

THE APOPHTHEGMS OR REMARKABLE SAYINGS OF  
KINGS AND GREAT COMMANDERS.

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PLUTARCH TO TRAJAN THE EMPEROR WISHETH PROSPERITY.

ARTAXERXES, King of Persia, O Caesar Trajan, greatest of princes, esteemed it no less royal and bountiful kindly and cheerfully to accept small, than to make great presents ; and when he was in a progress, and a common country laborer, having nothing else, took up water with both his hands out of the river and presented it to him, he smiled and received it pleasantly, measuring the kindness not by the value of the gift, but by the affection of the giver. And Lycurgus ordained in Sparta very cheap sacrifices, that they might always worship the Gods readily and easily with such things as were at hand. Upon the same account, when I bring a mean and slender present of the common first-fruits of philosophy, accept also (I beseech you) with my good affection these short memorials, if they may contribute any thing to the knowledge of the manners and dispositions of great men, which are more apparent in their words than in their actions. My former treatise contains the lives of the most eminent princes, lawgivers, and generals, both Romans and Grecians ; but most of their actions admit a mixture of fortune, whereas such speeches and answers as happened amidst their employments, passions, and events afford us (as in a looking-glass) a clear discovery of each particular temper and disposition. Accordingly Siramnes the Persian, to such as wondered that

he usually spoke like a wise man and yet was unsuccessful in his designs, replied : I myself am master of my words, but the king and fortune have power over my actions. In the former treatise speeches and actions are mingled together, and require a reader that is at leisure ; but in this the speeches, being as it were the seeds and the illustrations of those lives, are placed by themselves, and will not (I think) be tedious to you, since they will give you in a few words a review of many memorable persons.

CYRUS. The Persians affect such as are hawk-nosed and think them most beautiful, because Cyrus, the most beloved of their kings, had a nose of that shape. Cyrus said that those that would not do good for themselves ought to be compelled to do good for others ; and that nobody ought to govern, unless he was better than those he governed. When the Persians were desirous to exchange their hills and rocks for a plain and soft country, he would not suffer them, saying that both the seeds of plants and the lives of men resemble the soil they inhabit.

DARIUS. Darius the father of Xerxes used to praise himself, saying that he became even wiser in battles and dangers. When he laid a tax upon his subjects, he summoned his lieutenants, and asked them whether the tax was burthensome or not ? When they told him it was moderate, he commanded them to pay half as much as was at first demanded. As he was opening a pomegranate, one asked him what it was of which he would wish for a number equal to the seeds thereof. He said, Of men like Zopyrus, — who was a loyal person and his friend. This Zopyrus, after he had maimed himself by cutting off his nose and ears, beguiled the Babylonians ; and being trusted by them, he betrayed the city to Darius, who often said that he would not have had Zopyrus maimed to gain a hundred Babylons.

SEMIRAMIS. Semiramis built a monument for herself, with

this inscription : Whatever king wants treasure, if he open this tomb, he may be satisfied. Darius therefore opening it found no treasure, but another inscription of this import : If thou wert not a wicked person and of insatiable covetousness, thou wouldst not disturb the mansions of the dead.

**XERXES.** Arimenes came out of Bactria as a rival for the kingdom with his brother Xerxes, the son of Darius. Xerxes sent presents to him, commanding those that brought them to say : With these your brother Xerxes now honors you ; and if he chance to be proclaimed king, you shall be the next person to himself in the kingdom. When Xerxes was declared king, Arimenes immediately did him homage and placed the crown upon his head ; and Xerxes gave him the next place to himself. Being offended with the Babylonians, who rebelled, and having overcome them, he forbade them weapons, but commanded they should practise singing and playing on the flute, keep brothel-houses and taverns, and wear loose coats. He refused to eat Attic figs that were brought to be sold, until he had conquered the country that produced them. When he caught some Grecian scouts in his camp, he did them no harm, but having allowed them to view his army as much as they pleased, he let them go.

**ARTAXERXES.** Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, surnamed Longimanus (or *Long-hand*) because he had one hand longer than the other, said, it was more princely to add than to take away. He first gave leave to those that hunted with him, if they would and saw occasion, to throw their darts before him. He also first ordained that punishment for his nobles who had offended, that they should be stripped and their garments scourged instead of their bodies ; and whereas their hair should have been plucked out, that the same should be done to their turbans. When Satibarzanes, his chamberlain, petitioned him in an unjust matter, and he understood he did it to gain thirty thousand pieces

of money, he ordered his treasurer to bring the said sum, and gave them to him, saying: O Satibarzanes! take it; for when I have given you this, I shall not be poorer, but I had been more unjust if I had granted your petition.

**CYRUS THE YOUNGER.** Cyrus the Younger, when he was exhorting the Lacedaemonians to side with him in the war, said that he had a stronger heart than his brother, and could drink more wine unmixed than he, and bear it better; that his brother, when he hunted, could scarce sit his horse, or when ill news arrived, his throne. He exhorted them to send him men, promising he would give horses to footmen, chariots to horsemen, villages to those that had farms, and those that possessed villages he would make lords of cities; and that he would give them gold and silver, not by tale but by weight.

**ARTAXERXES MNEMON.** Artaxerxes, the brother of Cyrus the Younger, called Mnemon, did not only give very free and patient access to any that would speak with him, but commanded the queen his wife to draw the curtains of her chariot, that petitioners might have the same access to her also. When a poor man presented him with a very fair and great apple, By the Sun, said he, 'tis my opinion, if this person were entrusted with a small city, he would make it great. In his flight, when his carriages were plundered, and he was forced to eat dry figs and barley-bread, Of how great pleasure, said he, have I hitherto lived ignorant!

**PARYSATIS.** Parysatis, the mother of Cyrus and Artaxerxes, advised him that would discourse freely with the king, to use words of fine linen.

**ORONTES.** Orontes, the son-in-law of King Artaxerxes, falling into disgrace and being condemned, said: As arithmeticians count sometimes myriads on their fingers, sometimes units only; in like manner the favorites of kings sometimes can do every thing with them, sometimes little or nothing.

**MEMNON.** Memnon, one of King Darius's generals against Alexander, when a mercenary soldier excessively and impudently reviled Alexander, struck him with his spear, adding, I pay you to fight against Alexander, not to reproach him.

**EGYPTIAN KINGS.** The Egyptian kings, according unto their law, used to swear their judges that they should not obey the king when he commanded them to give an unjust sentence.

**POLTYS.** Poltys king of Thrace, in the Trojan war, being solicited both by the Trojan and Grecian ambassadors, advised Alexander to restore Helen, promising to give him two beautiful women for her.

**TERES.** Teres, the father of Sitalces, said, when he was out of the army and had nothing to do, he thought there was no difference between him and his grooms.

**COTYS.** Cotys, when one gave him a leopard, gave him a lion for it. He was naturally prone to anger, and severely punished the miscarriages of his servants. When a stranger brought him some earthen vessels, thin and brittle, but delicately shaped and admirably adorned with sculptures, he requited the stranger for them, and then brake them all in pieces, Lest (said he) my passion should provoke me to punish excessively those that brake them.

**IDATHYRSUS.** Idathyrus, King of Scythia, when Darius invaded him, solicited the Ionian tyrants that they would assert their liberty by breaking down the bridge that was made over the Danube: which they refusing to do because they had sworn fealty to Darius, he called them good, honest, lazy slaves.

**ATEAS.** Ateas wrote to Philip: You reign over the Macedonians, men that have learned fighting; and I over the Scythians, which can fight with hunger and thirst. As he was rubbing his horse, turning to the ambassadors of Philip, he asked whether Philip did so or not. He took prisoner

Ismenias, an excellent piper, and commanded him to play ; and when others admired him, he swore it was more pleasant to hear a horse neigh.

SCILURUS. Scilurus on his death-bed, being about to leave fourscore sons surviving, offered a bundle of darts to each of them, and bade them break them. When all refused, drawing out one by one, he easily broke them ; thus teaching them that, if they held together, they would continue strong, but if they fell out and were divided, they would become weak.

GELO. Gelo the tyrant, after he had overcome the Carthaginians at Himera, made peace with them, and among other articles compelled them to subscribe this, — that they should no more sacrifice their children to Saturn. He often marched the Syracusans out to plant their fields, as if it had been to war, that the country might be improved by husbandry, and they might not be corrupted by idleness. When he demanded a sum of money of the citizens, and thereupon a tumult was raised, he told them he would but borrow it ; and after the war was ended, he restored it to them again. At a feast, when a harp was offered, and others one after another tuned it and played upon it, he sent for his horse, and with an easy agility leaped upon him.

HIERO. Hiero, who succeeded Gelo in the tyranny, said he was not disturbed by any that freely spoke against him. He judged that those that revealed a secret did an injury to those to whom they revealed it ; for we hate not only those who tell, but them also that hear what we would not have disclosed. One upbraided him with his stinking breath, and he blamed his wife that never told him of it ; but she said, I thought all men smelt so. To Xenophanes the Colophonian, who said he had much ado to maintain two servants, he replied : But Homer, whom you disparage, maintains above ten thousand, although he is dead. He

fined Epicharmus the comedian, for speaking unseemly when his wife was by.

DIONYSIUS. Dionysius the Elder, when the public orators cast lots to know in what order they should speak, drew as his lot the letter M. And when one said to him, *Μωρολογεῖς*, You will make a foolish speech, O Dionysius, You are mistaken, said he, *Μοναρχήσω*, I shall be a monarch. And as soon as his speech was ended, the Syracusans chose him general. In the beginning of his tyranny, the citizens rebelled and besieged him; and his friends advised him to resign the government, rather than to be taken and slain by them. But he, seeing a cook butcher an ox and the ox immediately fall down dead, said to his friends: Is it not a hateful thing, that for fear of so short a death we should resign so great a government? When his son, whom he intended to make his successor in the government, had been detected in debauching a freeman's wife, he asked him in anger, When did you ever know me guilty of such a crime? But you, sir, replied the son, had not a tyrant for your father. Nor will you, said he, have a tyrant for your son, unless you mend your manners. And another time, going into his son's house and seeing there abundance of silver and gold plate, he cried out: Thou art not capable of being a tyrant, who hast made never a friend with all the plate I have given thee. When he exacted money of the Syracusans, and they lamenting and beseeching him pretended they had none, he still exacted more, twice or thrice renewing his demands, until he heard them laugh and jeer at him as they went to and fro in the market-place, and then he gave over. Now, said he, since they contemn me, it is a sign they have nothing left. When his mother, being ancient, requested him to find a husband for her, I can, said he, overpower the laws of the city, but I cannot force the laws of Nature. Although he punished other malefactors severely, he favored such as stole clothes, that

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