Student : Because of their armed guards.

Epictetus : Why, then, isn't a child frightened of them ? Presumably because he doesn't understand what they could do to him. A grown man would understand well enough, but if for some reason life had become distasteful to him, he would not fear them either, would he ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : Nor would a man who is content either to go on living or to die just as God wishes ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : Nor one who is indifferent as to whether or no he have any material possessions, a wife or offspring, who in fact regards all such things as children regard toys—as something to play with ?

Student : No.

Epictetus : Now such indifference may be due to some great sorrow, to a disordered intellect, or, as in the case of the Galilaeans (Christians), to a habit of mind. But surely it can also be attained by the exercise of our reasoning powers ? Reason tells us that God designed the Universe and all things in it to be free and so that the parts thereof should subserve the interest of the whole. Now, Man is the only animal capable of comprehending how God orders His Universe, that he is himself a part of the Universe, and that it is the duty of each part to work for the common good. And as Man is by nature rational, high-minded and free, he knows that some things are completely under his control while other

things are under other people's control, the former being all those things that lie within and the latter all those things that lie without the ambit of the moral purpose; and that if he sets his personal 'good' or advantage in the former he will be free, serene in mind, happy, invulnerable, high-minded, reverent, always grateful to God and never finding fault with anything or anybody, whereas if he sets them in the latter he will always be impeded and obstructed, a slave to those who control them, and obsessed with the blasphemous belief that God is trying to harm him, and he will always be doing his utmost, by fair means or foul, to get more than his fair share of the goods of this world, and his character will be mean and contemptible.

Once a man has grasped all this, there is nothing to prevent him from living happily in obedience to God's laws, patiently awaiting whatever may chance, patiently bearing all that has already overtaken him. He can say to God: 'Dost Thou wish me to be poor? I am ready to show how little poverty amounts to when it is properly endured. Dost Thou wish me to hold office? I am ready to do so; or to lose my office. I am equally ready to bear troubles. I will bear them gladly. To be banished? I do not mind, for wherever I go it will be well with me, not because of the place itself to which I am banished, but because the judgements of my mind are sound and I shall take them with me. (For no man can rob me of them; they are indeed the only things I really possess, and as long as I possess them I want nothing else, no matter where I am or what I do.) Dost Thou wish me to die? I am content to die!' What is death? It is only the resolution of the body back

into those elements from which it was formed.[1] There is nothing in that to make a fuss about. No particle of matter will be destroyed ; nothing strange or unreasonable will occur. Surely it cannot be this purely natural development [2] that lies at the back of the fear that despots inspire ? Is it really the thought of death that makes the swords of his guards seem so long and sharp ? Well, they may seem so to others, but not to me, for no one has any power over me. I have been set free by God.[3] No one can ever again reduce me to slavery. Of course, any one stronger than I can seize my body and my property, fling my body into prison or banish it, but none of these things can possibly affect *me*. Really a despot's power is extremely limited.

So what have I to fear ? Do you suppose I mind having some great man's door slammed in my face by his flunkey ? Let him slam it if he likes ; I don't care !

Student : Then why go to his door at all ?

Epictetus : I only go if for some reason it becomes my duty to go.

Student : And you say you don't mind if they won't admit you ?

Epictetus : No, why should I ? I should have done all in my power, and, so far as I personally am concerned, if some one does not want to see me, I don't want to see him. I always want the thing that actually happens, because I realize that God knows better than I do. He is my Master, I am His servant and follower, and my choices, likes, dislikes, and wishes

[1] See Book III, Ch. xiii, p. 148.
[2] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxiv, p. 191.
[3] See Book I, Ch. xix, p. 24.

are precisely the same as His. So no one can really bar their door against me, for I have no wish to enter it. And the reason why I have no desire to enter is simply that if I did enter I should not get anything that I wanted. What does a man who manages to force his way into Caesar's palace get? A Governorship, a Procuratorship or some honour. Such things are valueless to me. But if Caesar could distribute sound judgements such as would fit a man to be a Governor or a Procurator, ah, then it *would* be worth my while to try and push my way in! Not even children will scramble for things of no value at all, such as bits of broken earthenware, but they will scramble fast enough if some one throw dried figs or nuts on the roadway. And men will scramble for Governorships, Praetorships, Consulships and money; they will indeed do more than scramble—they will put up with anything to get them, with insults such as doors slammed in their faces, with beatings; they will kiss the hands of those in whose power it lies to give such things; they will even kiss the hands of their slaves! But *I* won't! Such things, so far as I am concerned, are worth far less than dried figs and nuts! But if when some one is scattering about such things a dried fig happens to fall at my feet, I don't mind picking it up and eating it; for after all a fig is a fig. But neither figs nor anything else that philosophers characterize as 'not good' are worth grovelling for or trying to get by flattery or interest.

What use to them are the long sharp swords of a despot's guards?

Student: They can kill.

Epictetus: So can fevers and falling tiles. Must I

then quake at the sight of a roof tile? There are limits to my stupidity. I know perfectly well that what is born must sometime die, otherwise the world would come to a standstill and the progress of the Universe would be impeded, while so far as I am concerned, what difference can it make whether death come to me through a fever, a falling tile or a soldier's sword?[1] Death through a soldier's sword would, indeed, have the advantage of being quicker and less troublesome. So, as I neither fear what a despot can do to me nor want any of the things that he can give, why should I revere or stand in awe of him or his guards? Why should I thrill with pleasure if he notices me kindly? Why should I boast of it to others? He is no Socrates or Diogenes whose approbation would really encourage me. I have no desire to model my character on his. I have, of course, no objection to obeying his commands so long as they are reasonable and right; but were he to bid me do something like the Thirty Tyrants bade Socrates when they ordered him to go to Salamis and arrest Leon[2] and bring him back to Athens, I should refuse and tell him to get somebody else to do his dirty work; and if he threatened to imprison me or behead me and throw my unburied corpse to the fowl of the air, I should be quite indifferent. The same fate sometimes overtakes despots themselves and their servants; while as far as my corpse is concerned, it would be silly to try and frighten me in that way. Only children and fools and persons who have never studied philosophy are ignorant of the fact that his corpse is not the man himself. The man is something

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. vi, p. 54.
[2] See Book IV, Ch. i, p. 221.

quite different ; he is not flesh, bone or sinews, be they alive or dead, but the governing principle which makes use of them and of his sense-perceptions.

Student : Statements like these make men despise the laws.

Epictetus : Nonsense ! they have just the opposite effect ; they make men far more ready to obey the laws, for through them we learn to surrender all material things, our bodies, property, parents, brothers, children, everything in fact except our judgements. You are better off than I am as regards the former, but I am far better off than you as regards the latter, for I have taken much trouble over my judgements and my reasoning powers—to find out what they are and how they work—whereas you have never bothered your head about them, have you ?

Student : Then you are really better off than I am in respect of the most important and valuable things of all ?

Epictetus : You've said it ! But there is nothing to prevent you from becoming as rich as I am if you care to direct your attention, abilities, and energies in the right direction. Indeed, you are exceptionally well placed for doing so, for you have books, leisure and people to help you. The thing to do is to make a start, if only a modest one. Set to work on your governing principle—consider what it is, whence it comes, and what its functions are, and how it makes use of everything else, checking everything, rejecting, selecting. Why delay ?

viii

Never praise or blame any one for their good or bad actions [1] or for their skill or lack of skill, for if you do you may be suspected of precipitancy or malice. A criticism such as 'So-and-so doesn't take long enough over his bath' is a silly one to make, for he may have a perfectly good reason for hurrying. Haste in bathing is in itself neither good nor bad, but may become either if the underlying motive is right or wrong. But to assess the rightness or wrongness of the underlying motive, i.e. to determine whether the judgement of the man's mind which inspired any particular action is right or wrong, is not easy. You may be deceived by appearances, for a man's actions are not conclusive proof of what he intended. The clumsy wielder of an axe or an adze may be a carpenter, but even if he is it does not follow that all carpenters are clumsy and useless ; a juster inference would be : 'He is obviously not a carpenter, for he doesn't know how to use an axe properly.' And similarly, if you heard some one singing badly you would be more inclined to say, 'He can't be a musician', than, 'So that's how musicians sing!' Curiously enough, it is only when they see some one behaving badly that people say, 'Oh, he must be a philosopher!' and conclude that all philosophers are humbugs! And this is because people have a clear idea of what constitutes a carpenter, a musician, an artist or an artisan, but are very foggy in their minds as to what constitutes a philosopher, and so give undue weight to external appearances. It is not his rough cloak or long beard or bushy hair that

[1] See Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 232.

make the philosopher, but his superior knowledge of what his reasoning faculty is and how properly to use it. That a man is a philosopher and that he is a living proof of the value of philosophy can only be demonstrated by observing his actions. But you will have to observe very carefully, for the true philosopher does not make a parade of his philosophy. Euphrates used to say (and he was right in saying so) : ' I concealed the fact that I was a philosopher for as long as I could, for I knew that when I did a good action I did it for my own satisfaction and not to get any credit out of it. It was for my own peace of mind and to please God that I strove always to look my best and to maintain a calm unruffled demeanour. Besides, I felt that if no one knew anything about it, then if I made mistakes, the only one to suffer would be myself, and I should bring no discredit on philosophy by my failure. And, as a matter of fact, people used to wonder how it was that one who, like myself, was personally acquainted with all the leading philosophers of the time, and who used to frequent their society, made no claim to being a philosopher himself. My idea was that it would be far better for them to find out that I was not by what I looked like but by what I did.'

If then you want to be sure whether a man is a philosopher or not, the sort of things you must watch out for are the way he eats, drinks, sleeps, bears misfortunes, is abstemious, helps others, exercises his likes and dislikes, and how he behaves towards his fellow-men whether they be relatives, friends or strangers. And of course you must be yourself able to appreciate the value of such evidence when you have got it. Some people are so blind that they

would not even recognize Hephaestus as a competent smith unless they saw him wearing his little felt cap.

This is why so many people failed to recognize even Socrates as a philosopher, and used to ask him to introduce them to *real* philosophers ! That suited him very well and he used to do so at once, inwardly delighted that he could be a philosopher without being bothered with being dubbed one. For the only thing that interested him was how to be a good man. What would you say is the distinguishing characteristic of a good man ? Is it to have a lot of pupils or to be able to explain knotty problems ? No, indeed ! It is to be beyond the reach of any man's hurt, never to need any man's help and yet always to get what you want. To achieve that goal a good man is prepared to take any amount of trouble, but he isn't such an idiot as to waste his time and energy in telling everybody what he is aiming at, or boasting about it when he has attained it. It is quite enough for him to know that he *has* attained it.

Now, it is not every good man who should preach. Preaching is reserved for the Cynic, who alone is worthy to share in the rule of God. He alone may say : ' My friends, God has sent me to you as a witness that you are looking for peace and happiness where they are not. For behold, I have no property, house, wife, children, no, nor even a bed or shirt or piece of furniture,[1] and yet see how healthy I am. Test me and be convinced that I really have found peace, and when you are convinced I will tell you how I won it, and then you can follow my example.' It is the Cynic's duty to speak like this, and it is a

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 167 ; and Book IV, Ch. xi, p. 265.

noble duty which has been assigned to him by God Himself, and he must be extremely careful never to do anything that will belie his words or lead any one to think that material possessions are in any way better worth having than virtue, and so he must never hanker after anything or anybody—some particular place to live in, some special mode of life, some one person—and he must live openly, not sheltered as other men are by their house-walls and doors and door-keepers, but by his integrity alone. And he must make the most of his personal appearance and, like Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, must 'never look pale and never shed a tear'.[1]

Such is the real Cynic. Those who claim to be Cynics on the strength of their long hair, rough cloaks, bare shoulders and rude, quarrelsome manner towards every one they meet of whose clothes they disapprove, are not Cynics at all. To be a real Cynic necessitates an arduous and uninterrupted training, harder even than that of a soldier who prolongs his drilling all through the winter. Special attention has to be paid to the exercise of choices—they must be exercised reasonably, not fancifully as a neurotic picks at his food or capriciously like a pregnant woman. The first thing a man should do is to conceal what he is aiming at; he ought to practise his philosophy almost covertly. He should learn a lesson from the growth of seeds. A seed has first to be buried in the earth and its growth, which for a time is hidden, should be slow and steady if it is eventually to bear the best fruit. If it be forced too rapidly, it may be killed by a late frost or an abnormally early summer. So, too, with Man; if he tries to rush his progress without

[1] *Odyssey*, XI, 529.

proper training, and if he poses as a great man before he is one, then often there

> . . . comes a frost, a killing frost,
> And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
> His greatness is a-ripening—nips his root . . .[1]

No, we must ripen slowly, sheltered from extremes of weather, establish our roots properly first, and then put forth our branches one by one, till finally and automatically we bear the fruits of perfection.

Bulls and dogs know their own natures and powers, and when occasion arises they defend themselves instinctively and need no one to urge them to do so ; so, too, we must know our nature and powers and use them in conformity with Nature without having to be prompted.

ix

Epictetus : If you ever feel tempted to envy some one his good job, remember that in fact you are better off than he is because you don't want one. Nor need you envy a rich man his money, for you have something worth more than money ; viz. no desire for it ; or any man his beautiful wife, for you can get on perfectly well without one. What indeed would not office-holders, millionaires and the husbands of beautiful women not give to be able to do without what they have gone to so much trouble to obtain ? So you see you are infinitely better off than they are. In the same way as a man with fever cannot slake his thirst however much he drinks, so too office-holders, the rich and those with beautiful wives cannot satisfy their appetite for such things by possessing them.

[1] Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, Act 3, Scene 2.

On the contrary, the more they have the more they want, and however much they get, they are still dissatisfied and become a prey to jealousy and the fear of losing them, and their words, thoughts, and deeds deteriorate.

If you lose position, wealth or wife, it is of very little consequence. But there are other things that you have the loss of which would be a very serious matter. If, for instance, you lost your modesty ; if instead of reading the philosophic works of Chrysippus and Zeno you were to read sex novels ; if instead of making men like Socrates and Diogenes your examples you were to approve those who corrupt and seduce the largest number of women, and if you started dolling yourself up and scenting yourself so as to try and do the same yourself. There was a time, not so very long ago either, when your chief concern was how to have pure thoughts and decorous speech and to associate with decent men, and then you used to sleep, go about, dress and converse as a decent man should, and it would never even have occurred to you to do any of the things I have mentioned. There was a time when you would have thought the loss of self-respect and decency a very serious matter, and when you were very anxious to maintain your position firmly as a sayer of right things and a doer of good deeds. Have you been dislodged from that position ? If you have, you must blame yourself and no one else. Supposing somebody had told you that *I* was being forced against my will to commit adultery, to dress extravagantly, to scent myself and so forth, wouldn't you have flown to my aid and suppressed him ? Of course you would ! But surely if you could come to my rescue you can come to your own ?

It is so much easier to come to your own rescue—there is no need for scenes or free fights or legal proceedings, but only just to talk quietly to and persuade yourself. Who is more likely to be able to persuade you than you yourself? And then, of course, the first thing that will happen is that you will condemn yourself for the way in which you have been carrying on. But you need not therefore despair of yourself or give up all hopes of or efforts for improvement. Don't imagine you are in the grip of some strong current which will sweep you away and against which it is vain to struggle ; think rather of how when a boy who is learning wrestling has been thrown, he jumps up and straightway starts another bout so that he may gradually develop his strength. That's the kind of way in which you ought to act, and remember it is much easier to develop your will-power than it is to develop your muscles. Will a thing to happen and you will suddenly find it has happened ; but if you are too lazy to will, then of course you will slip backwards. You must find your salvation (or your destruction) from within.

Student : But suppose I do all this, what good shall I get out of it?

Epictetus : Instead of being shameless you will be self-respecting once more ; instead of faithless, faithful ; instead of dissolute, self-controlled. Isn't that worth having? But if it means nothing to you, well, then you must go to the devil in your own way.

X

Epictetus : All our difficulties and perplexities arise in respect of material things. How often do men

exclaim : 'What am I to do?' 'How on earth shall I manage it?' 'I am afraid of that happening!' All such expressions refer to matters that lie outside the ambit of the moral purpose. On the other hand, how seldom do we hear any one saying : 'How can I avoid assenting to what is false?' 'How can I stick steadfastly to what is true?' 'How am I always to get what I want and avoid what I don't like?' And yet, of course, every one could easily accomplish all these things and have no difficulties or perplexities about them at all, if only they would act in accordance with Nature. They would then feel perfectly secure, for they would have got free from the things that agitate and alarm the majority of men, and would realize that their true concern is with those things that belong to them and not with those that are under somebody else's control.

Does not the future lie outside the ambit of the moral purpose?

Student : Yes.

Epictetus: And do not 'good' and 'evil' lie within it?

Student : They do.

Epictetus : And are you not absolutely free to deal as you will with those things that lie within it?

Student : I am.

Epictetus : Then there is no need for you to ask : 'How on earth am I to manage it?' for whatever happens you will turn it into good so that it will prove a blessing to you.[1] You will be like Herakles when he was called upon to face mighty lions and boars and savage men ; the mightier, the more savage your foes, the greater your victory will be.

[1] See Book III, Ch. xx, p. 159 ; and *Manual*, 18, p. 293, and 32, pp. 301 & 302.

Student : But if I succumb ?

Epictetus : Then you will die a noble death while doing a noble action. You have to die some time, you know, and when your hour comes you will be doing something or other—farming, digging, trading, discharging the duties of a Consul, or maybe suffering from dyspepsia or dysentery. What would you rather be doing at that moment ? Personally, I hope I shall be doing something worthy of my manhood, something kind, noble, and for the common weal ; or if not that, at least something that is not evil, something that is lawful, something that is conducing to my self-improvement and to the progress of my governing principle in dealing properly with my sense-perceptions, in bringing me peace of mind and in enabling me to do my duty to my neighbours, and something that is helping me to master the third field of study which is concerned with avoidance of rashness in judgement.

If death finds me thus occupied, then I can lift up my voice to God and say : ' I have never neglected those faculties that Thou didst give me so that I might understand how Thou dost rule Thy Universe and obey Thy laws. I have never deliberately done anything to dishonour Thee. I have never prostituted my five senses, nor been false to those instincts that Thou didst implant in me. I have never cavilled at Thee. I have never grumbled at anything that has befallen me or wished it had been otherwise. I have never failed to do my duty to my neighbours. I am grateful to Thee for creating me and for everything that Thou hast given me. I am more than satisfied with the length of time that Thou hast allotted me in which to use Thy gifts, and I now

willingly surrender them back to Thee for Thee to do with them as seems best to Thee, for they are all Thine and Thou didst only lend them to me for a season.' Surely that is the proper frame of mind in which to die. Can you suggest a better one?

But if you want to achieve this, never allow yourself to be upset by trifles, and never forget that though a little thing is a little thing, faithfulness in little things is a very great thing. You cannot possibly concentrate on the strengthening and development of your governing principle if you are thinking all the time how you are to get that consulship, that field, or that attractive slave. The moment you start hankering after things that do not belong to you, you lose that which does belong to you. You can't get away from it. In this world nothing is done, nothing is won, save at a price.[1] Does that surprise you? Come, you know perfectly well that to become a consul would cost you many a sleepless night, many a weary trudge; that you would have to waste hours waiting obsequiously, cap in hand, to see men of influence to try and buy their good word—and when you had bought it, what would be your reward?—twelve bundles of rods (the consular fasces), the privilege of sitting a few times in the Grand Stand at the Circus and of paying for some of the Games there as well as for refreshments for those who voted for you. That is all you get by becoming consul, and if you are prepared to go to so much trouble for so very little, won't you go to any trouble at all to win imperturbability, peace of mind, the power of really sleeping when you sleep, of being really awake when you are awake, contempt of danger and freedom from all

[1] Cp. *Manual*, 12, p. 291.

anxiety? And if while you are busy trying to win such inestimable boons as these, you happen to lose some of your material possessions, or if somebody manages to get something you hoped to get yourself, you will never regret it, for you will be more than compensated by what you have won. As I say, you can't expect to get such inestimable boons for nothing. 'No man can run two different jobs properly at one and the same time.' [1]

You cannot give constant and proper attention both to your governing principle and to purely mundane affairs. You must make one or other your main aim. If you concentrate on the former, then, if your oil be spilled, your furniture and books burned, you will remain undisturbed, for you will deal with such sense-perceptions in conformity with Nature. If you cannot obtain food, the worst that can happen to you will be that you will die, and, as you know, we all have to come one day to that safe harbour of refuge. That is why nothing that at first sight appears to be a difficulty is really difficult. If the smoke makes your eyes smart too much, there is nothing to prevent you from leaving the house; if the difficulties of life are too much for you, there is always a door of escape. So why lose sleep by worrying? Better far say to yourself: 'My "good" and my "evil" are both under my sole control; no man can rob me of the one or force me into the other against my will. So I can sleep in peace, for I know that everything that is really mine is perfectly safe, while as for what does not belong to me, let him have it to whom God gives it, for to whom it shall belong and on what conditions is entirely a matter for Him. It is not for me to

[1] See Book IV, Ch. vi, p. 243.

wish for what He has not thought fit to give me. God has not appointed me to decide who shall possess this or that. I am quite satisfied with what is under my control and I intend to make full use of it ; but the things that are under the control of others are no concern of mine.'

No man who really believes this loses any sleep or tosses open-eyed on his bed, for there is nothing to keep him awake. Even if some dear friend died it would not disturb his slumbers, for he knows that none of his friends are immortal and that all of them, and himself too, must sometime die. 'Ah, but', says one, 'I thought I should be the first to be taken and that my friend would bring my son up for me.' No doubt, but he thought wrong. Anyhow, fretting won't mend matters. His dead friend who used to wait on him won't wait on him any more, and he will have to find some one else to do it in his stead. If some one breaks your stew-pot you don't have to starve to death, you buy a new one. It would be silly, for a bagatelle of that sort, to mouth that line of Homer,

> No fearfuller thing than this could ever chance.[1]

What, by the way, do you think is the *real* meaning of that line ? I think it means that even the strongest, the handsomest, and those with the longest pedigrees, will always be unhappy unless their judgements are sound.

[1] *Iliad*, XIX, 321.

xi

Epictetus : Some people, it is true, question whether Man is really a social being,[1] but not even they, I imagine, deny that he has an instinct for cleanliness, and that this instinct is one of the chief points of distinction between him and the lower animals. In fact, if we happen to see some animal, like a cat, busy cleaning itself, we are apt to exclaim : 'Why, it is really almost human !' So, too, if we are annoyed with one, we say : 'Well, of course, it is only an animal !' We believe that this special characteristic of cleanliness comes to us from the Gods. They are by nature pure and undefiled ; but we, owing to the grossness of our mortal bodies, can never be as pure as They, though our faculty of reason bids us try to make ourselves as pure as we can.

Now, the highest form of purity is that of the soul. Purity of the soul consists in having sound judgements, for the functions of the soul are, as you know, to choose, refuse, like, dislike, prepare, purpose, and assent rightly. We aim at purity of soul, for it is only the pure soul that is secure. Similarly, impurity of soul consists in unsound judgements.

And as far as we can, we must also aim at cleanliness of body. Our bodies cannot, from their very nature, always be perfectly clean. It is only natural, for instance, that our noses should discharge mucus ; their very structure, in fact, is designed to facilitate its discharge, and our hands are given us, amongst other things, to enable us to blow our noses. Our feet, too, are bound sometimes to get dirty, with mud or other filth, and that is one of the reasons why God has

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxiii, p. 28 ; and Fragment i, p. 273.

given us water—that we may wash them. Again, it is of course impossible to eat without some impurities remaining on the teeth, and so Nature bids us clean them. Once again, we cannot help our bodies getting covered with dust and sweat which need washing off, and that we may do so God has given us water, oil, our hands, towels and all sorts of things. Smiths remove the rust from their tools, and you yourself insist on clean plates for your food. If you can wash your plate, surely you can wash your body!

Student: Why should I?

Epictetus: For two reasons: *first:* because you are a man, and *secondly*: so as not to be a nuisance to other people. Do you think other people enjoy smelling you? Have you no consideration for those who have to sit next to you? If you won't wash, you had better migrate into the desert and enjoy your smells to yourself! People who live in a city should think of others. If you had charge of a horse, wouldn't you groom it occasionally? Well, you are in charge of your own body, and you ought to wash it and rub it down and make it such that nobody will turn his back on you and avoid you. For every one avoids a dirty brute—one who looks dirty and stinks. One puts up with some poor devil who has been accidentally bespattered with dung, for that is a misfortune that might happen to anybody; but not to wash betokens an ingrained slovenliness which is an outward and visible sign of a really common nature.

Student: But Socrates very rarely bathed.

Epictetus: Sez you! Why, his body was radiant! It was so sweet and attractive that every one was in love with him and liked sitting next to him far more

than they did sitting next to those who merely had good figures or regular features.

Student : Well, Aristophanes says he was dirty.

Epictetus : Aristophanes said lots of things, most of them false,. and he was particularly fond of telling lies about Socrates. For instance, he said that Socrates used to steal clothes out of the wrestlers' dressing-rooms ! No, all his contemporaries are agreed that he was a most cleanly person, pleasant not only to listen to but to look at. And we have similar evidence about Diogenes. A real philosopher is in fact very careful about his personal appearance and always tries to appear calm and cheerful, for he knows that people are easily ' put off ' by unpleasant looks, and the very last thing he wants to do is to repel them from the study of philosophy. If you heard a man who looked like an ex-convict preaching and saying :[1] ' My brethren, I have nothing and I want nothing. I have no house or city or home and I am far from the land where I was born, and yet I assure you that I am happier, more contented and healthier than any one who is merely well born and rich,' would you believe him or pay any attention to him ? I doubt if I should. I should probably feel far more inclined to say : ' If that's what philosophy makes one look like, it's no use to me ! '

No, of two embryo philosophers, give me the one who brushes his hair and parts it neatly rather than the one who leaves it unkempt and dirty, for the former is obviously a young man who has a sense of and a penchant for beauty, and though as yet he may not know exactly in what beauty consists, he is at least trying to find out. And to him I say : ' You are

[1] See Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 167 ; and Book IV, Ch. viii, p. 253.

right to strive after beauty; but true beauty does not lie in your body or in material things, and no matter how hard you search you will never find it there; it lies within you, in your reasoning faculty, and you will find it in the proper exercise of your choices, refusals, likes, and dislikes.' But what could I say to the latter, who has no sense or appreciation of beauty at all? He and I have no point of contact, and if I were to say to him, 'Beauty is here, not there,' my words would convey nothing to him. I might just as well tell a pig not to wallow in mud. Xenocrates was successful in influencing Polemo [1] because Polemo was a young man with an instinctive craving for beauty, only he was looking for it in the wrong place.

Have you ever noticed that those animals that live most in men's company—horses and dogs—are very much more cleanly than the rest, such as pigs, geese, &c.?

No one wants you to doll yourself up. Try, of course, to beautify your moral purpose as much as possible; but as far as your body is concerned, all that is needed is that you should keep it sufficiently clean so as not to annoy other people. Avoid eccentricity and exaggeration; overwashing is as unnecessary as underwashing.

xii

Epictetus: Remember that a mistake made to-day weakens your position generally and that ground once lost is very hard to regain; so you must never relax your attention even for a moment. If you do, you will develop a habit of not paying attention, and

[1] See Book III, Ch. i, p. 116.

that will soon evolve into one of postponing paying attention, and you will then become reconciled to the idea of postponing indefinitely any attempt at trying to live in harmony with Nature ; and finally you will abandon any intention altogether. So whatever you do—whether it be work or play—do it with all your might. There is no part of your life that you can afford to scamp ; nothing is done better when you are wool-gathering. Do you suppose that a carpenter does his best work, or that the helmsman steers his ship better, if they are thinking of anything and everything except the job in hand ? No, once let your mind get into the habit of wandering and you will soon lose the power of concentration, and then you will be swayed not by reason but by your whims.

Student : Are there any things in particular to which I should pay attention ?

Epictetus : Yes, you should pay special attention to certain general principles, which must indeed always be at your finger-ends, and without which you should neither go to bed, nor get up, nor drink, nor eat, nor do anything ; viz. ' No man has any power over another's moral purpose,' and, ' One's good and evil lie only in one's moral purpose.' No one therefore but myself can do me either good or harm,[1] and so I am perfectly safe and have no business to be frightened or upset by anything—bullies, sickness, poverty, or difficulties, all of which lie outside the ambit of my moral purpose.

Student : As a matter of fact, I am very upset to-day.

Epictetus : Why ?

Student : Because unfortunately I have ruffled my employer up the wrong way.

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. xiii, p. 270.

Epictetus: But your employer is not your moral purpose, is he?

Student: No.

Epictetus: Then why bother whether he is ruffled or not?

Student: Well, he is a very important person.

Epictetus: No doubt he thinks he is. But you have to obey and please Some One who is far more important than him, namely God, and after Him yourself. God has put you in your own sole charge. He has given you your moral purpose, and standards to enable you to use it properly; and as long as you stick to those you need not worry about anything else or pay any attention to what people say. If you are properly trained you will never be upset but will despise the ill-informed criticisms of ignorant folk, just as scientists, artists, carpenters, and cobblers all laugh at people who find fault with their specialities of which they know nothing.

Well, as I was saying, you must have these principles at your finger-ends and do nothing without them, and keep your attention riveted on them; and, as He that is mighty has ordained, you must devote yourself wholly to those things that lie within the ambit of your moral purpose and not run after material things that are not under your control. And you must also remember who you are, and always try to do your best, especially in regard to your social relations, in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place you. You must remember, too, that there is a proper time for everything, a time for work and a time for play, a time to be serious and a time to jest; that some things are fitting, others out of place; that there are some people with whom we should associate, others

whom we should avoid ; and that in all we do we should never fall short of the highest standard of our moral purpose. One thing is certain, and that is that if ever you deviate even in the slightest degree from any of these principles, you will lose by it.

Student : But if I stick to them, then I shall never make any mistakes at all ?

Epictetus : I didn't say that. It is, in fact, impossible never to make any mistakes at all, but it is possible never to make a mistake purposely. If we are constantly on the *qui vive*, we shall avoid making a certain proportion of the mistakes that we should otherwise have made. But you must start being on the *qui vive* to-day—now. If you say, ' Oh, it will be time enough if I start to-morrow,' it is tantamount to saying that you don't mind how many mistakes you make to-day and that for the present you are quite content to be angry, envious and generally shameless ! If it really be worth your while to be on the *qui vive* to-morrow, it is certainly much more worth your while being on it to-day ; if not, you may as well postpone being so indefinitely.

xiii

Epictetus : If somebody tells us all about his private affairs, apparently quite unreservedly, we are often tempted to reciprocate and tell him all about ours. We feel perhaps that it would be a little unfair that after he has gratified our curiosity we should not return the compliment and gratify his ; and also that we can do so quite safely, for he knows that if he betrayed our confidence we could get square with him by betraying his. And another thing is, that no one wants to give

the impression of being secretive. As a matter of fact, it often happens that if, after we have listened to their story, we do not reciprocate spontaneously in this way, people say they think we ought to !

A knowledge of this piece of elementary psychology lies at the bottom of the procedure adopted by the *agents provocateurs* of the political police at Rome. As you are sitting in one of the public gardens a very ordinary-looking person who, though you don't know it, is really a detective, sits down beside you apparently by chance, and begins talking and presently criticizes Caesar and his doings, and you, imagining that since it was he who started this kind of talk he must be all right, proceed to agree with him and then add a few strictures of your own ; and the next thing is you find yourself arrested ! It is, of course, extremely foolish to tell all your innermost thoughts to strangers. One may know oneself to be discreet and a safe recipient of confidences for others, but you can't tell that other people are ; and if you are betrayed and then revenge yourself by betraying your betrayer's confidences, you will, it is true, involve him in your own ruin, but what good will that do you ? Indeed, you would do far better not to try and revenge yourself in this way, but to remember that it was not really he who injured you, but you yourself, and so you should blame yourself, not him. For one person cannot harm another ; [1] it is a man's own actions that either harm or help him. So by refraining from revenge you will at least have the satisfaction of not sinking to his level.

Student : But it does seem rather unfair to accept another person's confidences and then to refuse to give him one's own.

[1] Book IV, Ch. xii, p. 267.

Epictetus : Not if you didn't ask for his confidences, not if he made them voluntarily and did not stipulate in advance that you should reciprocate. One who is a babbler by nature has no right to assume that everybody he meets is a babbler too, and if he were it would be the best of all reasons for not confiding in him. The confirmed babbler is like a jug with a hole in it, a discreet man like a jug that is sound ; you can pour wine safely into the latter, but if you pour it into the former you have no right to complain when it all leaks away. If you are a dependable person and one who concerns himself solely with the perfecting of his governing principle and who does not bother himself about things that lie outside the ambit of his moral purpose ; if, in short, you are like an unbroken jug, then you will have no need to ask for confidences—people will entreat you to listen to them. For every one is in need of a sound vessel, a dependable friendly adviser who will share his troubles and by sharing them lighten them. But if you are one who neglects his governing principle, who hankers after riches, offices, honours, and all those things that lie outside the ambit of the moral purpose, then no one but a fool would dream of telling you anything.

Student : I think that if I trust some one, he should trust me.

Epictetus : Not if by ' trusting ' you mean ' confiding-in '. The real reason you confide your secret thoughts to any one who will listen to you, even though you hardly know them, is not because you really trust them —how can you ?—but because you are a babbler by nature and can't help tittle-tattling. And if in any particular case you really do have cause to trust a certain person, then you confide in him because of

your need to confide in a responsible person, not because you want him to reciprocate. I repeat: confidences should only be made to those who are worthy to receive them, and the fact that a man is a babbler is proof that he is not worthy. No, believe me, the man who busies himself earnestly with things that lie outside the ambit of his moral purpose and who is therefore subject to continual pressure and hindrance, needs but little inducement to talk—he will blurt out everything without your having to resort to extreme measures like torture; a smile from a girl, a favour from one of Caesar's courtiers, the promise of a good job, a legacy, a thousand and one things like that, will, any of them, unloosen his tongue. That is not the man to choose for a confidant. The only man you should confide in is one who has sound judgements, who is dependable, and who can say from the bottom of his heart: 'The only things I care for are those that really belong freely and unrestrainedly to me; nothing else interests me in the slightest degree.' But where, *where* is such a man to be found?

FRAGMENTS

i

'WHAT do I care' (said Epictetus), 'whether matter be composed of atoms, i.e. discrete and indivisible units, or of fire and earth? All I want to know is what "good" and "evil" are, and what I should properly like and dislike, choose and refuse, so that I may regulate my life accordingly. A knowledge of the ultimate constitution of matter may very well prove to be beyond the grasp of the human brain, and even if it were not, what would the knowledge of it profit us? The labour of acquiring such knowledge would be more than the knowledge is worth. On the other hand, it is well worth while labouring to try and comprehend the meaning of the command graven on the front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi: "Seek to know what you really are." [1] What exactly does that mean? I suppose a member of a chorus would interpret it as meaning that he should try and sing in time and harmony with the rest of the chorus, and sailors and soldiers that they should co-operate to the best of their ability with their comrades. If this be so, it seems a fair inference that Nature does not intend Man to live alone but to work with his fellow-men.[2] But as to what Nature is, whether She really exists, and if She does how She administers the Universe, is another

[1] See Book III, Ch. i, p. 117.
[2] Cp. Book I, Ch. xxiii, p. 28.

matter over which, it seems to me, there is no need to speculate.'

ii

He who is dissatisfied with what God has given him does not know the proper way to live ; whereas he who is content and does his best to make a proper use of what he has is a good man.

iii

Earth, sea, sun, stars, plants, animals, all are subservient to the laws of God ; and so too are our bodies, in health and in sickness, in youth and in age, and under all conceivable circumstances. Such being the case, it is only reasonable that our will, the one thing that is under our unrestricted control, should also be subservient to Him. For God is mightier than we are and knows better than we do what is good for us, and it was He who placed us where we are. It would be unreasonable not to make our wills subservient to His, and not only unreasonable but futile, for if we rebel against Him we embark on a vain struggle which will only involve us in pain and misery.

iv

God has divided things into those which are under our sole and unfettered control and those which are not. Of the former, the most important (that in virtue of which He Himself is happy and which we should safeguard in every possible way) is the power of making

a proper use of our sense-perceptions. If we use these aright we become free, secure, cheerful, dependable, just, law-abiding, self-controlled—in a word, virtuous. But everything else which is not under our control—such as children, country, body and the rest—we should leave and surrender entirely and gladly to God.

v

Here is a fine and altogether admirable story of Lycurgus of Lacedaemon: A certain young man named Alcander struck him and blinded him in one of his eyes; whereupon the Spartans handed him over to Lycurgus to wreak his vengeance on him in any way he liked; but he, to their astonishment, instead of harming him, was kind to him, educated him and transformed him from a young ruffian into a good man and a decent citizen, and then restored him to his friends.

vi

The chief function of Nature is to teach us what is befitting, reasonable and right, so that when we make our choices we may choose correctly.

vii

Only stupid or wicked people believe that a man is contemptible if he does not try to injure his enemies. A man is contemptible not when he fails to hurt but when he fails to help.

viii

It is and always has been and always will be the nature of the Universe that the processes of creation remain constant, not only for men and beasts on this earth and for the Gods Themselves, but even for the four elements—earth, water, air, and ether—which as they go up or down the scale change from one into the next above or below. Once you have grasped this fact and realized that your fate is conditioned by it, you will lead a peaceful life because it will be based on reason.

ix

Some of our sense-perceptions are so inherently convincing that they convince instantaneously without any preliminary judgement of our minds which, however, later review and confirm or reject them. Thus a sudden clap of thunder or other loud noise may make even the wisest of men turn pale for a moment and flinch, but as soon as he realizes what it is, he knows he has nothing to fear. And herein we may discern the fundamental distinction between a wise man and a fool : the fool not only thinks that instantaneous sense-perceptions of, say, cruelty and misfortune, are true when he first perceives them, but his belief is later ratified by the deliberate judgement of his mind ; whereas the wise man, though for the first brief instant he may have the illusion of perceiving cruelty and misfortune (so that he may blanch and tremble), knows all the time, and reflection confirms it, the opinion that he has always held, viz. that such sense-perceptions contain no real basis for fear, is still perfectly valid.

x

Most so-called philosophers are better at talking than at doing.

. . . . .

When Epictetus saw a shameless, impudent, bad fellow, who was in truth entirely uninterested in the care and development of his moral purpose, professing to study philosophy, he solemnly rebuked him, saying : ' If you pour wine into an unwashed decanter it will turn sour and go bad ; and similarly if you pour the teachings of philosophy into a dirty mind they too will be contaminated and become rotten.'

. . . . .

There are two vices worse than all the rest put together—want of endurance (i.e. failure to bear our misfortunes courageously), and lack of self-control (i.e. failure to abstain from those things from which it is our duty to abstain). If you will only take as your motto the words ' Bear and Forbear ', you will never go far wrong and your life will be a calm and peaceful one.

x*a*

When it is a question of the salvation of your soul and the preservation of your self-respect, don't stop to argue—act !

xi

When Archelaus, King of Macedonia, proposed to enrich Socrates, the latter sent him this message : ' Here in Athens I can buy four quart-measures of

barley meal for a penny halfpenny, and drinking-water costs nothing at all!' Enough is as good as a feast. A noble nature is content to play the part assigned to it by God, just as the famous actor Polus played the part of the outcast beggared Oedipus at Colonus [1] with just as much verve as he did that of Oedipus the King.[1] Was not Odysseus as outstanding in rags as he was in royal robes?

xii

Anger that is violent by its very violence blows itself away, and is not so dangerous as anger that is cold, calculating, rankling, and relentless.

xiii

If some one says that no self-respecting person would live on some one else's bounty, I ask him: 'And who, pray, is not dependent, in one way or another, on his fellow-men?' In fact, only the Universe itself can truly be said to be self-supporting.

If some one says that he sees the righteous perishing of hunger and cold, I reply: 'And do you not also see the wicked perishing of overeating and self-indulgence?'

xiv

Stoics believe that the only lawful pleasure is the pleasure of the soul resulting from living in harmony with Nature, from being just, self-controlled and free; and that Epicurus was wrong in maintaining that it

[1] Two tragedies of Sophocles (both extant).

lies in the delights of the body. For if Epicurus was right, why do we so often blush with shame when we experience it ?

xv

Plato's *Republic* is in high favour with Roman ladies because they imagine that he advocated that women should be the common property of men.[1] But in fact they have entirely misapprehended his meaning. He did not advocate universal community but one strictly limited to a small and highly educated band of warrior saints. The common ruck were, in his proposal, to contract temporary unions under the supervision of the State. How ready people are to misunderstand when it suits their purpose to do so !

xvi

It is difficult for any one to be consistent to his principles if he does not remember and practise them *daily*.

xvii

If you were to ask some one to dinner, and he, instead of eating the food you provided asked for something else, would you not think his manners insufferable ? But I observe that you have no hesitation in asking God for things He has not given you, and that in spite of the wealth of things that He *has* given you !

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. iv, p. 48.

xviii [1]

Those persons who boast about things that are not under their control always strike me as being rather comic. How often do we hear them saying: 'Anyhow, I am far better off than you are!' '*I* have been Consul (or Procurator); you haven't!' '*My* hair is nice and thick and curly!' Do you suppose that if horses talk to one another one says: 'I am better off than you are—I have as much barley and fodder as I can eat, my bridles are studded with gold, and my saddle cloths are all broidered!'? Horses aren't so silly. But I think you might very well hear one saying: 'I can gallop faster than you can!' The worth of every living creature depends on whether it has or has not the highest qualities of its species. Is Man the only animal without special qualities? Is his only claim to distinction his hair, clothes and pedigree?

xix

If his doctor does not give him a bottle of medicine a patient concludes that he must be too ill for medicine to be of any use. Similarly, if a philosopher does not speak out his mind, his pupil will infer that he is considered to be so depraved as to be incapable of reformation.

xx

A body that is really fit can endure all extremes of heat and cold; a moral purpose that is really sound can support anger, grief, great joy or any other emotion.

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xiv (*d*), p. 150.

xxi

Agrippinus was the type of man we should all admire, for he never claimed any particular merits, and indeed used to blush if any were attributed to him. If any misfortune overtook him—such as sickness, slander or banishment—he used to write a Hymn of Praise about it, thanking God for giving him such a good opportunity to test his training. On one occasion just as he was about to sit down to lunch word was brought him that the Emperor (Nero) had ordered him to be banished. 'Then I shall have to lunch at Aricia,' said he cheerily.[1]

xxii

When Agrippinus was Governor of Crete and Cyrenaica, he used to tell all convicted prisoners that he was bound to punish them, but that they should look on him not as their enemy but as their guardian or physician, whose actions were inspired by a desire for their ultimate good, and that they should try and realize that it was a right and proper thing that they should be punished for their crimes.

xxiii

It is very natural that we should love and indulge our bodies, and yet, if the truth be told, they are extremely dirty and unpleasant things. If you doubt that statement, imagine, if you please, what it would be like to have to look after somebody else's body for

[1] Cp. Book I, Ch. i, p. 2. Aricia was the first stopping-place for travellers on the Appian Way leading south to Capua.

a few days in just the same way as you do your own —if you had to brush its teeth every morning, wash it, take it to the lavatory and so forth, though to tell the truth it is almost as bad to have to do all that sort of thing for one's own ! And it was worse when I was younger, for my body then made other calls upon me from which I am thankful to say old age has now exempted me. But, as I must obey God, I endure and look after it to the best of my ability. But when that happy moment comes when Nature, who gave me my body, shall take it away again, then my troubles in its regard will at last be ended, and I can assure you that I shan't be sorry !

xxiv

How odd men are—if they die young, they rail against the harshness of fate ; if they attain old age, they say they have lived too long, that life is no longer worth living, and that they wish they were dead ; and yet if they feel ill, they send off post-haste for a doctor and beg him to spare neither time nor trouble to keep them alive ! What *do* they want ?

xxv

When you feel inclined to ' go for ' somebody, remind yourself that you are a tame animal and then you will abandon your intention. If you do this you will have nothing to regret in your last moments.

xxvi

Man is a little soul trailing around a corpse.

xxvii

What we have to do is to learn how to exercise our assent properly, how to make careful and correct choices, how to abstain from desire and how to be indifferent to all things that are not under our control.

xxviii

This is no ordinary matter ; it is a question of madness or sanity.

xxviii*a*

Socrates once asked a man :

Socrates : Do you want your soul to be rational and good or irrational and evil ?

Man : Rational and good, of course.

Socrates : Then why don't you try and make it so ?

Man : But it is !

Socrates : Then how is it you are always quarrelling ?

xxviii*b*

Never say, ' Why has this trouble befallen me ? ' but, ' How lucky I am that in spite of this trouble I remain uncrushed and undisturbed and have no fear of the future ! ' Troubles come to every one, but it is not every one who can bear them bravely, and those who can should be thankful that they are so fortunate. No misfortune can possibly prevent you from being just, high-minded, self-controlled, self-possessed, deliberate, truthful, self-respecting and free,

and from continuing to live in harmony with Nature. So for the future never forget that when anything appears to go wrong it is not a misfortune at all, but on the contrary, if you bear it properly, a piece of extraordinary good fortune.

FRAGMENTS OF DOUBTFUL AUTHENTICITY

xxix

Play always for safety ; it is safer to be silent than to speak, for if you speak there is no knowing what follies or wickednesses you may utter.

xxx

We should not let our happiness depend on a single hope any more than we would let our ship be secured by only one small anchor.

xxxi

We should not hanker after impossibilities any more than we should take impossibly long strides when we walk.

xxxii

It is more important to cure our souls than it is our bodies, for death is better than a bad life.

xxxiii

Unaccustomed pleasures are the keenest.

xxxiv

Moderation in everything is essential if you want real enjoyment.

xxxv

No man is free who is not master of himself.

xxxvi

Truth is eternal; its beauty does not fade with time. It teaches us what is lawful and just and how to recognize that which is neither.

THE *MANUAL* OF EPICTETUS

THINGS may be divided into two classes—those which are under our control, and those which are not. Amongst the former are our opinions, choices, likes, dislikes and actions ; amongst the latter are our material possessions, bodies, reputation, offices, and other people's actions. The things of the first class are in their very nature free, unhindered and unimpeded ; those of the second class do not belong to us and are subject to hindrance. If you confuse these two classes or imagine that those of the second class belong to you, you will be uneasy, unhappy and unfortunate, and you will blame everybody, men and God too ; whereas if you bear the distinction well in mind and always act upon it, then no one will ever be able to compel or hinder you, you will have no cause to reproach or find fault with anybody, you will never have to do anything you don't want to do, you will have no enemies, no one and nothing will ever be able to harm you—in short, you will be both free and happy. *In fact, this is the only way in which you can become free and happy.*

1. Surely that is a prize well worth the winning.—But you won't win it without taking some considerable trouble. It means, for instance, giving up all prospects of wealth and office. Still, even if you preferred aiming at wealth and office, you might fail to get them, and then you would miss both.

Assuming, however, that you decide to aim at winning freedom and happiness, then the first thing you must do is to learn to examine with the utmost care all your sense-perceptions ; i.e. the impressions of the outer world that reach you through your five senses, for they are not always what they seem to be. It is essential that you should test each one ; and the way to test them is this : Ask yourself : ' Is this particular sense-perception concerned with things that are included in the first class (which are under my control), or with those in the second class (which are not under my control) ? ' If it falls under the second class, it is no concern of yours.

2. Your real objective is always to get what you want and to avoid getting what you don't want ; and if you fail in either, so much the worse for you. To attain your objective, ignore everything in the second class (not under your control) ; of which further examples are disease, poverty, and death, and concentrate on shunning everything that is unnatural amongst the things in the first class. Further, for the time being at all events, abstain from all desire, for if you set your heart on something in the second class you will inevitably be disappointed, and incidentally you will fail to get what you might otherwise have got, viz. the things of the first class. You may, however, exercise choice and refusal, but at first do so modestly and tentatively, as befits a beginner.

3. Never allow yourself to grow over-fond of material things, however useful or pleasant they are, or whatever sentimental associations they may have for you. If you treasure, for instance, some particular vase, remember that after all it is only a vase, and then if some one breaks it you will not be upset. Similarly,

as you kiss your wife or child, whisper to yourself: 'You are only mortal!', and then if they die you will not be unduly distressed.[1]

4. Before doing anything, always reflect first what it is precisely you want to do. For instance, if you propose going to the Public Baths, first just run over in your mind the sort of things that may occur to any one going to them—how some people splash and jostle, others insult or rob,—and remind yourself that any one or all these things may happen to *you*, and that if they do, you want to deal with them as a man whose moral purpose is in harmony with Nature should deal with them. If you do this systematically, you will not be taken by surprise or vexed whatever occurs.

5. Men are perturbed not so much by things as by their false judgements or ideas about things. Thus, there is nothing so very dreadful about death (or Socrates would have displayed some nervousness when he had to drink hemlock—but, as you know, he didn't even change colour); it is the *fear of death* that is so terrible.[2] It follows that whenever you feel upset or unhappy or helpless, you have only yourself to blame, for it is the inevitable consequence of your wrong judgements. A person who does not realize this truth, i.e. an uneducated person, always blames some one else for his troubles; a person who has commenced his education blames himself; a fully educated person blames no one, not even himself.

6. Never glory in things that do not belong to you. If you exult over the beauty of your horse, you are exulting over something that only your horse is entitled to exult about. The only thing you really possess is

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xxiv, p. 191.
[2] See Book III, Ch. xxvi, p. 200.

your power of dealing with your sense-perceptions ; when you can do this properly, i.e. in harmony with Nature, then you will indeed have something to exult about.

7. If during a voyage your ship drops anchor somewhere and the passengers have a run ashore while the ship waters, and you start picking up shellfish and gathering fruit, never forget all the time to keep your eye on the ship in case the Captain signals that he is ready to set sail again ; for then you would have hurriedly to abandon all your finds and hasten back on board, or you would be left behind. And similarly in life, while there is no harm in your picking up—instead of shellfish and fruit—a little wife and a little child, *when your Captain signals*, you must respond at once, abandon everything and race back to your ship without one backward glance. And, especially if you are an old man, don't wander very far from your ship, lest when the signal is made you should not see it.

8. Never wish anything to happen just as you have the impulse to want ; wish it to happen as it actually does happen,[1] and then you will have a peaceful life.

9. Lameness and disease and many other things may incommode the body, but none of them can have any effect on a sound moral purpose.

10. God has given you special faculties to enable you to deal with everything that can possibly happen to you—for instance, you have continency to rely on when tempted by the sight of a handsome lad or woman, endurance when faced with hard work, patience wherewith to bear abuse. You can cope similarly with all your sense-perceptions.

11. Never admit to having lost anything : say that

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. iv, p. 128 ; and *Manual*, 33, p. 303.

you have given it back to God, who gave it you in the first instance. Thus if your wife or child die—you have given them back; if your farm is sequestrated—you have given it back. It makes no difference who has actually taken it from you—God may employ any agent He thinks fit, even some thoroughpaced scoundrel—that is no concern of yours. But so long as He allows you to retain something, look after it as best you may, always remembering that it does not really belong to you any more than an inn belongs to a traveller who puts up at it.

12. You will never make any progress if you imagine that if you do not attend to your business you will starve, or that if you do not punish your house-boy he will never improve. It is better for you to starve, provided you be free, fearless and happy, than for you to live in luxury if at the same time you are miserable; and it is better for your house-boy never to improve than for you to be unhappy. Start training yourselves in small matters; for instance, if your oil be spilled or your wine be drunk up by a thief, say to yourself: 'This is the price I have to pay for equanimity and peace of mind.' Nothing in this world is got save at a price.[1] Remember that when you call your valet he may take no notice, or if he does answer he may not do what you tell him. It would be absurd, of course, to let your peace of mind depend on what he does or doesn't do.

13. It doesn't matter in the least if you look like a fool; it is indeed very unwise to look as if you were clever. If people credit you with looking as if you were of some importance, you may be pretty sure that there is something wrong with you. It is no

[1] Cp. Book IV, Ch. x, p. 260.

easy matter to keep one's moral purpose in harmony with Nature and at the same time to attend to one's worldly affairs. If you devote your attention to the one you inevitably tend to neglect the other.

14. If you expect your wife and children and friends to live for ever, or your house-boy to be perfect, you will be sadly disappointed. None of them form part of the first class of things—those which lie within your control. But you may confidently hope always to get what you want, for that *is* in your power. So devote yourself to those things that are under your control. A man's master is that person who can gratify his wishes, be that person some one else or himself. And if you want to be your own master, i.e. free, and not somebody else's slave, never want or avoid anything that is under somebody else's control.

15. When you dine out you are not impatient because you are not the first to be served, but when a dish is handed you, you help yourself politely to a little and pass it on. You should behave in a similar way in life towards wife, children, wealth and office, and then some day you will be worthy of dining with the Gods ; and if you can abstain from all such good things set before you, caring nothing for them, then you will be worthy to share also in Their rule. This is what Diogenes and Heracleitus [1] did, and that is why men called them divine, as indeed they were.

16. When you see a friend overwhelmed by grief, perhaps because one of his sons has just started on a

[1] Heracleitus of Ephesus : *circa* 500 B.C. ; a philosopher whose views about the origin of things were adopted by the Stoics. Not the Heracleitus referred to in Book II, Ch. ii, p. 47, *supra*.

long voyage, or because he has lost a lot of money, remember that it is not these happenings themselves that are the real cause of his grief, but his wrong-headed judgements about them. However, provided you realize this, there is no harm in your giving him a few words of sympathy.

17. In life you are like an actor in a play. It is the Playwright who makes the play long or short, who invents the characters—beggars, cripples, officers, ordinary men—and who allocates the various rôles to the most suitable actors. All that the actors have to do is to play their parts to the best of their ability.

18. When a raven croaks ill-omenedly, remember that the portent may perhaps affect your body, estate, opinions, wife or children, but that it cannot possibly affect *you*. For me every portent is auspicious, for whatever happens to me I know how to extract some benefit from it.[1]

19. Provided you never enter on any struggle in regard to things that lie outside the ambit of your moral purpose, but confine your struggles to those things that lie within it, you are bound to win every time.[2]

Because you see some one outstripping you in advancement and honours and acquiring great influence and power, do not run away with the idea that he is therefore necessarily happy. Honours, power and so forth are not under your control, nor are they the things most worth having. The things most worth having, e.g. freedom and happiness, *are* under your control, and you can therefore get them if you choose. So you have no need to envy those who are satis-

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xx, p. 159 ; also Book IV, Ch. x, p. 258 ; and *Manual*, 32, pp. 301 & 302.

[2] Cp. Book III, Ch. vi (*b*), p. 131.

fied with mere practorships, consulships and senatorships. But there is only one way of getting such superlatively good things as freedom and happiness, and that is to disdain all things in the second class.

20. Do try and understand that it is not the man who abuses you or strikes you who really insults you —the insult lies in your own imagination, and is the result of your wrong-headed judgement about what he has said or done. And similarly, if you are irritated, your irritation is due to your mistaken feelings about the person who has irritated you, not to anything he has actually done. You must not be deceived by your sense-perceptions. Take plenty of time for reflection and then you will see your error and be able to avoid it in future.

21. Think continually about everything that seems dreadful to you, such as banishment, prison, torture, and especially death ; then you will never have any wrong thoughts, nor will you ever over-value anything.

22. If you elect to practise philosophy seriously, you must be prepared to put up with ridicule. People will jeer at you : ' So *he's* turned philosopher, has he —who'd ever have thought it of *him* ! [1] Isn't he stand-offish nowadays ! ' Well, there is no need for you to be stand-offish ; all you have to do is just to stick to your principles, remembering that you are holding a post to which you have been appointed by God Himself. And let me tell you this : if you *do* stick to your principles, those who mock you now will one day honour you for it ; while if you don't, they will go on laughing at you—and with good cause.

23. If, in order to please your parents (or any one else), you decide to make wealth, honours, reputation,

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xvi, p. 154.

office, &c., i.e. those things that lie in the second class, your main objective in life instead of those of the first class, you will ruin your life.

The main thing is not to look like but to *be* a philosopher ; if you really are one, people will soon recognize the fact, whatever you look like.

24. Why should the fact that you have never succeeded in distinguishing yourself beyond the common ruck, that you are a person of little consequence, sadden you? To become distinguished in the eyes of your fellow-men depends not on your merits but on their opinions, and their opinions are not under your control and are no concern of yours any more than it is your business to seek public office or invitations to dinner. The only distinction that you should aspire to, and which is in your power to achieve, is in regard to those things that *are* under your control. It is no argument to say that such distinction as this is useless because it will not enable you to help your friends (with money or other favours) or to be of service to the State (by erecting Public Baths and shelters). If you are poor, naturally you will not be able to become a private or public benefactor of this kind. Of course, if you have or can obtain money to enable you to do such things, all the better —but not if it costs you your self-respect, faithfulness and high-mindedness. No amount of money could possibly compensate you for the loss of them. To be a faithful friend to your friend is better than to give him untold riches ; to be a faithful and self-respecting citizen is the best gift you can give to the State.

25. Why should you be upset just because some one is placed nearer your host at a dinner-party, or is treated more deferentially than you are, or because

a brother-practitioner is called in in consultation instead of you? The whole point is: are such things good in themselves and really worth having, or not? If they are, you should be glad the other man got them; if they are not, then you should be glad you have not got them.

In order to acquire as many material possessions as your neighbours (and I again remind you that material possessions fall within the second class of things), you must go to at least as much trouble as they did to get them; you must hang round rich men's doors, dance attendance on them and flatter them no less than they do; otherwise how can you reasonably expect to get what you want? You will get nothing at all from those able to give you such things if you won't pay the price they demand.

A man may spend three halfpence in buying a couple of heads of lettuce, but when he has done so he is really no better off than his neighbour who keeps his three halfpence in his pocket. The one, it is true, has the lettuces, but the other still has his money. Similarly, one man may pay for an invitation to dinner with flattery and personal attention; another may refuse to pay this price and so does not get asked. He can't possibly expect to be asked if he won't pay the price, can he? But is he any the worse off for not being asked? No, indeed! He may not get a meal, but at least he has not had to flatter some one he despises, or to suffer the impertinences of his flunkeys. You can't have it both ways. It is silly and greedy to expect something for nothing.

26. We may discover the natural, i.e. the proper way to behave under the varying circumstances of life by considering our reactions when watching how

other people behave under similar circumstances. Suppose (to use a trivial but not uncommon incident as illustration) your neighbour complains that his house-boy has broken a tumbler, what do you do? Naturally you make light of it, saying: 'Oh, well, these little things will happen, you know!' Very well, then: when *your* house-boy breaks one of *your* tumblers, you must say the same and not fly into a temper. And you should apply this principle to more important matters. If one's neighbour's wife or child dies, do we not all say, philosophically: 'In the midst of life we are in death!' Then why don't we say the same when our wife or our child dies, instead of giving way to sorrow and complaints? We should behave towards our own misfortunes in exactly the same way as we do towards those of other people.

27. We should no more believe that evil is a necessary part of the Universe than we would believe that somebody could set up a target to be missed.

28. You would not relish it if you were to be bound hand and foot and delivered to an enemy with full liberty to dispose of you as he should think fit; yet you have no hesitation in handing over your mind to the first-comer and allow it to be upset if he abuses you! It is rather silly of you, isn't it?

29.[1] Before embarking on any new enterprise, consider carefully its probable cost and results, otherwise the light-hearted enthusiasm with which you began may fizzle out ignominiously. Suppose, for instance, you suddenly thought how nice it would be to be one of the winners at the Olympic Games. No doubt it would be. But remember that before you could

[1] Textually the same as Book III, Ch. xv, pp. 150–152.

even enter your name as a competitor, you would have to train, and that means strict discipline, strict diet, no sweets, going to bed and getting up early, fine or wet, warm or cold ; not drinking cold water ; only drinking wine with your meals—in short, handing yourself over to your trainer just as completely as you would to your doctor if you were ill. Then, at the actual Games, you might very well meet with some accident ; you might, for example, fracture your wrist or ankle, and anyhow you would inevitably swallow quantities of sand as you wrestled—and that is always disagreeable—and if you happened to commit a foul, you would be punished for it with a whipping. And at the end of it all you might lose your match ! Well, if you are prepared for all this, by all means go in for it ; but don't start and then give up half-way. That is what children do ; at one moment they play at athletes, at another at gladiators, then they blow their trumpets, and then act something that has struck their fancy. And some of you do much the same—successively you are athletes, gladiators, law-students, philosophers, but all of them half-heartedly. Like monkeys you mimic everything you see, are always attracted by the latest novelty, and familiar things bore you.

Similarly, the seeing and hearing of a philosopher such as Euphrates [1] might well inspire any one to want to be a philosopher. But before embarking on such a career, consider what it would involve to become one and whether you have the ability and pertinacity to do it. It is not every one whose aptitudes lie that way. (Natural abilities vary. To become a wrestler

[1] More concerning the philosopher Euphrates is found in Book IV. Ch. viii. p. 252.

you must have natural aptitude as well as efficient shoulders, thighs and legs.) You would have to behave very differently from the way you do now ; you would have to eat differently, drink differently, cease giving way to irritation and anger ; you would have to keep vigils, work hard, master carnal desires, lose the affection of your family, become the object of derision to slaves, be laughed to scorn by all you meet, in everything—whether in office, dignity or at law—always be the loser. If after careful reflection you decide that the game is worth the candle, and that the attainment of peace and freedom is worth the price I have named, go ahead and study to become a philosopher. But if not, do not attempt it. Above all, do not behave like a child and be at one moment a philosopher, at another a tax collector, then a lawyer, and then a civil servant. You cannot be all of them at once—they don't accord. You must be either a good man or a bad one ; you must either try to improve your governing principle by learning how to control your sense-perceptions, or concentrate on worldly matters which lie outside the ambit of your moral purpose. In a word, you must either be a philosopher or not be one.

30. Our social relationships afford us general indications as to what our conduct should be towards our fellow-men. For instance, one's duties towards one's father [1] include looking after him, deferring to him in everything, and being patient if he finds fault with you or even strikes you. It makes no difference to your obligations towards him whether he be a good father or a bad one towards you. Good or bad, he is your father. And similarly with your brother : [1]

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. x, p. 61.

even if he wrongs you, he remains your brother and you must behave towards him as a brother should. If you wish to keep your moral purpose in harmony with Nature, what you have to do is to see that you yourself behave properly, whatever he does. Nothing that he can do to you can injure you ; but of course if you allow yourself to feel that he has done you a wrong, then you will in fact have been injured. You can apply this principle to every one you meet. Consider first your relationship to each—whether he be your neighbour, your subject, commanding officer, &c.—and then his duties to you and yours to him will become apparent.

31. Our chief duty towards the Gods is to believe that They exist and that They order the Universe righteously and well, and to obey Them, submitting willingly to everything that happens, knowing (as we do) that it has so happened because They who know better than we do what is right have willed that it should so happen. If you do this, you will never reproach Them for anything, and never imagine that They are neglecting you. But you will not succeed in acting like this unless you realize first that your 'good' and 'evil' lie only in the things of the first class (that are under our control) and never in those of the second class, because if you put them in the latter, then, when you not only fail to get what you want but get what you don't want (as you will), you will inevitably blame and dislike those who have thwarted you in these material matters. And very naturally so too. For, after all, what could be more natural than for living creatures to love and seek to obtain the things they believe to be good and profitable, and to shun those they hold as evil and un-

profitable? No one likes things he regards as harmful any more than he likes their unpleasant results. It is because he has set his desires on the things of the second class that a son abuses even his father, if his father does not give him some of those things that he (the son) esteems good. That, too, was why Polyneices fell out with his brother Eteocles,[1] both thinking wrongly that royalty is a good thing; that, too, is why farmers, sailors, merchants and those who lose their wives and children reproach the Gods, for all of them set undue store by material possessions that are not under their control. In fact, their love for God waxes and wanes with the rise or fall of their earthly fortunes; whereas, were they to set their desire on the things of the first class, it would remain constant. That is the essence of true religion. However, we should by no means neglect its less important outward manifestations and forms—the pouring of libations, the doing of sacrifice, and the giving of first-fruits as our forefathers have been wont to do; all such things we should do devoutly and conscientiously, and as open-handedly as we can afford.

32.[2] When you consult a diviner to gain foreknowledge of some future event, remember that his prognostications, in so far as they concern things of the second class, cannot possibly affect you, for all such things (which are not under your control) are indifferent to you and are neither good nor evil. Hence, there is no need for you to want him to prophesy one thing rather than another, or to be afraid of anything he may say, for even if he prophesy all sorts of dreadful things, it will still be in your power (and

[1] See Book II, Ch. xxii, p. 101, and Book IV, Ch. v, p. 236.
[2] Cp. Book II, Ch. vii, pp. 55 & 56.

no one can prevent you) to turn them, when they occur, into blessings.[1]

Socrates considered that one should have recourse to divination only when all other methods, e.g. that of reasoning, of gaining essential foreknowledge of the future, have failed. There is no need for you, for instance, to ask a diviner whether you should risk your life for your country or for a friend, for reason tells you quite plainly that it is your bounden duty to do so, and the fact that the sacrificial signs were unfavourable and portended injury, banishment or death, would not absolve you from your duty. Remember how Apollo expelled from His temple at Delphi a man who had failed to defend his friend when attacked by men who subsequently murdered him.

33. Every man should propose to himself an ideal of conduct from which he should endeavour never to depart whether he be with others or alone.

As a rule, it is better to keep silence than to speak ; if, however, it is necessary for you to say something, say what you have to say in as few words as possible. Never, however, talk about such things as gladiators, horse-races or sports, or about food or drink ; or (especially) about people, whether by way of praise, criticism or comparison. If you are amongst friends, try, if possible, to get them to discuss something worth discussing ; if you are with strangers, it is better not to say anything at all.

Laugh as little as possible, and when you do laugh, laugh quietly—do not guffaw.

Never, if you can possibly avoid it, bind yourself by an oath.

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xx, p. 159 ; Book IV, Ch. x, p. 258 ; and *Manual*, 18, p. 293.

The only entertainments you should go to are those given by philosophers. If, however, for some reason you find yourself obliged to go to one given by some one who is not a philosopher, be very careful not to let your behaviour lapse from its usual high standard, for however clean a man may be, if he associates with chimney-sweeps he is bound to get smudged.

Give your body what it needs in the way of food, drink, clothing, shelter, and attendance, but no more than is really necessary. Eschew all outward show and luxury.

Before marriage strive to keep as pure as possible ; but do not boast of your purity nor criticize others who indulge their passions freely.

If you hear that some one is abusing you, do not defend yourself against his assertions, but say humbly : 'Ah, but had he known the whole truth about me, he would have said much worse than that ! '

It is best to avoid going to Public Spectacles altogether. However, if you do go, never become a partisan and hope that one side will win rather than another ; hope that that side will win which does win,[1] and so you will not fail to get what you want. Further, never shout, or become violently excited, or laugh at any one. And, after the show, talk about it sparingly, for if you talk much about it, it means that you have allowed yourself to like it more than any show deserves to be liked.

Nor should you go to too many Public Lectures or Readings ; but when you do, go modestly and quietly and be very careful never to give offence to any one.

When about to meet some well-known man, ask

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. iv, p. 128.

yourself how Socrates or Zeno would have acted in like circumstances, and that will give you the clue as to how to behave yourself.

Before calling on some man of great influence,[1] remind yourself that he may be away, or refuse to see you, or if he does see you he may pay no attention to what you say. In spite of all which possibilities, if it is your duty to call on him, call on him and do your best regardless of consequences, and do not complain afterwards that you have had all your trouble for nothing—that is the way people who are not philosophers talk, for they are easily upset if things in the second class, which alone interest them, go awry.

When conversing with other people, refrain from talking about yourself and your doings, for if you do you will only bore them. They prefer talking and hearing about themselves just the same as you do about yourself.

Never try to raise a laugh, for to do so one has often to descend to vulgarity, and then people lose their respect for you. Nor will you be respected if you use foul language. If other people use foul language in your presence, either keep silence and show by your demeanour that you disapprove, or if you think the circumstances really justify it, protest.

34. When you come across something (no matter what) that appears to you to be unusually attractive, be more than ordinarily careful in its regard. Don't decide hastily that you simply must have it; let it wait on your convenience. Ask yourself first how much enjoyment you think its possession will really

[1] Cp. Book II, Ch. vi, p. 52; Book III, Ch. xxiv, pp. 186 and 187; Book IV, Ch. vii, p. 249.

give you, and what your subsequent feelings—after you have gratified your desire—are likely to be, and whether the sense of self-disgust which you will then probably experience will not more than outweigh a transitory pleasure. Bear in mind, too, that abstention has a self-satisfaction of its own which is not to be despised. However, if you do decide that you must have whatever it is, have it and be done with it, and do not let it obtain a permanent hold over you.

35. When you have decided deliberately that you ought to do such-and-such a thing, do it regardless of what people think or say about you. If the deed is a righteous one, why should you mind ill-informed criticism? If it is an evil one, don't do it.

36. It may be good for your bodily health to take a second helping of some particular dish at a dinner-party, but your taking it might conceivably disgruntle your host. You should not sacrifice your host's feelings to your appetite.

37. If you essay tasks beyond your powers, you will not only muddle them but you will not leave yourself time to do what otherwise you might have done with success.

38. We are all very careful not to injure our bodies by treading on nails or by spraining our ankles. We should be even more careful never to do anything which will injure our governing principles.

39. Our properties should fit the needs of our bodies as our shoes do our feet—neither should be over-large or over-elaborate lest they cause us to stumble.

40. When girls attain the mature age of fourteen years they expect men to treat them as grown-ups, and as their only ambition in life is to get married,

they spend all their time and energy over their dresses and their toilet. Surely we men should teach them that they would be far better employed in cultivating their sense of modesty and self-respect.

41. It is the mark of a stupid man to devote much time to the care of his body—to constant exercise, eating, drinking, defaecating and sexual commerce. Of course, we all have to do such things occasionally, but the intelligent man does them as it were incidentally, and concentrates his main energies on the development of his mind.

42. Whenever somebody criticizes you unfavourably or refuses to help you, there is no reason for you to suspect that his words and actions have been dictated by anything else than a genuine sense of duty on his part, though in fact he may have entirely failed to appreciate your side of the question, and so have come to a very wrong conclusion. For that you should be sorry for him ; for the man who is in error is the real sufferer. So be kind to any one who abuses you, and excuse him to yourself, saying : 'No doubt he really believes it all !'

43. There are always two handles by which one may grasp a thing—a right one and a wrong one. If your brother offends you, do not grasp his offence by the handle of his wrongdoing, but by that of the fact that he *is* your brother, whom you should treat as a brother whatever he does.

44. Because one man is richer or makes better speeches than his neighbour, it does not follow that he is a better man ; it only means that he has more material possessions or that he has had the advantage of a better education. A man himself is distinct both from his property and from his education.

45. Because a man takes a very short time over his bath or drinks a great deal of wine, it does not follow that he does not bathe properly or that he is wrong in drinking as much as he does. If you do not know what motives lie behind his actions, how can you possibly tell whether his actions are good or bad? If you judge on insufficient premises, your conclusions will almost certainly be wrong.

46. Never describe yourself as a philosopher, and never, if you can avoid it, talk to persons who are not philosophers about your philosophic principles; content yourself with acting up to them. For instance, when you are dining out, it is not for you to tell your fellow-guests what they should or should not do, but simply to behave properly yourself. Remember how humble Socrates was: when people came to him and asked him to introduce them to *real* philosophers, he used to do so at once. He didn't show the least resentment at not being recognized as a real philosopher himself. And so if you find yourself in the company of men who are not philosophers and they suddenly begin discussing philosophy, your best course is to keep silence, for if you intervene, the chances are you may make ill-considered statements about matters which you have not thoroughly digested and do not yet really understand. When some one tells you that you know nothing and (like Socrates) you can be told that without feeling hurt or insulted, then you may be pretty sure that you are on the right track. Sheep do not boast to their shepherds of the quantities of grass they have eaten; they just digest the grass and let the outward results—wool and milk—speak for themselves. In the same way, you should avoid any ostentatious parade of your principles, and

be content to let men see the results of the principles you have thoroughly digested and absorbed in your actions.

47. When you have learned how to live the simple life, live it but do not brag about it. If you are a teetotaller, there is no need for you to advertise the fact; if you do exercises every morning before breakfast to keep fit, why tell everybody? You can harden your body without going to extremes such as embracing statues nude and in cold weather;[1] you may, if you like, take a mouthful of iced water on a hot day when you are very thirsty, spit it out, and refrain from telling anybody.[2]

48. The man who is not a philosopher relies for help on, or fears harm from, things of the second class that are not under his control; the philosopher only on and from things of the first class; i.e. on and from himself.

You will know that you are making progress if you never criticize, praise or reproach any one; if you never talk as if you were of some importance or had any special knowledge; if when you find yourself thwarted you realize that it is your own fault; if you feel genuinely amused when any one pays you a compliment; if when some one abuses you you keep silent; if you are as careful of your governing principle till it is really strong as a man who has broken his leg is of his leg till the callus has ossified; if you have suppressed in yourself all desire; if you have directed your aversion against those things which being under your control are contrary to nature; if you have no pronounced likes or dislikes; if you

[1] Cp. Book III, Ch. xii, p. 145; and Book IV, Ch. v, p. 234.
[2] Cp. Book III, Ch. xii, p. 146.

do not mind when people think you stupid and ignorant; if—in short—you protect yourself against yourself as though you were your own worst enemy.

49. We may say of a man who plumes himself on being able to understand and expound the writings of Chrysippus that had Chrysippus not happened to have a singularly obscure style, he would have had nothing to expound and so nothing to give himself airs about.

A man wants to understand Nature so as to be able to shape his actions in harmony with Nature. He needs a teacher, and hearing of Chrysippus reads his works, but finds them so obscure that he has to find a second teacher to explain them! That is all right as far as it goes; but merely to know the precepts of Chrysippus is of little value—the important thing is to practise them.

50. You should regard your philosophic principles as laws which it would be very wrong of you to disobey.

Never mind what other people say about you; their words and deeds are not under your control.

51. How much longer do you propose to wait before you decide to do what your reason tells you you should have begun to do long ago in order to obtain for yourselves the best things obtainable? You have been taught sound philosophic principles and have acknowledged their soundness, so what still prevents you making a start? Must you have yet another teacher to help you to make up your minds? Come, come! you are no longer boys, you are men now. If you keep on postponing making a start, you will end by never making a start at all, and before you realize it you will be old men on your death-beds and still not philosophers. Do make up your

minds before it is too late. Try to regard everything that your reason tells you is good as a law that must be obeyed ; and when you are confronted by some sense-perception that seems attractive or desirable or hard or valueless, remember that there is no possibility of postponing the struggle—it is there upon you—and your whole fate depends on your immediate decision. That is how Socrates became what he was —by always acting as his reason told him that he should. We cannot all hope to become like Socrates was, but we should all try to become as like him as we can.

52. The first and most important division of philosophy is concerned with the translation of philosophic principles (e.g. 'Thou shalt not lie') into action ; the second with the reasons on which these principles are based (i.e. why men should not tell lies) ; and the third analyses the validity of the reasons. The second and third divisions are of course interesting, important and necessary, but their importance is not comparable with that of the first. Unfortunately, we are all too apt to fritter away our time and energies arguing over whys and wherefores to the neglect of putting our principles into practice. So we have pat all the reasons why we should not tell lies, but that does not prevent us from telling them.

53. We ought to bear the following sayings constantly in mind :

> Lead Thou me on, O Zeus and Destiny,
> To that far goal that Thou hast set for me ;
> Weak though I am and fearful, still I'll follow Thee.[1]

[1] The first line of this 'Hymn of Cleanthes' is also quoted in Book II, Ch. xxiii, p. 109 ; Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; and Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 231.

The wise and godly man submits humbly to fate.[1]

Well, Crito : as God will, so be it ! [2]

Anytus and Meletus may kill me, but they cannot harm me.[3]

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[1] Euripides, Fragment 965 (Nauck).

[2] Plato, *Crito*, 43 D. Also quoted in Book I, Ch. iv, p. 5, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book III, Ch. xxii, p. 173 ; Book IV, Ch. iv, p. 228.

[3] Plato, *Apology*, 30, C–D. Also quoted in Book I, Ch. xxix, p. 39 ; Book II, Ch. ii, p. 46 ; Book III, Ch. xxiii, p. 177.

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Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London