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THEODORE MARTIN & W. LUCAS COLLINS

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EDITED BY THE

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HORACE

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CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

No writer of antiquity has taken a stronger hold upon the modern mind than Horace. The causes of this are manifold, but three may be especially noted: his broad human sympathies, his vigorous common-sense, and his consummate mastery of expression. The mind must be either singularly barren or singularly cold to which Horace does not speak. The scholar, the statesman, the soldier, the man of the world, the town-bred man, the lover of the country, the thoughtful and the careless, he who reads much, and he who reads little, all find in his pages more or less to amuse their fancy, to touch their feelings, to quicken their observation, to nerve their convictions, to put into happy phrase the deductions of their experience. His poetical sentiment is not pitched in too high a key for the unimaginative, but it is always so genuine that the most imaginative feel its charm. His wisdom is deeper than it seems, so simple, practical, and direct as it is in its application; and his moral teaching more spiritual and penetrating than is apparent on a superficial study. He does not fall into the common error

of didactic writers, of laying upon life more than it will bear; but he insists that it shall at least bear the fruits of integrity, truth, honour, justice, self-denial, and brotherly charity. Over and above the mere literary charm of his works, too—and herein, perhaps, lies no small part of the secret of his popularity—the warm heart and thoroughly urbane nature of the man are felt instinctively by his readers, and draw them to him as to a friend.

Hence it is that we find he has been a manual with men the most diverse in their natures, culture, and pursuits. Dante ranks him next after Homer. Montaigne, as might be expected, knows him by heart. Fenelon and Bossuet never weary of quoting him. La Fontaine polishes his own exquisite style upon his model; and Voltaire calls him "the best of preachers." Hooker escapes with him to the fields to seek oblivion of a hard life, made harder by a shrewish spouse. Lord Chesterfield tells us, "When I talked my best I quoted Horace." To Boileau and to Wordsworth he is equally dear. Condorcet dies in his dungeon with Horace open by his side; and in Gibbon's militia days, "on every march," he says, "in every journey, Horace was always in my pocket, and often in my hand." And as it has been, so it is. In many a pocket, where this might be least expected, lies a well-thumbed Horace; and in many a devout Christian heart the maxims of the gentle, genial pagan find a place near the higher teachings of a greater master.

Where so much of a writer's charm lies, as with Horace, in exquisite aptness of language, and in a