

Plutarch's Morals

Laconic apophthegms

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Lycurgus demonstrating the benefits of education (1660-62) Caesar van Everdingen
Stedelijk Museum, Alkmaar



It is a service to our Republic to publish a book that can force ambitious young men, before they mount the platform of the county conventions, to read the "Laconic Apothegms" and the "Apothegms of Great Commanders." If we could keep the secret, and communicate it only to a few chosen aspirants, we might confide that, by this noble infiltration, they would easily carry the victory over all competitors. But, as it was the desire of these old patriots to fill with their majestic spirit all Sparta or Rome, and not a few leaders only, we hasten to offer them to the American people.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson¹

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;² No more, he returned, than 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 Chalchioecus 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

¹ [Introduction to *Plutarch's Morals*, *ibid.* vol I, pp. xxiii-xxiv. Full text in the same series.]

² *Il. I.* 527



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 Narthacium. And this victory pleased him more than all the others he had won, because with his single cavalry he had beaten those that vaunted themselves as the best horsemen in the world. Diphridas bringing him commands immediately upon his march to make an inroad into Boeotia, — though he designed the same



thing in a short time, when he should be better prepared, — he obeyed, and sending for twenty thousand men from the camp at Corinth, marched into Boeotia; and at Coronea joining battle with the Thebans, Athenians, Argives, Corinthians, and Locrians altogether, he won, though desperately wounded himself, the greatest battle (as Xenophon affirms) that was fought in his age. And yet when he returned, after so much glory and so many victories, he made no alteration in his course of life.

When he saw some of the citizens think themselves brave fellows for breeding horses for the race, he persuaded his sister Cunisca to get into a chariot and put in for the prize at the Olympian games, intending by that way to convince the Greeks that it was no argument of bravery, but of wealth and profuse expense. Having Xenophon the philosopher at his house, and treating him with great consideration, he urged him to send for his children and have them brought up in Sparta, where they might learn the most excellent of arts, how to govern and how to be governed. And at another time being asked by what means the Lacedaemonians flourished above others, Because, says he, they are more studious than others how to rule and how to obey. When Lysander was dead, he found a strong faction, which Lysander upon his return from Asia had associated against him, and was very eager to show the people what manner of citizen Lysander was whilst he lived. And finding among Lysander's papers an oration composed by Cleon of Halicarnassus, about new designs and changing the government, which Lysander was to speak to the people, he resolved to publish it. But when an old politician, perusing the discourse and fearing its effect upon the people, advised him not to dig up Lysander but rather bury the speech with him, he followed the advice, and made no more of it. Those of the contrary faction he did not openly molest, but by cunning contrivance he got some of them into office, and then showed them to be rascals when in power. And then defending them or getting their pardon when accused, he brought them over to his own side, so that he had no enemy at last. To one desiring him to write to his acquaintance in Asia, that he might have justice done him, he replied, My acquaintance will do thee justice, though I do not write. One showed him the wall of a city strongly built and well fortified, and asked him whether he did not think it a fine thing. Yes, by heaven, he replied, for women, but not for men to live in. To a Megarian talking great things of his city he said, Youth, thy words want an army.

What he saw others admire he seemed not so much as to know; and when Callipides, a man famous among the Greeks for acting tragedies and caressed by all, met him and saluted him, and then impudently intruding amongst his companions showed himself, supposing that Agesilaus would take notice of him and begin some familiar discourse, and at last asked, Doth not your majesty know me? Have not you heard who I am? — he looked upon him and said, Art not thou Callipides, the Merry Andrew?³ (For that is the name the Lacedaemonians give an actor.) Being once desired to hear a man imitate a

³ Δεικηλίκτας, the Spartan word for the more common ὑποκριτής. (G.)



nightingale, he refused, saying, I have often heard the bird itself. Menecrates the physician, for his good success in some desperate diseases, was called Jupiter; and priding himself in the name, he presumed to write to Agesilaus thus: Menecrates Jupiter to King Agesilaus wisheth good health. Reading no more, he presently wrote back: King Agesilaus to Menecrates wisheth a sound mind.

When Conon and Pharnabazus with the king's navy were masters of the sea and wasted the coasts of Laconia, and Athens — Pharnabazus defraying the charges — was surrounded with a wall, the Lacedaemonians made a peace with the Persian; and sending Antalcidas, one of their citizens, to Tiribazus, they agreed to deliver into the King's hands all the Asiatic Greeks, for whose freedom Agesilaus fought. Upon which account Agesilaus was not at all blemished by this dishonorable treaty; for Antalcidas was his enemy, and clapped up a peace on purpose because the war raised Agesilaus and got him glory. When one said, The Lacedaemonians are becoming medized, he replied, Rather the Medes are becoming laconized. And being asked which was the better virtue, courage or justice, he said: Courage would be good for nothing, if there were no justice; and if all men were just, there would be no need of courage. The Asians being wont to style the king of Persia The Great; How, said he, is he greater than I am, if he is not more just or temperate? And he used to say, The Greeks in Asia are mean-spirited freemen, but stout slaves. And being asked how one might get the greatest reputation amongst men, he replied, By speaking the best and doing the bravest things. And he had this saying commonly in his mouth, A commander should be daring against his enemy, and kind and good-natured to his own soldiers. When one asked him what boys should learn; That, said he, which they shall use when men. When he sat judge upon a cause, the accuser spake floridly and well; but the defendant meanly and ever now and then repeated these words, Agesilaus, a king should assist the laws. What, said he, dost thou think, if any one dug down thy house or took away thy coat, a mason or a weaver would assist thee?

A letter being brought him from the king of Persia by a Persian that came with Callias the Spartan, after the peace was concluded, offering him friendship and kind entertainment, he would not receive it, bidding the messenger tell the king that there was no need to send private letters to him; for if he was a friend to Sparta and meant well to Greece, he would do his best to be his friend; but if he designed upon their liberty, he might know that, though he received a thousand letters from him, he would be his enemy. He was very fond of his children; and it is reported that once toying with them he got astride upon a reed as upon a horse, and rode about the room; and being seen by one of his friends, he desired him not to speak of it till he had children of his own. When he had fought often with the Thebans and was wounded in the battle, Antalcidas, as it is reported, said to him: Indeed, sir, you have received a very fair reward for instructing the Thebans, whom, when ignorant and unwilling, you have forced to learn the art of war. For story tells us, the Lacedaemonians at that time by frequent skirmishes had made the Thebans better soldiers than themselves. And therefore Lycurgus, the old



lawgiver, forbade them to fight often with the same nation, lest the enemy should learn their discipline. When he understood that the allies took it very ill, that in their frequent expeditions they, being great in number, followed the Spartans that were but few; designing to show their mistake about the number, he ordered all the allies to sit down in one body and the Lacedaemonians in another by themselves. Then he made proclamation that all the potters should rise first; and when they stood up, the braziers next; then the carpenters, next the masons, and so all other traders in order. Now almost all the allies stood up and not one of the Spartans, for their law forbids them all mechanical employments. Then said Agesilaus, with a smile, See now how many soldiers we provide more than you. When at the battle of Leuctra many of the Spartans fled and upon that account were obnoxious to the laws, the Ephors, seeing the city had but few men and stood in great need of soldiers at that time, would free them from the infamy and yet still keep the laws in force. Upon that account they put the power of making laws into the hands of Agesilaus; and he coming into the assembly said, I will make no new laws, nor will I add any thing to those you already have, nor take therefrom, nor change them in any wise; but I will order that the laws you already have be in force from to-morrow.

Epaminondas rushing on with a torrent and tide of force, and the Thebans and their allies being puffed up with this victory, though he had but an inconsiderable number, Agesilaus repulsed them from the city and forced them to retreat. In the battle at Mantinea, he advised the Spartans to neglect the others and fight Epaminondas only, saying: The wise alone is the stout man, and the cause of victory; and therefore if we take him off, we shall quickly have the rest; for they are fools and worth nothing. And it happened accordingly; for Epaminondas having the better of the day and the Spartans being routed, as he turned about and encouraged his soldiers to pursue, a Lacedaemonian gave him his death-wound. He falling, the Spartans that fled with Agesilaus rallied and turned the victory; the Thebans appearing to have much the worse, and the Spartans the better of the day. When Sparta had a great many hired soldiers in pay, and wanted money to carry on the war, Agesilaus, upon the king of Egypt's desire, went to serve him for money. But the meanness of his habit brought him into contempt with the people of that country; for they, according to their bad notions of princes, expected that the king of Sparta should appear like the Persian, gaudily attired. But in a little time he sufficiently convinced them that majesty and glory were to be gotten by prudence and courage. When he found his men discouraged at the number of the enemy (for they were 200,000) and their own fewness, just before the engagement, without any man's privity, he contrived how to encourage them: in the hollow of his left hand he wrote victory, and taking the liver from the priest, he put it into that hand, and held it a pretty while, pretending he was in doubt and perplexity at some appearance, till the characters were imprinted on the flesh; and then he showed it to the soldiers, telling them the Gods gave certain signs of victory by these characters. Upon which, thinking they had sure evidence of good success, they marched resolutely to the battle. When



the enemy much exceeded them in number and were making an entrenchment round his camp, and Nectabius, whom then he assisted, urged him to fight; I would not, said he, hinder our enemies from making their number as small as ours. And when the trench was almost drawn round, ordering his army to the space between, and so fighting upon equal terms, with those few soldiers he had he routed and killed abundance of the enemy, and sent home a great treasure. Dying on his voyage from Egypt, he commanded his attendants not to make any figure or representation of his body; For, said he, if I have done any brave action, that will preserve my memory; if not, neither will a thousand statues, the works of base mechanics.

Of Agesipolis the Son of Cleombrotus

Agesipolis the son of Cleombrotus, when one told him that Philip had razed Olynthus in a few days, said, Well, but he is not able to build such another in twice that time. To one saying that whilst he was king he himself was an hostage with some other youths, and not their wives or children, he replied, Very good, for it is fit we ourselves should suffer for our own faults. When he designed to send for some whelps from home, and one said, Sir, none must be carried out of the country, he replied, Nor men heretofore, but now they may.

Of Agesipolis the Son of Pausanias

Agesipolis the son of Pausanias, when the Athenians appealed to the Megarians as arbitrators of the differences between them, said, It is a shame, Athenians, that those who were once the lords of all Greece should understand what is right and just less than the people of Megara.

Of Agis the Son of Archidamus

Agis the son of Archidamus, when the Ephors gave orders, Go take the youth, and follow this man into his own country, and he shall guide thee to the very citadel, said: How can it be prudent to trust so many youths to the fidelity of him who betrays his own country? Being asked what art was chiefly learned in Sparta, To know, he replied, how to govern and to be governed. He used to say, The Spartans do not enquire how many the enemy are, but where they are. At Mantinea, being advised not to fight the enemy, who exceeded him in number, he said, It is necessary for him to fight a great many that would rule a great many. To one enquiring how many the Spartans were, Enough, he replied, to keep rascals at a distance. Marching by the walls of Corinth, and perceiving them to be high and strong and stretching out to a great length, he said, What women live there? To an orator that said speech was the best thing, he rejoined, You then, when you are silent, are worth nothing. When the Argives, after they had been once beaten, faced him more boldly than before; on seeing many of the allies disheartened, he said, Courage, sirs! for when we conquerors shake, what do you think is the condition of the conquered? To an ambassador from the Abderites, after he had ended his long speech, enquiring what answer he should carry to his city, he replied, This: As long as you talked, so long I quietly heard. Some commending the Eleans for exact justice in determining the prizes at the Olympian games, he said, What great wonder is it, that in four years they can be just one day? To some that told him he was envied by the heirs of the other royal family, Well, said



he, their own misfortunes will torment them, and my own and my friends' success besides. When one advised him to give the flying enemy room to run, he said, How shall we fight those that stand to it and resist, if we dare not engage those whom their cowardice makes fly? When one proposed a way to free Greece, well contrived indeed but hard to be brought about, he said, Friend, thy words want an army and a treasure. To one saying, Philip won't let you set foot upon any other part of Greece, he returned, Sir, we have room enough in our own country. An ambassador from Perinthus to Lacedaemon, after a long tedious speech, asking what answer he should carry back to the Perinthians, he said, What but this? — that thou couldst hardly find an end to thy talk, and I kept silent. He went by himself ambassador to Philip; and Philip saying, What! but one? he replied, I am an ambassador but to one. An old man, observing that the ancient laws were neglected and that new evil customs crept in, said to him, when he was now grown old himself, All things here at Sparta are turned topsy-turvy. He replied with a joke: If it is so, it is agreeable to reason; for when I was a boy, I heard my father say that all things were then topsy-turvy; and he heard his father say the same; and it is no wonder if succeeding times are worse than the preceding; but it is a wonder if they happen to be better, or but just as good. Being asked how a man could be always free, he replied, If he contemns death.

Of Agis the Younger

Agis the Younger, when Demades said, The Spartans' swords are so short that our jugglers can easily swallow them, replied, Yet the Spartans can reach their enemies with these swords. A base fellow often asking who was the bravest of the Spartans, he said, He that is most unlike thee.

Of Agis the Last

Agis, the last king of Lacedaemon, being taken and condemned by the Ephors without hearing, as he was led to the gallows, saw one of the officers weeping. Do not weep for me, he said, who, being so unjustly, so barbarously condemned, am in a better condition than my murderers. And having spoken thus, he quietly submitted himself to the halter.

Of Acrotatus

Acrotatus, when his parents commanded him to join in some unjust action, refused for some time; but when they grew importunate, he said: When I was under your power I had no notion of justice, but now you have delivered me to my country and her laws, and to the best of your power have taught me loyalty and justice, I shall endeavor to follow these rather than you. And since you would have me to do that which is best, and since just actions are best for a private man and much more for a governor, I shall do what you would have me, and refuse what you command.

Of Alcamenes the Son of Teleclus

Alcamenes the son of Teleclus, being asked how a ruler might best secure his government, replied, By slighting gain. And to another enquiring why he refused the presents the Messenians made him he said, Because, if I had taken them, I and the laws could never have agreed. When one said that though he had wealth enough he



lived but meanly, he replied, Well, it is a glory for one that hath abundance to live as reason not as appetite directs.

Of Alexandridas

Alexandridas, the son of Leo, said to one that was much concerned at his banishment from the city, Good sir, be not concerned that you must leave the city, but that you have left justice. To one that talked to the Ephors very pertinently but a great deal too much he said, Sir, your discourse is very good, but ill-timed. And when one asked him why they let their Helot slaves cultivate the fields, and did not take care of them themselves, he replied, Because we acquired our land not caring for it but for ourselves. Another saying, Desire of reputation causes abundance of mischief, and those are happy that are free from it; Then, he subjoined, it follows that villains are happy; for do you think that he that commits sacrilege or doth an injury takes any care for credit and reputation? Another asking why in a battle the Spartans venture so boldly into danger, Because, said he, we train ourselves to have a reverential regard for our lives, not, as others do, to tremble for them. Another demanding why the judges took so many days to pass sentence in a capital cause, and why he that was acquitted still remained liable to be brought to trial, he replied: They consult so long, because if they make a mistake in judgment and condemn a man to death, they cannot correct their judgment; and the accused still remains liable, because this provision might enable them to give even a better judgment than before.

Of Anaxander the Son of Eurycrates

Anaxander, the son of Eurycrates, to one asking him why the Spartans laid up no money in the exchequer, replied, that the keepers of it might not be tempted to be knaves.

Of Anaxilas

Anaxilas, when one wondered for what reason the Ephors did not rise up to the king, since the kings made them, said, It is for the same reason for which they are appointed Ephors (or overseers).

Of Androclidas

Androclidas a Spartan, being maimed in his leg, enlisted in the army; and when some refused him because he was maimed, he said, It must not be those that can run away, but those that can stand to it, that must fight the enemy.

Of Antalcidas

Antalcidas, when he was to be initiated in the Samothracian mysteries, and was asked by the priest what great sin he had committed in all his life, replied, If I have committed any, the Gods know it already. To an Athenian that called the Lacedaemonians illiterate he said, True; for we alone have learned no ill from you. Another Athenian saying, We have often beat you back from the Cephissus, he subjoined, But we never repulsed you from the Eurotas. To another demanding how one might please most men, he replied, By speaking what delights, and doing what profits them. A Sophist being about to read him an encomium of Hercules, he said, Why, who has blamed him? To Agesilaus, when he was wounded in a battle by the



Thebans, he said, Sir, you have a fine reward for forcing them to learn the art of war; for, by the many skirmishes Agesilaus had with them, they learned discipline and became good soldiers. He said, The youth are the walls of Sparta, and the points of their spears its bounds. To one enquiring why the Lacedaemonians fought with such short swords he replied, We come up close to our enemies.

Of Antiochus

Antiochus, one of the Ephors, when he heard Philip had bestowed some lands on the Messenians, said, Well, but hath Philip also given them forces, that they may be able to defend his gift?

Of Aregeus

Aregeus, when some praised not their own but other men's wives, said: Faith, about virtuous women there should be no common talk; and what beauty they have none but their own husbands should understand. As he was walking through Selinus, a city of Sicily, he saw this epitaph upon a tomb, —

Those that extinguished the tyrannic flame,
Surprised by war and hasty fate,
Though they are still alive in lasting fame,
Lie buried near Selinus' gate; —

and said: You died deservedly for quenching it when already in a flame; for you should have hindered it from coming to a blaze.

Of Ariston

Ariston, when one commended the saying of Cleomenes, — who, being asked what a good king should do, replied, Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies, — said: How much better is it, sir, to do good to our friends, and make our enemies our friends! Though upon all hands it is agreed Socrates spoke this first, yet he hath the credit of it too. To one asking how many the Spartans were in number he replied, Enough to chase our enemies. An Athenian making a funeral oration in praise of those that fell by the hand of the Lacedaemonians, he said, What brave fellows then were ours, that conquered these!

Of Archidamidas

Archidamidas said to one commending Charilas for being kind to all alike, How can he deserve commendation, that is gentle to the wicked and unjust? When one was angry with Hecataeus the Sophist because when admitted to the public entertainment he said nothing, he said, Sir, you seem not to understand that he that knows how to speak knows also when to speak.

Of Archidamus the Son of Zeuxidamus

Archidamus the son of Zeuxidamus, when one asked him who were governors at Sparta, replied, The laws, and the magistrates according to those laws. To one that praised a fiddler and admired his skill he said, How must you prize brave men, when you can give a fiddler such a commendation! When one recommending a musician to him said, This man plays well upon the harp, he returned, And we have this man who makes broth well; — as if it were no more to raise pleasure and tickle with a



sound than with meats and broths. To one that promised to make his wine sweet he said, To what purpose? for we shall spend the more, and ruin our public mess. When he besieged Corinth, seeing some hares started under the very walls, he said to his soldiers, Our enemies may be easily surprised. Two choosing him arbitrator, he brought them both into the temple of Minerva of the Brazen House, and made them swear to stand to his determination; and when they had both sworn, he said, I determine that you shall not go out of this temple, till you have ended all the differences between you. Dionysius the Sicilian tyrant sending his daughters some very rich apparel, he refused it, saying, When this is on, I am afraid they will look ugly and deformed. When he saw his son rashly engaging the Athenians, he said, Pray get more strength or less spirit.

Of Archidamus the Son of Agesilaus

Archidamus the son of Agesilaus, when Philip after the battle at Chaeronea sent him a haughty letter, returned this answer, If you measure your shadow, you will find it no greater than before the victory. And being asked how much land the Spartans possessed, he said, As much as their spears reach. Periander, a physician, being well skilled in his profession and of good credit, but writing very bad poems, he said to him, Why, Periander, instead of a good physician are you eager to be called a bad poet? In the war with Philip, when some advised him to fight at some distance from his own country, he replied, Let us not mind that, but whether we shall fight bravely and beat our enemies. To some who commended him for routing the Arcadians he said, It had been better if we had been too hard for them in policy rather than in strength. When he invaded Arcadia, understanding that the Eleans were ready to oppose him, he wrote thus: Archidamus to the Eleans; It is good to be quiet. The allies in the Peloponnesian war consulting what treasure would be sufficient to carry on the war, and desiring to set the tax, he said, War cannot be put on a certain allowance. As soon as ever he saw a dart shot out of an engine brought from Sicily, he cried out, Good God! true valor is gone for ever. When the Greeks refused to obey him or to stand to those conditions which he had made with Antigonus and Craterus the Macedonians, but would be free, alleging that the Spartans would prove more rigorous lords than the Macedonians, he said: A sheep always uses the same voice, but a man various and many, till he hath perfected his designs.

Of Astykratidas

Astykratidas, after Agis the king was beaten by Antigonus at Megalopolis, was asked, What will you Spartans do? will you serve the Macedonians? He replied, Why so, can Antipater hinder us from dying in the defence of Sparta?

Of Bias

Bias being surprised by an ambush that Iphicrates the Athenian general had laid, and his soldiers demanding what must be done, he replied, You must provide for your own safety, and I must fight manfully and die.



Of Brasidas

Brasidas catching a mouse amongst some dry figs, the mouse bit him; upon which he let her go, and said to his companions, There is nothing so little but it may preserve itself, if it dares resist the invaders. In a battle, being shot through the shield into the body, he drew the dart out and with it killed the enemy. And one asking how his wound came, he replied, By the treachery of my shield. As he was leading forth his army, he wrote to the Ephors, I will accomplish what I wish in this war, or I will die for it. Being killed as he fought to free the Greeks in Thrace, the ambassadors that were sent to Sparta to condole his loss made a visit to his mother Argileonis. And the first question she asked was, whether Brasidas died bravely. And the Thracians extolling him and saying there was no such man in the world; You mistake, sir, said she, it is true, Brasidas was a good man, but Sparta can show many who are better.

Of Damonidas

Damonidas, when the master of the festival set him in the lowest place in the choral dance, said, Well, sir, you have found a way to make this place, which was infamous before, noble and honorable.

Of Damis

Damis to some letters that were sent to him by Alexander, intimating that he should vote Alexander a God, returned this answer: We are content that Alexander (if he will) be called a God.

Of Damindas

Damindas, when Philip invaded Peloponnesus, and one said that the Spartans would suffer great mischiefs unless they accepted his proposals, said, Thou woman-man, what misery can we suffer that despise death?

Of Dercyllidas

Dercyllidas, being sent ambassador to Pyrrhus, — who was then with his army on the borders of Sparta, and required them either to receive their king Cleonymus, or he would make them know they were no better than other men, — replied, If he is a God, we do not fear him, for we have committed no fault; if a man, we are as good as he.

Of Demaratus

Demaratus, — when Orontes talked very roughly to him, and one said, Demaratus, Orontes uses you very roughly, — replied, I have no reason to be angry, for those that speak to please do the mischief, not those that talk out of malice. To one enquiring why they disgrace those that lose their shields in a battle and not those that lose their head-pieces or breastplates, he answered, Because these serve for their private safety only, but their shield for the common defence and strength of the whole army. Hearing one play upon the harp, he said, The man seems to play the fool well. In a certain assembly, when he was asked whether he held his tongue because he was a fool or for want of words, he replied, A fool cannot hold his tongue. When one asked him why being king he fled Sparta, he answered, Because the laws rule there. A Per-



sian having by many presents enticed the boy that he loved from him, and saying, Spartan, I have caught your love; No, faith, he answered, but you have bought him. One having revolted from the king of Persia, and by Demaratus's persuasion returning again to his obedience, and the king designing his death, Demaratus said: It is dishonorable, O king, whilst he was an enemy not to be able to punish him for his revolt, and to kill him now he is a friend. To a parasite of the king that often jeered him about his exile he said: Sir, I will not fight you, for you have lost your post in life.⁴

Of Emprepes

Emprepes, one of the Ephors, cut out two of the nine strings of Phrynis the musician's harp with a hatchet, saying, Do not abuse music.

Of Epänetus

Epänetus said that liars were the cause of all villainies and injustice in the world.

Of Euboidas

Euboidas, hearing some commend another man's wife, disliked it and said, Strangers who are not of the house should never speak of the manner of any woman.

Of Eudamidas the Son of Archidamus

Eudamidas, the son of Archidamus and brother of Agis, seeing Xenocrates, now grown old, philosophizing in the Academy with some of his acquaintance, asked what old man that was. And it being answered, He is a wise man, and one of those that seek after virtue; he replied, When will he use it, if he is seeking of it now? Another time, when he heard a philosopher discoursing that none but a learned man could be a good general, he said, Indeed the discourse is admirable, but he that makes it is of no credit in this matter, for he hath never heard a trumpet sound. Just as Xenocrates had finished his discourse, Eudamidas came into his school, and when one of his companions said, As soon as we came he ended; So he ought, he replied, if he had spoken all that was needful on the subject. And the other saying, Yet it were a pleasant thing to hear him, he replied, If we visited one that had supped already, should we desire him to sit down again? When one asked him why, when all the citizens voted a war with the Macedonians, he appeared for peace, he answered, Because I have no mind to convince them of their mistake. And when another encouraged them to this war, mentioning their various victories over the Persians, he said, Sir, you appear not to see that this would be as absurd as to set upon fifty wolves because you have beaten a thousand sheep. A musician playing very well, some asked him what manner of man he was in his opinion, and he answered, A great seducer in a small matter. Hearing one commending Athens, he said, Who could have reason to praise that city which no man ever loved because he had been made better in it? An Argive saying that the Spartans being taken from their own customs grew worse by travel, he replied, But you, when you come into Sparta, do not return worse, but much better. When Alexander ordered by public proclamation in the Olympic games, that all exiles whatever, except the Thebans, had free liberty to re-

⁴ Following Wytttenbach's emendation for "I have lost my post." (G.)



turn to their own country, Eudamidas said: This is a woful proclamation to you Thebans, but yet honorable; for of all the Grecians Alexander fears only you. Being asked why before a battle they sacrificed to the Muses, he replied, That our brave actions may be worthily recorded.

Of Eurycratidas the Son of Anaxandridas

Eurycratidas the son of Anaxandridas, when one asked him why the Ephor sat every day to determine causes about contracts, replied, That we may learn to keep our word even with our enemies.

Of Zeuxidamus

Zeuxidamus, when one asked him why they did not set down all their laws concerning bravery and courage in writing and let the young men read them, answered, Because they should be accustomed to mind valiant actions, rather than books and writings. An Aetolian saying that war was better than peace for those that would be brave men, No, faith, said he, but death is better than life.

Of Herondas

Herondas, when one at Athens was condemned for idleness, being informed of it desired one to show him the man that had been convicted of so gentlemanly an offence.

Of Thearidas

Thearidas whetting his sword, being asked, Is it sharp, Thearidas? replied, Yes, sharper than a slander.

Of Themistias

Themistias the prophet foretold to King Leonidas his own and his soldiers' destruction at Thermopylae, and being commanded by Leonidas to return to Sparta, under pretence of informing the state how affairs stood, but really that he might not perish with the rest, he refused, saying, I was sent as a soldier, not as a courier to carry news.

Of Theopompus

Theopompus, when one asked him how a monarch may be safe, replied, If he will give his friends just freedom to speak the truth, and to the best of his power not allow his subjects to be oppressed. To a guest of his that said, In my own country I am called a lover of the Spartans, he replied, It would be more honorable for you to be called a lover of your citizens than a lover of the Spartans. An ambassador from Elis saying that his city sent him because he was the only man amongst them that admired and followed the Spartan way of living, Theopompus asked, And pray, sir, which way is best, yours or the other citizens? And the ambassador replying, Mine; he subjoined, How then can that city stand, in which amongst so many inhabitants there is but one good man? When one said that Sparta was preserved because the kings knew how to govern; No, he replied, but because the citizens know how to be governed. The Pylions voting him greater honors, he wrote to them thus, Moderate honors time augments, but it defaces the immoderate.



Of Thorycion

Thorycion on his return from Delphi, seeing Philip's army possessed of the narrow passage at the Isthmus, said, Peloponnesus hath very bad porters in you Corinthians.

Of Thectamenes

Thectamenes, when the Ephors condemned him to die, went away smiling; and one of the company asked him whether he despised the judicial proceedings of Sparta. No, said he, but I am glad that I am ordered to pay a fine which I can pay out of my own stock, without being beholden to any man or taking up money upon interest.

Of Hippodamus

Hippodamus, when Agis was joined in command with Archidamus, being sent with Agis to Sparta to look after affairs there, said, But shall I not die a more glorious death fighting valiantly in defence of Sparta? He was above fourscore years of age, yet he put on his armor, fought on the right hand of the king, and died bravely.

Of Hippocratidas

Hippocratidas, when the governor of Caria sent him word that he had a Spartan in his hands who concealed a conspiracy that he was privy to, and asked how he should deal with him, returned this answer: If you have done him any great kindness, kill him; if not, banish him as a base fellow, too mean-spirited to be good. A youth whom his lover followed meeting him and blushing at the encounter, he said: You should keep such company that, whoever sees you, you will have no reason to change color.

Of Callicratidas

Callicratidas the admiral, when some of Lysander's friends desired him to permit them to kill one of the enemy, and offered fifty talents for the favor, though he wanted money extremely to buy provision for his soldiers, refused; and when Cleander urged him, and said, Sir, I would have taken the money if I were you, he replied, So would I, were I Cleander. When he came to Sardis to Cyrus the Younger, who was then an ally of the Lacedaemonians, about a sum of money to equip his navy, on the first day he ordered his officers to tell Cyrus that he desired audience; but being told that he was drinking, Well, said he, I shall stay till he hath done. But understanding that he could not be admitted that day, he presently left the court, and thereupon was thought a rude and uncivil fellow. On the next day, when he received the same answer and could not be admitted, he said, I must not be so eager for money as to do any thing unbecoming Sparta. And presently he returned to Ephesus, cursing those who had first endured the insolence of the barbarians, and had taught them to rely upon their wealth and abuse others; and he swore to his companions that as soon as ever he came to Sparta, he would do all that lay in his power to reconcile the Greek states, that they might be more dreadful to the barbarians, and not forced to seek assistance from them to ruin one another. Being asked what manner of men the Ionians were, he replied, Bad freemen, but good slaves. When Cyrus sent his soldiers their pay, and some particular presents to himself, he received the pay, but sent back the presents, saying that there was no need of any private friendship between



them, for the common league with the Lacedaemonians included him. Designing to engage near Arginusae, when Hermon the pilot said, It is advisable to tack about, for the Athenians exceed us in number; he exclaimed: What then! it is base and dishonorable to Sparta to fly, but to stand to it and die or conquer is brave and noble. As he was sacrificing before the battle, when he heard the priest presaging that the army would conquer but the captain fall, undauntedly he said: Sparta doth not depend on one man; my country will receive no great loss by my death, but a considerable one by my yielding to the enemy. And ordering Cleander to succeed as admiral, he readily engaged, and died in the battle.

Of Cleombrotus the Son of Pausanias

Cleombrotus, the son of Pausanias, when a friend of his contended with his father which was the best man, said, Sir, my father must be better than you, till you get a son as well as he.

Of Cleomenes the Son of Anaxandridas

Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandridas, was wont to say that Homer was the poet of the Lacedaemonians, Hesiod of the Helots; for one taught the art of war, and the other husbandry. Having made a truce for seven days with the Argives, he watched his opportunity the third night, and perceiving them secure and negligent by reason of the truce, he fell upon them whilst they were asleep, killed some, and took others prisoners. Upon this being upbraided for breach of articles, he said that his oath did not extend to night as well as day, and to hurt a man's enemies any way, both before God and man, was much better than to be just. It happened that he missed taking Argos, in hopes of which he broke his oath; for the women taking the old arms out of the temples defended the city. And afterwards running stark mad, he seized a knife, and ripped himself up from the very ankles to the vital parts, and thus died grinning and laughing. The priest advising him not to march to Argos, — for he would be forced to a dishonorable retreat, — when he came near the city and saw the gates shut and the women upon the walls, he said: What, sir priests, will this be a dishonorable retreat, when, the men being all lost, the women have shut the gates? When some of the Argives railed at him as an impious and forsworn wretch, he said, Well, it is in your power to rail at me, and in mine to mischief you. The Samian ambassadors urging him to make war on the tyrant Polycrates, and making long harangues on that account, he said: The beginning of your speech I don't remember, and therefore I cannot understand the middle, and the last I don't like. A pirate spoiling the country, and when he was taken saying, I had no provision for my soldiers, and therefore went to those who had store and would not give it willingly, to force it from them; Cleomenes said, True villainy goes the shortest way to work. A base fellow railing at him, he said, Well, I think thou railest at everybody, that being employed to defend ourselves, we may have no time to speak of thy baseness.

One of the citizens saying that a good king should be always mild and gracious, True, said he, as long as he doth not make himself contemptible. Being tormented with a long disease, he consulted the priests and expiators, to whom he formerly gave no credit; and when a friend of his wondered at the action, Why dost thou wonder, said he, for I am not the same man I was then; and since I am not the same, I do



not approve the same things. A Sophist discoursing of courage, he laughed exceedingly; and the Sophist saying, Why do you laugh, Cleomenes, when you hear one treat of courage, especially since you are a king? Because, sir, said he, if a swallow should discourse of it, I should laugh; but if an eagle, I should hearken attentively.

When the Argives boasted that they would retrieve their defeat by a new battle, he said, I wonder if the addition of two syllables⁵ has made you braver than you were before. When one railed at him, and said, Thou art luxurious, Cleomenes; Well, he replied, that is better than to be unjust; but thou art covetous, although thou art master of abundance of superfluities. A friend willing to recommend a musician to him, besides other large commendations, said he was the best musician in all Greece. Cleomenes, pointing to one that stood by, said, Faith, sir, that fellow is my best cook. Maeander the Samian tyrant, flying to Sparta upon the invasion of the Persian, discovering what treasure he had brought, and offering Cleomenes as much as he would have, Cleomenes refused, and beside took care that he should not give any of the citizens a farthing; but going to the Ephors, told them that it would be good for Sparta to send that Samian guest of his out of Peloponnesus, lest he should persuade any of the Lacedaemonians to be a knave. And they taking his advice ordered Maeander to be gone that very day. One asking why, since they had beaten the Argives so often, they did not totally destroy them, he replied, That we may have some to exercise our youth. One demanding why the Spartans did not dedicate the spoils of their enemies to the Gods, Because, said he, they are taken from cowards; and such things as are betrayed to us by the cowardice of the possessors are fit neither for our youth to see, nor to be dedicated to the Gods.

Of Cleomenes the Son of Cleombrotus

Cleomenes, the son of Cleombrotus, to one that presented him some game-cocks, and said, Sir, these will die before they run, returned: Pray let me have some of that breed which will kill these, for certainly they are the better of the two.

Of Labotus

Labotus said to one that made a long discourse: Why such great preambles to so small a matter? A speech should be no bigger than the subject.

Of Leotychidas

Leotychidas the First, when one said he was very inconstant, replied, My inconstancy proceeds from the variety of times, and not as yours from innate baseness. And to another asking him what was the best way to secure his present happiness, he answered, Not to trust all to Fortune. And to another enquiring what free-born boys should principally learn, That, said he, which will profit them when they are grown men. And to another asking why the Spartans drink little, he replied, That we may consult concerning others, and not others concerning us.

⁵ That is, changing *μάχεσθαι* (to fight) into *ἀναμάχεσθαι* (to retrieve a defeat). (G.)



Of Leotychidas the Son of Aristo

Leotychidas the son of Aristo, when one told him that Demaratus's sons spoke ill of him, replied, Faith, no wonder, for not one of them can speak well. A serpent twisting about the key of his inmost door, and the priests declaring it a prodigy; I cannot think it so, said he, but it had been one if the key had twisted round the serpent. To Philip, a priest of Orpheus's mysteries, in extreme poverty, saying that those whom he initiated were very happy after death, he said, Why then, you sot, don't you die quickly, and bewail your poverty and misery no more?

Of Leo the Son of Eucratidas

Leo the son of Eucratidas, being asked in what city a man might live with the greatest safety, replied, In that where the inhabitants have neither too much nor too little; where justice is strong and injustice weak. Seeing the racers in the Olympian games very solicitous at starting to get some advantage of one another, he said, How much more careful are these racers to be counted swift than just! To one discoursing of some profitable matters out of due season he said, Sir, you do a very good thing at a very bad time.

Of Leonidas the Son of Anaxandridas

Leonidas, the son of Anaxandridas and brother to Cleomenes, when one said to him, Abating that you are king, you are no better than we, replied, But unless I had been better than you, I had not been king. His wife Gorgo, when he went forth to Thermopylae to fight the Persian, asked him what command he left with her; and he replied, Marry brave men, and bear them brave children. The Ephors saying, You lead but few to Thermopylae; They are many, said he, considering on what design we go. And when they again asked him whether he had any other enterprise in his thought, he replied, I pretend to go to hinder the barbarians' passage, but really to die fighting for the Greeks. When he was at Thermopylae, he said to his soldiers: They report the enemy is at hand, and we lose time; for we must either beat the barbarian or die ourselves. And to another saying, What, the flights of the Persian arrows will darken the very sun, he said, Therefore it will be pleasant for us to fight in the shade. And another saying, What, Leonidas, do you come to fight so great a number with so few? — he returned: If you esteem number, all Greece is not able to match a small part of that army; if courage, this number is sufficient. And to another discoursing after the same manner he said, I have enough, since they are to be killed. When Xerxes wrote to him thus, Sir, you may forbear to fight against the Gods, but may follow my interest and be lord of all Greece, he answered: If you understood wherein consisted the happiness of life, you would not covet other men's; but know that I would rather die for the liberty of Greece than be a monarch over my countrymen. And Xerxes writing to him again thus, Send me thy arms, he returned, Come and take them. When he resolved to fall upon the enemy, and his captains of the war told him he must stay till the forces of the allies had joined him, he said: Do you think all those that intend to fight are not here already? Or do you not understand that those only fight who fear and reverence their kings? And he ordered his soldiers so to dine, as if they were to sup in another world. And being asked why the bravest men prefer an honorable death before an inglorious life, he replied, Because they believe one is the gift of Na-



ture, while the other is peculiarly their own. Being desirous to save the striplings that were with him, and knowing very well that if he dealt openly with them none would accept his kindness, he gave each of them privately letters to carry to the Ephors. He desired likewise to save three of those that were grown men; but they having some notice of his design refused the letters. And one of them said, I came, sir, to be a soldier, and not a courier; and the second, I shall be a better man if here than if away; and the third, I will not be behind these, but the first in the fight.

Of Lochagus

Lochagus the father of Polyænides and Siron, when one told him one of his sons was dead, said, I knew long ago that he must die.

Of Lycurgus the Lawgiver

Lycurgus the lawgiver, designing to reclaim his citizens from their former luxury and bring them to a more sober course of life and make them brave men (for they were then loose and delicate), bred up two whelps of the same litter; one he kept at home, bred him tenderly, and fed him well; but the other he taught to hunt, and used him to the chase. Both these dogs he brought out into the public assembly, and setting down some scraps of meat and letting go a hare at the same time, each of the dogs ran greedily to what they had been accustomed. And the hunter catching the hare, Lycurgus said: See, countrymen, how these two, though of the same litter, by my breeding them are become very different; and that custom and exercise conduces more than Nature to make things brave and excellent. Some say that he did not bring out two whelps of the same kind, but one a house dog and the other a hunter; the former of which (though the baser kind) he had accustomed to the woods, and the other (though more noble) kept lazily at home; and when in public, each of them pursuing his usual delight, he had given a clear evidence that education is of considerable force in raising bad or good inclinations, he said: Therefore, countrymen, our honorable extraction, that idol of the crowd, though from Hercules himself, profits us little, unless we learn and exercise all our life in such famous exploits as made him accounted the most noble and the most glorious in the world.

When he made a division of the land, giving each man an equal portion, it is reported that some while after, in his return from a journey, as he past through the country in harvest time and saw the cocks of wheat all equal and lying promiscuously, he was extremely pleased, and with a smile said to his companions, All Sparta looks like the possession of many loving brothers who have lately divided their estate. Having discharged every man from his debts, he endeavored likewise to divide all movables equally amongst all, that he might have no inequality in his commonwealth. But seeing that the rich men would hardly endure this open and apparent spoil, he cried down all gold and silver coin, and ordered nothing but iron to be current; and rated every man's estate and defined how much it was worth upon exchange for that money. By this means all injustice was banished Sparta; for none would steal, none take bribes, none cheat or rob any man of that which he could not conceal, which none would envy, which could not be used without discovery, or carried into other countries with advantage. Besides, this contrivance freed them from all superfluous arts; for no merchant, Sophist, fortune-teller, or mountebank would live amongst



them; no carver, no contriver ever troubled Sparta; because he cried down all money that was advantageous to them, and permitted none but this iron coin, each piece of which was an Aegina pound in weight, and less than a penny in value.⁶ Designing farther to check all luxury and greediness after wealth, he instituted public meals, where all the citizens were obliged to eat. And when some of his friends demanded what he designed by this institution and why he divided the citizens, when in arms, into small companies, he replied: That they may more easily hear the word of command; and if there are any designs against the state, the conspiracy may join but few; and besides, that there may be an equality in the provision, and that neither in meat nor drink, seats, tables, or any furniture, the rich may be better provided than the poor. When he had by this contrivance made wealth less desirable, it being unfit both for use and show, he said to his familiars, What a brave thing is it, my friends, by our actions to make Plutus appear (as he is indeed) blind! He took care that none should sup at home and afterwards, when they were full of other victuals, come to the public entertainments; for all the rest reproached him that did not feed with them as a glutton and of too delicate a palate for the public provision; and when he was discovered, he was severely punished. And therefore Agis the king, when after a long absence he returned from the camp (the Athenians were beaten in the expedition), willing to sup at home with his wife once, sent a servant for his allowance; the officers refused, and the next day the Ephors fined him for the fault.

The wealthy citizens being offended at these constitutions made a mutiny against him, abused, threw stones, and designed to kill him. Thus pursued, he ran through the market-place towards the temple of Minerva of the Brazen House, and reached it before any of the others; only Alcander pursuing close struck him as he turned about, and beat out one eye. Afterward the commonwealth delivered up this Alcander to his mercy; but he neither inflicted any punishment nor gave him an ill word, but kindly entertained him at his own house, and brought him to be his friend, an admirer of his course of life, and very well affected to all his laws. Yet he built a monument of this sad disaster in the temple of Minerva, naming it *Optiletis*, — for the Dorians in that country call eyes *optiloi*. Being asked why he used no written laws, he replied, Because those that are well instructed are able to suit matters to the present occasion. And another time, when some enquired why he had ordained that the timber which roofed the houses should be wrought with the axe only, and the doors with no other instrument but the saw, he answered: That my citizens might be moderate in every thing which they bring into their houses, and possess nothing which others so much prize and value. And hence it is reported that King Leotychides the First, supping with a friend and seeing the roof curiously arched and richly wrought, asked him whether in that country the trees grew square. And some demanding why he forbade them to war often with the same nation, he replied, Lest being often forced to stand on their defence, they should get experience and be masters of our art. And therefore it was a great fault in Agesilaus, that by his frequent incursions into Boeotia he made the Thebans a match for the Lacedaemonians. And another asking why he exercised the virgins' bodies with racing, wrestling, throwing the bar,

⁶ According to Plutarch, the Spartan iron coin weighed an Aeginetan mina (about 1½ lbs. avoirdupois), and was of the value of four chalci (or ¾ farthings, about 1½ cents). (G.)



and the like, he answered: That the first rooting of the children being strong and firm, their growth might be proportionable; and that the women might have strength to bear and more easily undergo the pains of travail, or, if necessity should require, be able to fight for themselves, their country, and their children. Some being displeased that the virgins went about naked at certain solemnities, and demanding the reason of that custom, he replied: That using the same exercises with men, they might equal them in strength and health of body and in courage and bravery of mind, and be above that mean opinion which the vulgar had of them. And hence goes the story of Gorgo, wife of Leonidas, that when a stranger, a friend of hers, said, You Spartan women alone rule men, she replied, Good reason, for we alone bear men. By ordering that no bachelor should be admitted a spectator of these naked solemnities and fixing some other disgrace on them, he made them all eager to be married and get children; besides, he deprived them of that honor and observance which the young men were bound to pay their elders. And upon that account none can blame what was said to Dercyllidas, though a brave captain; for as he approached, one of the young men refused to rise up and give him place, saying, You have not begotten any to give place to me.

When one asked him why he allowed no dowry to be given with a maid, he answered, that none might be slighted for their poverty or courted for their wealth, but that every one, considering the manners of the maid, might choose for the sake of virtue. And for the same reason he forbade all painting of the face and curiousness in dress and ornament. To one that asked him why he made a law that before such an age neither sex should marry, he answered, that the children might be lusty, being born of persons of full age. And to one wondering why he would not suffer the husband to lie all night with his wife, but commanded them to be most of the day and all the night with their fellows, and creep to their wives cautiously and by stealth, he said: I do it that they may be strong in body, having never been satiated and surfeited with pleasure; that they may be always fresh in love, and their children more strong and lusty. He forbade all perfumes, as nothing but good oil corrupted, and the dyer's art, as a flatterer and enticer of the sense; and he ejected all skilled in ornament and dressing, as those who by their lewd devices corrupt the true arts of decency and living well. At that time the women were so chaste and such strangers to that lightness to which they were afterwards addicted, that adultery was incredible; and there goes a saying of Geradatas, one of the ancient Spartans, who being asked by a stranger what punishment the Spartans appointed for adulterers (for Lycurgus mentioned none), he said, Sir, we have no adulterers amongst us. And he replying, But suppose there should be? Geradatas made the same reply; For how (said he) could there be an adulterer in Sparta, where wealth, delicacy, and all ornaments are disesteemed, and modesty, neatness, and obedience to the governors only are in request? When one desired him to establish a democracy in Sparta, he said, Pray, sir, do you first set up that form in your own family. And to another demanding why he ordered such mean sacrifices he answered, That we may always be able to honor the Gods. He permitted the citizens those exercises only in which the hand is not stretched out; and one demanding his reason, he replied, That none in any labor may be accustomed to be weary. And another enquiring why he ordered that in a war the camp should be often changed, he answered, That we may damage our enemies the more.



Another demanding why he forbade to storm a castle, he said, Lest my brave men should be killed by a woman, a boy, or some man of as mean courage.

When the Thebans asked his advice about the sacrifices and lamentation which they instituted in honor of Leucothea, he gave them this: If you think her a Goddess, do not lament; if a woman, do not sacrifice to her as a Goddess. To some of the citizens enquiring, How shall we avoid the invasions of enemies, he replied, If you are poor, and one covets no more than another. And to others demanding why he did not wall his city he said, That city is not unwallled which is encompassed with men and not brick. The Spartans are curious in their hair, and tell us that Lycurgus said, It makes the handsome more amiable, and the ugly more terrible. He ordered that in a war they should pursue the routed enemy so far as to secure the victory, and then retreat, saying, it was unbecoming the Grecian bravery to butcher those that fled; and beside, it was useful, for their enemies, knowing that they spared all that yielded and cut in pieces the opposers, would easily conclude that it was safer to fly than to stand stoutly to it and resist. When one asked him why he charged his soldiers not to meddle with the spoil of their slain enemies, he replied, Lest while they are eager on their prey they neglect their fighting, but also that they may keep their order and their poverty together.

Of Lysander

Lysander, when Dionysius sent him two gowns, and bade him choose which he would to carry to his daughter, said, She can choose best; and so took both away with him. This Lysander being a very crafty fellow, frequently using subtle tricks and notable deceits, placing all justice and honesty in profit and advantage, would confess that truth indeed was better than a lie, but the worth and dignity of either was to be defined by their usefulness to our affairs. And to some that were bitter upon him for these deceitful practices, as unworthy of Hercules's family, and owing his success to little mean tricks and not plain force and open dealing, he answered with a smile, When the lion's skin cannot prevail, a little of the fox's must be used. And to others that upbraided him for breaking his oaths made at Miletus he said, Boys must be cheated with cockal-bones, and men with oaths. Having surprised the Athenians by an ambush near the Goat Rivers and routed them, and afterwards by famine forced the city to surrender, he wrote to the Ephors, Athens is taken. When the Argives were in a debate with the Lacedaemonians about their confines and seemed to have the better reasons on their side, drawing his sword, he said, He that hath this is the best pleader about confines. Leading his army through Boeotia, and finding that state wavering and not fixed on either party, he sent to know whether he should march through their country with his spears up or down. At an assembly of the states of Greece, when a Megarian talked saucily to him, he said, Sir, your words want a city. The Corinthians revolting, and he approaching to the walls that he saw the Spartans not eager to storm, while at the same time hares were skipping over the trenches of the town; Are not you ashamed (said he) to be afraid of those enemies whose slothfulness suffers even hares to sleep upon their walls? At Samothrace, as he was consulting the oracle, the priests ordered him to confess the greatest crime he had been guilty of in his whole life. What, said he, is this your own, or the God's command? And the priests replying, The God's; said he, Do you withdraw, and I will



tell them, if they make any such demand. A Persian asking him what polity he liked, That, he replied, which assigns stout men and cowards suitable rewards. To one that said, Sir, I always commend you and speak in your behalf, — Well, said he, I have two oxen in the field, and though neither says one word, I know very well which is the laborious and which the lazy. To one that railed at him he said, Speak, sir, let us have it all fast, if thou canst empty thy soul of those wicked thoughts which thou seemest full of. Some time after his death, there happening a difference between the Spartans and their allies, Agesilaus went to Lysander's house to inspect some papers that lay in his custody relating to that matter; and there found an oration composed for Lysander concerning the government, setting forth that it was expedient to set aside the families of the Europrotidae and Agidae, to admit all to an equal claim, and choose their king out of the worthiest men, that the crown might be the reward not of those that shared in the blood of Hercules, but of those who were like him for virtue and courage, that virtue that exalted him into a God. This oration Agesilaus was resolved to publish, to show the Spartans how much they were mistaken in Lysander and to discredit his friends; but they say, Cratidas the president of the Ephors fearing this oration, if published, would prevail upon the people, advised Agesilaus to be quiet, telling him that he should not dig up Lysander, but rather bury that oration with him, being so cunningly contrived, so powerful to persuade. Those that courted his daughters, and when at his death he appeared to be poor forsook them, the Ephors fined, because whilst they thought him rich they caressed him, but scorned him when by his poverty they knew him to be just and honest.

Of Namertes

Namertes being on an embassy, when one of that country told him he was a happy man in having so many friends, asked him if he knew any certain way to try whether a man had many friends or not; and the other being earnest to be told, Namertes replied, Adversity.

Of Nicander

Nicander, when one told him that the Argives spake very ill of him, said, Well, they suffer for speaking ill of good men. And to one that enquired why they wore long hair and long beards, he answered, Because man's natural ornaments are the handsomest and the cheapest. An Athenian saying, Nicander, you Spartans are extremely idle; You say true, he answered, but we do not busy ourselves like you in every trifle.

Of Panthoidas

When Panthoidas was ambassador in Asia and some showed him a strong fortification, Faith, said he, it is a fine cloister for women. In the Academy, when the philosophers had made a great many and excellent discourses, and asked Panthoidas how he liked them; Indeed, said he, I think them very good, but of no profit at all, since you yourselves do not use them.



Of Pausanias the Son of Cleombrotus

Pausanias the son of Cleombrotus, when the Delians pleaded their title to the island against the Athenians, and urged that according to their law no women were ever brought to bed or any carcass buried in the isle, said, How then can that be your country, in which not one of you was born or shall ever lie? The exiles urging him to march against the Athenians, and saying that, when he was proclaimed victor in the Olympic games, these alone hissed; How, says he, since they hissed whilst we did them good, what do you think they will do when abused? When one asked him why they made Tyrtaeus the poet a citizen, he answered, That no foreigner should be our captain. A man of a weak and puny body advising to fight the enemy both by sea and land; Pray, sir, says he, will you strip and show what a man you are who advise to engage? When some amongst the spoils of the barbarians admired the richness of their clothes; It had been better, he said, that they had been men of worth themselves than that they should possess things of worth. After the victory over the Medes at Plataea, he commanded his officers to set before him the Persian banquet that was already dressed; which appearing very sumptuous, By heaven, quoth he, the Persian is an abominable glutton, who, when he hath such delicacies at home, comes to eat our barley-cakes.

Of Pausanias the Son of Plistoanax

Pausanias the son of Plistoanax replied to one that asked him why it was not lawful for the Spartans to abrogate any of their old laws, Because men ought to be subject to laws, and not the laws to men. When banished and at Tegea, he commended the Lacedaemonians. One said to him, Why then did you not stay at Sparta? And he returned, Physicians are conversant not amongst the healthy, but the diseased. To one asking him how they should conquer the Thracians, he replied, If we make the best man our captain. A physician, after he had felt his pulse and considered his constitution, saying, He ails nothing; It is because, sir, he replied, I use none of your physic. When one of his friends blamed him for giving a physician an ill character, since he had no experience of his skill nor received any injury from him; No, faith, said he, for had I tried him, I had not lived to give this character. And when the physician said, Sir, you are an old man; That happens, he replied, because you were never my doctor. And he was used to say, that he was the best physician, who did not let his patients rot above ground, but quickly buried them.

Of Paedaretus

Paedaretus, when one told him the enemies were numerous, said, Therefore we shall get the greater reputation, for we shall kill the more. Seeing a man soft by nature and a coward commended by the citizens for his lenity and good disposition, he said, We should not praise men that are like women, nor women that are like men, unless some extremity forceth a woman to stand upon her guard. When he was not chosen into the three hundred (the chief order in the city), he went away laughing and very jocund; and the Ephors calling him back and asking why he laughed, Why, said he, I congratulate the happiness of the city, that enjoys three hundred citizens better than myself.



Of Plistarchus

Plistarchus the son of Leonidas, to one asking him why they did not take their names from the first kings, replied, Because the former were rather captains than kings, but the later otherwise. A certain advocate using a thousand little jests in his pleading; Sir, said he, you do not consider that, as those that often wrestle are wrestlers at last, so you by often exciting laughter will become ridiculous yourself. When one told him that an notorious railer spoke well of him; I'll lay my life, said he, somebody hath told him I am dead, for he can speak well of no man living.

Of Plistoanax

Plistoanax the son of Pausanias, when an Athenian orator called the Lacedaemonians unlearned fellows, said, 'Tis true, for we alone of all the Greeks have not learned any ill from you.

Of Polydorus

Polydorus the son of Alcamenes, when one often threatened his enemies, said to him, Do not you perceive, sir, that you waste a great part of your revenge? As he marched his army against Messene, a friend asked him if he would fight against his brothers? No, said he, but I put in for an estate to which none, as yet, hath any good title. The Argives after the fight of the three hundred being totally routed in a set battle, the allies urged him not to let the opportunity slip, but storm and take the city of the enemy; for it would be very easy, now all the men were destroyed and none but women left. He replied: I love to vanquish my enemies when I fight on equal terms; nor do I think it just in him who was commissioned to contest about the confines of the two states, to desire to be master of the city; for I came only to recover our own territories and not to seize theirs. Being asked once why the Spartans ventured so bravely in battle; Because, said he, we have learned to reverence and not fear our leaders.

Of Polycratidas

Polycratidas being joined with others in an embassy to the lieutenants of the king, being asked whether they came as private or public persons, returned, If we obtain our demands, as public; if not, as private.

Of Phoebidas

Phoebidas, just before the battle at Leuctra, when some said, This day will show who is a brave man, replied, 'Tis a fine day indeed that can show a brave man alive.

Of Soos

It is reported of Soos that, when his army was shut up by the Clitorians in a disadvantageous strait and wanted water, he agreed to restore all the places he had taken, if all his men should drink of the neighboring fountain. Now the enemy had secured the spring and guarded it. These articles being sworn to, he convened his soldiers, and promised to give him the kingdom who would forbear drinking; but none accepting it, he went to the water, sprinkled himself, and so departed, whilst the enemies looked on; and he therefore refused to restore the places, because he himself had not drunk.



Of Telecrus

Telecrus, to one reporting that his father spoke ill of him, replied, He would not speak so unless he had reason for it. When his brother said, The citizens have not that kindness for me they have for you, but use me more coarsely, though born of the same parents, he replied, You do not know how to bear an injury, and I do. Being asked what was the reason of that custom among the Spartans for the younger to rise up in reverence to the elder, Because, said he, by this behavior towards those to whom they have no relation, they may learn to reverence their parents more. To one enquiring what wealth he had, he returned, No more than enough.

Of Charillus

Charillus being asked why Lycurgus made so few laws; Because, he replied, those whose words are few need but few laws. Another enquiring why their virgins appear in public unveiled, and their wives veiled; Because, said he, virgins ought to find husbands, married women keep those they have. To a slave saucily opposing him he said, I would kill thee if I were not angry. And being asked what polity he thought best; That, said he, in which most of the citizens without any disturbance contend about virtue. And to a friend enquiring why amongst them all the images of the Gods were armed he replied, That those reproaches we cast upon men for their cowardice may not reflect upon the Gods, and that our youth may not supplicate the Deities unarmed.



Alexander on Bucephalus charging at Issus (c 100) Mosaic, House of Faun, Pompeii
(Possibly copy of painting by Apelles of Kos)



The remarkable speeches of some obscure men amongst the Spartans⁷

1 When the Samian ambassadors had made a long harangue, the Spartans answered, We have forgot the first part, and so cannot understand the last.

To the Thebans violently contesting with them about something they replied, Your spirit should be less, or your forces greater.

A Lacedaemonian being asked why he kept his beard so long; That seeing my gray hairs, he replied, I may do nothing but what becomes them. One commending the best warriors, a Spartan that overheard said, At Troy.

Another, hearing that some forced their guests to drink after supper, said, What! not to eat too?

Pindar in his poems having called Athens the prop of Greece, a Spartan said, Greece would soon fall if it leaned on such a prop.

When one, seeing the Athenians pictured killing the Spartans, said, The Athenians are stout fellows; Yes, subjoined a Spartan, in a picture.

To one that was very attentive to a scandalous accusation a Spartan said, Pray, sir, be not prodigal of your ears against me.

And to one under correction that cried out, I offend against my will, another said, Therefore suffer against thy will.

One seeing some journeying in a chariot said, God forbid that I should sit where I cannot rise up to reverence my elders.

Some Chian travellers vomiting after supper in the consistory, and dunging in the very seats of the Ephors, first they made strict inquiry whether the offenders were citizens or not; but finding they were Chians, they publicly proclaimed that they gave the Chians leave to be filthy and uncivil.

2 When one saw a merchant sell hard almonds at double the price that others were usually sold at, he said, Are stones scarce?

Another pulling a nightingale, and finding but a very small body, said, Thou art voice and nothing else.

Another Spartan, seeing Diogenes the Cynic in very cold weather embrace a brazen statue, asked whether he was not very cold; and he replying, No, he rejoined, What great matter then is it that you do?

A Metapontine, being jeered by a Spartan for cowardice, replied, Nay, sir, we are masters of some of the territories of other states; Then, said the Spartan, you are not only cowards but unjust.

A traveller at Sparta, standing long upon one leg, said to a Lacedaemonian, I do not believe you can do as much; True, said he, but every goose can.

⁷ Apophthegms arranged in separate paragraphs by ED. PHIL.



To one valuing himself upon his skill in oratory a Spartan said, By heaven, there never was and never can be any art without truth.

An Argive saying, We have the tombs of many Spartans amongst us; a Spartan replied, But we cannot show the grave of one Argive; meaning that they had often invaded Argos, but the Argives never Sparta.

A Spartan that was taken captive and to be sold, — when the crier said, Here's a Spartan to be sold, — stopped his mouth, saying, Cry a captive.

One of the soldiers of Lysimachus, being asked by him whether he was a true Spartan or one of the Helot slaves, replied, Do you imagine a Lacedaemonian would serve you for a groat a day?

The Thebans, having beaten the Lacedaemonians at Leuctra, marched to the river Eurotas itself, where one of them boasting said, Where are the Spartans now? To whom a captive replied, They are not at hand, sir, for if they had been, you had not come so far.

The Athenians, having surrendered their own city to the Spartans, requested that they might be permitted to enjoy Samos only; upon which the Spartans said, When you are not at your own disposal, would you be lords of others? And hence came that proverb, He that is not master of himself begs Samos.

3 When the Lacedaemonians had taken a town by storm, the Ephors said, The exercise of our youth is lost, for now they will have none to contend with them.

The Persian offering to raze a city that had frequent quarrels and skirmishes with the Spartans, they desired him to forbear and not take away the whetstone of their youth. They appointed no masters to instruct their boys in wrestling, that they might contend not in sleights of art and little tricks, but in strength and courage; and therefore Lysander, being asked by what means Charon was too hard for him, replied, By sleights and cunning.

When Philip, having entered their territories, sent to know whether he should come as an enemy or a friend, the Spartans returned, Neither.

Hearing that the ambassador they had sent to Antigonus the son of Demetrius had called him king, they fined him, though he had obtained of him in a time of scarcity a bushel of wheat for every person in the city.

A vicious person giving excellent good counsel, they received it, but took it from him and attributed it to another, a man regular and of a good life.

When some brothers differed, they fined the father for neglecting his sons and suffering them to be at strife. They fined likewise a musician that came amongst them, for playing the harp with his fingers.

Two boys fighting, one wounded the other mortally with a hook. And when his acquaintance, just as he was dying, vowed to revenge his death and have the blood of him that killed him; By no means, saith he, it is unjust, for I had done the same thing if I had been stout and more speedy in my stroke.



Another boy, at the time when freemen's sons are allowed to steal what they can and it is a disgrace to be discovered, when some of his companions had stolen a young fox and delivered it to him, and the owners came to search, hid it under his gown; and though the angry little beast bit through his side to his very guts, he endured it quietly, that he might not be discovered. When the searchers were gone and the boys saw what had happened, they chid him roundly, saying, It had been better to produce the fox, than thus to conceal him by losing your own life; No, no! he replied, it is much better to die in torments, than to let my softness betray me and suffer a life that had been scandalous.

Some meeting certain Spartans upon the road said, Sirs, you have good luck, for the robbers are just gone. Faith, they replied, they have good luck that they did not meet with us.

A Lacedaemonian, being asked what he knew, answered, To be free.

A Spartan boy, being taken by Antigonus and sold, obeyed his master readily in every thing that he thought not below a freeman to do; but when he was commanded to bring a chamber-pot, unable to contain he said, I will not serve; but his master pressing him, he ran to the top of the house, and saying, You shall find what you have bought, threw himself down headlong and died.

Another being to be sold, when the chapman asked him, Wilt thou be towardly if I buy thee? Yes, he returned, and if you do not buy me.

Another captive, when the crier said, Here's a slave to be sold, cried out, You villain, why not a captive?

A Spartan, who had a fly engraven on his shield no bigger than Nature hath made that creature, when some jeered him as if he did it on purpose that he might not be taken notice of, replied: It is that I may be known; for I advance so near my enemies that they can well perceive my impress, as little as it is.

Another, when at an entertainment a harp was brought in, said, It is not the custom of the Spartans to play the fool.

A Spartan being asked whether the way to Sparta was safe or not, replied: That is according as you go down thither; for lions that approach rue their coming, and hares we hunt in their very coverts.

A Spartan wrestling, when he could not make his adversary that had got the upper hand of him loose his hold, and was unable to avoid the fall, bit him by the arm; and the other saying, Spartan, thou bitest like a woman; No, said he, but like a lion.

A lame man, marching out to war and being laughed at, said, There is no need of those that can run away, but of those that can stand to it and defend their post.

Another being shot through said with his last breath: It doth not trouble me that I die, but that I should be killed by a woman before I had performed some notable exploit.

One coming into an inn and giving the host a piece of meat to make ready for him, — when the host demanded some cheese and oil besides, — What! says the Spartan, if I had cheese should I want meat?



When one called Lampis of Aegina happy, because he seemed a rich man, having many ships of his own at sea, a Spartan said, I do not like that happiness that hangs by a cord.

One telling a Spartan that he lied, the Spartan returned: True, for we are free; but others, unless they speak truth, will suffer for it.

When one had undertaken to make a carcass stand upright, and tried every way to no purpose; Faith, said he, there wants something within.

Tynnichus bore his son Thrasybulus's death very patiently, and there is this epigram made upon him: —

Stout Thrasybulus on his shield was brought
From bloody fields, where he had bravely fought;
The Argives beat, and as he stoutly prest,

Seven spears, and Death attending, pierced his breast.
The father took the corpse, and as he bled,
He laid it on the funeral pile, and said:
Be cowards mourned, I'll spend no tear nor groan,
Whilst thus I burn a Spartan and my son.

4 The keeper of the bath allowing more water than ordinary to Alcibiades the Athenian, a Spartan said, What! is he more foul, that he wants more than others?

Philip making an inroad upon Sparta, and all the Spartans expecting to be cut off, he said to one of them, Now what will you Spartans do? And he replied: What, but to die bravely? for only we of all the Greeks have learned to be free and not endure a yoke.

When Agis was beaten and Antipater demanded fifty boys for hostages, Eteocles, one of the then Ephors, answered: Boys we will not give, lest swerving from the customs of their country they prove slothful and untoward, and so incapable of the privilege of citizens; but of women and old men you shall have twice as many. And when upon refusal he threatened some sharp afflictions, he returned: If you lay upon us somewhat worse than death, we shall die the more readily.

An old man in the Olympic games being desirous to see the sport, and unprovided of a seat, went about from place to place, was laughed and jeered at, but none offered him the civility; but when he came to the Spartans' quarter, all the boys and some of the men rose from their seats, and made him room. At this, all the Greeks clapped and praised their behavior; upon which the good old man shaking his hoary hairs, with tears in his eyes, said: Good God! how well all the Greeks know what is good, and yet only the Lacedaemonians practise it!

And some say the same thing was done at Athens. For at the great solemnity of the Athenians, the Panathenaic festival, the Attics abused an old man, calling him as if they designed to make room for him, and when he came putting him off again; and when after this manner he had passed through almost all, he came to that quarter where the Spartan spectators sat, and all of them presently rose up and gave him place; the whole multitude, extremely taken with this action, clapped and shouted;



upon which one of the Spartans said: By Heaven, these Athenians know what should be done, but are not much for doing it.

A beggar asking an alms of a Lacedaemonian, he said: Well, should I give thee any thing, thou wilt be the greater beggar, for he that first gave thee money made thee idle, and is the cause of this base and dishonorable way of living.

Another Spartan, seeing a fellow gathering charity for the Gods' sake, said, I will never regard those as Gods that are poorer than myself.

Another, having taken one in adultery with an ugly whore, cried out, Poor man, how great was thy necessity!

Another, hearing an orator very lofty and swelling in his speech, said, Faith, this is a brave man, how excellently he rolls his tongue about nothing!

A stranger being at Sparta, and observing how much the young men revered the old, said, At Sparta alone it is desirable to be old.

A Lacedaemonian, being asked what manner of poet Tyrtaeus was, replied, Excellent to whet the courage of our youth.

Another that had very sore eyes listed himself a soldier; when some said to him, Poor man, whither in that condition, and what wilt thou do in a fight? He returned, If I can do nothing else, I shall blunt the enemies' sword.

Buris and Spertis, two Lacedaemonians, going voluntarily to Xerxes the Persian to suffer that punishment which the oracle had adjudged due to Sparta for killing those ambassadors the King had sent, as soon as they came desired Xerxes to put them to death as he pleased, that they might make satisfaction for the Spartans. But he, surprised at this gallantry, forgave the men and desired their service in his court; to which they replied, How can we stay here, and leave our country, our laws, and those men for whom we came so far to die? [To] Indarnes the general pressing them to make peace, and promising them equal honors with the King's greatest favorites, they returned, Sir, you seem to be ignorant of the value of liberty, which no man in his wits would change for the Persian empire.

A Spartan in a journey, when a friend of his had purposely avoided him the day before, and the next day, having obtained very rich furniture, splendidly received him, trampled on his tapestry saying, This was the cause why I had not so much as a mat to sleep upon last night.

Another coming to Athens, and seeing the Athenians crying salt-fish and dainties to sell up and down the streets, others gathering taxes, keeping stews, and busied about a thousand such dishonest trades, and looking on nothing as base and unbecoming; after his return, when his acquaintance enquired how things were at Athens, he replied, All well; intimating by this irony that all things there were esteemed good and commendable, and nothing base.

Another, being questioned about something, denied it; and the enquirer rejoining, Thou liest, he replied: And art not thou a fool to ask me what you know yourself very well?



Some Lacedaemonians being sent ambassadors to the tyrant Lygdamis, pretending sickness he deferred their audience a long time. They said to one of his officers, Pray, sir, assure him that we did not come to wrestle but to treat with him.

A priest initiating a Spartan in holy mysteries asked him what was the greatest wickedness he was ever guilty of. And he replying, The Gods know very well, and the priest pressing him the more and saying he must needs discover, the Spartan asked, To whom? to thee or the God? And the priest saying, To the God, he rejoined, Then do you withdraw.

Another at night passing by a tomb and imagining he saw a ghost, made towards it with his spear, and striking it through cried out, Whither dost thou fly, poor twice dead ghost?

Another having vowed to throw himself headlong from the Leucadian rock, when he came to the top and saw the vast precipice, he went down again; upon which being jeered by an acquaintance, he said, I did not imagine that one vow needed another that was greater.

Another in a battle had his sword lifted up to kill his enemy, but the retreat being sounded, he did not let the blow fall; and when one asked him why, when his enemy was at his mercy, he did not use the advantage, Because, said he, it is better to obey my leader than kill my enemy.

One saying to a Spartan that was worsted in the Olympic games, Spartan, thy adversary was the better man; No, he replied, but the better tripper.



Flowers still-life (1677) Willem van Aelst, Private collection

