

Who has forgotten the story of the speaker's tragic end? How he sided with Pompey, and, when all was lost, resolved to die rather than yield; how he supped, chatted pleasantly with his friends, and withdrew to his chamber to embrace his son and read Plato on the Immortality of the Soul; how he stabbed himself and died the same night? It was of this Cato that Cæsar said, "Cato, I envy thee thy death, since thou hast envied me the glory of saving thy life."

Seneca's character and political conduct were very open to reproach, but his great abilities and his power as a writer on moral and philosophical subjects are freely admitted. Despite his intimacy with the Emperor Nero, and the share which he is believed to have had in the infamy of the Imperial court, his judgment and his feelings appear to have been on the side of virtue. Seneca was a Stoic, and from the opening text, *Regem non faciunt opes*, he thus discourses on one of the Stoic ideas of perfection:—

What makes the king? His treasure? No,
Nor yet the circlet on his brow;
Nor yet the purple robe of State;
Nor yet the golden palace gate.
The king is he who knows not fear,
Whose breast no angry passions tear,
Who scorns insane ambition's wreath,
The maddening crowd's inconstant breath,
The wealth of Europe's mines, the gold
In the bright tide of Tagus rolled,
And the unmeasured stores of grain
Garnered from Libya's sultry plain.

Who quails not at the thrust of spear;
Feels of the flashing steel no fear;
Who from his spirit's height serene
Looks down upon the troubled scene,
And, uncomplaining, when his date
Has come, goes forth to meet his fate.
With kings in grandeur let them vie;
Before whose arms wild Dahans fly,
Who o'er Arabia's burning sea
Stretch out their gorgeous empery,
Who dare Sarmatian horsemen brave
And march o'er Danube's frozen wave,
Or the strange land of fleecy trees,
True kingship is a mind at ease.

The king, a king self-crowned, is he
Who from desire and fear is free;
Who would the power of courtiers share
May mount ambition's slippery stair;
To live by all the world forgot
In ease and quiet be my lot,
And as my noiseless days glide past
Best undistinguished to the last.
Well may the man his end bemoan
Who dies to others too well known
A stranger to himself alone.

From Catullus, the friend of Cicero and a true poet, a few odes are taken illustrative of his easy and unaffected style, and the sweetness and harmony of his verse. It is to be hoped the lady readers of THE WEEK will not think less of him for the lines on "Woman's Inconstancy":—

My lady swears, in all the world, she will have none but me,
None other wed, whose'er may woo, not though great Jove were he.
She swears, but what a woman swears when lovers bend the knees
Write we upon the shifting sand, or on the flowing sea.

There are, as was to be expected, some choice specimens of the odes of Horace in this collection. These evince the peculiar structure and variety of his poetical faculties. They show also the special value of his poetical development, which consists, mainly, in the elevation and refinement of his taste and style. Of all the writers of the Augustan age none asserted the dignity of literature and the prerogative of poetry with such dexterity and effect. His profound knowledge of the world and his fine talent for observation, combined with his Socratic irony, his wit and matchless art, have made him the common property of civilization. Mr. Smith's translations are most graceful. The first few stanzas are taken from the sixteenth ode of the second book, which is designed to show that contentment with competency is better than the pursuit of wealth or honours:—

For ease the weary seaman prays
On the wild ocean, tempest tost,
When guiding stars withhold their rays,
When pales the moon in cloud-wrack lost.

For ease the Median archers sigh—
For ease the Thracian warrior bold;
But ease, my friend, nor gems can buy,
Nor purple robes, nor mighty gold.

No lacquey train, no consul's guard
Can keep the spectral crowd aloof
That throngs the troubled mind, or ward
The cares that haunt the gilded roof.

Care sits upon the swelling sail,
Care mounts the warrior's barbed steed;
The bounding stag, the driving gale,
Are laggards to her deadly speed.

Come weal, we'll joy while joy we may,
And let the future veil the rest;
Come woe, we'll smile its gloom away,
Since naught that is is always blest.

Like Charles Lamb in his "Elia" and letters, Horace, in his odes and other writings, has disclosed pretty fully his personal character and habits. He was somewhat of a *bon vivant*, and an epicure as well as an Epicurean—a fair sample probably, in these and other respects, of the Roman gentleman of his day. His ode (the twenty-first in the third-book), to the jar of wine made in the year in which he was born, is a famous one:—

My good contemporary cask, whatever thou dost keep
Stored up in thee—smiles, tears, wild loves, mad brawls or easy
sleep—
Whate'er thy grape was charged withal, thy hour is come; descend;
Corvinus bids, my mellowest wine must greet my dearest friend.
Sage and Socratic though he be, the juice he will not spurn,
That many a time made glow, they say, old Cato's virtue stern.

There's not a heart so hard but thou beneath its guard canst steal,
There's not a soul so close but thou its secret canst reveal;
There's no despair but thou canst cheer, no wretch's lot so low
But thou canst raise, and bid him brave the tyrant and the foe.
Please Bacchus and the Queen of Love, and the linked Graces three,
Till lamps shall fail and stars grow pale, we'll make a night with thee.

The seventh ode in the second book belongs to the same class of Horatian compositions. It is a welcome, after a long absence, to Pompeius Varus, an old friend and former companion-in-arms, on the Republican side, at the battle of Philippi:—

Thou that so oft where Brutus led
With me hast marched to do or die,
What god my long-lost friend hath sped
Back to his home, his native sky?

How oft, our brows with garlands crowned,
Together, comrade of my prime,
We've made the merry cup go round,
And lent new wings to leaden Time!

Then let the feast to Jove be paid,
And here beneath my laurel-tree
Let thy war-wearied limbs be laid,
Nor spare the cask long kept for thee.

Bid the bright goblet mantle high
With wine, the sovereign balm for care;
Pour the rich scents—Ho! loiterers, fly
And braid the chaplets for our hair.

Reach me the dice and let us see
Who shall be master of our feast.
Mad as a Bacchanal I'll be,
With thee, my long-lost friend, for guest.

Very different in style and sentiment are the following stanzas from the fifth ode of the second book. Some Roman standards and prisoners had been taken by the Parthians in the war with Crassus and Antony. The poet rebukes the desire to ransom them by an appeal to the example of the Roman hero Regulus, who, having been defeated and taken prisoner by the Carthaginians in the first Punic war, was released on parole and returned to Rome, where he dissuaded the Senate against an exchange of prisoners, but scorned to break his parole, though conscious of the fate that awaited him on his return to Carthage. Infuriated at the rejection of their proposals, the Punic enemy cruelly tortured him to death:—

This, Regulus, thy patriot soul foresaw—
Consent refusing to the compact base,
Lest one ignoble precedent should draw
In time to come dishonour on the race.

Sternly he bade let die the captive bands
Unransomed. "Shameful sights," the hero said—
Arms wrested from a living Roman's hands,
Our standards in the foe's man's fanes displayed—

"These eyes have seen—a freeman's name belied,
By freemen who the conqueror's fetters wore;
The Carthaginian's gates thrown open wide,
And fields our war had wasted tilled once more.

"Think ye the coward, ransomed, will be brave?
Ye do but lose your gold and honour too.
Wool that has drunk the dye 'twere vain to lave;
Never will it regain its native hue.

"So genuine valour, let it once depart
From its degraded seat, returns no more.
What, have ye e'er beheld the timorous hart,
Loosed from the tangling toils, the huntsman gore?

"Then will ye see the slave, fresh manhood donned,
On other fields make Punic squadrons fly.
Who once has felt the ignominious bond
Upon his castif limbs and feared to die!

"Dreaming of peace in war, his craven heart
Discerned not whence alone true life could come.
O day of shame! Carthage, how great thou art,
Exalted on the ruined pride of Rome!"

'Tis said that from his children pressing round,
And the fond wife that for his kisses sued,
He, as an outlaw, turned, and on the ground
Bending his gaze, stern and relentless stood,

Until his voice had fixed the wavering State,
In counsel never given but on that day;
Then, through the weeping concourse, from the gate
To glorious banishment he took his way.

If Horace, with his natural beauties of style, has had many translators, Propertius, the contemporary and friend of Ovid, has had correspondingly few. The artificiality and obscurity of his elegies render them difficult to read, and still more difficult to translate. Yet one of the finest of the "Bay Leaves" series is a Propertian elegy. It is on the death of Cornelia, a Roman matron of the highest rank, who is supposed, after death, to address her late husband and children in words "hardly equalled," as the translator says, "in the writings of the ancients as a tender expression of conjugal and maternal love." We quote a few closing stanzas. To her husband she says:—

Now I bequeath our children to thy heart,
Husband, though I am dust, that care is mine;
Father and mother too henceforth thou art;
Around one neck now all those arms must twine.

Kiss for thyself and then for her that's gone;
Thy love alone the whole dear burden bears;
If e'er for me thou weepst, weep alone,
And see, to cheat their lips, thou driest thy tears.

Be it enough by night thy grief to pour,
By night to commune with Cornelia's shade;
If to my likeness in thy secret bower
Thou speakest, speak as though I answer made.

And then to her children she says:—
Should time bring on another wedding day,
And set a step dame in your mother's place,
My children, let your looks no gloom betray;
Kind ways and loving words will win her grace.

Nor speak too much of me; the jealous ear
Of the new wife, perchance, offence may take;
But ah! if my poor ashes are so dear
That he will live unwedded for my sake,

Learn, children, to forestall your sire's decline,
And let no lonesome thought come near his life;
Add to your years what Fate has reft from mine;
Blest in my children let him bless his wife.

We close our quotations with Lucretius, whose great poem, "*De Rerum Natura*" (On the Nature of Things), contains a development of the physical and ethical doctrines of Epicurus. Despite the unpromising nature of his subject, there is no writer in whom the majesty and stately grandeur of the Latin language is more effectively displayed. The first stanzas form part of an invocation to Venus at the opening of the poem:—

Goddess from whom descends the race of Rome;
Venus, of gods and men supreme delight,
Hail thou that all beneath the starry dome—
Lands rich with grain and seas with navies white—
Blestest and cherishest! When thou dost come
Enamelled earth decks her with posies bright
To meet thy advent. Clouds and tempests flee
And joyous light smiles over land and sea.

Often as comes again the vernal hour
And balmy gales of spring begin to blow,
Birds of the air first feel thy sovereign power,
And, stirred at heart, its genial influence show.
Next the wild herds the grassy champagne scour,
Drawn by thy charm, and stem the river's flow.
In mountain, wood, field, sea, all by the grace
Of Venus' love, and love preserves their race.

The following are from some stanzas on the consolations of science at the opening of the second book:—

Fools! what doth nature crave? A painless frame,
Therewith a spirit void of care or fear.
Calm ease and true delight are but the same.
What, if for thee no golden statues rear
The torch to light the midnight feast, nor flame
The long-drawn palace courts with glittering gear,
Nor roofs of fretted gold with music ring,
Yet hast thou all things that true pleasure bring—

Pleasure like theirs that 'neath the spreading tree
Beside the brook, on the soft greensward lie,
In kindly circle feasting cheerfully
On simple dainties, while the sunny sky
Smiles on their sport and flowrets deck the lea,
Bright summer over all. Will fever fly
The limbs that toss on purple and brocade
Sooner than those on poor men's pallets laid?

In the beginning of the third book, Greece is thus apostrophized as "the light of the ancient world":—

O thou that in such darkness such a light
Durst kindle to man's ways a beacon fire!
Glory of Grecian land! to tread aright
Where thou hast trod, this is my heart's desire.
To love, not rival, is my utmost flight;
To rival thee, what mortal can aspire?
Can swallows match with swans, or the weak feet
Of kids vie in the race with coursers fleet?

Father, discoverer, guide, we owe to thee
The golden precepts that shall ne'er grow old;
As bees sip honey on the flowery lea,
Knowledge we sip of all the world doth hold.
Thy voice is heard: at once the shadows flee,
The portals of the universe unfold,
And ranging through the void thy follower's eye
Sees Nature at her work in earth and sky.

In this imperfect review the translator has been allowed to speak freely, and, we hope, not unfairly for himself. What has been said otherwise might have been much better said of a species of literary work so rarely done in Canada, and that has been so well done by a representative Canadian. However modestly Mr. Smith may think of his booklet, it has given great pleasure to his friends, any of whom may be excused for expressing the hope that they have not seen the last of his charming translations. JOHN KING.

Berlin.

LONDON LETTER.

WHEN you come, in the fourpenny box of a book-stall, to a queer plump volume written by William Collins and called "The Memoirs of a Picture" (with which is incorporated a sketch of "that celebrated original and eccentric genius, the late Mr. George Morland"), be sure you take the treasure home. For if you love biography you will be repaid. The fourpence will be well laid out, believe me.

There is something of a Micauber-like touch in Mr. Collins' swelling periods which is delightful to see. It makes one feel at once at home with his easy going kindhearted gentleman. Though Mr. Micauber's knowledge of art was not his stock-in-trade, his attention instead being early turned to the selling of coals and wine, on commission, yet had he been trained as a critic his opinion of the old masters would be identical with that of Mr. Collins, and just as strongly expressed, too. If Mr. Micauber had put together in his leisure moments a sound family novel on the Deplorable Decadence of British Taste, he would have wandered on through three hundred pages in just the same irrelevant fashion. For a little variety he too would have sandwiched in a biographical sketch of his dear misguided friend, ending the memoir with an original epitaph "at the earnest desire of several friends of our own and the painter, and not from any little motive of vanity. . . . and which has appeared before and received the sanction of public approbation in other prints."

Mr. Collins is bold enough to make fun, in the intervals of weeping over Morland's untimely death, of the great Desenfans, whom he nicknames Des-chong-fong, the Chinese expert, and of whom he draws a ludicrous portrait enough. 'Tis the same Desenfans who laboriously gathered together