



Byzantine Satire

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BYZANTINE SATIRE.

It must sometimes have occurred to readers of Byzantine literature, after they have perused a number of the occasionally valuable, but almost always dreary, works of which it is composed—lifeless chronicles, polemical and other theology, inflated panegyrics, and grammatical treatises—to ask the question, whether this was really all; whether a quick-witted and intelligent people, such as we know the inhabitants of Constantinople at certain periods to have been, were contented to subsist entirely on such dry mental food. No doubt, religious controversy often ran high, and this, when it fills men's thoughts, is apt to supply the place of intellectual interests; but such discussions did not last for ever, and could not have occupied the minds of the whole of the educated population. A certain source of relief was provided in the numerous poems, songs, and romances in the popular language—some of native growth and dealing with subjects of local or traditional interest, some imitated from the romances of Western Europe—which have been brought to light by the industry of such men as MM. Sathas and Legrand at Paris, Prof. Lambros of Athens, and the late Dr. W. Wagner of Hamburg. But even these do not furnish that element of liveliness, which we should expect to manifest itself in some shape or other in a great centre of activity.

Now the form of literature which is most liable to be generated by circumstances such as these is satire. Repression, whether in the character of political despotism or of literary mannerism,

—and both these existed in the Byzantine Empire—has the effect of forcing genius into side channels, and criticism, when it cannot be exercised openly, finds for itself indirect methods of expression, which are usually characterised by a tone of bitterness. To some extent we see these influences at work at Rome in the early period of the empire; and in the great cities of the East, where popular feeling was less under control, the satirical spirit manifests itself on various occasions; as when the Emperor Julian at Antioch became the subject of libellous songs, to which he replied by the counterblast of the *Misopogon*. That the same thing prevailed at Constantinople is shown by a passage of Anna Comnena, where she says, speaking of a conspiracy among the courtiers against her father, Alexius Comnenus, that they wrote a number of scurrilous pamphlets, and flung them into the emperor's tent.¹ The word *φάμουσα* (*i.e. famosi libelli*), which Anna uses here, proves by its Latin origin that such compositions were no new thing, since it must have descended from the early period of the Eastern empire, when the Latin language was in vogue. But, beyond this, we have ample evidence of a regular satirical literature having existed there. Some of these Byzantine satires, which have no very distinctive marks to betray the lateness of their date, have been printed along with Lucian's works, but the majority have remained in manuscript; and Hase, who first drew attention to this subject, says there are about a dozen such in the National Library at Paris alone. Two of these last have now been published, and as they are both interesting in themselves and characteristic specimens of the literature to which they belong, it is the object of the following paper to give some account of them.

The publication of the first of these, which is entitled *Timarion's Sufferings* (*Τιμαρίων, ἡ περὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν παθημάτων*), may be said to be due to a fortunate accident. The manuscript in which it is preserved belongs to the Vatican library, and when the treasures of that collection were temporarily in Paris in the early part of this century, having been transferred thither by the Emperor Napoleon I., M. Hase was employed to make a catalogue of the Greek manuscripts therein contained. Finding that this satire was a work of merit, he printed it entire in 1813, in the *Notices et Extraits des Manu-*

¹ Anna Comnena, *Alexias*, Book xiii. chap. i. p. 179, edit. Bonn.

scrits (Vol. ix. Pt. 2, pp. 125 foll.), together with a Latin translation, illustrative notes, and a long and learned preface, in which he discusses the origin and character of this class of writings. At the same time he drew attention to a similar satire of some importance, that of the *Sojourn of Mazaris in Hades* (*Ἐπιδημία Μάζαρι ἐν ᾗδου*), as existing in manuscript in the Paris library, and of this he gave an analysis, accompanied by historical and other comments, though he did not publish it. Eighteen years later it was printed by Boissonade in the third volume of his *Anecdota Graeca*. Both these works were subsequently republished in 1860 from the texts of Hase and Boissonade, with a German translation by Dr. Ellissen of Göttingen, in the fourth volume of his *Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur*, and the notes which that accomplished student of Byzantine history and literature has added are of the utmost value. It is from these authorities that my knowledge of the subject is for the most part derived.

The dates of these compositions can be approximately determined by internal evidence. That of 'Timarion' is some time in the first half of the twelfth century, for that character—and there can be little doubt that by Timarion the anonymous writer meant himself—speaks of Theodore of Smyrna as having been his teacher, and that rhetorician flourished in the reign of Alexius Comnenus (1081–1118); while on the other hand the dignitary for whom he expresses the highest admiration in this piece, and who was probably his patron, Michael Palaeologus, occupied important positions under John Comnenus (1118–1143) and Manuel (1143–1180). This was a period of considerable literary activity, for it produced, among others, the historians Zonaras and Cinnamus, the grammarian Tzetzes, and the commentator Eustathius. The author appears, from what he says of Timarion, to have been a native of Cappadocia, and by profession a philosopher, that is, probably, some kind of student and teacher. On the other hand, 'Mazaris' was composed nearly three centuries later, during the latter half of the long reign of Manuel Palaeologus II. (1391–1425), for reference is made in it to the visit of that emperor to western Europe with the object of obtaining aid against the Turks, from which he returned in 1402, as an event of recent occurrence, and the defeat of Sultan Bajazet by Timour at Angora, which happened

in the same year, is also alluded to. The author of this satire must have been an inhabitant of Constantinople from his intimate acquaintance with the gossip and scandal of the court, and if he speaks in his own name, he would seem to have been a courtier himself. The severity with which he handles the monks, proves that he was not an ecclesiastic. It will be seen that the two periods to which these compositions refer were times of considerable interest; for the former was the era of the Crusades, when the Byzantine empire was still vigorous, while the latter saw that empire in the last stage of decrepitude, though struggling against its impending fate.

The subject of both pieces is the same, a narrative of a visit to the infernal regions. From Homer's time onward this idea, exciting as it is to the imagination, had been a favourite one in Greek literature, and the descents of Heracles, Orpheus, Theseus, and Ulysses provided the material for fanciful speculation and for poetic treatment. As long as the belief in the old gods remained, a certain feeling of awe clung to the subject, though even apart from scepticism it was easily turned into ridicule, as we see from the way in which it is handled in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. But by the Byzantine writers it was employed as a means of expressing an opinion, favourable or unfavourable as the case might be, of persons either still living or lately dead, and of introducing allusions and anecdotes which might amuse the reading public. In Timarion also, and probably in Mazaris, the person is not supposed to descend alive into Hades, as is the case with Dante and with the heroes of Greek romance, but the soul is for the time separated from the body, and is only reunited to it by some supernatural means. But though these two compositions correspond to one another in these respects, in most points there is a strong contrast between them. In the first place, their form is somewhat different, for while Timarion is a dialogue, Mazaris is rather a narrative, for a supposed audience is addressed as ὦ παρόντες; but this difference exists in appearance rather than in reality, for in the former the interlocutor is only introduced to ask leading questions so as to facilitate the telling of the story; while on the other hand the narrative of Mazaris is to a great extent taken up with the report of conversations. A much more marked contrast is found in their contents and the mode of handling the subject. For whereas

in Timarion the primary object is to amuse, so that the story is worked out in considerable detail, and the satire is kept in the background, and is gentle and good-humoured in its criticisms; in Mazaris the occurrences that are mentioned are few, and the dialogue is the more prominent feature; and the satirical element prevails throughout, usually taking the form of malevolent detraction, mixed with violent and scurrilous invective.

The classical author whose compositions served as a model to these mediaeval satirists was Lucian. This clever writer, the Swift or Voltaire of the second century of our era, exercised great influence over the Byzantines, and was both read and imitated by them. His popularity at any period is not difficult to account for, owing to the eminent readableness of his works; for his style is clear and easy, the subjects that he treats of are very numerous, his sketches of men and manners are singularly graphic, the form of his compositions is varied, being sometimes dialogue and at others narrative, and his satire is a mixture of light wit and rasping sarcasm. In this way he never fails to amuse. But in the Eastern empire there were additional causes for his popularity. Besides the tendency to satirical writing which we have noticed as being prevalent under that dominion, and which naturally suggested the study of so great a master of that art, religious feeling also contributed to the same result. For some of the vices that Lucian attacks, such as pride, avarice and hypocrisy, are amongst the things with which religion is constantly at war; and at the same time Christian teachers were amused at his ridicule of the heathen gods and ancient systems of philosophy, which were their own antagonists, while they failed to perceive that this weapon might be turned, as he had occasionally turned it, against themselves; in fact, that scepticism such as his struck at the root of all religion and all absolute truth. Accordingly, they were tempted to imitate him, and some of them in different centuries succeeded so far that their compositions were for a time mistaken for his. But his wit was his own, and could not be reproduced; what they inherited was his form and method, which served as a vehicle for satires on the society, and occasionally on the events and characters, of their own times.

The satires of Lucian which touch on the subject of the future state are—

(1) The *Dialogi Mortuorum* : these thirty short pieces are mainly devoted to ridiculing the follies and superstitions of mankind, by means of imaginary conversations between mythological or historical personages in the lower world ; indirectly also they are intended to expose the inconsistencies in men's ideas about a life after death.

(2) The *Cataplus sive Tyrannus* : this is also a dialogue, and describes a multitude of souls crossing in Charon's boat, which Megapenthes, the rich tyrant, wishes to avoid doing, in order that he may enjoy the pleasures of life a little longer ; with his unwillingness is contrasted the eagerness of a cobbler, Micyllus, to make the passage, and when they are brought before Rhadamanthys for trial, they are appointed to happiness and suffering inversely to what they had experienced in the world above. It is a sort of heathen version of Dives and Lazarus.

(3) The *De Luctu* : in this satire Lucian ridicules the funeral customs of various peoples, and those of the Greeks in particular, and introduces a youth lately dead as returning to life in order to reproach his parents for insulting him by this mockery, when he was so much better off than they were. Short though it is, it contains the most detailed account that the satirist has given of the beliefs on the subject of death which he attributes to his countrymen.

(4) The second book of the *Vera Historia*. This work, which is a romance composed of all sorts of extravagances and impossibilities—a narrative which might be compared to Sindbad the Sailor, or Gulliver's Travels, or one of Jules Verne's Tales—in one part describes a visit to the Islands of the Blessed, where the city they inhabit bears in many points a strange resemblance to the New Jerusalem of the book of Revelation, though the life described shows Lucian at his worst. Afterwards the adventurers reach another island, which contains the place of punishment.

The state of the dead which the satirist describes is the Homeric Inferno, amplified by some further details, and by the addition of some personages, like Charon, who belong to the later mythology. Lucian, in fact, in the treatise *De Luctu*, himself attributes the views of the Greeks on this subject to Homer and Hesiod as their authors.¹ The conception of Hades

¹ *De Luctu*, ii.

is that of a dark region underground, surrounded by great rivers, of which pieces of water the Acherusian lake is the largest, and cannot be crossed without the ferryman. At the descent of the pit dwell Aeacus and Cerberus, and within, the asphodel meadow is entered, in which is the water of Lethe. From this, according to the judgment of Minos and Rhadamanthys, the good are sent to the Elysian plain, the bad to the place of torment, while the large class of those intermediate between the two continue to wander in the meadow, and are fed by the libations and other offerings made on their tombs, so that those who receive none of these starve. This conception is modified by Lucian in different parts of his writings, according, it would seem, as suited the purpose of his satire at the time. The idea of punishment has generally much greater stress laid upon it than that of reward; in one place the Seven Wise Men alone are spoken of as free from sorrow,¹ and in another the inhabitants of Hades are said to lie all alike beneath the same darkness, in no wise differing the one from the other.²

The dialogue, however, which is most closely imitated in Timarion and Mazaris, is the *Necyomanteia*, and this is probably the work not of Lucian himself, but of an early imitator. In this, Philonides, an acquaintance of the cynic Menippus, who is a favourite character with Lucian, meets that philosopher wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a lion's skin, and carrying a lyre, which objects prove to be emblems of a pilgrimage to the infernal regions, assumed by him in imitation of Ulysses, Heracles and Orpheus. To his friend's salutation and inquiries concerning his absence he replies in the first words of the Hecuba—

ἦκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
λιπὼν, ἔν' ἕδης χωρὶς ἔκισται θεῶν—

and, when further interrogated, he continues to reply by quotations from Euripides and Homer, in whose company he says he has lately been, so that their verses come unbidden to his lips. On the same principle, apparently, he swears by Cerberus. He in turn inquires about those whom he had left above ground, and when he is told that they are pursuing their usual occupations of plunder, perjury and usury, he compassionates them because of the decree that had lately been passed

¹ *Dialogi Mortuorum*, xx. 4.

² *Ibid.* xv. 2.

in Hades concerning rich men. What this was, he is at first unwilling to divulge, lest he should render himself liable to indictment for impiety in the court of Rhadamanthys, but ultimately he agrees to do so on promise of silence. First, however, Philonides requests that he should explain his reasons for visiting the lower regions, and relate who acted as his guide, and what he saw and heard. His reason, he replies, was to obtain relief from scepticism, since he had failed to meet with any satisfaction in this matter in the world above. He then describes his early difficulties—how in his youth he had learnt to believe in the history of the gods and goddesses with all their crimes and misdemeanours; and when at a later period he found these things to be strictly forbidden by the laws, he was in perplexity how to reconcile religion and morality. Thereupon he betook himself to philosophy, but in doing so perceived that he had got from the frying-pan (or, as the Greek proverb has it, from the smoke) into the fire, because each school maintained different tenets, and, what was worse, they brought forward from their different points of view such irrefragable arguments to prove directly contrary propositions that he was bewildered. Persons who have seen the inhabitants of south-eastern Europe at the present day express dissent by throwing back the head, as the Greeks and Romans used to do, instead of shaking it, as we do, will appreciate his description of his state of mind at this time; for he says that he was in the condition of a drowsy man, one minute nodding his head forward (*ἐπινεύων*), and the next throwing it back again (*ἀνανεύων*). Besides this, he found the lives of the philosophers quite at variance with their tenets. Disappointed here, he bethought him of applying to the Chaldaean magi, who were said to be able by means of incantations to conduct living persons into Hades and back again, in order that he might communicate with the shade of Teiresias, and learn from him what was the best and most reasonable life to lead. One of these, called Mithrobarzanes, dresses him up with the emblems already mentioned, in order that he might be mistaken for one of the personages who had already made the journey, and then conducting him to a spot near the Euphrates, causes the ground to open and form a chasm by which they enter. After passing the usual objects of the Greek Inferno, they come to the place where Minos was judging

the souls, witness being borne against them in an ingenious manner by the shadows they had cast during their lifetime. This gives an opportunity for drawing the contrast, which is so familiar in Lucian, between the greatness of princes in the world above and their contemptible position after death. They then arrive at the place of punishment, where terrible tortures are being inflicted, and finally reach the Acherusian plain, where the rest of the dead are assembled, all ghastly, and hardly distinguishable from one another; the moral being that life is an empty pageant, and the gifts on which men pride themselves an unreality. At last Philonides recalls him to the decree which he had mentioned concerning rich men; this was to the effect that after death their bodies should be punished like those of other criminals, but their souls should be sent up to earth again, to inhabit the bodies of asses, and to be driven by the poor. This was proposed by *Κρατίων Σκελετίωνος Νεκυσίεϋς, φύλης Ἀλιβαντίδος*, and was voted in the assembly of the dead. After this Menippus meets Teiresias, and asks him the question for the sake of which he had descended; and receives the characteristic answer, that the best rule of conduct is to enjoy oneself, to cultivate a jesting spirit, and not to be anxious or earnest about anything. Menippus returns to the upper world by the cave of Trophonius.

Having thus noticed the conditions under which the Byzantine satires were produced, let us turn to the first of those which we propose to examine, viz.—

TIMARION'S SUFFERINGS.

The age of the Comneni, to which the story of these belongs, was a period at once of decline and of revival to the Byzantine empire. From the beginning of the eighth century, when Leo the Isaurian by his reforms infused new life into the declining state, until the commencement of the eleventh century, that power was the strongest in Europe; and no other monarchical government in history can show so long a succession of able administrators as is found, first in the line of the Iconoclast emperors, and afterwards in the Macedonian dynasty. Its greatness in war is shown by its having beaten back and ultimately outlived the power of the Saracens, who would

otherwise have overrun the whole of Europe ; and on the other side by its having kept at bay for three hundred years, and at last destroyed, the great Bulgarian monarchy. Its material prosperity appears in the immense weight of taxation it was able to endure, and was in great measure the result of the commerce of the mercantile marine, which had in its hands the whole of the carrying trade between Asia and Western Europe. And in respect of civilization its high position is shown by the attention paid to education, by the regular administration of justice, and especially by the steady maintenance of the legal standard of the coinage. But in the eleventh century symptoms of decline appeared, and developed themselves with great rapidity. This was owing partly to political, and partly to social causes. During the three previous centuries the government had tended to become more and more a pure despotism, and the evils arising from the complete centralization of the system were only kept in check by the admirable organization of the public service, officials being regularly trained to conduct the various departments of the state ; but now this system was broken down in consequence of these offices being entrusted to eunuchs of the imperial household, the object being to diminish the chance of rebellion by placing the government in the hands of men who could not found a dynasty. At the same time the accumulation of property in the hands of a few great landholders, whose farms were cultivated by serfs or slaves, almost extirpated the middle class of small farmers, and thus diminished the number of those who were willing to defend their liberties against invaders. A single false step revealed the weakness that had thus been introduced into the whole body politic. At the time when the Seljouk Turks first made their appearance on the eastern frontier of the empire, Constantine IX. (A.D. 1045) destroyed the Armenian kingdom of the Bagratidae which had long guaranteed its safety, and thereby laid his dominions open to the invaders ; and the consequence was that within fifty years the Seljouks had occupied all the inland part of Asia Minor, and had established their capital at Nicaea, in the immediate neighbourhood of Constantinople. With the accession of Alexius Comnenus a revival commenced, for the first Crusade, which coincided with his reign, beat back the Seljouks, who thenceforward fixed their capital at Iconium, on the south-eastern

frontier of Asia Minor; and Alexius himself, and his two immediate successors, John and Manuel Comnenus, whose long reigns extended over an entire century, were all distinguished by personal courage and skill in war, by literary culture, and by sagacity in politics, and were thus well qualified to impart fresh vigour to the state. But the prevailing evils were incurable; the public service had become disorganised, the military spirit of the nobles was impaired by luxury, and the trading privileges which had been conceded to the Venetians and other commercial states of the west, prepared the way for the decline of Greek commerce. Everything depended on the existing sovereign, and it was in the power of one bad emperor, like Andronicus Comnenus, the last of his dynasty, to ruin all. It is one source of the interest of the present satire, that it gives us some idea of the state of the empire and of the condition of society at that time.

The story commences, like that of the *Necyomanteia*, by the narrator, Timarion, being met on his return to Constantinople after a lengthened absence by a friend, Cydion, who inquires the reason of his delaying his return. As Cydion addresses him with quotations from Homer, Timarion replies by passages from that poet and Euripides, giving as his reason for so doing, not the same explanation which Menippus gave, namely that he had been in the company of the poets, but his desire to commence his subject in a dignified manner, suitably to its tragic character. However, when he is once started, he puts aside pedantry, and gives a straightforward account of his journey. His object was to visit Thessalonica for the festival of St. Demetrius, the patron saint of that city, which was held on the 26th of October; and the description he gives of the liberal hospitality which he received on the way thither, and of the magnificence of the entertainments at which he was present, gives us a high idea of the prosperity of the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia at this period, which is confirmed by what we learn from other sources. His interrogator, imitating Philonides in his request to Menippus, begs him not to hurry over the ground so fast, but to be more communicative about the details of his journey; and Timarion, thus encouraged, describes his hunting on the banks of the Axios, in the interval which elapsed before the commencement of the festival, for he hated idleness, he says, as a Jew hates

pork—and then proceeds to give an account of the great fair, or Demetria, as he calls it, which began six days before the Saint's day. It may be premised that Thessalonica, which is the scene of this, is the Genoa of the East, for like that city it occupies the innermost part of a bay, and its houses rise from the water's edge, and gradually ascend the hillsides towards the north. Like Genoa, also, it holds a singularly advantageous position with reference to trade with the interior of the country. Allowing for a certain amount of exaggeration, this description gives us a fair notion of the trade of the Eastern empire, and is interesting as referring to the important silk manufactures of Thebes and Corinth.

'The Demetria is a festival, like the Panathenaea at Athens, and the Panionia among the Milesians, and it is at the same time the most important fair held in Macedonia. Not only do the natives of the country flock together to it in great numbers, but multitudes also come from all lands and of every race—Greeks, wherever they are found, the various tribes of Mysians [*i.e.* people of Moesia] who dwell on our borders as far as the Ister and Scythia, Campanians and other Italians, Iberians, Lusitanians, and Transalpine Celts'—this is the Byzantine way of describing the Bulgarians, &c., Neapolitans, Spaniards, Portuguese, and French; 'and, to make a long story short, the shores of the ocean send pilgrims and suppliants to visit the martyr, so widely extended is his fame throughout Europe. For myself, being a Cappadocian from beyond the boundaries of the empire,'—this country was now under the Seljouk sultans of Iconium—'and having never before been present on the occasion, but having only heard it described, I was anxious to get a bird's eye view of the whole scene, that I might pass over nothing unnoticed. With this object I made my way up to a height close by the scene of the fair, where I sat down and surveyed everything at my leisure. What I saw there was a number of merchants' booths, set up in parallel rows opposite one another; and these rows extended to a great length, and were sufficiently wide apart to leave a broad space in the middle, so as to give free passage for the stream of the people. Looking at the closeness of the booths to one another and the regularity of their position, one might take them for lines drawn lengthwise from two opposite points. At right angles to these, other booths were

set up, also forming rows, though of no great length, so that they resembled the tiny feet that grow outside the bodies of certain reptiles. Curious indeed it was, that while in reality there were two rows, they presented the appearance of a single animal, owing to the booths being so near and so straight; for the lines suggested a long body, while the crossrows at the sides looked like the feet that supported it. I declare, when I looked down from the heights above on the ground plan of the fair, I could not help comparing it to a centipede, a very long insect with innumerable small feet under its belly.

‘And if you are anxious to know what it contained, my inquisitive friend, as I saw it afterwards when I came down from the hills—well, there was every kind of material woven or spun by men or women, all those that come from Boeotia and the Peloponnese, and all that are brought in trading ships from Italy to Greece. Besides this, Phoenicia furnishes numerous articles, and Egypt, and Spain, and the pillars of Hercules, where the finest coverlets are manufactured. These things the merchants bring direct from their respective countries to old Macedonia and Thessalonica; but the Euxine also contributes to the splendour of the fair, by sending across its products to Constantinople, whence the cargoes are brought by numerous horses and mules. All this I went through and carefully examined afterwards when I came down; but even while I was still seated on the height above I was struck with wonder at the number and variety of the animals, and the extraordinary confusion of their noises which assailed my ears—horses neighing, oxen lowing, sheep bleating, pigs grunting, and dogs barking, for these also accompany their masters as a defence against wolves and thieves.’

This curious passage is followed, first, by a description of the nightly ceremonies of the festival of the Saint, and then by a detailed account of a civil and military procession during the day, in which the governor played a conspicuous part. This person, who is called ‘the Duke’ (ὁ Δούξ), can be satisfactorily identified with the Michael Palaeologus already mentioned, an ancestor of the imperial family who ruled the Byzantine empire during the last two centuries of its existence, by a play on his name; for the writer goes out of his way to say, that the grandfather of the Duke in consequence of ancient speeches

(παλαιοὶ λόγοι) made by him or about him, received a surname implying the antiquity of his lineage. His family and personal appearance are here described with much hyperbole of language, for in this instance the writer has fallen into the inflated style of Byzantine diction, from which he has the merit of being usually free. At the end of the day, when the ceremonies were concluded, Timarion returned to his lodging, and there was seized by a violent fever—an occurrence which must have been common enough at times of pilgrimage, owing to the overcrowding of the people, and the absence of sanitary arrangements. The real interest of the story commences at this point, for what has hitherto been related is introductory. After a few days he felt better, and started on his homeward journey, but on the way, when the fever had left him, an attack of inflammation of the liver and dysentery supervened. All this is described with a mixture of the comic and the pathetic which is very amusing, and both the symptoms of the maladies and their treatment are fully detailed, since the *dénouement* in great measure turns upon them. But besides this, it is evident that one object of the piece is to satirize physicians and medical theories, and that the writer had a tolerably intimate acquaintance with the science of medicine. Timarion perseveres in travelling, notwithstanding extreme weakness, which caused him, he says, to lie across a pack-horse like a bundle of luggage; but at last, when he reaches the banks of the Hebrus, his system can endure no longer, and he dies, or at least his soul is separated from his body. What followed shall be told in his own words.

‘Since my poor body, dear Cydion, was completely worn out, partly by the dysentery, and still more by fasting for twenty entire days, I began, as I thought, to sleep the last sleep. Now there are in the universe certain avenging spirits, which by the appointment of divine providence punish those who rebel against the laws of God, and also good spirits, who reward the righteous; and others again there are, the conductors of souls, who bring down to Pluto, Aeacus, and Minos in whatever way they can the souls which have departed from their bodies, in order that, when they have been examined according to the customs and laws of the dead, they may afterwards receive their rightful portion and abode. This last was what happened in my case.

Shortly before midnight two men of shadowy form and dusky aspect, flying through the air, presented themselves at my bed, where I had lain down and was endeavouring to slumber. As soon as I beheld them I became numb at the strangeness of the sight; my voice was checked, though I tried to scream, and my very organs of speech were paralysed. Whether what passed was a dream or a reality I cannot tell, since fright deprived me of all power of judgment; but it was so manifest, so perfectly clear, that even now I seem to see it all before me; so terrified was I at what then happened. And when they stood by me, and laid as it were an indissoluble chain on my tongue, fettering my speech either by the awfulness of the sight or by some secret influence, they began to speak to one another in whispers, saying—"This is the man who has lost the fourth of his component elements,¹ and he cannot be allowed to continue to live on the strength of the remaining three; because a sentence of Aesculapius and Hippocrates has been written out and posted up in Hades, to the effect that no man may live when one of his four elements is wanting, even though his body may be in good condition." Then in harsher tones they exclaimed, "Follow us, you wretched creature, and be numbered among your fellows, the dead."

The sentence here mentioned sounds almost like an anticipation of the great dictum of the physician in Molière, that it is better for a patient to die in accordance with the rules of medical practice, than to recover if they are neglected. Timarion continues:—

'Much against my will I followed (what else could I do, seeing I was deprived of all succour?), being borne through the air just as they were borne, light, agile, imponderable, with my feet at large, progressing without fatigue or difficulty, like a ship that runs before the wind, so that a slight rushing sound arose as I passed, resembling the whizz of an arrow that is shot from a bow. And when, without wetting our feet, we had crossed the river that we hear of in the world above, and traversed the Acherusian lake, to which my guides also gave that name, we approached a subterraneous opening, much larger than what we are wont to see in wells. There the darkness which was dimly

¹ According to the 'humoral pathology' of Hippocrates, the four fluids or humours of the body were blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile.

visible from the mouth had so disgusting and loathsome an appearance, that I declined to be conducted down ; but they separated and cut me off between them, and one of them, plunging headforemost down the opening, with a savage look dragged me after him. I laid hold of the pit's mouth, and resisted with hands and feet, until the one who followed behind, assailing me with blows, first on my face, and afterwards on my back, forced me down that gloomy chasm. From that point we journeyed a long distance in darkness and solitude, and at last reached the iron gate which closes the realm of Hades.'

This graphic, though ghastly, scene was probably suggested by a passage in Lucian, where Hermes is described in very similar language as performing the same office for the recalcitrant shades, while they fling themselves on the ground, and fight vigorously against him.¹ It has been thought that the two demons who conduct the dead, and whose names we afterwards find to be Oxybas and Nyction ('Speedy' and 'Nightly'), are a reproduction of Munker and Nekir, the Mahometan angels of death ; but it is much more likely that they were derived from figures in some Byzantine fresco of the punishment of the wicked, such as may be seen on the west front of the churches in some Greek monasteries. Similar beings, both good and evil, in the act of carrying off men's souls, are represented in western art ; for instance, in the great frescoes relating to death and judgment, in the Campo Santo at Pisa. Charon and his boat, it will be observed, are ignored by our author.

At the gate the horrors of death are renewed. Here they find Cerberus, and fiery-eyed serpents, and wild hideous men who act as guards. All however exhibit a friendly spirit towards his conductors, and allow them to enter, while the guards, after carefully inspecting Timarion, recognise in him the man who had already been the subject of discussion in Hades, as daring to live in defiance of the physicians. 'In with the wretch,' they exclaimed, 'who holds his own views about the composition of the body ! Never shall any one live on earth without all the four elementary humours !' When once within, however, he finds the general aspect of things less uncomfortable than might have been expected. It was dark, indeed, but the inhabitants were supplied with artificial lights, the brightness of which was

¹ *Dial. Mort.* xxvii. 1.

regulated by the station in life of the owners; the poorer having torches, and those of the middle class, wood and coal fires, while the abodes of persons of distinction were brilliantly illuminated by lamps. This difference of classes is noticeable also in other points; thus, when the conductors of the dead pass by, the common people stand up out of respect to them, 'like boys in the presence of their schoolmasters.' The life in general, to judge from the examples given—for no very definite conception of it is left on the mind—seems to be a pale reflexion of the life in the world above. We are told, indeed, that all are strictly judged, and we hear in passing of rewards and punishments; but in most instances the suffering are seen still to suffer, and the prosperous to enjoy themselves, and old faults of character remain unchanged.

They had now ceased to fly, and being all rather tired by the rapidity of their transit, walked leisurely along; and as the conductors had been absent above ground for some time, they frequently stopped to gossip with the inhabitants, thus giving Timarion time to look about him. These opportunities he employed in recognising and conversing with various persons, who had either been known to him in life, or were important historical figures shortly before his time, and who therefore were interesting to his contemporaries. Even where the names of these are not given, it must have been an easy matter to identify them, owing to the minuteness with which their personal appearance is described. The first that he saw—in a brightly lighted place, which implied that its occupant was a person of distinction—was an old man, seated in a reclining posture, with a large bowl of bacon and Phrygian cabbage by his side, of which mess he was shovelling large handfuls into his mouth. Two well-fed mice, like those which, we are here told, the people of that time used to keep as pets in their houses, were waiting to lick the old man's beard when he fell asleep after his meal. He wore a good-humoured expression, and requested the newly arrived stranger to partake with him; but this offer Timarion declined, for fear of trespassing too far on the indulgence of his guards. A common man now came up, and he inquired of him who the genial old gourmand was; but in reply he was informed that the mention of his name was strictly forbidden by the authorities, though the circumstances of his

life were accurately detailed. His being of a noble family in Great Phrygia, from which country the Palaeologi came, and the praise which is accorded to him notwithstanding his greediness, coupled with the reserve about his name, suggest that he was a near relation of the great man who appeared in the procession at Thessalonica. There can be no doubt that gluttony is one of the failings satirized in this piece, for it is referred to on several subsequent occasions, though rather as a subject for laughter than for reprobation, and no punishment is awarded to it. Another shade a little later on, perceiving by a slight trace of colour in Timarion's cheeks that he had newly arrived from above, addresses him thus—'Hail, freshman among the dead, and tell me about affairs in the upper world. How many mackerel for an obol? What do tunnies and anchovies cost? What's the price of oil, wine, corn, &c.? and—most important of all, though I almost overlooked it—has there been a good catch of sardines? For when I was alive they were my favourite dish, and I preferred them even to pike.' From this we learn that fish were esteemed as great a delicacy in the days of the Comneni as they were in those of Aristophanes. Even the distinguished orator who advocates Timarion's cause before the judgment-seat, pleads guilty to the same failing. When our hero hardly recognises him, owing to the improvement in his appearance after death, he explains this by saying, that in his lifetime he was a martyr to the gout, owing to over-indulgence in the pleasures of the table, so that when he made an oration before the emperor he had to be brought in on a litter; but the spare diet of the lower world, mallows and asphodel, had completely restored his health. His old *penchant*, however, had not entirely left him, for he requests as his fee, that if his client is restored to life, he will send him down some of his favourite dainties, adding some severe remarks on the meagreness of the broth that was allowed in Hades. What is here implied concerning this vice of Byzantine society, is corroborated by what we learn from other writers concerning the luxury and self-indulgence of the upper classes at that period.

The next figure that attracted Timarion's attention was that of the Emperor Romanus IV. (Diogenes), the same on whose neck, after the great battle of Manzikert, in which he was taken prisoner, Alp Arslan placed his foot; and who, on his return to

Constantinople, was dethroned, and blinded with such barbarity as to cause his death. He is described as a man of great stature and grand appearance; but his eyes are seen to be gouged, and as he lies in his tent he utters constant lamentations, while poison trickles from his mouth. The last point refers to the attempt that was made to take his life. By his side sits a courtier, who out of compassion for his sufferings tries to console him, but in vain. The tragic story of his misfortunes is then related. The circumstance that this emperor, whose death occurred more than half a century before this time, was of Cappadocian extraction, and therefore a fellow-countryman of Timarion, may perhaps explain the interest that the writer felt in him.

As he proceeds, he is met by a man whose appearance is graphically detailed, and who, after eying him for some time, at length, like Brunetto Latini in a similar passage in Dante's *Inferno*, suddenly recognises him as an old and favourite pupil. This is the famous rhetorician Theodore of Smyrna. After mutual greetings, Timarion describes to him the circumstances of his death, and complaining that he has been unfairly treated, begs his tutor to undertake a suit in his behalf against Oxybas and Nyction, which he promises to do. Timarion, however, is anxious to know whether his case is likely to receive a fair hearing, because as Aeacus and Minos, the judges, are Hellenes, they are likely to be prejudiced against him and his advocate, who are 'Galilaeans.' I need hardly remark that the word "Ελλην at this time was used for a pagan, while a Greek was 'Ρωμαίος. The rhetorician replies, with no lack of self-assertion, that his best ground of confidence is his own ability, and adds that, having a slight knowledge of medicine, he can easily arrange his arguments so as to confound the ancient divinities. Both here and in subsequent passages it is clear that the sophists of that age are made a subject of satire, in addition to the two former classes of the physicians and the gourmands. He next describes the composition of the court of justice by which the dead are tried, and this is one of the most original points in the story.

In the first place, the great physicians of antiquity—Aesculapius, Hippocrates, Erasistratus, and Galen—had been constituted a body of assessors to advise the judges, because they

were most likely to be acquainted with the causes of death. Like coroners, they were qualified to determine whether a man's life had come to an end by fair means. Of their capacities, however, Theodore has a very poor opinion. He says that Aesculapius had not spoken for many years, and if he was forced to reply, did so only by the movement of his head. This means, no doubt, that since the extinction of heathenism the oracles, and among them those of this divinity, had given no responses. Hippocrates was a little more communicative, but even he only enunciated short enigmatical aphorisms, of which specimens are given; and as these were in the Ionic dialect, which Hippocrates uses in his writings, as soon as they were uttered, Minos and Aeacus, to whom they were only half intelligible, burst out laughing. Erasistratus he regarded as a mere empirical practitioner. Galen was a more formidable person to cope with, but he by good luck was now unable to attend, being engrossed by the work of bringing out an enlarged edition of his treatise on fevers. Possibly this means that this work was at that time being edited or adapted by some writer on medicine at Constantinople. All this, the sophist continued, was in their favour, and in other respects the court was satisfactory. For Aeacus and Minos, though heathens, were strictly just, and complete toleration was established in Hades, every man being allowed to adhere to his own religious persuasion. Still, as the tenets of the Galilaeans had pervaded all Europe and a great part of Asia, 'Providence' thought good (*ἔδοξε τῇ προνοίᾳ*) to appoint a third judge to sit along with the heathen judges. The name of the person selected for this office comes upon us as a great surprise. We should have expected that a writer of that age would fix on some one distinguished by rigid orthodoxy; but, on the contrary, it is a vigorous iconoclast, the Emperor Theophilus, who lived early in the ninth century, and was famed for his impartial justice.

They now move onwards, the two friends and the two conductors of the dead, the latter of whom receive warning that they will be summoned to trial for arresting a soul under false pretences. After journeying for two miles they perceive a light in the distance, and when they reach it find themselves in a delightful spot, closely resembling Dante's Earthly Paradise, where there are groves and shrubberies, with singing-birds, and

green turf, and falling water, and a wide river running through it; here there is eternal spring, and the fruits never wither on the trees. This is the Elysian plain and asphodel meadow. Within it is held the court of justice, and here Minos, Aeacus, and Theophilus the 'Galilæan' are found in session, the two former being gaily attired, while the Christian Emperor wears dark and squalid garments; this is here said to have been his custom in life, though the point is not noticed by contemporary historians. By his side stands a prompter, whose sexless appearance, white raiment, and beaming countenance excite Timarion's curiosity; and he is informed, with a slightly profane allusion to the idea of a guardian angel, which we should hardly expect to meet with in an orthodox Byzantine writer, that every Christian emperor has such an angel assigned to him to suggest how he should act, and that the one who attended on Theophilus had accompanied him to the world below.

The trial which follows is a sort of travesty of an Athenian lawsuit, though modified, probably, so as to suit the forms of Byzantine procedure. The accused, Oxybas and Nyction, are brought into court by the *εἰσαγγελεῖς*, and at a signal from one of these, the rhetorician, after composing his countenance and folding his hands, commences *ore rotundo* the speech for the prosecution. In this he points out that the laws of the dead prescribed that no soul may be brought down to Hades, unless some vital organ has been destroyed, and that even then three days must elapse before the conductors of the dead are allowed to seize it; in Timarion's case, not only had these been disregarded, but there were traces of blood about his soul, which proved that he was not properly dead when he was carried off. When Minos, who from the first seems disposed to take a severe view of the case, sharply orders the accused to give an account of their proceedings, Nyction, after referring to their long experience of their office, which dated from the time of Cronos, replies by appealing to the dictum of the physicians with regard to the four elementary humours, and showing that they had reason to believe that he had lost one of them. The matter thus becomes a question for the medical referees, and the judges adjourn the trial till the third day, so as to allow of their being consulted. Meanwhile both parties in the dispute are conducted to a region of twilight, which intervenes between Elysium and the

land of total darkness, and regale themselves on the fragrant herbs that grow there.

When the morning of the third day appeared, they returned to the court, where they found Aesculapius and Hippocrates seated along with the judges; the former having his face enveloped in a transparent veil, from a foolish pride about revealing his divinity, though it allowed of his seeing through it; while Hippocrates wore a tall turban and a single garment reaching to his feet, and had a long beard and closely-shaven crown. After the clerk of the court had read the minutes of the previous proceedings, and Aesculapius and Hippocrates had had a private consultation with Erasistratus, the symptoms of the patient and the circumstances of his death were minutely inquired into; during which proceeding the volubility and self-assertion of Theodore of Smyrna made so great an impression on Hippocrates, that he took the opportunity of asking for information about him. Ultimately the question turned on the condition of Timarion's soul, and to inquire into this two examiners, called Oxydercion and Nyctoleustes ('Sharpeye' and 'Nightspy'), were appointed; they reported that it was in an impure state, and that tiny particles of flesh and blood were still adhering to it. This evidence of the experts was at once appealed to by the counsel for the prosecution, as showing that the elementary bile could not have been exhausted, for otherwise the soul would have separated easily and cleanly from the body. The arguments on both sides being now concluded, silence was proclaimed in the court, and the judges, after conferring with the physicians, gave their votes by ballot, and the result was in favour of the plaintiff. Oxybas and Nyction were deposed from their office of conductors of the dead, and Timarion was ordered to be restored to life.

While the sentence was being written out, a new person is introduced, called 'the Byzantine sophist,' who is the chief officer of the court under the judges, having been appointed to that office on account of his cleverness in extemporizing. Who he was we recognise, as we did Michael Palaeologus before, by a play on his name. He is described as speaking indistinctly (*ὀποψελλίζων*), and this word suggests that he is Michael Psellus, the most learned man in the Byzantine empire during the eleventh century, who held the office of Prince of Philoso-

phers, *i.e.* chief teacher of philosophy and dialectic, at Constantinople, and played no inconsiderable part in the politics of his time. This view is confirmed by other circumstances which are here mentioned. He now receives the judgment from the bench, and dictates it to the scribe, after which the court rises. And as they departed, 'all the Christians shouted aloud, and leapt for joy, and embraced the sage of Smyrna, and extolled him to the skies for his skilful arguments, and the method and arrangement of his speech,'—a truly Greek proceeding.

The duty of reconducting Timarion to the upper world is entrusted to the *εἰσαγωγεὶς*. On the return journey he visits the abode of the philosophers, a quiet retreat resembling that in which they are assembled in Dante's Limbo, and sees many of the sages of ancient Greece calmly conversing together, and discussing various tenets. Their tranquillity, however, was on this occasion disturbed by an untoward incident. This was a violent altercation between Diogenes the Cynic and Johannes Italus, the clever and prolific writer who succeeded Psellus in the office of Prince of Philosophers, and was a bitter opponent of his. This man, as we learn from contemporary writers, was headstrong in his opinions, so that for a time he was regarded as a heresiarch, and arrogant and passionate in disputation; these peculiarities are here caricatured, and the good-humoured tone of the satire passes for once into violent invective. After a while Cato interposes, and having separated the combatants, conducts the Byzantine into the company of the dialecticians, but they also rise up against him and pelt him with stones as a charlatan. Shortly afterwards Psellus appears, and is received with friendliness and respect, though not on terms of equality, by the philosophers, but with enthusiasm by the dialecticians, who pay him the highest compliments, and offer him the president's chair. From the contrast which is thus drawn between these leaders, we should gather that the rivalry between their followers, or at all events the controversy with regard to their respective merits, had not died out when this satire was composed. Theodore of Smyrna also comes in for some further criticisms; and altogether, throughout this part of the narrative, the elaborate terms which are used for the different branches of the science of oratory, the profusion of epithets applied to grace of style, and the gusto with which a

bold and felicitous expression is quoted, impress the reader forcibly with the importance attached at this period to the study of rhetoric in all its branches.

At this point Timarion takes leave of his friendly advocate, and that kind-hearted epicure, in the midst of many affectionate speeches, does not fail to specify the articles which he desires to be forwarded to him in acknowledgment of his services—'a lamb five months old; two three-year-old fowls, hens, fattened and killed, like those that poulterers have for sale in the market with the fat neatly extracted from the stomach and laid upon the thighs; a sucking-pig one month old; and a good rich fleshy sow's paunch.' Resuming his journey, our traveller takes a passing glance at Nero and other cruel tyrants in history, among whom Philaretus, a hard-handed Armenian usurper of the eleventh century, holds a conspicuous place, undergoing the same unsavoury punishment as the flatterers in Dante's *Inferno*; and at last reaches the mouth of the pit, through which he ascends and once more sees the stars. His return to his body is described as follows:—

'Now when I knew not which way to turn to reach my body, I was borne along through the air as if carried by the wind, till I came to the river and recognised the house in which my poor body lay. There, on the river's bank, I said farewell to my conductor, and leaving him, entered through the opening in the roof, a device which has been invented for the escape of smoke from the hearth,'—this looks as if chimneys, which were almost unknown to the Greeks and Romans, were now coming in—'and approaching close to my body entered through the mouth and nostrils. I found it very cold, owing to the frosty winter season, and still more to its having been dead; and that night I felt like a person with a violent chill. The next day, however, I packed up my things, and continued my journey to Constantinople.'

The satirical romance, of which a sketch has thus been given, is certainly amusing, and not wanting in originality. Though somewhat discursive and episodic in its plan, it is full of movement from first to last: it passes by rapid transitions from grave to gay; its sketches of men and manners are very graphic; and its style is lively and often epigrammatic. Owing to its notices of historical characters, and its descriptions of life and

customs, for which we look in vain in ordinary Byzantine writers, it cannot fail to interest those who care for the history of the Eastern empire. If any of the questions which it makes the object of special criticism, such as exploded medical theories, have lost their point for us; the same can be said of satire in all ages, where it does not deal with matters of universal application, and will certainly be the case in future days with much of the humorous criticism of our time. This is also true of descriptions of the characteristics of persons, who were then well known, but are now either altogether unknown to us, or at the best but shadowy figures; we experience the same difficulty when we try to become familiar with some of the characters in Aristophanes. But notwithstanding these drawbacks, 'Timarion's Sufferings' is a remarkable work, and we have good reason to be satisfied that it has been preserved.

The other Byzantine satire, which we are to notice, and which forms in many ways a strong contrast to this, is

THE SOJOURN OF MAZARIS IN HADES.

At the time when this was written the Byzantine empire had become a shadow of its former self. Instead of including, as it did under the Comneni, a large part of Asia Minor, and in Europe an extent of country as great as, though not exactly corresponding to, European Turkey before the Treaty of Berlin, it was now restricted to Constantinople and the neighbouring district, a few of the islands, as Lemnos and Thasos, Thessalonica, and the greater part of the Peloponnese. The Fourth Crusade had intervened, and by it the fabric of the Eastern empire had been shattered in pieces and its territory partitioned; and though the Greeks afterwards regained possession of the capital, and gradually reannexed several of the provinces, yet the body had now lost its power of cohesion. Meanwhile the Ottoman Turks had appeared on the scene, and extending their conquests from Asia to Europe, had absorbed one after another of the possessions of the Christians. Yet the second decade of the fifteenth century, to which 'Mazaris' is shown to belong by the events which it mentions, was in some degree a period of revival. Though the expedition of Manuel Palaeologus II. to Western Europe had sufficiently proved to the Greeks that there was

no hope of substantial aid from that quarter, yet the great blow which the Ottoman power received through the defeat of Sultan Bajazet by Timour at the battle of Angora in 1402 secured to the Greeks a respite, which they employed in strengthening their position. The terms of contempt with which Bajazet is spoken of in this satire (ὁ κατάπτυστος ἐκείνος σατράπης), and the title of 'invincible' applied to the emperor (ὁ ἀήττητος αὐτοκράτωρ), would have been almost absurd in the time of his predecessor, John V., who formally acknowledged himself a vassal of the Sultan. Yet, as we read it, we feel that the society which it describes is that of a kingdom doomed to fall. The disaffection among the provincials, and still more the want of patriotism, the egotism and self-seeking, of the upper class, and the narrow and petty subjects which occupied their thoughts, show that no true spirit remained on which a vigorous resistance could be based.

The story of Mazaris need not detain us very long, for it is not the prominent feature, as in Timarion, but serves rather as a framework for the satire and invective, which it is the writer's object to give vent to. Like the former tale, it describes the illness of the narrator, which in this case was owing to a violent epidemic that visited Constantinople, probably in the year 1414. He speaks of his desolate condition, when his friends and relations, who were in the same plight, were unable to visit him, and his sick-bed was watched, not by physicians, but by the ravens who were waiting for his remains. At last he fell asleep, and was conscious of being carried off at dead of night, he knew not how, until he found himself in a wide and deep valley. If any one doubts his veracity, he challenges him to bring a suit against him in the court of Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanthys, in order that, if convicted, he may suffer the punishment they shall impose. The account given of the passage to Hades is vague enough, and forms a strong contrast to the elaborate details given in Timarion; but this same absence of explanation is characteristic of other descriptions of the same kind, such as those in the *Odyssey* and in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, in both of which it would be equally difficult to say in what way the transition is effected. We may notice in passing another point of correspondence between the Inferno of Mazaris and that of Aristophanes, in the introduction of myrtle-groves in both.¹

¹ Ar. *Ran.* 156.

The valley in which Mazaris was deposited contained a crowd of dead persons, all naked, and mingled indiscriminately together; but some of them were marked with numerous weals, the result of their former sins, while others were free from these ignominious tokens. The idea here expressed, though it appears in various forms in several ancient writers, was probably derived by the author from Lucian's *Cataplus*, where it is said that the crimes that a man commits become invisible punctures on his soul, which make themselves manifest on his form after death.¹ One of these persons soon recognised him by his limping gait, a peculiarity of his which is several times referred to, and which, we can hardly doubt, arose from the gout, for he suffered from that disease, and the same epithet (*κυλλοποδίων*) that is applied to him is subsequently used of another gouty subject. From this it would seem that good living was still a vice of the Byzantines. This man addresses him with an adaptation of the first words of the *Hecuba*, the same which Menippus had used at the beginning of the *Necyomanteia*, and then proceeds to question him about the latest news from the Imperial court, his interest in which proclaims him one of its former inmates. His name was Holobolus, and he is described as having a prominent aquiline nose, the sharpness of which corresponds to his extreme inquisitiveness; in his lifetime he had been a rhetorician and physician, and one of the Emperor's secretaries, and from the character which is subsequently given of him, and the traits which show themselves in the course of conversation, we see in him the type of the place-hunting, backbiting, scandale-mongering courtier. Among other pieces of advice which he offers to Mazaris, he urges him to betake himself to the Morea, and to attach himself to one of those in authority in that country in the hope of advancement—a suggestion which the recipient has reason subsequently to believe to have been made in a malicious spirit. The Morea at that time was ruled by Theodore Palaeologus II., the elder brother of the last emperor of Constantinople, Constantine XI., with the title of despot, which was now regularly conferred on the member of the imperial family who governed that province.

When Mazaris recognises Holobolus, whom, owing to his nakedness and the numerous scars on his person, he had not

¹ Lucian, *Cataplus*, c. 24, cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 524 E.

discovered before, he inquires of him the cause of the miserable change in his appearance ; whereupon Holobolus leads him to a place a little further off, where they can rest under the shade of a spreading bay-tree, and there recounts to him the story of his rise to power, which culminated in his accompanying the Emperor Manuel on his journey to France and England, subsequently to which he had a prospect of being appointed to the office of Grand Logothete. Afterwards, with many tears, he gives an account of his fall, which was owing primarily to a disgraceful intrigue with a nun, which led him to neglect his official duties, and gave his enemies a handle against him ; but it was embittered by the treacherous artifices by which his secrets were wormed out of him, and by the purloining of his confidential papers when he lay on his deathbed, which he intended either to have burnt or to have had buried with him. During this conversation, which is supposed to have been conducted in perfect privacy, mention is made of many of the public men of the time, and among them, in no complimentary terms, of an important person, called Padiates, who had greatly influenced, for good or for evil, the fortunes of both the interlocutors. Suddenly at this point a figure arises from the myrtle bushes in the neighbourhood, and to their no small confusion the great Padiates himself (*Παδιάτης ὁ πᾶνυ*), who has been lying in ambush, and has overheard the whole dialogue, stands before them, with fury depicted on his countenance, and a club in his hands. Thereupon a vigorous altercation follows, interlarded with strong vituperation ; and this at last becomes so intolerably personal, that Padiates raises his club, and fells Holobolus to the ground.

The outcry and excitement caused by this occurrence soon bring numbers of the dead up to the spot, and foremost among them Pepagomenus, once the court physician, who attends to the wounded man, and stanches the blood with a healing herb. He is anxious for news of his two sons, one of whom was about the court, the other practising as a physician. Then other courtiers follow in turn, and as all are anxious for the latest information from the new-comer, opportunity is given both for ridiculing their peculiarities, and for satirizing the living through their mouths. One of these inquires about his former mistress, whose bloom, he is told, has now faded, and whose large fortune

has been squandered; another wishes to hear of a man who defrauded him of money, and whom he intends to indict as soon as he comes down below. Several ask after their sons, towards whom, as a general rule, they seem to bear no good will—one, who is described as dyeing his hair and beard black with ravens' eggs, inquiring about a son who has apostatised to Mahometanism; a second, whether his sons are eavesdroppers as he was himself; and so on. By the time that the reader has had his fill of this kind of scandal, Holobolus has recovered; and rising up he takes Mazaris by the hand, and leads him to a spot corresponding to the descriptions of Elysium, where there are elms and plane trees and singing-birds. But even in this happy place the topics of conversation are the same, for the imperial choir-master, Lampadarius, whom he finds here, takes the opportunity, when speaking of his surviving relations, of lashing the monks (*ναζυπαῖοι*) in no measured language, saying that the monastic dress is made to conceal all kinds of licentiousness; the same charge comes up in other parts of the story. Long before this, Mazaris had complained that his head ached with listening and talking, and at last Holobolus suggests to him a mode of escape. Pointing out to him the deep bed of a stream in the neighbourhood, shaded with trees, he tells him to make a pretence of retiring thither, and adds that, when he has concealed himself there for a little while, he will be able to return to the upper world again.

In this somewhat abrupt way the narrative ends, but not the entire piece. There follow four compositions, which are intended to form a pendant to what precedes, though no actual attempt is made to connect them with it. The first of these is a dialogue between Mazaris, after his return to life, and Holobolus, which, both from its heading, and from the way in which it is subsequently spoken of, must be regarded as taking place in a dream; the three others are letters written in connection with it. The object aimed at in all of them is evidently to satirize the Moreotes. In the dream Mazaris complains to Holobolus that he had practised upon him with his former deceptive arts, in advising him to make his fortune in the Morea, for though he had been residing there fourteen months he was in a worse plight than before, and began to doubt whether Tartarus or Peloponnesus was the most objectionable. Holobolus replies that, having

himself visited that country in company with the Emperor, he had received large presents, and had every reason to be satisfied; but he would be glad to hear what the real state of things is. Accordingly, it is arranged that Mazaris shall send him a letter on the subject by the hands of some one lately dead by way of Taenarum, that entrance to the lower world being near Sparta—that is, Misithra or Mistra, the Byzantine headquarters in that province—where Mazaris was residing. The letter, which follows, mentions the visit of the Emperor Manuel to the Morea, and his constructing the fortification across the Isthmus of Corinth, which was intended to check the advance of the Turks; but it is mostly occupied with virulent detraction of all classes inhabiting the peninsula, but especially of the local governors or archonts (here called *τοπαρχοί*) on account of their resistance to the emperor. The next letter purports to be from Holobolus in Hades to a physician, Nicephorus Palaeologus Ducas, with the object of consoling him for his enforced residence in Peloponnesus and the loss of the enjoyments of Constantinople, which latter he enumerates with the enthusiasm with which a Parisian in exile might speak of the delights of Paris. The remedy which he recommends to him is a draught of the water of Lethe, which he says he has himself partaken of, though notwithstanding this he rather inconsistently recurs to past pleasures and chagrins. This letter, as might be expected, has a sting in its tail, for it ends with malicious insinuations on the part of Holobolus with regard to some supposed malpractices of his correspondent. Palaeologus in his reply does not fail to fasten on the weak point in his assailant's remarks, and twits him with the poor effect the draught of forgetfulness seems to have had in his case.

The suddenness of the conclusion at this point, and the want of method in all the latter part, show how much more satire and detraction were aimed at by the author than literary completeness. This feature requires to be borne in mind in estimating the work and its contents. Though we can hardly doubt, after reading it, that the Greek Kingdom, the life of which it describes from a courtier's point of view, deserved its impending fate, yet it is evident that the writer was a man of a bitter and malevolent spirit, who took the worst view of the men of his time, and was greatly influenced by personal spite and jealousy. Our interest

in it would probably be increased, if we knew more of the personages spoken of. Unfortunately, almost all of them are names to us and nothing more, owing to the absence of any contemporary history of the period. But for this very reason the story has a value of its own, as throwing light on the state of society in an obscure age, and furnishing evidence with regard to certain facts of history. Thus, we hear of the Emperor Manuel's progress to Thasos, Thessalonica, and the Peloponnese, and of the measures he set on foot there to consolidate his power. Neighbouring Christian states are mentioned, where Holobolus advises Mazaris, if he cannot ultimately get profitable employment in the Morea, to betake himself either to Crete, which was then in the possession of Venice, or to the despot of Cephalonia—that is, Charles Tocco II., who at this time was in possession of part of Elis and Achaia. We see the close connection existing between the inhabitants of Constantinople and the people of Wallachia, from the mention of Greeks going to that country from the capital, and making large fortunes in the service of the voivodes, just as has been the case in later times, when the hospodars of Wallachia and Moldavia were chosen from among the Fanariote Greeks. The Turkish names which are borne by persons of some position at Constantinople,—Seselkoï, Meliknasar, Aidin (*Αἰτίνης*)—are an evidence of the influence which the future conquerors had already begun to exercise. Finally, the condition of the Peloponnese is largely illustrated; but this point I leave, for a detailed account of the state of things in that province belongs rather to a historical notice of the time than to our present subject.

The language in which 'Timarion' and 'Mazaris' are composed is the contemporary Greek that was used in the Byzantine court and in polite conversation. This spoken language was the lineal descendant of Hellenic, as distinguished from Romaic, Greek; and therefore, as this continued to be used until the overthrow of the Empire, Dr. Ellissen's statement is true, that Hellenic Greek first became a dead language after the fall of Constantinople.¹ It differed, that writer remarks, on the one hand, from the language used in the regular Byzantine literature, and on the other, far more widely from the popular Greek of the period. The former of these, though based on the same "common"

¹ Ellissen, *Analecten*, vol. iv. part 1, p. 37.

dialect of the Macedonian Greeks, as it had been transmitted with various modifications by the later Greek writers and the fathers of the Church, was yet to a great extent a factitious language, the uniformity of which was maintained by traditional imitation of Attic authors, and which approached nearer to, or receded further from, the classical standard according to the cultivation of the writer. The latter was the humbler, but not less lineal, descendant of ancient Greek, which diverged from the written language certainly as early as the fourth century after Christ, and by the end of the ninth century was the only Greek intelligible to the great bulk of the people; when the Greeks ceased to be a nation, it became universal, and a refined idiom of it—the ‘volgare illustre,’ as Dante might say—is the Modern Greek of the present day. But though poetical compositions of some merit existed in the popular language in the time of the Comneni, yet the ‘good society’ of Constantinople held aloof from it; so much so, that even a person who sympathised with the provincials, like the excellent Archbishop Michael Acominatus of Athens at the end of the twelfth century, could profess after three years’ residence in that city, that he could hardly understand the dialect spoken there;¹ and the author of ‘Mazaris’ during his residence at Sparta, when speaking of the speech of the Tzakones in the neighbourhood of that place—whose name he identifies, like some modern writers, with that of the Lacones—quotes as specimens of their barbarous idiom words, most of which are ordinary Romaic forms, and are not peculiar, if they belong at all, to that singular dialect, thus betraying his ignorance of the popular Greek. We may notice in passing, how great an advance has been made in the study of Modern Greek, when we find Hase saying, in speaking of these Tzaconian words—that they may be of some interest to those who ‘prétendent que le grec vulgaire, tel à peu près qu’il est parlé aujourd’hui par le peuple, remonte à une époque bien antérieure à la prise de Constantinople.’²

The Greek of Mazaris, however, is considerably debased from that of Timarion, a natural result of nearly three centuries of misfortune and degradation which elapsed between them. This

¹ See the passage quoted by M. Lam-bros in his pamphlet, *Αἱ Ἀθήναι περὶ τὰ τέλη τοῦ δωδεκάτου αἰῶνος*, p. 45.

² *Notices des Manuscrits*, vol. ix. part 2, p. 136.

is traceable partly in the growth of unclassical usages, especially in respect of faults of syntax; but far more in the vocabulary. In Timarion we meet with many rare words, which are either genuinely classical or are found in later Greek, and these are interesting to the student. But in Mazaris it is a sign of depraved taste that far-fetched expressions and extravagance of language are cultivated for their own sake, and poetical, comic, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, even dialectic words are introduced in the oddest way, so as to produce a strange jumble. It may be worth while to give some instances of these. Far-fetched expressions are such as *ἀρχιθύτης* for the Patriarch of Constantinople, *πίστιν χαμαιλεοντικήν* for 'untrustworthy allegiance.' As dialectic forms we may notice *ἐξεφαάνθη* and *αἶδαο*: as Homeric words *βροτολοιγός* and *κυλλοποδίων*: as poetical words *πολύμνητος*, *οὔρεσίτροφος*, *ἐλέπολις*—and many others might be added, though it is to be observed that some words which are poetical in classical writers passed into more common use at a later time. But the largest contribution to the vocabulary of extravagance is derived from the comedians; as, *κεκοισυρωμένη* for 'a self-indulgent woman,' *κυμνοπρίστης* 'a skin-flint,' *ἀνθοσμίας* 'wine with a bouquet,' *ώρακιᾶν* 'to faint,' *φληναφᾶν*, or rather, as it appears here, *φληναφεῖν*, 'to babble'; and the way in which *τετρεμαίνω*, *ἀπεριμερίμνος*, and numerous other words are casually introduced shows how thoroughly the writer's language was steeped in Aristophanes. Mixed with these occur mediaeval terms, which, though most of them are used by the Byzantine historians, yet in a work of fiction, like the present, fall strangely on a modern ear; as *καβαλλάριος*, 'knight,' *δομestikός*, here 'a church officer,' *δρουγγάριος*, 'military or naval commander,' *βοεβόδα*, 'voivode,' *ἰνδικτος*, 'the indiction,' and others derived from a Western source, as *μπαντιάτης*, 'bandit,' *ποτεστάτος*, the 'podestà' of the Genoese settlement at Galata, *φλωρίον*, 'florin.' Even a Turkish word is found—*σούπασις*, *i.e.* *subashi*, the name of a Turkish officer. The medley of language thus produced conduces not a little to the bizarre character of the entire composition, which renders it exceedingly amusing.

A further peculiarity is the quotations, which the author is never tired of introducing. He was evidently very familiar with the classical literature, for he quotes Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles,

Euripides, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Aristotle, and Theocritus; to which we may add the Septuagint, the New Testament, Lucian, Synesius, and Gregory Nazianzen: and the passages taken from these are evidently not obtained by him at second-hand. Sometimes they occur without notice as part of the narrative or dialogue, sometimes they are prefaced by *κατὰ τὸν ποιητὴν* or *κατὰ τὸν εἰπόντα*, less frequently the name of the writer is given. They are made to suit all kinds of subjects. A pretender to omniscience is *τὸν οἰόμενον εἶδέναι τὰ τ' ἔοντα τὰ τ' ἔσσομένα πρό τ' ἔοντα*: a person of low origin is spoken of as *φορῶν διφθέραν*: a man in fear says *πεφόβημαι καθάπερ πτηνῆς ὄμμα πελείας*: one seeking revenge is told *ἔσχες κότον ὄφρα τελέσσης*: Mazaris is advised to leave the Peloponnese, if he is in poverty, *ἵνα μὴ λιμώξῃς ὡς κύων καὶ τὴν Σπάρτην κυκλοῖς*. A curious mixture of passages is seen in *ἐπειδήπερ, καθ' Ὀμηρον, μόρον ἀμήχανον, κἂν ἐν οἰκίσκῳ σαυτὸν καθείρξης, οὐχ ὑπαλύξαις*. Homer and Aristophanes are the authors most often cited, especially the latter, whom he speaks of as *ὁ κωμικός*, and of all his plays the *Plutus* is the one which occurs to him most readily. Plays on words and names are also of frequent occurrence. We have seen that these are found occasionally in Timarion, and even Lucian does not altogether despise them, as when in the *Vera Historia* the island of cheese in the sea of milk is said to have a temple of *Γαλάτεια*, and to have been ruled by *Τυρώ*, daughter of Salmoneus.¹ But in Mazaris they are rampant. Now and then they are mere puns on ordinary words or names of places, introduced for the sake of the jingle of sound, as *ἀντὶ ἰατρῶν τοὺς τοῦ θανάτου κήρυκας κόρακας*, where the resemblance will be better seen if we remember the modern pronunciation; *μᾶλλον παιδείας χάριν ἢ παιδιᾶς γέγραφα*: and of descending to Hades by way of Taenarum it is said, *ἐς μόρον ἀπὸ Μώρας ἤξεις*—*Μώρα* being the form in which the name Morea is regularly found in this composition. But far more frequently they are parodies of names of persons. Sometimes these are intended to suggest a name, which for some reason is suppressed, like those of Palaeologus and Psellus in Timarion; this was no doubt instantly recognizable by contemporaries, and the resemblance is close enough for us at the present day to be able to make a shrewd guess at it. Thus *τοὺς διαβεβοημένους*

¹ *Vera Historia*, ii. 3.

ἀγίους καὶ κατ' ἀντίφρασιν ξανθούς ὑπούλους (' blonde hypocrites ') can hardly fail to mean persons called Xanthopoulos ; similarly ὁ αἰιδὸς Πῶλος Ἀργυρός will be Argyropoulos ; and Ὀνοκέντιος, which is shown to stand for a Western name by ὁ κατὰ Λατίνους being appended to it, seems to be an uncomplimentary rendering of Innocentius or perhaps Vincentius. The rest, where the real name is given, take the form of epithets or descriptions, in a few instances complimentary, as τὴν ἀντικρυσ ὡς ἐξ ἀνατολῆς λάμπουσαν, Ἀνατολικήν, but much more commonly opprobrious, for the purpose of ridiculing or flinging imputations at persons whom the author disliked. Such are—ὁ τὰς αἰγας πρότερον Μελγουσῆς ἀμέλγων—ἄσοφος Σοφιανός—ὡς ἀσπίς βύων τὰ ὦτα, ἐκείνος ὁ Ἀσπιέταος, ὁ λόγους μὲν ἠδυεπῆς, ἔργοις δ' ὥσπερ ἀσπίς δάκνων—τοῦ τὰς αἰσθήσεις μεμυκότος Καμύτζη—ὁ ἐκ Πατροκλέους ἀφικόμενος Ἀλουσιάνος, with an allusion to Aristophanes' *Plutus* (84)—

—ἐκ Πατροκλέους ἔρχομαι,
ὅς οὐκ ἐλούσατ' ἐξ ὄτουπερ ἐγένετο—

—Λούκιος, ἢ ὄνος, referring to Lucian's composition with that title. Some of these are amusing, some far-fetched, others contemptible ; but this matters not to the writer, who cares little what his missile is, as long as he has something to throw. It is noticeable, what an intimate acquaintance with the classics he expects from his readers.

The foregoing remarks will have given some idea of the nature of the satire contained in this piece. It is coarse, unrestrained, and merciless. Here and there a really witty expression occurs, such as ' a ferryman of words ' for ' an interpreter ' (διαπορθμεὺς λόγων καὶ μνημμάτων Λατίνων καὶ Γραικῶν), though possibly the idea here is borrowed from Plato, who uses διαπορθμεύω in the sense of ' to interpret ' : ¹ yet, on the whole, it is the recklessness of expression, the bold caricature of contemporary characters, the burlesque humour that pervades it, and the drollery of the whole thing, which forms a sort of literary masquerade, that cause it to be amusing. No point is spared that leaves an opening for attack. At one time it is a man's ignoble origin, at another his personal defects or peculiarities—a halting gait, or

¹ Plato, *Sympos.* p. 202 E.

coppery-lead complexion (*μολυβδοχαλκόχρων Μαχητὰν ἐκείνων*). The medical profession, in particular, comes in for much severer treatment than in 'Timarion.' A common expression for them is 'manslayers' (*βροτολοιγοί*), and *Pepagomenus*, the court physician, is actually charged with having administered poison instead of medicine. Similar imputations are made on others, not without malicious puns—*τοῦ κερβέρου Κωνώνη, τοῦ ἀντ' ἀλεξιτηρίου κώνειον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παρεχομένου, καὶ τοῦ ῥαδίως καὶ ἀναιμωτὶ πρὸς Χάρωνα τοὺς πονηρῶς ἔχοντας προοδοποιουμένου Χαρσιανίταιο*. The power of vituperation which the author possesses is something surprising. The following epithets and depreciative expressions may be taken as specimens—*βδελυγμίας, λωποδύτης, μαιφόνος, παράληρος, κατάπτυστος, ἐπάρατος, παλαμναῖος, ἀλιτήριος, ἐμβρόντητος, ἰαπετός, βεκκεσέληνος, καταγεγαυρωμένος, ἐκκεκωφωμένος, κολιοφθαλμος φῶρ, Αἰθίοπος μελάντερος, ἐξ ἀγγέλων πονηρῶν ἀπόγονος*: and sometimes the fuel of political and religious controversy is thrown in, as in *λατινόφρων*, 'partisan of the Latins,' *συμβολομάχος*, 'impugner of the faith,' *ζιζανίων σπορεύς*. It will easily be believed that there are others of a character far from delicate. But this abusiveness was suited to the times; indeed, if the language which Mazaris puts into the mouths of his characters at all represents the reality, the conversation of the inmates of the court of Constantinople at that period must have been of the coarsest description, and the facility with which, in addressing one another, they pass from *ἄριστε φίλων* to *μάταιε, κάκιστε, μνησίκακε*, and so forth, implies a total absence of mutual respect.

Still, notwithstanding his personal enmities and love of detraction, the author of this narrative had a serious object in view. More than once he declares that he writes more in earnest than in jest (*σπουδάζων μᾶλλον ἢ παίζων*). He seems to have been awake to the evils of his time, especially to the incontinence of the upper classes and the monks, and to the corrupt administration of justice. In respect of this latter point, which presented the greatest danger—for throughout the long history of the Byzantine empire nothing had so much tended to hold its subjects together, and reconcile them to oppressive taxation, as the impartiality of the law-courts—a strong contrast is drawn between the verdicts in the world below, which are

given *δικαίως καὶ ἀπροσωπολήπτως*, ἔτι δὲ *ἀδωροδοκῆτως*, and those amongst the living, where personal influence prevailed, and the judges took bribes from both sides, so that justice was in the hands of the powerful and the wealthy. But the primary aim that Mazaris had in view was to support the Emperor Manuel, for whom he manifests a sincere respect, in the political reforms which he was attempting to introduce. These came too late for it to be possible for them to save the expiring state, but they were well intended, and the fact that the writer approved them shows that he belonged to the few who still cherished a feeling of patriotism. The opposition offered to these measures by the inhabitants of Peloponnesus was, as we have seen, the cause of the extreme bitterness with which he satirizes them.

The state of the dead which is here described, and the theology, so to speak, of the lower world, have as little consistency as any other part of the composition. One thing is agreed upon, namely, that the loss of the good things of this life is the greatest of all trials, and consequently the punishment which Lucian assigns to the rich man, that he should not be allowed to drink the water of Lethe, but should continue to remember his former enjoyments,¹ is here brought prominently forward. But though the righteous are distinguished in their appearance from the wicked, little or nothing is said on the subject of future happiness, and when a catalogue of punishments is given, Scriptural and Pagan expressions are inserted alternately. So, too, while God is conceived of as the ruler of the universe, Pluto, Persephone and Hermes are the governors in Hades, and in one passage the one and the others are invoked in successive sentences. But the greatest surprise is at the end, when, after the mention of all this classical apparatus, we are suddenly reminded that the last trumpet has yet to sound (*μέχρις ἂν τῆς τελευταίας ἐκείνης ἀκούσειας σάλπιγγος*). Perhaps the incongruity of all this is not greater than what is found in Dante's *Inferno*, only in that case the skill of the poet is shown in his reconciling us to it.

The two satires which we have thus examined may serve, I think, as a proof that an amusing element was not wanting in

¹ Lucian, *Catopulus*, 28, 29.

Byzantine literature. At first sight each of them, and particularly the latter, seems like a phenomenon in its age; indeed it would be hard to conceive a stronger contrast with the pedantry and solemnity which we usually associate with the court ceremonial of Constantinople, than is found in 'Mazaris.' Still more surprising is it, if we compare these descriptions of visits to the lower world with such a mediaeval Greek story as 'The Apocalypse of the Virgin'—a narrative, full of horrors, of the descent of the Virgin into Hell under the guidance of the Archangel Michael, of which M. Gidel has given an account in his *Nouvelles Études sur la Littérature grecque moderne* (pp. 313–330), and M. Polites a Modern-Greek translation in his *Νεοελληνική Μυθολογία* (vol. i. pp. 375–389)—to think that the same state of society should have produced both. At the same time we know that 'Timarion' and 'Mazaris,' though the only published specimens of these satirical compositions, are not the only existing ones; and those that have come down to us are not improbably the remains of what was once an extensive literature. Under the uniform surface, and the hard crust of custom, with which the life of the Eastern Empire was overlaid, there would seem to have been more variety than is generally imagined.

H. F. TOZER.