

in universal conflagration. At this juncture, the passive material returns to its original chaotic state; the active, being fragments of Deity, are absorbed; and again the process repeats itself, thus alternating through countless cycles.

Stoicism speaks of design most beautiful and perfect, of harmony grand and complete; not one atom useless, not one misplaced, the whole telling of profound skill and economy. It tells, too, of a God, intelligent, good, wise, incorruptible, and supreme; but it stripped him of personality and conscience, thus sinking the Deity into the working of a blind force, into fatalism and inevitable necessity, to which immutable law it regards Gods and men alike subjected.

In Ethics, the Stoics seem to approach nearer the truth. In this, the most celebrated part of the system, *virtue*, was clothed with transcendent glory. It was the acme of life, and requires that every power of the mind, every aspiration of the soul, shall be bent to its consummation, till all the affections of the heart become subservient to the *reason*. Thus the system aimed not to curb merely, but actually to extinguish the passions. Accordingly, he was the sage, the Godlike Philosopher, who made virtue the guiding star of life, and who kept his unmoved gaze fixed upon this summit, till, like the tyrant who crushes beneath his iron heel the freedom he cannot govern, every emotion of the soul is utterly quenched, and reason alone reigns in undisputed ascendancy.

In the ideal wise man of the system centered all that was noble, pure, and elevating. Inflexible to hate or pity, he always did right; he stands out in solitary grandeur, the only perfect exemplar. This chimerical child of fancy the Stoic Philosopher sought to imitate with indefatigable zeal and unflinching step. To possess such virtues no pain was deemed too severe, no hardship too great, no pathway too thorny, and every pleasure was strenuously avoided which should in any degree impede a race so ennobling. This feature in the Stoic Philosophy, seeming to overlook man's unavoidable infirmity, tended

nevertheless to quicken one of his most sublime powers—that of self-denial. At one time it revealed itself in a patriotism unsurpassed in lofty moral grandeur; at another, in an exalted self-sacrifice, prompted by no other motive than that of duty. The Stoic swerved not from life's sterner pathways, however fraught with suffering, peril, and toil. He encountered danger with fortitude, and coveted death rather than enjoy ignoble life; and this, be it remembered, without any other hope of an eternal happy future, than the cold uncertainty of philosophical deductions, or the shadowy pictures of poetic fiction. This self-denying adherence to duty is unparalleled, unexampled in any later schools, and challenges the admiration, if not the imitation, of the disciples of the only true philosophy, that of the cross of Christ. Stoicism taught also that all vice should be avoided, though hid from the eyes of Gods and men. "Never forget," said one of its followers, "that it is possible to be a Divine man, yet a man unknown to the world." "That which is beautiful, is beautiful in itself; the praise of men adds nothing to its quality." "We do not love virtue because it gives pleasure; but it gives us pleasure because we love it." Astounding utterances sounding out from the depths of Pagan night.

The boundary line between pity and clemency was defined with remarkable clearness by the Stoics. They would administer to the wants of the needy, give aid to the shipwrecked, console the weeping, yet shed no tear. They would clothe the naked, feed the hungry, help the feeble; but do all with a calm countenance that betrayed no emotion. They looked undisturbed upon the cold marble face of death. Thus, in cultivating exclusively what its followers deemed the highest part of nature to the utter neglect of every other, the system was grossly defective; for human nature is not simple, but composite, consisting not of one, but of many parts, differing in kind and degree; and he who exalts the one into absolute predominance, at the cost of the entire subordina-