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IX. Marcus Portius Cato - Messalla Corvinus.

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head of which thou wast pleased to become a legislator. Adieu!
—Self-examination requires retirement.

DIALOGUE IX.

MARCUS PORTIUS CATO.—MESSALLA CORVINUS.

C A T O.

O H Messalla!—is it then possible that what some of our countrymen tell me should be true? Is it possible that you could live the courtier of Octavius, that you could accept of employments and honours from him, from the tyrant of your country; you, the brave, the noble-minded, the virtuous Messalla; you, whom, I remember, my son-in-law Brutus has frequently extolled, as the most promising youth in Rome, tutored by philosophy, trained up in arms, scorning all those soft, effeminate pleasures, that reconcile men to an easy and indolent servitude, fit for all the roughest tasks of honour and virtue, fit to live or to *die* a freeman?

M E S S A L L A.

Marcus Cato, I revere both your life and your death: but the last, permit me to tell you, did no good to your country; and the former would have done more, if you could have mitigated a little the sternness of your virtue, I will not say of your pride. For my own part, I adhered with constant integrity and unwearied zeal to the republic, while the republic existed. I fought for her at Philippi, under the only commander, who, if he had conquered, would have conquered for her, not for himself. When he was dead, I saw that nothing remained to my country but *the choice of a master*. I chose *the best*.

C A T O.

The best!—What! a man who had broken all laws, who had violated all trusts, who had led the armies of the common-wealth

wealth against Antony, and then joined with him and that foolish traitor Lepidus, to set up a Triumvirate more execrable by far than either of the former; who shed the best blood in Rome by an inhuman proscription; murdered even his own guardian; murdered Cicero, to whose confidence, too improvidently given, he owed all his power! Was this the master you chose? could you bring your tongue to give him the name of *Augustus*? could you stoop to beg consulships and triumphs from him? Oh shame to virtue! O degeneracy of Rome! To what infamy are her sons, her noblest sons, fallen! The thought of it pains me more than the wound that I died of: it stabs my soul.

MESSALLA.

Moderate, Cato, the vehemence of your indignation. There has always been too much passion mixed with your virtue. The enthusiasm you are possessed with is a noble one; but it disturbs your judgement. Hear me with patience, and with the tranquillity that becomes a philosopher. It is true, that Octavius had done all you have said: but it is no less true, that in our circumstances he was the best master Rome could choose. His mind was fitted by nature for empire. His understanding was clear, and strong. His passions were cool, and under the absolute command of his reason. His name gave him an authority over the troops and the people, which no other Roman could possess in an equal degree. He used that authority to restrain the excesses of both, which it was no longer in the power of the senate to repress, nor of any other general, or magistrate in the state. He restored discipline in our armies, the first means of salvation, without which no legal government could have been formed or supported. He avoided all odious and invidious names. He maintained and respected those which time and long habits had endeared to the Roman people. He permitted a generous liberty of speech. He treated the nobles of Pompey's party as well as those of his

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father's, if they did not themselves, for factious purposes, keep up the distinction. He formed a plan of government, moderate, decent, respectable, which left the senate its majesty, and some of its power. He restored vigour and spirit to the laws; he made new and good ones for the reformation of manners; he enforced their execution; he governed the empire with lenity, justice, and glory: he humbled the pride of the Parthians; he broke the fierceness of the barbarous nations: he gave to his country, exhausted and languishing with the great loss of blood, which she had sustained in the course of so many civil wars, the blessing of peace; a blessing which was become so necessary for her, that without it she could enjoy no other. In doing these things, I acknowledge, he had my assistance. I am prouder of it, and I think I can justify myself more effectually to my country, than if I had died by my own hand at Philippi. Believe me, Cato, it is better *to do some good* than to *project a great deal*. A little practicable virtue is of more use to society than the most sublime theory, or the best principles of government ill applied.

C A T O.

Yet I must think it was beneath the character of Messalla to join in supporting a government, which, though coloured and mitigated, was still a tyranny. Had you not better have gone into a voluntary exile, where you would not have seen the face of the tyrant, and where you might have quietly practised those private virtues, which are all that the gods require from good men in certain situations?

MESSALLA.

No:—I did much more good by continuing at Rome. Had Augustus required of me any thing base, any thing servile, I would have gone into exile, I would have died, rather than do it.—But he respected my virtue, he respected my dignity; he treated me as well as Agrippa, or as Mæcenas, with this distinction

tion alone, that he never employed my sword but against foreign nations, or the old enemies of the republic.

C A T O.

It must, I own, have been a pleasure to be employed against Antony, that monster of vice, who plotted the ruin of liberty, and the raising of himself to sovereign power, amidst the riot of Bacchanals, and in the embraces of harlots: who, when he had attained to that power, delivered it up to a lascivious queen, and would have made an Egyptian strumpet the mistress of Rome, if the battle of Actium had not saved us from *that last of misfortunes*.

M E S S A L L A.

In that battle I had a considerable share. So I had in encouraging the liberal arts and sciences, which Augustus protected. Under his judicious patronage the Muses made Rome their capital seat. It would have pleased you to have known Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Ovid, Livy, and many more, whose names will be illustrious to all generations.

C A T O.

I understand you, Messalla. Your Augustus and you, after the ruin of our liberty, made Rome a Greek city, an academy of fine wits, another Athens under the government of Demetrius Phalareus. I had much rather have seen her under Fabricius and Curius, and her other honest old consuls, who could not read.

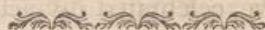
M E S S A L L A.

Yet to these writers she will owe as much of her glory as she did to those heroes. I could say more, a great deal more, on the happiness of the mild dominion of Augustus. I might even add, that the vast extent of the empire, the factions of the nobility, and the corruption of the people, which no laws under the ordinary magistrates of the state were able to restrain, seemed necessarily to require some change in the government:

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that Cato himself, had he remained upon earth, could have done us no good, unless he would have yielded to become *our prince*. But I see you consider me as a deserter from the republic, and an apologist for a tyrant. I therefore leave you to the company of those ancient Romans, for whose society you were always much fitter than for that of your contemporaries. Cato should have lived with Fabricius and Curius, not with Pompey and Cæsar.



DIALOGUE X.

CHRISTINA, Queen of Sweden.—Chancellor OXENSTIERN.

CHRISTINA.

YOU seem to avoid me, Oxenstiern; and, now we are met, you don't pay me the reverence that is due to your queen! Have you forgotten that I was your sovereign?

OXENSTIERN.

I am not your subject here, madam; but you have forgotten, that you yourself broke that bond, and freed me from my allegiance, many years before you died, by abdicating the crown, against my advice and the inclination of your people. Reverence here is paid only to virtue.

CHRISTINA.

I see you would mortify me, if it were in your power, for acting against your advice. But my fame does not depend upon your judgement. All Europe admired the greatness of my mind in resigning a crown, to dedicate myself entirely to the love of the sciences and the fine arts: things of which you had no taste in barbarous Sweden, the realm of Goths and Vandals.

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