

THE DIALOGUES OF LUSIAN

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The Dialogues of Lusian by Lucian & William Tooke & N. M. Penzer

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LUCIAN & WILLIAM TOOKE & N. M. PENZER

THE DIALOGUES OF LUSIAN



JUDGMENT OF PARIS

~~167~~
~~163E~~
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THE DIALOGUES *of* LUCIAN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK
by
WILLIAM TOOKE, F.R.S.

NOW EDITED WITH OCCASIONAL NOTES AND
AN INTRODUCTION

by
N. M. PENZER, M.A.

AND ILLUSTRATED WITH A SERIES
OF ORIGINAL DRAWINGS

by
BLANCH



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INTRODUCTION

IN attempting to sketch the life of Lucian we are wholly dependent, or very nearly so, on what he tells us himself. In some cases the autobiographical evidence is clear and unobscured, but in other cases it must be sought in the speeches or dialogues of certain characters in several of his works. Even then we are uncertain what allowance we must make for rhetorical decoration and satirical humour. Certain main facts, however, stand out in clear relief and form a framework which can be filled in very largely at the scholarly discretion of readers of his entire works.

For instance, we know from more than one source that Lucian was born at Samosata on the Euphrates, now the Kurdish village of Samsat lying between Aleppo and Diarbekr, somewhere about A.D. 125.

Thus he was a Syrian by birth, although Samosata had become a Greek city at an early date, being the capital of Kommukh, called Comma-gene by the Greeks. It did not become a Roman province till A.D. 72, when it received the additional name of Flavia.

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind when we come to consider Lucian as a satirist. He

was an Oriental, born and bred in a Greek city. He stood on the bridge that joined east to west, over which not only armies had marched, but by which had come the influx of tales and legends from Persia and India. Lucian heard some of them, and in later days we find them, or rather *motifs* from them, introduced into works like the *Vera Historia*.

He possessed in an astonishing degree the Oriental power of extravagant description and boundless imagination, and an appreciation of this fact is the key to all his satirical writings.

But it was a long time before Lucian turned to satirical dialogue, by which his name has lived. In his *Somnium*, known also as *Vita Luciani* owing to the fact that it is usually accepted as genuine autobiography, he tells us that as his father was by no means wealthy, he was anxious for his son to decide upon a profession that would prove lucrative, rather than that he should follow a life of culture which could only be enjoyed by the rich.

A surreptitious use of the wax scraped from his school tablets for the purposes of modelling, added to the fact that his uncle was a sculptor, soon decided the craft his parents considered Lucian most fitted for.

A broken plaque, an uncle's wrath, and the smart of a stick put an abrupt end to the apprenticeship. Then came the dream, or perhaps rather the allegory by which he tells us

of the struggle he had with himself before finally adopting rhetoric as his profession. Two women strove to possess Lucian, each pleading her cause in as persuasive a manner as possible. The first woman was Statuary, who, although coarse of dress and of slovenly appearance, promised him health and strength without the worry of having to leave home and travel abroad in search of a livelihood. The other woman was Learning,¹ who offered him knowledge and understanding, appreciation of the beautiful, good appearance, and the great gift of eloquence. Lucian's mind was soon made up in favour of Learning, whereupon he was carried through the air in a chariot whence he saw the blessings the earth derives from culture.

How his parents received the news of his decision we are not told, but it would hardly be guessing to infer that they were sadly disappointed, and after useless expostulation let him go his own way.

Owing to his poverty Lucian would have been unable to attach himself to any of the sophists who taught at Smyrna and Ephesus, but in all probability would at the first instance have soaked himself in the works of the ancient orators and historians. This would enable him

¹ I prefer this translation of *παιδεία*, to such renderings as "Literature," "Culture," or "Eloquence." The term is obviously intended to be general. The particular branch of *παιδεία* he first assayed was that of the *ῥήτορ*.

to prepare speeches for clients, which work formed one of the branches of the art of the rhetorician. While still a youth he wandered about Ionia learning the rudiments of the profession he had chosen, perfecting his knowledge of Greek and gradually overcoming the disadvantages of his Syrian dialect and provincial manner. Whether he actually spoke in the courts or contented himself with writing speeches we do not know, but it seems likely that he tried his hand at everything in order to master his art as far as possible and make money. His efforts were attended with success. He soon wished to widen his sphere of activity, so he repaired to Greece, and later to Italy, where his success continued. As he tells us in *Nigrinus*, he visited Rome to see an oculist, but the outpouring of the philosophical genius of Nigrinus made him realise it was rather spiritual blindness he was suffering from. Lucian's apparent dislike of Latin and the ugly picture painted of Roman life by Nigrinus made him on the one hand take up the study of philosophy, and on the other hand leave Rome. This sudden interest in philosophy, as may be expected, was but short-lived. It was not long before our author returned to rhetoric, a much more paying proposition, and we soon find him in Gaul where he appears to have settled for some years, and to have accumulated quite a considerable amount of money.

This brings us roughly to A.D. 160; and very

shortly after this Lucian must have returned to Syria, for he wrote a panegyric on the mistress of Lucius Verus, whom he saw at Antioch during her visit in 162-63.

He now decided to travel with his father to Athens, in order to enjoy the charm, elegance and culture of the capital about which he had heard so much. Accordingly about A.D. 165 he started on his journey, but on the way occurred an event which might easily have ended his life.

He passed through Abonoteichos in Paphlagonia, celebrated at the time for the "cures" of the famous impostor Alexander. Lucian immediately saw through his trickery, and tried to expose him. An interview followed in which Lucian, instead of kissing his hand according to custom, bit it as hard as he could. Alexander, though suffering great pain, nursed his resentment, but secretly laid plans for revenge. Hardly had Lucian got on board when he noticed obvious distress on the part of the captain. On being pressed for an explanation he ultimately admitted that Alexander had hired him to throw him overboard during the voyage.

As Lucian had not yet turned his attention to dialogue, we may be especially grateful that his life was saved on this occasion.

And so, with his arrival in Athens, we come to the great turning-point in his career.

According to Lucian's own statement, it was not until he was forty years old that he left