



UNIVERSITÄTS-  
BIBLIOTHEK  
PADERBORN

## **Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn**

### **The Works of George Lord Lyttleton**

**Lyttelton, George <Lord>**

**London, 1774**

XVII. Marcus Brutus - Pomponius Atticus.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-50364](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-50364)

signed to different tempers different comforts. To you it gave the education of a prince, the government of a state, the pride of being called the wife of a hero; to me a *good living husband*, quiet, opulence, nobility, and a fair reputation, though not in a degree so exalted as your's. If our whole sex were to chuse between your consolations and mine, your highness, I think, would find very few of your taste. But I respect the sublimity of your ideas. Now that we have no bodies, they appear less unnatural than I should have thought them in the other world.

PRINCESS OF ORANGE.

Adieu, madam; our souls are of a different order, and were not made to sympathize or converse with each other.

\*\*\*\*\*

### DIALOGUE XVII.

MARCUS BRUTUS—POMPONIUS ATTICUS.

BRUTUS.

**W**ELL, Atticus, I find, that, notwithstanding your friendship for Cicero and for me, you survived us both many years, with the same chearful spirit you had always possessed, and, by prudently wedding your daughter to Agrippa, secured the favour of Octavius Caesar, and even contracted a close alliance with him by your grand-daughter's marriage with Tiberius Nero.

ATTICUS.

You know, Brutus, my philosophy was the Epicurean. I loved my friends, and I served them in their wants and distresses with great generosity; but I did not think myself obliged to die when they died, or not to make others, as occasions should offer.

BRUTUS.

You did, I acknowledge, *serve* your friends, as far as you could, without bringing yourself, on their account, into any great danger or disturbance of mind: but that you *loved* them, I much doubt. If you loved Cicero, how could you love Antony? if you loved me, how could you love Octavius? if you loved Octavius, how could you avoid taking part against Antony in their last civil war? Affection cannot be so strangely divided, and with so much equality, among men of such opposite characters, and who were such irreconcilable enemies to each other.

A T T I C U S.

From my earliest youth I possessed the singular talent of ingratiating myself with the heads of different parties, and yet not engaging with any of them, so far as to disturb my own quiet. My family was connected with the Marian party; and, though I retired to Athens, that I might not be unwillingly involved in the troubles, which that turbulent faction had begun to excite, yet, when young Marius was declared an enemy by the senate, I sent him a sum of money, to support him in his exile. Nor did this hinder me from making my court so well to Sylla, upon his coming to Athens, that I obtained from him the highest marks of his favour. Nevertheless, when he pressed me to go with him to Rome, I declined it, being as unwilling to fight for him against the Marian party, as for them against him. He admired my conduct; and, at his departure from Athens, ordered all the presents made to him during his abode in that city, to be carried to me. I remind you of this, only to shew that moderation in all contentions of this kind had been always my principle; and that in the instances you mentioned I did not act from any levity or inconstancy in my nature, but from a regular consistent plan of conduct, which my reason convinced me was the wisest I could follow.

Vide Cornel.  
Nepot. in  
Vita Attici.

I i i 2

BRUTUS.

BRUTUS.

I remember indeed that you observed the same neutrality between Pompey and Julius Cæsar.

ATTICUS.

I did so—and that I might be able to do it with dignity, and without the reproach of ingratitude, I never would accept any office or honour from either of those great men; nor from Cicero, though my sister had married his brother; nor from you, Marcus Brutus, whose friendship I thought the greatest honour of my life.

BRUTUS.

Are there no obligations to a good heart, Pomponius, but honours and offices? or could you, by refusing to encumber yourself with these, dissolve all other ties? But, setting aside any considerations of private affection or esteem, how was you able to reconcile your conduct with that which is the ruling principle in the heart of every virtuous man, and more especially a virtuous Roman, *the love of the public?*

ATTICUS.

The times I lived in were so bad, and the conflict of parties had so little to do in reality with *the love of the public*, that I thought my virtue much safer and purer by avoiding, than mixing in the fray.

BRUTUS.

Possibly, in the dispute between Marius and Sylla, and even in that between Pompey and Cæsar, a virtuous man might see so much to blame on both sides, and so much to fear, whichever faction should overcome the other, as to be justified in not engaging with either. But let me say, without vanity, in the war which I waged against Antony and Octavius you could have nothing to blame: for I know you approved the principle upon which I killed Julius Cæsar. Nor had you any thing to fear if our arms had succeeded; for you knew that my intentions

tentions were upright and pure; nor was it doubtful that Cassius was as much determined as I to restore the Republic. How could you then, with any sense of virtue in your heart, maintain an indifference and neutrality between the *deliverers* and the *tyrants* of your country?

A T T I C U S.

My answer to this will necessarily require explanations, which my respect to the *manes* of Brutus makes me wish to avoid.

B R U T U S.

In the other world I loved truth, and was desirous that all might speak it with freedom: but here even the tender ears of a tyrant are compelled to endure it. If I committed any faults, or erred in my judgement, the calamities I have suffered are a punishment for it. Tell me then truly, and without fear of offending, what you think were my failings.

A T T I C U S.

You said that the principle upon which you killed Julius Cæsar had my approbation. This I do not deny:—but did I ever declare, or give you reason to believe, that I thought it a *prudent* or *well-timed* act? I had quite other thoughts. Nothing ever seemed to me *worse judged* or *worse timed*: and these, Brutus, were my reasons. Cæsar was just setting out to make war on the Parthians. This was an enterprize of no little difficulty, and no little danger. But his unbounded ambition, and that restless spirit, which never would suffer him to take any repose, did not intend to stop there. You know very well, (for he hid nothing from you) that he had formed a vast plan, of marching, after he had conquered the whole Parthian empire, along the coast of the Caspian sea and the sides of Mount Caucasus, into Scythia, in order to subdue all the countries that border on Germany, and Germany itself; from whence he proposed to return to Rome by Gaul. Consider now, I beseech

V. Plutarchi.  
in Vita Jul.  
Cæsar.

befeech you, how much time the execution of this project required. In some of his battles with so many fierce and warlike nations, the bravest of all the barbarians, he might have been slain: but if he had not, disease, or age itself, might have ended his life, before he could have compleated such an immense undertaking. He was, when you killed him, in his fifty-sixth year, and of an infirm constitution. Except his bastard by Cleopatra, he had no son: nor was his power so absolute, or so quietly settled, that he could have a thought of bequeathing the empire, like a private inheritance, to his sister's grandson, Octavius. While he was absent, there was no reason to fear any violence, or male-administration in Italy, or in Rome. Cicero would have had the chief authority in the senate. The praetorship of the city had been conferred upon you by the favour of Cæsar; and your known credit with him, added to the high reputation of your virtues and abilities, gave you a weight in all business, which none of his party, left behind him in Italy, would have been able to oppose. What a fair prospect was here of good order, peace, and liberty at home, while abroad the Roman name would have been rendered more glorious, the disgrace of Crassus revenged, and the empire extended beyond the utmost ambition of our forefathers, by the greatest general that ever led the armies of Rome, or, perhaps, of any other nation! What did it signify, whether in Asia, and among the barbarians, that general bore the name of king, or dictator? Nothing could be more puerile in you and your friends, than to start so much at the proposition of his taking that name in Italy itself, when you had suffered him to enjoy all the power of royalty, and much more than any king of Rome had possessed, from Romulus down to Tarquin.

B R U T U S.

We considered that name as the last insult offered to our liberty and our laws. It was an ensign of tyranny, hung out with a vain and arrogant purpose of rendering the servitude of  
Rome

Rome more apparent. We therefore determined to punish the tyrant, and restore our country to freedom.

ATTICUS.

You punished the tyrant, but you did not restore your country to freedom. By sparing Antony, against the opinion of Cassius, you suffered the tyranny to remain. He was consul, and, from the moment that Cæsar was dead, the chief power of the state was in his hands. The soldiers adored him for his liberality, valour, and military frankness. His eloquence was more persuasive from appearing unstudied. The nobility of his house, which descended from Hercules, would naturally inflame his heart with ambition. The whole course of his life had evidently shewn, that his thoughts were high and aspiring, and that he had little respect for the liberty of his country. He had been the second man in Cæsar's party: by saving him you gave a new head to that party, which could no longer subsist without your ruin. Many, who would have wished the restoration of liberty, if Cæsar had died a natural death, were so incensed at his murder, that merely for the sake of punishing *that*, they were willing to confer all power upon Antony, and make him absolute master of the republic. This was particularly true with respect to the veterans who had served under Cæsar: and he saw it so plainly, that he presently availed himself of their dispositions. You and Cassius were obliged to fly out of Italy; and Cicero, who was unwilling to take the same part, could find no expedient to save himself and the senate, but the wretched one of supporting and raising very high another Cæsar, the adopted son and heir of him you had slain, to oppose Antony, and to divide the Cæsarean party. But even while he did this, he perpetually offended that party, and made them his enemies, by harangues in the senate, which breathed the very spirit of the old Pompeian faction, and made him appear to Octavius, and all the friends of the dead dictator, no less guilty of his death, than

than those who had killed him. What could this end in, but that which you and your friends had most to fear, a reunion of the whole Cæsarean party, and of their principal leaders, however discordant the one with the other, to destroy the Pompeians? For my own part, I foresaw it long before the event, and therefore kept myself wholly clear of those proceedings.— You think I ought to have joined you and Cassius at Philippi, because I knew your good intentions, and that, if you succeeded, you designed to restore the commonwealth. I am persuaded you did both agree in that point; but you differed in so many others, there was such a dissimilitude in your tempers and characters, that the union between you could not have lasted long; and your dissention would have had most fatal effects, with regard both to the settlement and to the administration of the republic. Besides, the whole mass of it was in such a fermentation, and so corrupted, that I am convinced new disorders would soon have arisen. If you had applied gentle remedies, to which your nature inclined, those remedies would have failed: if Cassius had induced you to act with severity, your government would have been stigmatized with the name of a tyranny more detestable than that against which you conspired; and Cæsar's clemency would have been the perpetual topic of every factious oration to the people, and of every seditious discourse to the soldiers. Thus you would have soon been plunged in the miseries of another civil war, or perhaps assassinated in the senate, as Julius was by you. Nothing could give the Roman empire a lasting tranquillity, but such a prudent plan of a *mitigated imperial power*, as was afterwards formed by Octavius, when he had ably and happily delivered himself from all opposition and partnership in the government. Those quiet times I lived to see; and I must say, they were the best I ever had seen, far better than those under the turbulent aristocracy for which you contended. And let me boast a little of my own prudence, which, through so many storms,



storms, could steer me safe into that port. Had it only given me safety, without reputation, I should not think that I ought to value myself upon it. But in all these revolutions my honour remained as unimpaired as my fortune. I so conducted myself, that I lost no esteem, in being Antony's friend, after having been Cicero's; or in my alliance with Agrippa and Augustus Cæsar, after my friendship with you. Nor did either Cæsar or Antony blame my inaction in the quarrels between them; but, on the contrary, they both seemed to respect me the more for the neutrality I observed. My obligations to the one, and alliance with the other, made it improper for me to act against either: and my constant tenour of life had procured me an exemption from all civil wars by a kind of *prescription*.

## B R U T U S.

If man were born to no higher purpose, than to wear out a long life in ease and prosperity, with the general esteem of the world, your wisdom was evidently as much superior to mine, as my life was shorter and more unhappy than your's. Nay, I verily believe, it exceeded the prudence of any other man that ever existed, considering in what difficult circumstances you were placed, and with how many violent shocks and sudden changes of fortune you were obliged to contend. But *here* the most *virtuous* and *public-spirited* conduct is found to have been the most *prudent*. The motives of our actions, not the success, give us *here* renown. And, could I return to that life from whence I am escaped, I would not change my character to imitate your's: I would again be Brutus rather than Atticus. Even without the sweet hope of an eternal reward in a more perfect state, which is the strongest and most immovable support to the good under every misfortune, I swear by the gods, I would not give up *the noble feelings of my heart*, that elevation of mind which accompanies active and suffering virtue, for your seventy-seven years of constant tranquillity,

K k k

with

with all the praise you obtained from the learned men whom you patronized, or the great men whom you courted.



## DIALOGUE XVIII.

WILLIAM THE THIRD, King of England.—JOHN DE WITT,  
Pensionary of Holland.

WILLIAM.

**T**HOUGH I had no cause to love you, yet, believe me, I sincerely lament your fate. Who could have thought that De Witt, the most popular minister that ever served a commonwealth, should fall a sacrifice to popular fury! Such admirable talents, such virtues, as you were endowed with, so clear, so cool, so comprehensive a head, a heart so untainted with any kind of vice, despising money, despising pleasure, despising the vain ostentation of greatness, such application to business, such ability in it, such courage, such firmness, and so perfect a knowledge of the nation you governed, seemed to assure you of a fixed and stable support in the public affection. But nothing can be durable that depends on the passions of the people.

DE WITT.

It is very generous in your majesty, not only to compassionate the fate of a man, whose political principles made him an enemy to your greatness, but ascribe it to the caprice and inconstancy of the people; as if there had been nothing very blameable in his conduct. I feel the magnanimity of this discourse from your majesty, and it confirms what I have heard of all your behaviour after my death. But I must frankly confess, that, although the rage of the populace was carried much too far, when they tore me and my unfortunate brother to pieces, yet I certainly had deserved to lose their affection, by relying too much on the uncertain and dangerous friendship  
of