

BOOK V.

WHETHER VIRTUE ALONE BE SUFFICIENT FOR A HAPPY LIFE.

I. THIS fifth day, Brutus, shall put an end to our Tusculan Disputations: on which day we discussed your favorite subject. For I perceive from that book which you wrote for me with the greatest accuracy, as well as from your frequent conversation, that you are clearly of this opinion, that virtue is of itself sufficient for a happy life: and though it may be difficult to prove this, on account of the many various strokes of fortune, yet it is a truth of such a nature that we should endeavor to facilitate the proof of it. For among all the topics of philosophy, there is not one of more dignity or importance. For as the first philosophers must have had some inducement to neglect everything for the search of the best state of life: surely, the inducement must have been the hope of living happily, which impelled them to devote so much care and pains to that study. Now, if virtue was discovered and carried to perfection by them, and if virtue is a sufficient security for a happy life, who can avoid thinking the work of philosophizing excellently recommended by them, and undertaken by me? But if virtue, as being subject to such various and uncertain accidents, were but the slave of fortune, and were not of sufficient ability to support herself, I am afraid that it would seem desirable rather to offer up prayers, than to rely on our own confidence in virtue as the foundation for our hope of a happy life. And, indeed, when I reflect on those troubles with which I have been so severely exercised by fortune, I begin to distrust this opinion; and sometimes even to dread the weakness and frailty of human nature, for I am afraid lest, when nature had given us infirm bodies, and had joined to them incurable diseases and intolerable pains, she perhaps also gave us minds participating in these bodily pains, and harassed

also with troubles and uneasinesses, peculiarly their own. But here I correct myself for forming my judgment of the power of virtue more from the weakness of others; or of myself perhaps, than from virtue itself: for she herself (provided there is such a thing as virtue; and your uncle Brutus has removed all doubt of it) has everything that can befall mankind in subjection to her; and by disregarding such things, she is far removed from being at all concerned at human accidents; and, being free from every imperfection, she thinks that nothing which is external to herself can concern her. But we, who increase every approaching evil by our fear, and every present one by our grief, choose rather to condemn the nature of things than our own errors.

II. But the amendment of this fault, and of all our other vices and offences, is to be sought for in philosophy: and as my own inclination and desire led me, from my earliest youth upward, to seek her protection, so, under my present misfortunes, I have had recourse to the same port from whence I set out, after having been tossed by a violent tempest. O Philosophy, thou guide of life! thou discoverer of virtue and expeller of vices! what had not only I myself, but the whole life of man, been without you? To you it is that we owe the origin of cities; you it was who called together the dispersed race of men into social life; you united them together, first, by placing them near one another, then by marriages, and lastly, by the communication of speech and languages. You have been the inventress of laws; you have been our instructress in morals and discipline; to you we fly for refuge; from you we implore assistance; and as I formerly submitted to you in a great degree, so now I surrender up myself entirely to you. For one day spent well, and agreeably to your precepts, is preferable to an eternity of error. Whose assistance, then, can be of more service to me than yours, when you have bestowed on us tranquillity of life, and removed the fear of death? But Philosophy is so far from being praised as much as she has deserved by mankind, that she is wholly neglected by most men, and actually evil spoken of by many. Can any person speak ill of the parent of life, and dare to pollute himself thus with parricide, *and be so im-*

piously ungrateful as to accuse her whom he ought to reverence, even were he less able to appreciate the advantages which he might derive from her? But this error, I imagine, and this darkness has spread itself over the minds of ignorant men, from their not being able to look so far back, and from their not imagining that those men by whom human life was first improved were philosophers; for though we see philosophy to have been of long standing, yet the name must be acknowledged to be but modern.

III. But, indeed, who can dispute the antiquity of philosophy, either in fact or name? For it acquired this excellent name from the ancients, by the knowledge of the origin and causes of everything, both divine and human. Thus those seven Σόφοι, as they were considered and called by the Greeks, have always been esteemed and called wise men by us; and thus Lycurgus many ages before, in whose time, before the building of this city, Homer is said to have lived, as well as Ulysses and Nestor in the heroic ages, are all handed down to us by tradition as having really been what they were called, wise men; nor would it have been said that Atlas supported the heavens, or that Prometheus was bound to Caucasus, nor would Cepheus, with his wife, his son-in-law, and his daughter have been enrolled among the constellations, but that their more than human knowledge of the heavenly bodies had transferred their names into an erroneous fable. From whence all who occupied themselves in the contemplation of nature were both considered and called wise men; and that name of theirs continued to the age of Pythagoras, who is reported to have gone to Phlius, as we find it stated by Heraclides Ponticus, a very learned man, and a pupil of Plato, and to have discoursed very learnedly and copiously on certain subjects with Leon, prince of the Phliasii; and when Leon, admiring his ingenuity and eloquence, asked him what art he particularly professed, his answer was, that he was acquainted with no art, but that he was a philosopher. Leon, surprised at the novelty of the name, inquired what he meant by the name of philosopher, and in what philosophers differed from other men; on which Pythagoras replied, "That the life of man seemed to him to resemble those games which were celebrated with the

greatest possible variety of sports and the general course of all Greece. For as in those games there were some persons whose object was glory and the honor of a crown, to be attained by the performance of bodily exercises, so others were led thither by the gain of buying and selling, and mere views of profit; but there was likewise one class of persons, and they were by far the best, whose aim was neither applause nor profit, but who came merely as spectators through curiosity, to observe what was done, and to see in what manner things were carried on there. And thus, said he, we come from another life and nature unto this one, just as men come out of some other city, to some much frequented mart; some being slaves to glory, others to money; and there are some few who, taking no account of anything else, earnestly look into the nature of things; and these men call themselves studious of wisdom, that is, philosophers: and as there it is the most reputable occupation of all to be a looker-on without making any acquisition, so in life, the contemplating things, and acquainting one's self with them, greatly exceeds every other pursuit of life."

IV. Nor was Pythagoras the inventor only of the name, but he enlarged also the thing itself, and, when he came into Italy after this conversation at Phlius, he adorned that Greece, which is called Great Greece, both privately and publicly, with the most excellent institutions and arts; but of his school and system I shall, perhaps, find another opportunity to speak. But numbers and motions, and the beginning and end of all things, were the subjects of the ancient philosophy down to Socrates, who was a pupil of Archelaus, who had been the disciple of Anaxagoras. These made diligent inquiry into the magnitude of the stars, their distances, courses, and all that relates to the heavens. But Socrates was the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil. And his different methods of discussing questions, together with the variety of his topics, and the greatness of his abilities, being immortalized by the memory and writings of Plato, gave rise to many sects of philosophers of different sentiments, of all which I have principally ad-

hered to that one which, in my opinion, Socrates himself followed; and argue so as to conceal my own opinion, while I deliver others from their errors, and so discover what has the greatest appearance of probability in every question. And the custom Carneades adopted with great copiousness and acuteness, and I myself have often given in to it on many occasions elsewhere, and in this manner, too, I disputed lately, in my Tusculan villa; indeed, I have sent you a book of the four former days' discussions; but the fifth day, when we had seated ourselves as before, what we were to dispute on was proposed thus:

V. A. I do not think virtue can possibly be sufficient for a happy life.

M. But my friend Brutus thinks so, whose judgment, with submission, I greatly prefer to yours.

A. I make no doubt of it; but your regard for him is not the business now: the question is now, what is the real character of that quality of which I have declared my opinion. I wish you to dispute on that.

M. What! do you deny that virtue can possibly be sufficient for a happy life?

A. It is what I entirely deny.

M. What! is not virtue sufficient to enable us to live as we ought, honestly, commendably, or, in fine, to live well?

A. Certainly sufficient.

M. Can you, then, help calling any one miserable who lives ill? or will you deny that any one who you allow lives well must inevitably live happily?

A. Why may I not? for a man may be upright in his life, honest, praiseworthy, even in the midst of torments, and therefore live well. Provided you understand what I mean by well; for when I say well, I mean with constancy, and dignity, and wisdom, and courage; for a man may display all these qualities on the rack; but yet the rack is inconsistent with a happy life.

M. What, then? is your happy life left on the outside of the prison, while constancy, dignity, wisdom, and the other virtues, are surrendered up to the executioner, and bear punishment and pain without reluctance?

A. You must look out for something new if you would

do any good. These things have very little effect on me, not merely from their being common, but principally because, like certain light wines that will not bear water, these arguments of the Stoics are pleasanter to taste than to swallow. As when that assemblage of virtues is committed to the rack, it raises so reverend a spectacle before our eyes that happiness seems to hasten on towards them, and not to suffer them to be deserted by her. But when you take your attention off from this picture and these images of the virtues to the truth and the reality, what remains without disguise is, the question whether any one can be happy in torment? Wherefore let us now examine that point, and not be under any apprehensions, lest the virtues should expostulate, and complain that they are forsaken by happiness. For if prudence is connected with every virtue, then prudence itself discovers this, that all good men are not therefore happy; and she recollects many things of Marcus Atilius,¹ Quintus Cæpio,² Marcus Aquilius;³ and prudence herself, if these representations are more agreeable to you than the things themselves, restrains happiness when it is endeavoring to throw itself into torments, and denies that it has any connection with pain and torture.

VI. *M.* I can easily bear with your behaving in this manner, though it is not fair in you to prescribe to me how you would have me carry on this discussion. But I ask you if I have effected anything or nothing in the preceding days?

A. Yes; something was done, some little matter indeed.

M. But if that is the case, this question is settled, and almost put an end to.

A. How so?

M. Because turbulent motions and violent agitations of

¹ This was Marcus Atilius Regulus, the story of whose treatment by the Carthaginians in the first Punic War is well known to everybody.

² This was Quintus Servilius Cæpio, who, 105 B.C., was destroyed, with his army, by the Cimbri, it was believed as a judgment for the covetousness which he had displayed in the plunder of Tolosa.

³ This was Marcus Aquilius, who, in the year 88 B.C., was sent against Mithridates as one of the consular legates; and, being defeated, was delivered up to the king by the inhabitants of Mitylene. Mithridates put him to death by pouring molten gold down his throat.

the mind, when it is raised and elated by a rash impulse, getting the better of reason, leave no room for a happy life. For who that fears either pain or death, the one of which is always present, the other always impending, can be otherwise than miserable? Now, supposing the same person — which is often the case — to be afraid of poverty, ignominy, infamy, or weakness, or blindness, or, lastly, slavery, which doth not only befall individual men, but often even the most powerful nations; now can any one under the apprehension of these evils be happy? What shall we say of him who not only dreads these evils as impending, but actually feels and bears them at present? Let us unite in the same person banishment, mourning, the loss of children; now, how can any one who is broken down and rendered sick in body and mind by such affliction be otherwise than very miserable indeed? What reason, again, can there be why a man should not rightly enough be called miserable whom we see inflamed and raging with lust, coveting everything with an insatiable desire, and, in proportion as he derives more pleasure from anything, thirsting the more violently after them? And as to a man vainly elated, exulting with an empty joy, and boasting of himself without reason, is not he so much the more miserable in proportion as he thinks himself happier? Therefore, as these men are miserable, so, on the other hand, those are happy who are alarmed by no fears, wasted by no griefs, provoked by no lusts, melted by no languid pleasures that arise from vain and exulting joys. We look on the sea as calm when not the least breath of air disturbs its waves; and, in like manner, the placid and quiet state of the mind is discovered when unmoved by any perturbation. Now, if there be any one who holds the power of fortune, and everything human, everything that can possibly befall any man, as supportable, so as to be out of the reach of fear or anxiety, and if such a man covets nothing, and is lifted up by no vain joy of mind, what can prevent his being happy? And if these are the effects of virtue, why cannot virtue itself make men happy?

VII. *A.* But the other of these two propositions is undeniable, that they who are under no apprehensions, who are

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