

PLUTARCH'S MORALS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK BY SEVERAL HANDS.

CORRECTED AND REVISED

BY

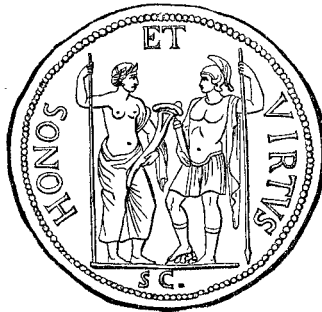
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WITH

AN INTRODUCTION BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE translation of Plutarch's *Morals* "by Several Hands" was first published in London in 1684-1694. The fifth edition, "revised and corrected from the many errors of the former editions," published in 1718, is the basis of the present translation. The earlier translation made by Philemon Holland, Doctor of Physick, published in London in 1603 and again in 1657, has often been of great use in the revision. It hardly need be stated, that the name "*Morals*" is used by tradition to include all the works of Plutarch except the *Lives*.

The original editions of the present work contained translations of every grade of merit. Some of the essays were translated by eminent scholars like William Baxter (nephew of Richard Baxter) and Thomas Creech, whose work generally required merely such revision as every translation of such an age would now need. But a large number, including some of the longest and most difficult treatises, were translated by men whose ignorance of Greek—or whatever language was the immediate ancestor of their own version—was only one of their many defects as translators. Perhaps we may gain a better idea than we have had of the scholars of Oxford whom Bentley delighted to torment, from these specimens of the learning of their generation; and it may have been a fortunate thing for some of our translators that Bentley was too much occupied with the wise heads of Christ Church to be able to notice the blunders of men who could write notes saying that the Parthenon is "a Promontory shooting into the Black Sea, where stood a Chappel dedicated to some Virgin God-head, and famous for some Victory thereabout obtain'd;" or who could torture a plain statement that a certain water when stirred produced *bubbles* (*πομφόλυγες*) into a story of a

new substance called *Pompholyx*, "made by Mixture of Brass with the Air"! See Vol. V. p. 337, and Vol. III. p. 517, of the original translation.

Besides the great variety of scholarship and ignorance, each translator had his own theory of translation. While some attempted a literal version, so as even to bracket all words not actually represented in the Greek, others gave a mere paraphrase, which in one case (Mr. Pulleyn's "Customs of the Lacedaemonians") became an original essay on the subject, based on the facts supplied by Plutarch. The present editor's duty, of course, changed with each new style of translation. It would have been impossible to bring the whole work to a uniform standard of verbal correctness, unless essentially a new translation had been made. The original version was often so hopelessly incorrect that no revision was possible; and here the editor cannot flatter himself that he has succeeded in patching the English of the seventeenth century with his own without detriment. Fortunately, the earlier translation of Holland supplied words, and even whole sentences, in many cases in which the other was beyond the help of mere revision. The translation of Holland is generally more accurate than the other, and, on the whole, a more conscientious work; its antiquated style and diffuseness, however, render it less fitted for republication at the present time. Notwithstanding all the defects of the translation which is here revised, it is beyond all question a more readable version than could be made now; and the liveliness of its style will more than make up to most readers for its want of literal correctness. It need not be stated to professional scholars, that translations made in the seventeenth century cannot, even by the most careful revision, be made to answer the demands of modern critical scholarship.

One of the greatest difficulties in preparing the present work has been to decide how much of the antiquated language of the old translation should be retained. On this point the editor has fortunately been able to consult the wisest and most experienced advisers, to whose aid he has been constantly indebted; but even the highest authorities occasionally disagree on the first principles. He is fully aware, therefore, that he has dissatisfied a large number of the friends of Plutarch in this respect; but he is equally sure that he should have dissatisfied an equal number by any other course which he might have followed. The general princi-

ple adopted has been to retain such expressions as were in good use when the translation was made, provided the meaning is obvious or easy to be learned from a dictionary, and to discard such as would be unintelligible to ordinary readers. It has, in some cases, been assumed that the use of a phrase of obvious meaning in this translation is of itself authority for accepting it. On these principles many words and expressions are retained, which are decidedly weaker than their modern equivalents, especially many Latinisms and Gallicisms which now seem pedantic. Even here consistency has been impossible, where the duty of a reviser changed with every new treatise. Perhaps the editor cannot state his own object more correctly, than by saying that he has tried to make each treatise what the original translator would have made it if he had carried out his own purpose conscientiously and thoroughly. Where so many errors were to be corrected, it would be absurd to hope that many have not remained still unnoticed.

The corrupt state of the Greek text of many parts of Plutarch's *Morals* must not be overlooked. No complete edition of the Greek has been published since Wytttenbach's (1795-1800), except the French one by Dübner in the Didot collection. The latter gives no manuscript readings; and although it professes to be based partly on a new collation of the manuscripts in the public library of Paris, nothing distinguishes the changes made on this authority from conjectures of the editor and his predecessors. A slight glance at Wytttenbach will show that many parts of the text are restored by conjecture; and many of the conjectures, though plausible and ingenious, are not such as would be accepted by modern scholarship if they were made in earlier classic authors. A translator must accept many of these under silent protest; to enumerate one-half of them would introduce a critical commentary entirely out of place in a translation. In fact, no critical translation of these treatises is possible, until a thorough revision of the text, with the help of the best manuscripts, has been made; and this is a task from which most scholars would shrink in dismay. In many cases in this edition, blanks have been preferred to uncertain conjectures or traditional nonsense. The treatises on Music, on the Procreation of the Soul, and the two on the Stoics, have many of their dark corners made darker by the utter uncertainty of the Greek text.

The essays in this edition follow the same order as in the old translation; but those on Fortune, and on Virtue and Vice, with the Conjugal Precepts, are transferred from the beginning of volume third to the end of volume second. The sections have been numbered in accordance with the modern editions of the Greek text. References to most of the classic authors quoted by Plutarch are given in the foot-notes, except where a quotation is a mere fragment of an unknown work. The tragic fragments are numbered according to the edition of Nauck (Leipsic, 1856). All notes (except these references) introduced by the editor are marked G. A few notes are taken from Holland; and all which are not otherwise marked are retained from the old translation.

In conclusion, the editor must express his warmest thanks to his colleagues at the University and other friends who have kindly aided him with their advice and skill. Without their help, the undertaking would sometimes have seemed hopeless.

WILLIAM W. GOODWIN.

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