

**EXTRACTS FROM MARTIAL; FOR
THE USE OF THE HUMANITY
CLASSES IN THE UNIVERSITIES
OF EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW**

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M. V. MARTIALIS

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EXTRACTS FROM

Marcus Valerius

MARTIAL *is*

[*Edited by W. Y. Sellar and G. G. Furness*]

For the Use of the Humanity Classes

IN THE

UNIVERSITIES OF EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY W. Y. SELLAR, M.A., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF HUMANITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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P R E F A C E.

THE following selection from the Epigrams of Martial has been drawn up as a text-book for the students in the Humanity Classes in the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. From some points of view, Martial is the most instructive of all the poets of the Silver Age. He has placed before us, in the most vivid colours, the whole life of Rome as he knew it, good and bad alike: no other author presents us in the same compass with so detailed a view of the daily life and manners of antiquity. His merits as a writer are undisputed: in his own department of Latin literature—and that a department which brings out in a special way the genius of the Latin language—he is without a rival. Yet great as are the interest and importance of his writings, it is impossible to place his whole text in the hands of students; and unless this most valuable page of Roman literature is to be entirely closed to them, selection becomes indispensable. But fortunately, while no writings more imperatively demand censorship, none lend themselves to it more readily, or suffer less from the process: no author

needs less to be studied as a whole, nor have omissions any effect in impairing the value of what is retained.

The selections published by Mr Paley and by Mr Stephenson are excellent; but setting aside the question of price, neither edition covers exactly the ground we have traced out for ourselves, whether as regards the pieces omitted or those included. In the present collection we have attempted to include everything in the author's comments upon human life, that seemed most worth preserving for its wit, humour, sense, or pathos, as well as everything that in a marked degree throws light upon the poet's own life, character, and circumstances; upon the social conditions, manners, and customs of the day, whether in Rome or in the provinces; upon the history, the literature, and the current literary ideas of the time. We have omitted all pieces that are unsuitable for reading in a class: in addition, we have omitted everything that appeared to us to be of inferior merit, to be false in sentiment, or artificial in manner, or merely to repeat in a less pointed way ideas already expressed in other epigrams. In a few cases the omission of one or two lines has enabled us to admit pieces of great general merit, which are thus rendered unobjectionable.

W. Y. SELLAR.

G. G. RAMSAY.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no Roman poet among those later than the Augustan age, whose writings, when at their best, and when not disfigured by the grave faults by which many of them are defaced, can still be read with so fresh a sense of pleasure as Martial. The indignant earnestness and the tragic passion with which his scenes from life and his characters have been described, has gained for Juvenal a higher place in the esteem of the modern world. But as a literary artist, and a life-like painter of the actual world of his day, Martial has no equal among the poets of "the silver age." None of them can write so naturally and sensibly, and, at the same time, so vividly and brilliantly. He brought one form of literary art, peculiarly adapted to the critical temper of Rome,* and to the vigorous condensation of phrase to which the Latin language adapts itself, to the highest perfection it has ever attained. He wrote, for the most part, of things which passed before his own eyes, and in which his contemporaries were inter-

* *Crede mihi nimium Martia turba sapit.*

—Ep. i. 3, 4.

ested : and set himself steadily against the prevailing taste, fostered by the public recitations, which encouraged the composition of epics like the "Theseid of the hoarse Cordus," and tragedies like the "enormous Telephus," satirised by Juvenal. Though the spirit in which they treat their subject is very different, yet he and Juvenal agree in seeking the material of their literary art in the realities of the age of Domitian, not in the unrealities of the age of mythology.

Martial does not, like Juvenal, profess to write in the interests of morality ; nor has he anything of the introspective wisdom which blends with the experience of Horace. But he is, among all Roman poets, with the exception, perhaps, of Catullus, the keenest observer ; and his observation is more disinterested, and its range more varied, than that of the poet whose character might be described in his own words, "odi et amo." In the last twelve years of a fairly long life he summed up in about 1200 epigrams, written in twelve books, his experience of life, gathered through five-and-thirty years of residence in the capital. Coming to Rome as a stranger from a remote and unsophisticated Spanish colony, at an age when curiosity and the powers of enjoyment are keenest, he must have received many vivid impressions from scenes and objects, which would awaken little emotion among those brought up amongst them. He lived for these

five-and-thirty years the life of a struggling, but on the whole a successful adventurer. He knew a great variety of people of all ranks, and enjoyed much social and literary popularity. Though he found many butts for the exercise of his wit, he does not seem to have laid himself open to serious enmities. Even his negative attitude in regard to morals and politics contributed to his success as an accurate observer and painter of the life which passed before his eyes. He could live pleasantly among his contemporaries and write his epigrams without the sense of fear or of shame which reduced the more eminent or the more high-minded men of his time to silence; and he could be the piquant critic without feeling himself called on to be the indignant satirist of his age. And as truth is the chief aim of a critical, and effect the chief aim of a satirical representation, more reliance may be placed on the sketches which Martial drew from life, without any other motive than the pleasure of drawing them, than on the pictures worked up with all the resources of rhetorical art by Juvenal. It is remarkable how often the original sketches and comments of the epigrammatist have given the first suggestion of the more elaborate representations and more powerful invective of the satirist. Few painters of manners and characters, endowed with so keen a sense of the ridiculous, have been so little of caricaturists as Martial.

Our knowledge of the outward incidents and of the

general course of his life, and the estimate which we form of his character, are derived almost entirely from the twelve books of epigrams already mentioned, published between the years 86 A.D. and 102 A.D. Between 86 A.D. and the end of 96 A.D. eleven books appeared, for the most part at intervals of a year. A revised and enlarged edition of Book X., more adapted to the principles and tastes of the new régime, appeared in 98 A.D., after the accession of Trajan to the Empire. Three years later the last book, the twelfth, was sent from Spain to Rome. But besides these twelve books, which are his most important literary legacy, there is a short book prefixed to them to which the title of "*Liber Spectaculorum*" has been given, the first edition of which must have been published in the reign of Titus, *i.e.*, before 81 A.D., at the opening of the Coliseum. Two other books, numbered XIII. and XIV., and named *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* contain about 350 inscriptions in distyches, suitable for presents given and received at the Saturnalia. The date of the publication of these books is uncertain, but it was probably some time before the publication of Book I. In the first poem of that book he introduces himself as "*Martial, known all over the world for his brilliant epigrams.*"

"Toto notus in orbe Martialis
Argutis epigrammaton libellis."

And in a later epigram of the same book (l. 113) he speaks with humorous candour of a bookseller who