

old; and after giving so exalted a definition of art, he proscribes artists. So weak and contradictory did these aspirations towards inaccessible wisdom and truth prove in the individual! Aristotle (384-322), the disciple of Plato, subverted the system of his master, and took up his study of philosophy by tracing back the effect to the cause, instead of descending from the cause to the effect. Thus, the changeable, the casual, the sensational, or whatever relates to the senses, he made his starting-point. *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.* His philosophy bears the title of Experimental. Its moral may be said to be resumed in this axiom of Epicurus's, "Pleasure constitutes the highest happiness of man." The day on which immortality was thus solemnly installed in the domains of philosophy, the sages were struck with terror at their work. With Zeno (300-260), they took refuge in the exaggerated rigours of stoicism. "The body is everything," said Epicurus: "The body is nothing." say the stoics. "Pleasure is the sovereign good," says the former: "Pain is not an evil," reply the latter. What but universal scepticism could follow from these conflicting and contradictory opinions? Arcesilaus (300-241) based his philosophy on it, in the New Academy of which he was the founder. The basis of all wisdom, he said, is that we can know nothing, since a criterion of truth is wanting to us.

Meanwhile, what had become of humanity, thus tossed about from materialism to spiritualism, from spiritualism to empiricism, from empiricism to formal incredulity? Humanity was becoming extinct! No more issue: the elcibacy of vice had destroyed the generations at their source; Augustus was obliged to institute a penal law forcing the youth of Rome to marry. Divorce, polygamy, concubinage, rendered withal the conjugal yoke easy to bear. In Rome, under Augustus, as in China in our own day, children were abandoned, sold, or put to death. This was the barbarous right of the father, and he availed himself of it. After the same manner did Sparta deal with her ill-formed children, casting them into the Taygetus. Humanity was perishing in the arena, by the teeth of the wild beasts, the sword of the gladiator, the bloody lash, which tore the naked flesh of the slave. For slavery was the basis of the Greco-Roman society. The slave was a thing, a beast of burden, less than a dog. "If he held the post of doorkeeper, he was fastened close to his door, with a long chain riveted to each ankle by an iron ring. A master rarely deigned to speak to his slaves; he called them by a snap of his fingers; when more explanation was needed, some there were who carried their arrogance so far as to write what they had to say, lest they might prostitute their words. The law condemned to the same penalty the individual who killed the slave of another or his beast of burden. He was to pay the price fixed; which varied according to the strength or weakness of the slave, and the more or less damage done to the master by his death." As to the master himself, he possessed an absolute right over the slave. Augustus, in a single day, caused six thousand of these wretched creatures to be strangled for having allowed themselves to be enrolled by the Senate in the service of the Republic. A slave was deprived of the right to carry arms, or to seek death as a soldier dies. The element emperor, learning one day that one of his slaves had roasted a quail and eaten it, ordered him to be crucified. Vedius Pollio causes a slave to be cast to his muræna for having through awkwardness broken a precious vase. "When a public crime has been committed, when a master has been assassinated in his house, the law condemns to the death of the cross every slave, without distinction, who was under the roof at the moment of the crime." Now, slavery in Rome, Athens, Sparta, was in the fearful proportion of two hundred slaves to one free man. Several private citizens in Rome were known to possess as many as twenty thousand slaves. In truth, humanity was dying out in those regions desolated by slavery. Again, war maintained slavery. *Servi servati*, said the Roman proverb. So slight a value did the code of public and official morality set on human life, that Julius Cæsar, that ideal of a hero, caused four thousand Helvetic prisoners to be reduced to slavery, and other three thousand to have their two thumbs cut off.

It was meet that the mistress of the world should be furnished with that band of human victims of which Seneca says:—"What a horror were our slaves to think of numbering us!" Egypt, Libya, the East, Greece, Gaul, all the provinces of the world sent their vanquished, in long and interminable caravans, to people the ergastulum, of the patricians. In the markets where the traffic of this hideous merchandise was permanently carried on the prisoner of war had a crown on his head; this was the derisive mark of his worth. Those who came from beyond the sea had their feet rubbed with gypsum or chalk. On entering that Rome where they were about to be buried alive, the infamous crosses, standing erect, with forlorn bodies hanging upon them, met their gaze, near the Equiline gate. Then their eyes were opened to the sad truth that the city of Romulus had turned to its own profit the expression of the Gaulish Brennus—"Woe to the vanquished." They walked along in a dead silence to the dwelling of their master, where awaited them the gibbet, the lash, the brand, chains, prison, and death. Yes, always death! The Roman matrons and the vestal virgins invoked it by raising their finger in the bloody games of the amphitheatre. The gladiators, on their way to death, saluted Cæsar. There were no festivals at which deadly combats between slaves were not introduced to rouse the half sleeping guests on their golden triclinium by the sight of blood. The wealthy Romans bequeathed, as a legacy to their heirs, the death of their slaves for a memorial of undying affection.

God unknown, humanity every where slaughtered, the soul buried in a monstrous depravity—behold the spectacle of the Greco-Roman world! We have not said all, and yet the heart sickens at the recital. A profound disgust, mingled with an indescribable terror, full of anguish, weighs on the soul in its rapid passage through so much moral turpitude, ferocious barbarity, and infernal degradation. St. Paul in one word sums up ancient civilisation—*Deus ventur est.* "They ate to vomit, and vomit to eat again; scarce deigning to give themselves the trouble of digesting repasts to which all the countries of the world had contributed magnificence." Thus speaks Seneca, the philosopher; and he adds:—Caius Cæsar, whom, I do believe, nature brought forth to give in one ensemble an example of all vices

reunited, in the midst of the greatest wealth, expended in one day one hundred thousand sesterces for a dinner. Assisted in this work by his guests, his fancy succeeded in expending nearly the entire of the annual revenues of three provinces in the one gigantic repast. Æsopus, the tragedian, serves up a dish which cost £19,405. Clodius dissolves in vinegar and drinks a pearl worth £194,500. The costly suppers of Lucullus and Antony are well known; also the name of that Apicius who, after squandering millions on his stomach, put an end to himself, saying that a Roman could not live on such a miserable pittance as two hundred thousand pounds. To crown themselves with flowers, and lie on couches of purple and gold in festive halls, where they were served by beautiful young girls; to enjoy the bloody spectacle of the gladiators, and devour the substance of the universe; to inebriate themselves at once with wine, blood, and luxury—such is a picture of life in the age of Augustus.

The natural winding up of such a life was suicide. Apricius, ruined, was only putting in practice the precepts of Cicero—*Injuriarum fortuna, quas ferre nequeas, defugiendo relinquo.* "When one has not the courage to bear up against the blows of fortune, one must get out of the world." This is the last form of philosophy. And fear not to be suspected of cowardice by abandoning life, like a soldier who throws down his arms and forsakes the post of honor confided to him. Suicide is an act of supreme heroism. "If you are unhappy, and that you still can boast of a little virtue," adds Cicero, "put an end to yourself, as the noblest men have done." Perhaps a future life, the destinies of the immortal soul, may restrain your arm. We hear of the Black Cocytus, of Acheron, the Infernal River, of torments which never end. "Do you suppose me so insane as to believe in these fables?" replies Cicero. Where is the mind silly enough to admit them? "Either the soul survives decease," he continues, "or it expires with it." A God will one day tell us how it is, because it is very difficult to discern which of these two opinions would be the more probable. However it may be, if the soul die, death is not an evil; if it survive, it cannot be otherwise than happy—*Si manent, beati sunt.* By virtue of this dilemma, which Seneca simplified still further in his well known sentence, *aut beatus, aut nullus*, "Happiness, or nothingness;" suicide was hovering over the world as over its prey; it was branding, with its shameful stigma, the most illustrious memories—Hannibal, Mithridates, Antony, Pompey, Marius, Cato of Attica, Cleomenes, Crassus, Demosthenes, Caius Gracchus, Otho; all these heroes of Plutarch are the heroes of suicide. If we wished to consult the thermometer, as it were, of public morality, and examine to the end the list of names inscribed by Plutarch in his biographical collection as the tablets of immortality, murder would form the counterpart to voluntary death. Agis, Alcibiades, Cæsar, Cicero, Coriolanus, Dion, Tiberius Gracchus, Nicias, Numa, Philopæmon, Sertorius, fall victims to poison or the sword. The more favored die in exile. Of the fifty great men recorded by Plutarch, only ten had the happiness of ending their lives gloriously on the battle-field or in the calm and serene enjoyment of the domestic hearth. Now, may we rightly understand the sentence of the Prophet. Humanity was really seated in darkness, in the region of the shadows of death.

The Book of Wisdom draws a picture of the idolatrous world, each feature of which presents a striking reality. "For either they sacrifice their children, or use hidden sacrifices, or keep watches full of madness, so that now they neither keep life nor marriage undefiled, but one killeth another through envy, or grieveth him by adultery; and all things are mingled together, blood, murder, theft, and dissimulation, corruption and unfaithfulness, tumults and perjury, disquieting of the good, forgetfulness of God, defiling of souls, changing of nature, disorder in marriage, and the irregularity of adultery and uncleanness. For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning and end of all evil." Behold, then, despoiled of all the seductions of form, the fascinations of poetry, the prestige of oratorical art—behold, in its terrible reality, the carcass of ancient paganism! There it is, displaying under our eyes the spectacle of its infamy. But who has killed it? Why has life become extinct in the bosom of that humanity whose entrails it tore so pitilessly during fourteen centuries, and whose blood it drank in torrents? Who was the David of this Goliath—the conqueror of this giant, which not Socrates, Plato, Alexander, Cæsar, not even the genius of the scholars nor the arms of heroes had been able to reach? In the age of Augustus it was full of life; it had conquered the world. From the East to the West, it commanded victims; bodies and souls, infancy and age, modesty, virginity, virtue, fell a prey to it—it devoured men in thousands! Everything seemed to insure it a lasting reign. Poets celebrated its praises in immortal songs; crowns were awarded to it status; the votaries of pleasure rushed wildly to its feasts; the smoking incense perfumed its altars; the people and their kings, the sages themselves, bowed before its divinity. Supposing that its future had been marked by a progress analogous to its development in the past, it ought necessarily to reach us through an uninterrupted series of victories. Such being the case, can we picture to ourselves what it would be in our day, having at its disposal the mighty powers of modern civilisation? The hecatombs of antiquity would be replaced by masses of victims. Instead of the thirty thousand gladiators who expired in the reign of Augustus, entire nations would be transported, with the aid of steam, to the midst of a spacious amphitheatre, whose colossal proportions would far exceed that of the ancient Coliseum. Wild beasts would no longer suffice to work the destruction of victims; even the sacred fire of the altars would consume them too slowly. Electricity, with its newly discovered flames, should add intensity to the tortures, and the palpitating members, delivered over to the mercy of the infernal machines, would be ground to powder under their pitiless wheels. Sensuality would have for tributary not alone provinces, but the entire world. The Roman roads, replaced by our modern railroads, would transport in a few days those delicacies which the luxury and the gluttony of the patricians were forced to await for years! Once more, who has dealt the death-blow to paganism. He alone, whoever he may be, has worked the greatest miracle recorded in history. God alone could do it, and expiring humanity invoked with a loud voice a divine Saviour.