

# COMPLETE WORKS OF MARCUS AURELIUS: Meditations, The Speeches Of Marcus, The Sayings Of Marcus Illustrated

## MEDITATIONS

*A new rendering based on the  
foulis translation of 1742  
By George W. Chrystal*

### Book I

#### 1.

I learned from my grandfather, Verus, to use good manners, and to put restraint on anger.

#### 2.

In the famous memory of my father I had a pattern of modesty and manliness.

#### 3.

Of my mother I learned to be pious and generous; to keep myself not only from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts; and to live with a simplicity which is far from customary among the rich.



**4.**

I owe it to my great-grandfather that I did not attend public lectures and discussions, but had good and able teachers at home; and I owe him also the knowledge that for things of this nature a man should

count no expense too great.

## 5.

My tutor taught me not to favour either green or blue at the chariot races, nor, in the contests of gladiators, to be a supporter either of light or heavy armed. He taught me also to endure labour; not to need many things; to serve myself without troubling others; not to intermeddle in the affairs of others, and not easily to listen to slanders against them.

## 6.

Of Diognetus I had the lesson not to busy myself about vain things; not to credit the great professions of such as pretend to work wonders, or of sorcerers about their charms, and their expelling of Demons and the like; not to keep quails (for fighting or divination), nor to run after such things; to suffer freedom of speech in others, and to apply myself heartily to philosophy. Him also I must thank for my hearing first Bacchius, then Tandasis and Marcianus; that I wrote dialogues in my youth, and took a liking to the philosopher's pallet and skins, and to the other things which, by the Grecian discipline, belong to that profession.

## 7.

To Rusticus I owe my first apprehensions that my nature needed reform and cure; and that I did not fall into the ambition of the common Sophists, either by composing speculative writings or by declaiming harangues of exhortation in public; further, that I never strove to be admired by ostentation of great patience in an ascetic life, or by display of activity and application; that I gave over the study of rhetoric, poetry, and the graces of language; and that I did not pace my house in my senatorial robes, or practise any similar affectation. I observed also the simplicity of style in his letters, particularly in that which he wrote to my mother from Sinuessa. I learned from him to be easily appeased, and to be readily reconciled with those who had displeased me or given cause of offence, so soon as they inclined to make their peace; to read with care; not to rest satisfied with a slight and superficial knowledge; nor quickly to assent to great talkers. I have him to thank that I met with the discourses of Epictetus, which he furnished me from his own library.

## 8.

From Apollonius I learned true liberty, and tenacity of purpose; to regard nothing else, even in the smallest degree, but reason always; and always to remain unaltered in the agonies of pain, in the losses of

children, or in long diseases. He afforded me a living example of how the same man can, upon occasion, be most yielding and most inflexible. He was patient in exposition; and, as might well be seen, esteemed his fine skill and ability in teaching others the principles of philosophy as the least of his endowments. It was from him that I learned how to receive from friends what are thought favours without seeming humbled by the giver or insensible to the gift.

## 9.

Sextus was my pattern of a benign temper, and his family the model of a household governed by true paternal affection, and a steadfast purpose of living according to nature. Here I could learn to be grave without affectation, to observe sagaciously the several dispositions and inclinations of my friends, to tolerate the ignorant and those who follow current opinions without examination. His conversation showed how a man may accommodate himself to all men and to all companies; for though companionship with him was sweeter and more pleasing than any sort of flattery, yet he was at the same time highly respected and revered. No man was ever more happy than he in comprehending, finding out, and arranging in exact order the great maxims necessary for the conduct of life. His example taught me to suppress even the least

appearance of anger or any other passion; but still, with all this perfect tranquillity, to possess the tenderest and most affectionate heart; to be apt to approve others yet without noise; to have much learning and little ostentation.

## 10.

I learned from Alexander the Grammarian to avoid censuring others, to refrain from flouting them for a barbarism, solecism, or any false pronunciation. Rather was I dexterously to pronounce the words rightly in my answer, confining approval or objection to the matter itself, and avoiding discussion of the expression, or to use some other form of courteous suggestion.

## 11.

Fronto made me sensible how much of envy, deceit and hypocrisy surrounds princes; and that generally those whom we account nobly born have somehow less natural affection.

## 12.

I learned from Alexander the Platonist not often nor without great necessity to say, or write to any man

in a letter, that I am not at leisure; nor thus, under pretext of urgent affairs, to make a practice of excusing myself from the duties which, according to our various ties, we owe to those with whom we live.

### 13.

Of Catulus I learned not to condemn any friend's expostulation even though it were unjust, but to try to recall him to his former disposition; to stint no praise in speaking of my masters, as is recounted of Domitius and Athenodorus; and to love my children with true affection.

### 14.

Of Severus, my brother, I learned to love my kinsmen, to love truth, to love justice. Through him I came to know Thrasea, Helvidius, Cato, Dion, and Brutus. He gave me my first conception of a Commonwealth founded upon equitable laws and administered with equality of right; and of a Monarchy whose chief concern is the freedom of its subjects. Of him I learned likewise a constant and harmonious devotion to Philosophy; to be ready to do good, to be generous with all my heart. He taught me to be of good hope and trustful of the affection of my friends. I observed in him candour in declaring what he

condemned in the conduct of others; and so frank and open was his behaviour, that his friends might easily see without the trouble of conjecture what he liked or disliked.

## 15.

The counsels of Maximus taught me to command myself, to judge clearly, to be of good courage in sickness and other misfortunes, to be moderate, gentle, yet serious in disposition, and to accomplish my appointed task without repining. All men believed that he spoke as he thought; and whatever he did, they knew it was done with good intent. I never found him surprised or astonished at anything. He was never in a hurry, never shrank from his purpose, was never at a loss or dejected. He was no facile smiler, but neither was he passionate or suspicious. He was ready to do good, to forgive, and to speak the truth, and gave the impression of unperturbed rectitude rather than of a reformed character. No man could ever think himself despised by Maximus, and no one ever ventured to think himself his superior. He had also a good gift of humour.

## 16.

I learned from my father gentleness and

undeviating constancy in judgments formed after due reflection; not to be puffed up with glory as men understand it; to be laborious and assiduous. He taught me to give ready hearing to any man who offered anything tending to the common good; to mete out impartial justice to every one; to apprehend rightly when severity and when clemency should be used; to abstain from all impure lusts; and to use humanity towards all men. Thus he left his friends at liberty to sup with him or not, to go abroad with him or not, exactly as they inclined; and they found him still the same if some urgent business had prevented them from obeying his commands. I learned of him accuracy and patience in council, for he never quitted an enquiry satisfied with first impressions. I observed his zeal to retain his friends without being fickle or over fond; his contentment in every condition; his cheerfulness; his forethought about very distant events; his unostentatious attention to the smallest details; his restraint of all popular applause and flattery. Ever watchful of the needs of the Empire, a careful steward of the public revenue, he was tolerant of the censure of others in affairs of that kind. He was neither a superstitious worshipper of the Gods, nor an ambitious pleaser of men, nor studious of popularity, but in all things sober and steadfast, well skilled in what was honourable, never affecting novelties. As to the things which make the ease of life, and which fortune can

supply in such abundance, he used them without pride, and yet with all freedom: enjoyed them without affectation when they were present, and when absent he found no want of them. No man could call him sophist, buffoon, or pedant. He was a man of ripe experience, a full man, one who could not be flattered, and who could govern himself as well as others. I further observed that he honoured all who were true philosophers, without upbraiding the rest, and without being led astray by any. His manners were easy, his conversation delightful, but not cloying. He took regular but moderate care of his body, neither as one over fond of life or of the adornment of his person, nor as one who despised these things. Thus, through his own care, he seldom needed any medicines, whether salves or potions. It was his special merit to yield without envy to any who had acquired any special faculty, as either eloquence, or learning in the Law, in ancient customs, or the like; and he aided such men strenuously, so that every one of them might be regarded and esteemed for his special excellence. He observed carefully the ancient customs of his forefathers, and preserved, without appearance of affectation, the ways of his native land. He was not fickle and capricious, and loved not change of place or employment. After his violent fits of headache he would return fresh and vigorous to his wonted affairs. Of secrets he had few, and these seldom, and such only as concerned public matters. He