

LACONIC APOPHTHEGMS; OR REMARKABLE SAYINGS
OF THE SPARTANS.

Of Agasicles.

AGASICLES the Spartan king, when one wondered why, since he was a great lover of instruction, he would not admit Philophanes the Sophist, freely said, I ought to be their scholar whose son I am. And to one enquiring how a governor should be secure without guards, he replied, If he rules his subjects as fathers do their sons.

Of Agesilaus the Great.

Agesilaus the Great, being once chosen steward of a feast, and asked by the butler how much wine he allowed every guest, returned: If you have a great deal provided, as much as every one calls for; if but a little, give them all an equal share. When he saw a malefactor resolutely endure his torments, How great a rascal is this fellow, he cried out, that uses patience, bravery, and courage, in such an impious and dishonest case! To one commending an orator for his skill in amplifying petty matters he said, I don't think that shoemaker a good workman that makes a great shoe for a little foot. When one in discourse said to him, Sir, you have assented to such a thing already, and repeated it very often, he replied, Yes, if it is right; but if not, I said so indeed but never assented. And the other rejoining, But, sir, a king is obliged to perform whatever he hath granted by his nod; * No more, he returned, than

* II. I. 527.

those that petition him are bound to make none but good and just requests, and to consider all circumstances of time and what befits a king. When he heard any praise or censure, he thought it as necessary to enquire into the character of those that spake as of those of whom they spake. While he was a boy, at a certain solemnity of naked dancing, the person that ordered that affair put him in a dishonorable place; and he, though already declared king, endured it, saying, I'll show that it is not the places that grace men, but men the places. To a physician prescribing him a nice and tedious course of physic, he said, By Castor and Pollux, unless I am destined to live at any rate, I surely shall not if I take all this. Whilst he stood by the altar of Minerva Chalcioecus sacrificing an ox, a louse bit him. At this he never blushed, but cracked him before the whole company, adding these words, By all the Gods, it is pleasant to kill a plotter at the very altar. Another time seeing a boy pull a mouse by the tail out of his hole, and the mouse turn and bite the boy's fingers and so escape; he bade his companions take notice of it, saying, If so little a creature will oppose injurious violence, what think ye that men ought to do?

Being eager for war against the Persians to free the Asiatic Greeks, he consulted the oracle of Jupiter at Dodona; and that telling him to go on as he designed, he brought the answer to the Ephors, upon which they ordered him to go to Delphi and put the same question. He went, and put it in this form: Apollo, are you of the same mind with your father? And the oracle agreeing, he was chosen general and the war began. Now Tissaphernes, at first being afraid of Agesilaus, came to articles, and agreed that the Greek cities should be free and left to their own laws; but afterward procuring a great army from the king, he declared war against him unless he should presently leave Asia. Glad of this treachery of Tissaphernes, he marched

as if his design was to make an inroad upon Caria ; but when Tissaphernes had brought his troops thither, he turned upon Phrygia, and took a great many cities and abundance of rich spoil, saying to his friend : To break one's promise is indeed impious ; but to outwit an enemy is not only just and glorious, but profitable and sweet. Being inferior to the enemy in horse, he retreated to Ephesus, and ordered all the wealthy to provide each a man and horse, which should excuse them from personal service in his wars. By which means, in the room of rich cowards, he was soon furnished with stout men and able horses ; and this he said he did in imitation of Agamemnon, who agreed for a serviceable mare to discharge a wealthy coward. When he ordered the captives to be sold naked and the chapmen came, a thousand bid money for the clothes, but all derided the bodies of the men, which were tender and white by reason of their delicate breeding, as useless and worth nothing. He said to his soldiers, Look, those are the things for which ye fight, and these are the things with whom ye fight. Having beaten Tissaphernes in Lydia and killed many of his men, he wasted the territories of the king ; and the king sending money and desiring a peace, Agesilaus replied : To grant peace is in the power only of the commonwealth. I delight to enrich my soldiers rather than myself, and think it agreeable to the honor of the Greeks not to receive gifts from their enemies but to take spoils.

Megabates the son of Spithridates, a very pretty boy, who thought himself very well beloved, coming to him to offer a kiss and an embrace, he turned away his head. But when the boy had not appeared a long time, Agesilaus enquired after him ; and his friends replied, that it was his own fault, since he derided the kiss of the pretty boy, and the youth was afraid to come again. Agesilaus, standing silent and musing a pretty while, said : Well, I will use no

persuasions, for methinks I had rather conquer such desires than take the most popular city of my enemies ; for it is better to preserve our own than rob others of their liberty. In all things else he was very exact, and a strict observer of the law ; but in his friends' concerns he thought that to be too scrupulous was a bare pretence to cloak unwillingness to use his interest. And agreeable to this, there is extant a small note of his, interceding for a friend to one Idrieus a Carian : If Nicias is not guilty, discharge him ; if he is, discharge him for my sake ; but by all means pray let him be discharged. This was his usual humor in his friends' concerns, yet sometimes profit and convenience was preferred ; for once breaking up his camp in disorder, and leaving one that he loved behind him sick, when he begged and beseeched him with tears to have compassion, he turned and said, How hard it is to be pitiful and wise at once ! His diet was the same with that of his attendants ; he never fed to satisfy, nor drank himself drunk ; he used sleep not as a master, but as a servant to his affairs ; and was so fitted to endure heat or cold, that he alone was undisturbed at the change of seasons. He lodged amongst his soldiers, and his bed was as mean as any ; and this he had always in his mouth : It befits a governor to excel private men not in delicacy and softness, but in bravery and courage. And therefore when one asked him what good Lycurgus's laws had brought to Sparta, he replied, Contempt of pleasure. And to one that wondered at his and the other Lacedaemonians' mean fare and poor attire, he said, From this course of life, sir, we reap liberty. And to one advising him to indulge more, saying, Chance is uncertain, and you may never have the opportunity again, he replied, I accustom myself so that, let whatever change happen, I shall need no change. When he was grown old, he continued the same course ; and to one asking him why at his age in very cold weather he would not wear a coat, he replied, that

the youth may imitate, having the old men and governors for example.

The Thasians, when he marched through their country, presented him with corn, geese, sweetmeats, honey-cakes, and all sorts of delicacies, both of meat and drink ; he accepted the corn, but commanded them to carry back the rest, as useless and unprofitable to him. But they importunately pressing him to take all, he ordered them to be given to the Helots ; and when some asked the reason, he replied, They that profess bravery ought not to meddle with such delicacies ; and whatever takes with slaves cannot be agreeable to the free. Another time the Thasians, after considerable benefits received, made him a God and dedicated temples to his honor, and sent an embassy to compliment him on that occasion. When he had read over the honors the ambassadors had brought him, Well, said he, and can your country make men Gods ? And they affirming, Go to, he rejoined, make yourselves all Gods first ; and when that is done, I'll believe you can make me one. The Greeks in Asia decreeing him statues, he wrote thus to them : Let there be no representation of me, either painted, founded, or engraved. In Asia, seeing a house roofed with square beams, he asked the master whether trees in their country were grown square. And he replying, No, but round ; What then, said he, if they grew square, would you make them round ? Being asked how far Sparta's bounds extended, shaking a spear he replied, As far as this will reach. And to another enquiring why Sparta was without walls, he showed the citizens in arms, saying, Look, these are the walls of Sparta. And to another that put the same question he replied, Cities should be walled not with stones and timber, but with the courage of the inhabitants ; and his friends he advised to strive to be rich not in money, but in bravery and virtue. When he would have his soldiers do any thing quickly, he before them all put the

first hand to it ; he was proud that he wrought as much as any, and valued himself more upon ruling his own desires than upon being king. When one saw a lame Spartan marching to the war, and endeavored to procure a horse for him, How, said he, don't you know that war needs those that will stay, not those that will fly ? Being asked how he got this great reputation, he replied, By contemning death. And another time, one enquiring why the Spartans used pipes and music when they fought, he said, When all move in measure, it may be known who is brave and who a coward. When he heard one magnifying the king of Persia's happiness, who was but young, Yes, said he, Priam himself was not unhappy at that age.

When he had conquered a great part of Asia, he designed to march against the King himself, to break his quiet and hinder him from corrupting the popular men amongst the Greeks ; but being recalled by the Ephors to oppose the designs which the other Greek states, bought with the King's gold, were forming against Sparta, he said, A good ruler should be governed by the laws, — and sailed away from Asia, leaving the Greeks there extremely sorry at his departure. And because the stamp of the Persian money was an archer, he said, when he broke up his camp, that he was driven out of Asia by thirty thousand of the King's archers. For so many pieces of gold being carried to Thebes and Athens by Timocrates, and distributed amongst the popular men, the people were excited to war upon the Spartans. And this epistle he sent to the Ephors : —

AGESILAUS to the EPHORS, Greeting.

We have subdued a great part of Asia, driven out the barbarians, and furnished Ionia with arms. But since you command me back, I follow, nay almost come before this epistle ; for I am not governor for myself, but for the

commonwealth. And then a king truly rules according to justice, when he is governed by the laws, the Ephors, or others that are in authority in the commonwealth.

Passing the Hellespont, he marched through Thrace, but made no applications to any of the barbarians, only sending to know whether he marched through the country of an enemy or a friend. All the others received him as friends and guided him in his march; only the Troadians (of whom, as story says, even Xerxes bought his passage) demanded of Agesilaus a hundred talents of silver and as many women. But he scoffingly replied, Why then do not you come presently to receive what you demand? And leading on his army, he fought them; and having destroyed a considerable number, he marched through. To the king of Macedon he sent the same question; and he replying that he would consider of it. Let him consider, saith he, and we will be marching on. Upon which the king, surprised at his daring temper and afraid of his force, admitted him as a friend. The Thessalians having assisted his enemies, he wasted their country, and sent Xenocles and Scythes to Larissa in order to make a treaty. These being seized and detained, all others stomached it extremely, and were of opinion that Agesilaus should besiege and storm Larissa. But he replying that he would not give either of their lives for all Thessaly, he had them delivered upon articles. Hearing of a battle fought near Corinth, in which very few of the Spartans, but many of the Corinthians, Athenians, and their allies were slain, he did not appear joyful, or puffed up with his victory, but fetching a deep sigh cried out, Unhappy Greece, that hath destroyed herself men enough to have conquered all the barbarians! The Pharsalians pressing upon him and distressing his forces with five hundred horse, he charged them, and after the rout raised a trophy at the foot of

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