

**LUCIAN**

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Lucian by W. Lucas Collins

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**W. LUCAS COLLINS**

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BY THE  
*William*  
REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

AUTHOR OF  
'STONIANA,' 'THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,' ETC.

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# L U C I A N.

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## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHICAL.

LUCIAN (Lucianus, or Lycinus, as he sometimes calls himself) was born about A.D. 120, or perhaps a few years later, at Samosata, on the bank of the Euphrates, at that time the capital city of Commagene, and perhaps better known a century later from its heresiarch bishop, Paul. What we know of our author's life is chiefly gathered from incidental notices scattered through his numerous writings. Of his youthful days he has given what is probably a truthful account in a piece which he has entitled "The Dream." This appears to have been written in his successful later years (when men are most disposed to be open and honest about their early antecedents), and recited as a kind of prologue to his public readings of his works, before his fellow-citizens of Samosata. He tells us that his parents, who seem to have been in humble circumstances, held a council of the friends of the family to consult what should be done with their boy. They

came to the conclusion that a liberal education was not to be thought of, because of the expense. The next best thing, for a lad who had already no doubt given token of some ability, was to choose some calling which should still be of an intellectual rather than a servile character. This is his own account of what took place in the family council:—

“When one proposed one thing and one another, according to their fancies or experience, my father turned to my maternal uncle—he was one of the party, and passed for an excellent carver of Mercuries\*—‘It is impossible,’ said he, politely, ‘in your presence, to give any other art the preference. So take this lad home with you, and teach him to be a good stone-cutter and statuary: for he has it in him, and is clever enough, as you know, with his hands.’ He had formed this notion from the way in which I used to amuse myself in moulding wax. As soon as I left school, I used to scrape wax together, and make figures of oxen and horses, and men too, with some cleverness, as my father thought. This accomplishment had earned me many a beating from my schoolmasters; but at this moment it was praised as a sign of natural talent, and sanguine hopes were entertained that I should speedily become master of my new profession, from this early plastic fancy. So, on a day which was counted lucky for entering on my apprenticeship, to

\* The figures of Mercury so commonly set up in the streets and at the gates of houses were mere busts without arms, and could not have required any very great amount of art in their production.

my uncle I was sent. I did not at all object to it myself: I thought I should find the work amusing enough, and be very proud when I could show my playmates how I could make gods, and cut out other little figures for myself and my special friends. But an accident happened to me, as is not uncommon with beginners. My uncle put a chisel in my hand, and bid me work it lightly over a slab of marble that lay in the shop, quoting at the same time the common proverb, 'Well begun is half done.' But, leaning too hard upon it, in my awkwardness, the slab broke; and my uncle, seizing a whip that lay at hand, made me pay my footing in no very gentle or encouraging fashion; so the first wages I earned were tears."

"I ran off straight home, sobbing and howling, with the tears running down my cheeks. I told them there all about the whip, and showed the wheals; and with loud complaints of my uncle's cruelty, I added that he had done it all out of envy,—because he was afraid I should soon make a better artist than himself. My mother was extremely indignant, and vented bitter reproaches against her brother."\*

Of course, with the mother in such mood, we readily understand that young Lucian never went back to the shop. "I went to sleep," he says, "with my eyes full of tears, and that very night I had a dream." This dream, which the author goes on to relate, is a reproduction, adapted to suit the circumstances, of the well-known "Choice of Hercules." How far Lucian

\* "The Dream," 2-4.