

Marcus Aurelius The stern philosophy of the Stoics certainly developed some noble traits of character, but it too often led to the harsh dogmatism of the cynics. It only escaped this peril in the case of the tutor of Nero, who became at length the victim of his perverse pupil. His is by no means a faultless character, but the marvel is how, in such a grovelling age, he reached such moral elevation as he exhibits, and how, surrounded by such reeking foulness, he preserved such moral purity.

A much grander example of moral manhood is presented in the poor deformed Phrygian slave, Epictetus, who ennobled his bondage by a sublimity of soul and loftiness of moral teaching, that to the early Fathers seemed almost inspired.

But the noblest of Pagan slaves was surpassed only by the noblest of Pagan Emperors. "The one," says Farrar, "a foreigner, feeble, deformed, ignorant, born in squalor, bred in degradation, the despised chattel of a despicable freed man, surrounded by every depressing, ignoble, and pitiable circumstance of life—showed how one who seemed born to be a wretch could win noble happiness and immortal memory; the other—a Roman, a patrician, strong, of heavenly beauty, of noble ancestors, almost born to the purple, the favourite of Emperors, the greatest conqueror, the greatest philosopher, the greatest ruler of his time—proved forever that it is possible to be virtuous, and tender, and holy, and contented in the midst of sadness, even on an irresponsible and imperial throne. Strange, that of the two the Emperor is even sweeter, more simple, more admirable, more humbly and touchingly resigned, than the slave. A nobler, a gentler, a purer, a sweeter soul; a soul more fitted by virtue and chastity and self-denial to enter into the eternal peace, never passed into the presence of its Heavenly Father."

Yet this man was the successor, on the most absolute throne on earth, of such moral monsters as Tiberius,

Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, and was the father of the wicked and detested Commodus. What a contrast is this pious Pagan to many of the "Most Christian" monarchs of Europe—a persecuting Philip II. or Charles IX., a dissolute Louis XIV. or Paul I., or still more apostate vicars of Christ, a Borgia or a Leo X. An infinite sadness seems to brood over the life of Aurelius, and is reflected from his pensive "Thoughts," and "Meditations." From these and from the writings of Seneca and Epictetus, Canon Farrar largely quotes in illustration of his themes; and his pictures of the foul condition of that old Roman world in which they lived, increases our wonder at the moral grandeur to which they attained. The whole book is suffused with the spell of that broad learning, that Christian spirit, that chaste and classic eloquence of which the author is so consummate a master. The contemplation of those noble souls, who even in thick darkness reached out groping hands to the great Father of lights, and haply "touched God's right hand in the darkness, and were lifted up and strengthened," should inspire in us a desire for "something more high and heroic in religion than the present age effecteth."

*The Pleasure Dance in its Relation to Religion and Morality.* By the Rev. W. J. HUNTER, D.D. Toronto: Wm. Briggs. Price, 10 cents.

This pamphlet is a timely utterance upon an evil that more and more menaces the well-being of the Christian Church. It is a sermon preached by Dr. Hunter in the regular course of his Sunday ministrations. He brings a strong indictment against the popular pleasure dance. These are not words of railing accusation, but of truth and soberness, which are abundantly verified by the teachings of the Word of God, and by the recorded judgments of wise and good men of different branches of the Christian Church. This pamphlet should have a wide circulation.