

Augustus," and left his shield behind him "without much glory." It is not every man who could joke about such a story, yet Horace does, and Augustus was not offended. Liveliness, sprightliness and a nimble fancy characterize all his work, while as we saw Persius jests less naturally, though not devoid of humour either. Contrast Persius' claim not to be a bard with Horace's claim that he was, and how much more amusing is the latter. But the Roman world was losing the art of laughter. The hysterical laugh of Juvenal and the godless chuckle of Lucian are not very pleasing.

We now come to the content of their work, and as we should expect we find more divergence. Horace, a freedman's son (as he frankly owns), bred in Rome and Athens, a volunteer for the Old Regime, who had to hop with clipped pinions like the rest of the volunteers after Philippi (*decisis humilis pennis*), who had hard days till he made his way upward by his merits, good sense and good temper, had seen far more than Persius. *Mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes*, and he writes more naturally of what he has seen and known, while Persius draws his knowledge of the world from others, and knowing it only at second-hand cannot write so naturally. In a longer and a fuller life, Horace must have had a wider range. But furthermore, Horace was born two years before Cicero's consulship, and had seen the old order; he had seen Julius rise and die, the varying fortunes of the "Liberators" and of Antony, and the rise, the triumph, and the establishment of Augustus. It was a wider world in which he had lived, over and above his living a wider life. So there is more breadth and more accessibility in his mind, and his singing has a wider compass. He has more notes, and therefore more possibilities of variation. I do not say there is more truth, more faithfulness to experience in his writing than in Persius, but that he has had more opportunity. Where he knew his ground, Persius is as surefooted as Horace. But as happens with men who deal with books his mental processes are obscure because rapid, and it is hard sometimes to see the connection between a thought and what follows it. His limited experience and limited humour produce in the reader a feeling of abruptness and effort, as if he were trying to be Horace without quite achieving it. In fact he pleases us most not when he tries to be somebody else, whether Horace or Lucilius, but when he is himself. As a general law we are better pleased with the true rather than the imitative note.

I pass to another aspect of the question. The critic is bound to be a moralist more or less. He who condemns my way is bound to show me what he thinks a more excellent way—must whether

he will or no. So the satirist is inevitably a preacher. Some men will preach when they are young, and the habit wears off. With others it grows with age, as it did with Horace. The early Empire was an age of preaching. The old walks of life were closed, the old interests gone, and the old order had changed, and men's hearts were failing them for fear. They turned from without to within to find, if they could, something durable and permanently valuable. It was an age of philosophy, an age of sadness and uneasiness. There were those who stayed themselves in ritual—in the rites of the Egyptian, the Phrygian or the Jew. But the lettered turned to philosophy. Lucretius had preached with a Wesleyan fervour a divine non-entity and a world of chance and emptiness. Virgil and Horace had listened. And Virgil, as many a passage shows, had caught his great accents. Nor was Horace unaffected. As age came on, each began to turn from the phenomenal to the real, and each would renounce mere literature for philosophy. Virgil was meaning to finish his *Æneid*, and then permanently devote himself to the philosophers. Horace actually did drop ode-making for reading, and his epistles show again and again the reality of the change. Throughout he had preached (so far as he could preach) contentment, moderation, self-mastery. Now he is more explicit than ever. Life is real, life is earnest, and Lyde and Lydia have gone where Claribel low-lying and rate pale Margaret went—have gone so entirely, leaving not a wrack behind, that if his public had had anything of his humour they could never have supposed Horace to be a very thoroughgoing libertine. For this is not the zeal of the convert, it is merely the development and restatement of what he has sung in his odes.

And yet with all this earnestness on Horace's part, one has the feeling it is more the passion of quest than of attainment. Here it is a contrast with Persius. Persius has the certainty of conviction. He has no doubt but that he has the knowledge which can make men happy and keep them so. Perhaps this again is a mark of youth. There is no sadness about him, he is confident and happy in his youth and his knowledge. It may astonish some to have it suggested that the dominant impression Horace gives is melancholy. But note the frequency with which Death and Fate and Necessity recur in his writings, and the repetition of the advice *nil admirari* (no strong emotion). Lucretius' panacea for human ills was no hereafter and no divine. Horace's is rather right attitude, but as right attitude is hard to attain, and even those who get nearest it like Horace himself are least satisfied by it, this view of life is bound to lead to sadness.