

Testament, or for the other Phoenician, Aramaic, etc., months known from the inscriptions. We may obtain more light as to the exact value of the term "Amorite" used here. At any rate this unpretending sketch may serve to provoke interest in the subject.

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*NOTES FROM THE LECTURE-ROOM OF
EPICTETUS.¹*

"*I forbid you to go into the senate-house.*" "*As long as I am a senator, go I must.*" Two voices were speaking from one person—the first, pompous, coarse, despotic ; the second, refined, dry, austere. There was nothing that approached stage-acting—only a suggestion of one man swelling out with authority, and of another straightening up his back in resistance. These were the first words that I heard from Epictetus, as I crept late into the lecture-room, tired with a long journey over-night into Nicopolis.

I need not have feared to attract attention. All eyes were fixed on the lecturer as I stole into a place near the door, next my friend Arrian, who was absorbed in his notes. What was it all about ? In answer to my look of inquiry Arrian pushed me his last sheet with the names "Vespasian" and "Helvidius Priscus" scrawled large upon it. Then I knew what it meant. It was a story now nearly forty years old—which I had often heard from an old friend of my father's, Æmilius Scaurus—illustrating the duty of obeying the voice of the conscience rather than the voice of a king. Epictetus, after his manner, was throwing it into the form of a dialogue :—

¹ In the following pages, which form the first chapter of a volume probably to be published before long, all sayings assigned to Epictetus are translated or paraphrased from Arrian's record of his lectures. It has not been thought necessary to insert references or notes, which will come more appropriately in the complete work.

“*Vespasian*. I forbid you to go into the senate-house.

“*Priscus*. As long as I am a senator, go I must.

“*Vespasian*. Go, then, but be silent.

“*Priscus*. Do not ask my opinion, and I will be silent.

“*Vespasian*.⁵ But I am bound to ask it.

“*Priscus*. And I am bound to answer, and to answer what I think right.

“*Vespasian*. Then I shall kill you.

“*Priscus*. Did I ever say that I could not be killed? It is yours to kill; mine, to die fearless.”

I give his words as Arrian took them down, exactly. But the tone and the spirit are past man's power to put on paper. He flashed from Emperor to Senator like the zig-zag of lightning with a straight down flash at the end. This was always his way. He would play a thousand parts, seeming, superficially, a very Proteus; but they were all types of two characters, the philosopher and the worldling, the follower of the Logos and the follower of the flesh. Moreover, he was always in earnest, in hot earnest. On the surface he would jest like Menander or jibe like Aristophanes; but at bottom he was a tragedian. At one moment he would point to his halting leg and flout himself as a lame old grey-beard with a body of clay. In the next, he was “a son of Zeus,” or “God's own son,” or “carrying about God.” Never at rest, he might deceive a stranger into supposing that he was occasionally rippling and sparkling with real mirth like a sea in sunlight. But it was never so. It was a sea of molten metal and there was always a Vesuvius down below.

I suspect that he never knew mirth or genial laughter even as a child. He was born a slave, his master being Epaphroditus, a freedman of Nero's and his favourite, afterwards killed by Domitian. They say that this wretch caused his lameness. He was twisting his leg one day to

see how much he could bear. The boy—for he was no more—said with a smile, “If you go on, you will break it,” and then, “Did not I tell you, you would break it?” True or false, this story gives the boy as I knew the man. You might break his leg but never his will. I do not know whether Epaphroditus, out of remorse, had him taught philosophy; but taught he was, under one of the best men of the day, and he acquired such fame that he was banished from Rome under Domitian, with other philosophers of note—whether at or before the time when Domitian put his master to death I cannot say. In one of his lectures he described how he was had up before the Prefect of the City with the other philosophers: “Come,” said the Prefect, “come, Epictetus, shave off your beard.” “If I am a philosopher,” he replied, “I am not going to shave it off.” “Then I shall take your head off.” “If it is for your advantage, take it off.”

But now to return to my first lecture. Among our audience were several men of position and one at least of senatorial rank. Some of them seemed a little scandalized at the Teacher’s dialogue. But it was not likely that the Emperor would take offence. In the second year of Hadrian we were not in a Neronian or Domitian atmosphere. Moreover, our teacher was known to be on good terms with the new Emperor. Perhaps their official sense of propriety was shocked; and, in the first sentence of what follows, Epictetus may have been expressing their thoughts: “‘*So you, philosophers, teach people to despise the throne!*’ Heaven forbid! Which of us teaches anyone to lay claim to anything over which kings have authority? Take my body, take my goods, take my reputation! Take my friends and relations! ‘Yes,’ says the ruler, ‘but I must also be ruler over your convictions.’ Indeed, and who gave you this authority?”

Epictetus went on to say that if indeed his pupils were of the true philosophic stamp, holding themselves detached from the things of the body and with their minds fixed on the freedom of the soul, he would have no need to spur them to boldness, but rather to draw them back from over-hasty rushing to the grave; for, said he, they would come flocking about him, begging and praying to be allowed to teach the tyrant that they were free, by finding freedom at once in self-inflicted death: "Here on earth, Master, these robbers and thieves, these courts of justice and kings have the upper hand. These creatures fancy that they have some sort of authority over us, simply because they have a hold on our paltry flesh and its possessions! Suffer us, Master, to show them that they have authority over nothing!" If, said [he, a pupil of this high spirit were brought before the tribunal of one of the Rulers of the Earth, he would come back scoffing at such "authority" as a mere scarecrow: "Why did I take so much trouble, and make so much preparation, to meet no enemy at all? Was this his authority, this his solemn ante-room, his gentlemen of the chamber, his yeomen of the guard! These things were nothing, and I was preparing to meet something great!"

On the scholar of the unpractical and cowardly type, anxiously preparing "what to say" in his defence before the magistrate's tribunal, he poured a hot scorn. Had not the fellow, he asked, been practising "what to say"—all his life through? "What else," said he, "have you been practising? Syllogisms and convertible propositions!" Then came the reply, in a whine, "Yes, but he has authority to kill me!" To which the Teacher answered, "Then speak the truth, you pitiful creature. Cease your imposture and give up all claim to be a philosopher. In the lords of the earth recognize your own lords and masters. As long as you give them this grip on you, through your flesh, so long

must you be at the beck and call of every one that is stronger than you are. Socrates and Diogenes had practised 'what to say' by the practice of their lives. But as for you—get you back to your own proper business, and never again budge from it! Get you back into your own snug corner, and sit there at your leisure, spinning your syllogisms :

' In thee is not the stuff that makes a man
A people's leader.' ”

Thence he passed to the objection that a judicial condemnation might bring disgrace on one's name. "The authorities, you say, have condemned you as guilty of impiety and profanity. What harm is there in that for you? This creature, with authority to condemn you—does he himself know even the meaning of piety or impiety? If a man in authority calls day night or bass treble, do men that know take notice of him? Unless the judge knows what the truth is, his 'authority to judge' is no authority. No man has authority over our convictions, our inmost thoughts, our will. Hence when Zeno the philosopher went into the presence of Antigonus the king, it was the king (not the philosopher) that was anxious; for the king wished to gain the philosopher's good opinion, but the philosopher cared for nothing that the king could give. When, therefore, you go to the palace of a great ruler, remember that you are in effect going to the shop of a shoemaker or a grocer—on a great scale of course, but still a grocer. He cannot sell you anything real or lasting, though he may sell his groceries at a great price."

At the bottom of all this doctrine about true and false authority, there was, as I afterwards understood, a belief that God had bestowed on all men, if they would but accept and use it, authority over their own wills, so that they might conform their wills to His, as children do with a Father, and might find pleasure, and indeed their only pleasure, in

doing this, accepting all bodily pain and evil as not evil but good because it comes from His will, which must be also their will and must be honoured and obeyed. "When," said he, "the ruler says to any one, 'I will fetter your leg,' the man that is in the habit of honouring his leg cries, 'Don't, for pity's sake!' But the man that honours his will says, 'If it appears advisable to you, fetter it.'"

"*Tyrant.* Won't you bend ?

"*Cynic.* I will not bend.

"*Tyrant.* I will show you that I am lord.

"*Cynic.* You ! impossible ! I have been freed by Zeus. Do you really imagine that He would allow His own son to be made a slave ? But of my corpse you *are* lord. Take it."

In this particular lecture Epictetus also gave us a glimpse of a wider and more divine authority imparted by God to a few special natures, akin to Himself, whereby, as God is supreme King over men His children, so a chosen few may become subordinate kings over men their brethren. Like Plato, he seemed to look forward to a time when rulers would become philosophers, or else philosophers kings. Nero and Sardanapalus, Agamemnon and Alexander, all came under his lash—all kings and rulers of the old régime. Not that he denied Agamemnon a superiority to Nero, or the right to call himself "Shepherd of the people" if he pleased. "Sheep, indeed," he exclaimed, "to submit to be ruled over by you !" and "Shepherd, indeed, for you weep like the shepherds, when a wolf has snatched away a sheep !"

From these old-fashioned rulers he passed to a new and nobler ideal of kingship : "Those kings and tyrants received from their armed guards the power of rebuking and punishing wrongdoing, though they might be rascals themselves. But on the Cynic"—that was the term he used—"this power is bestowed by the conscience." Then he explained

what he meant by "conscience"—the consciousness of a life of wise, watchful, and unwearied toil for man, with the co-operation of God. "And how," he asked, "could such a man fail to be bold and speak the truth with boldness—speaking, as he does, to his own brethren, to his own children and kinsfolk? So inspired, he is no meddler or busybody. Supervising and inspecting the affairs of mankind, he is not busying himself with other men's matters, but with his own. Else, call a general, too, a busybody, when he is busy inspecting his own soldiers!"

This was, to me, quite a new view of the character of a Cynic. But Epictetus insisted on it with reiteration. The Cynic, he said, was Warrior and Physician in one. As a warrior, he was like Hercules, wandering over the world with his club and destroying noxious beasts and monsters. As a physician, he was like Socrates or Diogenes, going about and doing good to those afflicted with sickness of mind, diagnosing each disease, prescribing diet, cautery, or other remedy. In both these capacities the Cynic received from God authority over men, and men recognized it in him, because they perceived him to be their benefactor and deliverer.

There are, said Epictetus, in each man two characters—the character of the Beast and the character of the Man. By Beast he meant wild or savage beast, as distinct from tame beast, which he preferred to call "sheep." "Sheep" meant the cowardly, passive, greedy passions within us. "The Beast" meant the savage, aggressive, greedy nature, not only stirring us up to external war against our neighbours, but also waging war to the death against our inward better nature, against the "Man." The mark or stamp of the Beast he connected with Nero. "Cast it away," he said. The opposite mark or stamp he connected with the recently deceased Emperor, Trajan. If we acted like a

beast, he warned us that we should become like a beast, and then, according to his customary phrase, "*You will have lost the Man.*" And was this, asked he, nothing to lose? Over and over again he repeated it: "*You have thrown away the Man.*" It was in this light—as a type of the Man—that he regarded Hercules, the first of the Cynics, the Son of God, going on the errands of the Father to destroy the Beast in its various shapes, typifying an armed Missionary, but armed for spiritual not for fleshly warfare, destroying the Beast that would fain dominate the world. But it was for Diogenes that he reserved his chief admiration, placing him (I think) even above Socrates, or at all events praising him more warmly—partly, perhaps, out of fellow-feeling, because Diogenes, too, like himself, had known what it was to be a slave. Never shall I forget the passage in this lecture in which he described Alexander surprising the great Cynic asleep, and waking him up with a line of Homer:—

"To sleep all night suits not a Councillor,"

—to which Diogenes replied at once in the following line, claiming for himself the heavy burden—entrusted to him by Zeus—of caring like a king for all the nations of the earth:—

"Who holds, in trust, the world's vast orb of cares."

Diogenes was not only an Æsculapius of souls; he wielded "the sceptre and the kingdom of the Cynic." Some have represented Epictetus as claiming this authority for himself. But in the lecture that I heard, it was not so. Though what he said might have been mistaken as a claim for himself, it was really a claim for "the Cynic," as follows. First he put the question, "How is it possible for one destitute, naked, homeless, hearthless, squalid, with not one slave to attend him, or a country to call his own, to lead a life of

equable happiness ? ” To which he replied, “ Behold, God hath sent unto you the man to demonstrate in act this possibility. *‘ Look on me, and see that I am without country, home, possessions, slaves ; no bed but the ground, no wife, no children—no palace to make a king or governor out of me—only the earth, and the sky, and one threadbare cloak ! And yet what do I want ? Am I not fearless ? Am I not free ? When saw ye me failing to find any good thing that I desired, or falling into any evil that I would fain have avoided ? What fault found I ever with God or man ? When did I ever accuse anyone ? Did anyone ever see me with a gloomy face ? How do I confront the great persons before whom you, worldlings, bow abashed and dismayed ? Do not I treat them as cringing slaves ? Who, that sees me, does not feel that he sees in me his natural Lord and Master ? ’ ”*

I confess that up to this point I had myself supposed that he was speaking of himself, standing erect as ruler of the world. But in the next instant he had dropped, as it were, from the pillar upon which he had been setting up the King, and now, like a man at the pedestal pointing up to the statue on the top, he exclaimed, “ Behold, these are the genuine Cynic’s utterances : this is his stamp and image : this is his aim ! ”

He passed on to answer the question, What if the Cynic missed his aim, or, at least, missed it so far as exerting the royal authority over others ? What if death cut his purpose short ? In that case, he said, the will, the purpose, the one essential good, had at all events remained in its purity ; and how could man die better than in such actions ? “ If, while I am thus employed, death should overtake me, it will suffice me if I can lift up my hands to God and say, ‘ The helps that I received from Thee, to the intent that I might understand and follow Thy ordering of the universe, these I have not neglected. I have not disgraced Thee, so

far as in me lay. See how I have used these faculties which Thou hast given me ! Have I ever found fault with Thee ? ever been ill-pleased with anything that has happened or ever wished it to happen otherwise ? Thou didst beget me, and I thank Thee for all Thou gavest me. I have used to the full the gifts that were of Thy giving and I am satisfied. Receive them back again and dispose them in such region as may please Thee. Thine were they all, and Thou hast given them unto me.' ” Then, turning to us, he said, “ Are you not content to take your exit after this fashion ? Than such a life, what can be better, or more full of grace and beauty ? Than such an end, what can be more full of blessing ? ”

There was much more, which I cannot recall. I was no longer in a mood to note and remember exact words and phrases, and I despair of making my readers understand why. Able philosophers and lecturers I had heard before, but none like this man. Some of those had moved me to esteem and gained my favourable judgement. But this man did not “ move ” me. He whirled me away into an upper region of spiritual possibility, at once glad and sad—sad at what I was, glad at what I might be. Alcibiades says in the Symposium of Plato that whereas the orator Pericles had only moved his outer self to admiration, the teaching of Socrates caught hold of his very soul, “ whirling it away into a Corybantic dance.” I quoted these words to Arrian as we left the lecture-room together, and he replied that they were just to the point. “ Epictetus,” he said, “ is a Phrygian ; and, like the Phrygian priests of Cybele, with their cymbals and their dances, he has just this power of whirling away his hearers into any region he pleases and making them feel at any moment what he wishes them to feel ; but,” added he thoughtfully, “ it did not last with Alcibiades. Will it last with us ? ”

I argued (or perhaps I should say urged, for it was more feeling than logic) that it would last—at all events for the world; that Socrates had exerted a lasting influence on mankind; that Diogenes, in a different way, had done the same; that it was impossible to doubt that Epictetus had a deep and loyal belief in God; and hardly possible to doubt that God was speaking to us through him. Could all this be a delusion? Even if there were some errors of detail or some dramatic hyperbole, was there not underneath these a solid truth—and a truth most salutary in those days when the Beast, in the shape of a Nero or a Domitian, might sit upon the throne and call himself Lord God and claim to be worshipped; while the true Man, the real “Son of God”—as Epictetus termed him—was liable to be called before the judgement-seat, and tried and condemned and put to death?

Arrian walked on for a while without answering. Presently he said, “This is your first lecture. It is not so with me. I, as you know, have heard Epictetus for several months, and I admire him as much as you do, perhaps more. I am sure he is doing me good. But I do not aim at being his ideal Cynic. ‘Not in me is the stuff’—I admit his censure—that makes a man into a King, bearing all the cares of all mankind upon his shoulders. My ambition is, some day, to become (as you are by birth) a Roman citizen”—he was not one then, nor was he Flavius Arrianus, but I have called him by the name by which he became known in the world—“and to do good work in the service of the Empire, as an officer of the State and yet an honest man. For that purpose I want to keep myself in order—at all events to some reasonable extent. Epictetus is helping me to do this, by making me ashamed of the foul life of the Beast, and by making me aspire to what he calls ‘the Man.’ That I feel day by day, and for that I am thankful.

“ But if you ask me about the reality of this ‘ authority,’ which our teacher claims for his Cynic, then, in all honesty, I must confess to doubts. Socrates, certainly, has moved the minds of civilized mankind. But then he had, as you know, a ‘ daemonic something ’ in him, a divine voice of some kind. And he believed in the immortality of the soul—a point on which you have not yet heard what Epictetus has to say. As to Diogenes, though I have always faithfully recorded in my notes what our teacher says about him, yet I do not feel that the philosopher of the tub had the same heaven-sent authority as Socrates, or as Epictetus himself. And, indeed, did you not yourself hear to-day that God gives us authority over nothing but our own hearts and wills ? How, then, can the Cynic claim this authority over others, except as an accident ? But I forget. Perhaps Epictetus did not mention to-day his usual doctrine about ‘ good ’ and ‘ evil,’ about ‘ peace of mind ’ and about the ‘ rule ’ of our neighbours as being ‘ no evil ’ to us. It comes in almost every lecture. Wait till you have heard this.

“ Again, as to the origin of this authority, the teacher tells us that it is given by God—or by gods, for he uses both expressions. But by what God or gods ? Is not this a matter of great importance ? Wait till you have heard him on this point. Now I must hasten back to my rooms to commit my notes to writing while fresh in my memory. We meet in the lecture-room to-morrow. Meantime, believe me, I most heartily sympathize with you in your admiration of one whom I account the best of all living philosophers. I have all your conviction of his sincerity. Assuredly, whencesoever he derives it, he has in him a marvellous power for good. The gods grant that it may last ! ”

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