

## CONCERNING THE FORTUNE OF THE ROMANS.

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1. AMONG the many warm disputes which have often happened between Virtue and Fortune, this concerning the Roman empire is none of the least considerable, whether of them shall have the honor of founding that empire at first, and raising it afterwards to vast power and glory. The victory in this cause will be no small commendation of the conqueror, and will sufficiently vindicate either of the contending parties from the allegations that are usually made against it. For Virtue is accused as unprofitable, though beautiful, and Fortune as unstable, though good ; the former as laboring in vain, the latter as deceitful in its gifts. But who can deny but Virtue has been most profitable, if Rome does favor her cause in this contention, since she procured so much good to brave and gallant men ; or that Fortune is most constant, if she be victorious in this contest, since she continued her gifts with the Romans for so long a time ?

Ion the poet has written somewhere in prose, that Fortune and Wisdom, though they be very much different from one another, are nevertheless the causes of the very same effects. Both of them do advance and adorn men ; both do raise them to glory, power, and empire. It were needless to multiply instances by a long enumeration of particulars, when even Nature itself, which produces all things, is by some reputed Fortune, and by others Wisdom. And therefore the present controversy will con-

ciliate great honor and veneration to the city of Rome, since she is thought worthy of the same enquiry which uses to be made concerning the earth and seas, the heavens and the stars, — whether she owes her being to Fortune or to Providence.

2. In which question, I think it may be truly affirmed that, notwithstanding the fierce and lasting wars which have been between Virtue and Fortune, they did both amicably conspire to rear up the structure of her vast empire and power, and join their united endeavors to finish the most beautiful work that ever was of human production. It was the opinion of Plato, that the whole world was composed of fire and earth, as necessary first principles, which being mixed together did render it visible and tangible, — the earth contributing weight and firmness, while the fire gave color, form, and motion to the several parts of matter ; but for the tempering and union of these extremes, he thought it necessary that the water and air, being of a middle nature, should mitigate and rebate the contrary force by composition. After the same manner did God and Time, who laid the foundations of Rome, conjoin and mingle Virtue and Fortune together, that by the union of their several powers, they might compose a Vesta, truly sacred and beneficent to all men, which should be a firm stay, an eternal support, and a steady anchor (as Democritus calls it) amidst the fluctuating and uncertain affairs of human life. For as naturalists say, that the world was not framed at first into that beautiful order and structure in which we now behold it, nor would these several bodies that compose it unite and mix so that Nature might receive a common form by their union, but that all things did fluctuate a long while in confusion and crashing, — whilst some bodies were still small and variously moved, and slipped and avoided all seizure and connections, and others which were greater and already

compacted, being of contrary natures, did frequently jostle and jar one against another, — and that all was full of destruction and confusion and wreck, until such time as the earth, being framed of them both in its due magnitude, was established in its proper place, and by its stability gave occasion to all the other bodies of the universe either to settle upon it or round about it; just so it happened to the greatest kingdoms and empires of men, which were long tossed with various changes and broken in pieces by mutual clashings. And for want of one supreme ruler over all, while all aspired to rule, the world was filled with unspeakable violence, confusion, and revolution in all things, until such time as Rome was raised to its just strength and greatness, which, comprehending under her power many strange nations and even transmarine dominions, did lay the foundation of firmness and stability to the greatest of human affairs; for by this vast compass of one and the same empire, government was secured as in an unmovable circle, resting upon the centre of peace. Whosoever therefore contrived and compassed these great designs must not only have been endowed with all virtues, but likewise have been assisted by Fortune in many things; as will plainly appear from the following discourse.

3. And now methinks I behold, as from a turret, Virtue and Fortune coming to this conference. As to Virtue, her gait is modest, her countenance grave, the blushing color of her face shows her earnest desire of obtaining victory and honor in this contest. Fortune in her hasty pace, leaves her far behind, but she is led and accompanied by many brave and gallant men,

A martial host, ghastly with bloody arms, \*

all wounded in the fore part of their bodies, distilling blood mingled with sweat, and they lean upon the bending spoils

\* *Odys.* XI. 41.

of their enemies. If you enquire who they are, they answer, We are of the Fabricii, Camilli, and Lucii, and Cincinnati, and Fabii Maximi, and Claudii Marcelli, and the Scipios. I perceive also in the train of Virtue Caius Marius angry with Fortune, and Mucius Scaevola holding out his burning hand and crying with a loud voice, Will ye attribute this to Fortune also? And Marcus Horatius, who behaved himself gallantly at the river Tiber, when he cut the bridge and swam over, being loaded with Tyrrhenian darts, showing his wounded thigh, thus expostulates from out of the deep whirlpit of the river, Was I also thus maimed by mere chance? Such is the company of Virtue, when she comes to the dispute; "a company powerful in arms, terrible to their foes."

4. But as to Fortune, her gait is hasty, her looks bold, her hope arrogant; and leaving Virtue far behind her, she enters the lists, not, as she is described, with light wings, balancing herself in the air, or lightly tripping with her tiptoes upon the convexity of the globe, as if she were presently to vanish away out of sight. No, she does not appear here in any such doubtful and uncertain posture; but as the Spartans say that Venus, when she passed over the Eurotas, put off her gewgaws and female ornaments, and armed herself with spear and shield for the sake of Lycurgus; so Fortune, having deserted the Persians and Assyrians, did swiftly fly over Macedonia, and quickly threw off her favorite Alexander the Great, and after that, having passed through the countries of Egypt and Syria, and oftentimes by turns supported the Carthaginians, she did at last fly over Tiber to the Palatine Mount, and there she put off her wings, her Mercurial shoes, and left her slippery and deceitful globe. Thus she entered Rome, as one that was to be resident there, and thus she comes to the bar in this controversy. She is no more uncertain, as Pindar describes her; she does not henceforth guide a

double helm, but continues constant to the Romans, and therefore may be called the sister of Eunomia and Persuasion, and the daughter of Providence, as Alcman describes her pedigree. This is certain in the opinion of all men, that she holds in her hand the Horn of Plenty, not that which is filled with verdant fruits, but that which pours forth abundance of all things which the earth or the sea, the rivers or the metals, or the harbors afford. Several illustrious and famous men are seen to accompany her, Numa Pompilius from the Sabines, and Priscus from Tarquinius, whom, being foreigners and strangers, Fortune seated on the throne of Romulus. Aemilius Paulus also, bringing back his army from Perseus and the Macedonians, and triumphing in an unbloody and entire victory, does greatly magnify and extol Fortune. The same does Cae-cilius Metellus, that brave old gentleman surnamed Macedonicus, whose corpse was carried forth to its funeral by his four sons, Quintus Balearicus, Lucius Diadematus, Marcus Metellus, and Caius Caprarius, and his two sons-in-law, — who were all six honorable men, and of consular dignity, — and also by his two grandsons, who were famous for the good offices they did to the commonwealth, both abroad by their heroical actions and at home by the administration of justice. Aemilius Scaurus, from a mean estate and a meaner family, was raised by Fortune to that height of dignity that he was chosen Prince of the Senate. It was Fortune that took Cornelius Sylla out of the bosom of Nicopolis the whore, and exalted him above the Cimbrian triumphs of Marius and the dignity of his seven consulships, giving him at once the powers of a monarch and a dictator; upon which account he adopted himself and all his memorable actions to Fortune, crying out with Oedipus in Sophocles, I think myself the son of Fortune.\* In the Roman tongue he was called Felix, the

\* Soph. Oed. Tyr. 1080.

happy ; but he writ himself to the Greeks Lucius Cornelius Sylla Venustus, i. e. Beloved of Venus, — which is also the inscription on all his trophies, both those at Chæronea with us, and those in honor of his victories over Mithridates ; and that not without reason, since it is not the Night, as Menander thought, but Fortune, that enjoys the greatest part of Venus.

5. And thus, having made a seasonable beginning in defence of Fortune, we may now call in, for witnesses in this cause, the Romans themselves, who attributed more to Fortune than to Virtue. For the temple of Virtue was but lately built by Scipio Numantinus, a long time after the building of the city. And after that, Marcellus dedicated a temple to Virtue and Honor ; and Aemilius Scaurus, who lived in the time of the Cimbrian war, founded another to the Mind, when now, by the subtilties of sophisters and encomiastics of orators, these things began to be mightily extolled. And to this very day there is no temple built to Wisdom, nor to Temperance, Patience, Magnanimity, or Continnence. On the contrary, the temples dedicated to Fortune are splendid and ancient, almost as old as the first foundations of Rome itself. The first that built her a temple was Ancus Marcius, born of the sister of Numa, being the third king from Romulus ; and he seems to have made Fortune surname to Fortitude, to which she contributes very much for obtaining victory. The Romans built the temple of Feminine Fortune before the time of Camillus, when by the help of the women they turned back Marcius Coriolanus, leading up the Volsci against the city of Rome ; for the women being sent ambassadors to him, together with his mother and wife, prevailed with the man to spare the city at that time and to draw off the army of the barbarians. It is said that this statue of Fortune, when it was consecrated, uttered these words : It was piously done, O ye city matrons, to dedicate me by the law

of your state. But (which is more remarkable) Furius Camillus, having quenched the flame of the Gallic war, and rescued Rome from the balance and scales in which her price was weighed to them in gold, did not upon this occasion found a temple to Prudence and Fortitude, but to Fame and Presage; which he built hard by the New Way, in that very place where (it is said) Marcus Caedicius walking in the night-time heard a prophetic voice, commanding him shortly to expect a war from the Gauls. And the Fortune whose temple is near the river they call Fortis (that is, *stout*, or *valiant*, or *manly*), as having the power of conquering all things.\* And her temple is built in those very gardens which were left by Caesar as a legacy to the people, because they thought that he also was raised to the height of power by the favor of Fortune.

6. And so Caesar himself testified, otherwise I should be ashamed to say such a thing of so great a person. For when he loosed from Brundisium, and embarked in pursuit of Pompey, on the fourth day of January, though it was then the latter end of winter, he passed over the sea in safety by the good conduct of Fortune, which was stronger than the rigor of the season. And when he found Pompey powerful by sea and land, with all his forces lying together, and himself with his small party altogether unable to give him battle, while the army of Antonius and Sabinus lagged behind, he ventured to set forth again in a little bark, unknown either to the master of the vessel or the pilot, who took him for some servant. But when he saw the pilot began to change his purpose of putting out to sea, because of the violence of the waves,

\* The temple built in Caesar's gardens was a temple of Fors Fortuna; and as this name appeared most frequently in the genitive, Fortis Fortunae, Plutarch probably mistook the title for Fortis, which he translates by *ἀνδρεία*. As the gardens of Caesar were *trans Tiberim*, Plutarch cannot refer to the temple still standing in the Forum Boarium, generally called that of Fortuna Virilis(?). See Becker's *Römische Alterthümer* I. pp. 478-480, note. (G.)

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