

## HOW A MAN MAY RECEIVE ADVANTAGE AND PROFIT FROM HIS ENEMIES.

---

1. Nor to mention, Cornelius Pulcher, your gentle as well as skilful administration of public affairs, for which goodness and humanity you have gotten an interest in mankind, we clearly perceive that in your private conversation you have made a quiet and peaceable way of living your choice and continual practice. By this means you are justly esteemed a useful member of the commonwealth in general, and also a friendly affable companion to those who familiarly converse with you, as being a person free from all sour, rough, and peevish humors. For, as it is said of Crete, we may by great chance discover one single region of the world that never afforded any dens or coverts for wild beasts. But through the long succession of ages, even to this time, there scarce ever was a state or kingdom that hath not suffered under envy, hatred, emulation, the love of strife, fierce and unruly passions, of all others the most productive of enmity and ill-will among men. Nay, if nothing else will bring it to pass, familiarity will at last breed contempt, and the very friendship of men doth frequently draw them into quarrels, that prove sharp and sometimes implacable. Which that wise man Chilo did well understand, who, when he heard another assert that he had no enemy, asked him very pertinently whether he had no friend. In my judgment therefore it is absolutely necessary that a man, especially if he sit at the

helm and be engaged to steer the government, should watchfully observe every posture and motion of his enemy, and subscribe to Xenophon's opinion in this case; who hath set it down as a maxim of the greatest wisdom, that a man should make the best advantage he can of him that is his adversary.

Wherefore, having lately determined to write somewhat on this argument, I have now gathered together all my scattered thoughts and meditations upon it, which I have sent to you, digested into as plain a method as I could; forbearing all along to mention those observations I have heretofore made and written in my Political Precepts, because I know you have that treatise at your hand, and often under your eye.

2. Our ancestors were well satisfied and content if they could safely guard themselves from the violent incursions of wild beasts, and this was the end and object of all their contests with these creatures. But their posterity have laid down their weapons of defence, and have invented a quite contrary use of them, making them serviceable to some of the chief ends of human life. For their flesh serves for food, and their hair for clothing; medicines and antidotes are devised out of their entrails; and their skins are converted into armor. So that we may upon good grounds fear that, if these supplies should fail, their manner of life would appear savage, destitute of convenient food and raiment, barbarous and naked.

Although we receive these benefits and comforts from the very beasts, yet some men suppose themselves happy and secure enough, provided they escape all harm from enemies, not regarding Xenophon's judgment, whom they ought to credit in this matter, that every man endowed with common sense and understanding may, if he please, make his opposites very useful and profitable to him.

Because then we cannot live in this world out of the

neighborhood of such as will continually labor to do us injury or oppose us, let us search out some way whereby this advantage and profit from enemies may be acquired.

The best experienced gardener cannot so change the nature of every tree, that it shall yield pleasant and well-tasted fruit; neither can the craftiest huntsman tame every beast. One therefore makes the best use he can of his trees, the other of his beast; although the first perhaps are barren and dry, the latter wild and ungovernable. So seawater is unwholesome and not to be drunk; yet it affords nourishment to all sorts of fish, and serves as it were for a chariot to convey those who visit foreign countries. The Satyr would have kissed and embraced the fire the first time he saw it; but Prometheus bids him take heed, else he might have cause to lament the loss of his beard,\* if he came too near that which burns all it touches. Yet this very fire is a most beneficial thing to mankind; it bestows upon us the blessings both of light and heat, and serves those who know how to use it for the most excellent instrument of mechanic arts. Directed by these examples, we may be able to take right measures of our enemies, considering that by one handle or other we may lay hold of them for the use and benefit of our lives; though otherwise they may appear very untractable and hurtful to us.

There are many things which, when we have obtained them by much labor and sweat, become nauseous, ungrateful, and directly contrary to our inclinations; but there are some (you know) who can turn the very indispositions of their bodies into an occasion of rest and freedom from business. And hard pains that have fallen upon

\* *Τράγος γένειον ἄρα πενθήσεις σὺ γε, Thou goat, soon thou shalt bewail the loss of thy beard.* This verse is supposed to belong to the Satyrdrama *Prometheus of Aeschylus*, which was exhibited with the trilogy to which the *Persians* belong. The whole tetralogy, according to the *didascalía*, consisted of the *Phineus*, *Persians*, *Glauco*, and *Prometheus*. (G.)

many men have rendered them only the more robust through vigorous exercise. There are others who, as Diogenes and Crates did, have made banishment from their native country and loss of all their goods a means to pass out of a troublesome world into the quiet and serene state of philosophy and mental contemplation. So the Stoic Zeno welcomed the good fortune, when he heard the ship was broken wherein his adventures were, because she had reduced him to a torn coat, to the safety and innocence of a mean and low condition. For as some creatures of strong constitutions eat serpents and digest them well, — nay, there are some whose stomachs can by a strange powerful heat concoct shells or stones, — while on the contrary, there are the weak and diseased, who loathe even bread and wine, the most agreeable and best supports of human life; so the foolish and inconsiderate spoil the very friendships they are engaged in, but the wise and prudent make good use of the hatred and enmity of men.

3. To those then who are discreet and cautious, the most malignant and worst part of enmity becomes advantageous and useful. But what is this you talk of all this while? An enemy is ever diligent and watchful to contrive stratagems and lay snares for us, not omitting any opportunity whereby he may carry on his malicious purposes. He lays siege to our whole life, and turns spy into the most minute action of it; not as Lynceus is said to look into oaks and stones, but by arts of insinuation he gets to the knowledge of our secrets, by our bosom friend, domestic servant, and intimate acquaintance. As much as possibly he can, he enquires what we have done, and labors to dive into the most hidden counsels of our minds. Nay, our friends do often escape our notice, either when they die or are sick, because we are careless and neglect them; but we are apt to examine and pry curiously almost into the very dreams of our enemies.

Now our enemy (to gratify his ill-will towards us) doth acquaint himself with the infirmities both of our bodies and mind, with the debts we have contracted, and with all the differences that arise in our families, all which he knows as well, if not better, than ourselves. He sticks fast to our faults, and chiefly makes his invidious remarks upon them. Nay, our most depraved affections, that are the worst distempers of our minds, are always the subjects of his inquiry; just as vultures pursue putrid flesh, noisome and corrupted carcasses, because they have no perception of those that are sound and in health. So our enemies catch at our failings, and then they spread them abroad by uncharitable and ill-natured reports.

Hence we are taught this useful lesson for the direction and management of our conversations in the world, that we be circumspect and wary in every thing we speak or do, as if our enemy always stood at our elbow and overlooked every action. Hence we learn to lead blameless and inoffensive lives. This will beget in us vehement desires and earnest endeavors of restraining disorderly passions. This will fill our minds with good thoughts and meditations, and with strong resolutions to proceed in a virtuous and harmless course of life.

For as those commonwealths and cities know best how to value the happiness of having good and wholesome laws, and most admire and love the safety of a quiet and peaceable constitution of things, which have been harassed by wars with their neighbors or by long expeditions; so those persons who have been brought to live soberly by the fear and awe of enemies, who have learned to guard against negligence and idleness, and to do every thing with a view to some profitable end, are by degrees (they know not how) drawn into a habit of living so as to offend nobody, and their manners are composed and fixed in their obedience to virtue by custom and use, with very little help from the

reason. For they always carry in their minds that saying of Homer, if we act any thing amiss,

Priam will laugh at us, and all his brood ;

our enemies will please themselves and scoff at our defects ; therefore we will do nothing that is ridiculous, sinful, base, or ignoble, lest we become a laughing-stock to such as do not love us.

In the theatre we often see great artists in music and singing very supine and remiss, doing nothing as they should, whilst they play or sing alone ; but whenever they challenge one another and contend for mastery, they do not only rouse up themselves, but they tune their instruments more carefully, they are more curious in the choice of their strings, and they try their notes in frequent and more harmonious consorts. Just so a man who hath an adversary perpetually to rival him in the well ordering of his life and reputation is thereby rendered more prudent in what he does, looks after his actions more circumspectly, and takes as much care of the accurateness of them as the musician does of his lute or organ. For evil hath this peculiar quality in it, that it dreads an enemy more than a friend. For this cause Nasica, when some thought the Roman affairs were established for ever in peace and safety, after they had razed Carthage and enslaved Greece, declared that even then they were in the greatest danger of all and most likely to be undone, because there were none left whom they might still fear and stand in some awe of.

4. And here may be inserted that wise and facetious answer of Diogenes to one that asked him how he might be revenged of his enemy : The only way, says he, to gall and fret him effectually is for yourself to appear a good and honest man. The common people are generally envious and vexed in their minds, as oft as they see the cattle of those they have no kindness for, their dogs, or their horses, in a thriving condition ; they sigh, fret, set their

teeth, and show all the tokens of a malicious temper, when they behold their fields well tilled, or their gardens adorned and beset with flowers. If these things make them so restless and uneasy, what dost thou think they would do, what a torment would it be to them, if thou shouldst demonstrate thyself in the face of the world to be in all thy carriage a man of impartial justice, a sound understanding, unblamable integrity, of a ready and eloquent speech, sincere and upright in all your dealings, sober and temperate in all that you eat or drink ;

While from the culture of a prudent mind,  
Harvests of wise and noble thought you reap.\*

Those that are conquered, saith Pindar, must seal up their lips ; they dare not open their mouths, no, not even to mutter.† But all men in these circumstances are not so restrained ; but such chiefly as come behind their opposites in the practice of diligence, honesty, greatness of mind, humanity, and beneficence. These are beautiful and glorious virtues, as Demosthenes ‡ says, that are too pure and great to be touched by an ill tongue, that stop the mouths of backbiters, choke them and command them to be silent. Make it thy business therefore to surpass the base ; for this surely thou canst do. || If we would vex them that hate us, we must not reproach our adversary for an effeminate and debauched person, or one of a boorish and filthy conversation ; but instead of throwing this dirt, we ourselves must be remarkable for a steady virtue and a well-governed behavior ; we must speak the truth, and carry ourselves civilly and justly towards all who hold any correspondence or maintain any commerce with us. But if at any time a man is so transported by passion as to utter any bitter words, he must take heed that he himself be not

\* Aeschyl. Septem, 593 See note on page 202. (G.)

† Fragment 253.

‡ Fals. Legat. p. 406, 4.

|| Eurip. Orest. 251.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:  
**Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature**  
which can be purchased on our Website :  
[www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :  
**Brainfly Inc.**  
**5100 Garfield Ave. #46**  
**Sacramento CA 95841-3839**

## **TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:**

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website ([www.Brainfly.net](http://www.Brainfly.net)) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

[webcomments@brainfly.net](mailto:webcomments@brainfly.net)