

**CHILD-LIFE, ADOLESCENCE
AND MARRIAGE IN GREEK
NEW COMEDY AND IN THE
COMEDIES OF PLAUTUS**

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Child-life, Adolescence and Marriage in Greek New Comedy and in the Comedies of Plautus by
David Russell Lee

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DAVID RUSSELL LEE

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COMEDIES OF PLAUTUS**

**Child-Life, Adolescence and Marriage
in Greek New Comedy
and in the
Comedies of Plautus**

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS REPRESENTED AS EXISTING BETWEEN
PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN**

By

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INTRODUCTORY

The picture of family life presented by the writers of Greek New Comedy and by Plautus is a comprehensive one though it is not a complete and perfectly balanced one. It was to obtain this comprehensive picture that the present study was entered upon.

The comic theatre took cognizance of the home and peered inquisitively into its life. With true art, however, its lynx-like eye knew where to soften its gaze. Its fine sense of fitness kept Greek New Comedy from seriously offending. At times it exhibits touches of tenderness. It is a gentle life that is represented.

One cannot but admire the high ideal governing the relations of parent and child as found in the Greek New Comedy. This ideal is not framed in words which make it exclusively a father-and-son relationship but rather one of child and parents. It is more elevated in tone than that in the plays of Plautus. Education is represented as practical and as also cultural. Greek New Comedy furnishes a score of plays the titles of which were drawn from the various relationships of family life. The plays of Plautus exhibit the same type of titles. The title of a play, however, is not always an index to the nature of the content of the play.¹ One is not disappointed in the amount of material dealing with family affection, for it is large. Family life is, as a whole, kindly and healthful. Adolescence and young manhood chiefly engaged attention. This was but natural in plays the plots of which were usually founded upon love adventures. Moreover, it was the moral aspects of adolescence that were by far the most interesting. This was not because the comedies taught morals,² for they did not, yet the mass of material dealing with morals is greater than that dealing with any other theme connected with home life. The marriages represented are born of love. Dowries brought by rich wives are frequently referred to and give endless opportunity for witty reflections, both as to their advantages and disadvantages, and, judging from the many subtle arguments set forth, it was felt that there were many of both. Great restraint is

¹ *Legr.*, pp. 27-29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 441.