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The Works of George Lord Lyttleton

Lyttelton, George <Lord>

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XXI. Cardinal Ximenes - Cardinal Wolsey.

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ourite officer the whole nation of Cusseans, men, women, and children, who were entirely innocent of his death; because you had read in Homer, that Achilles had immolated some Trojan captives on the tomb of Patroclus. I could mention other proofs that your passions inflamed you as much as wine: but these are sufficient.

ALEXANDER.

I can't deny that my passions were sometimes so violent as to deprive me for a while of the use of my reason; especially when the pride of such amazing successes, the servitude of the Persians, and barbarian flattery, had intoxicated my mind. To bear, at my age, with continual moderation, such fortune as mine, was hardly inhuman nature. As for you, there was an excess and intemperance in your virtues, which turned them all into vices. And one virtue you wanted, which in a prince is very commendable, and beneficial to the public, I mean the love of science and of the elegant arts. Under my care and patronage they were carried in Greece to their utmost perfection. Aristotle, Apelles, and Lysippus, were among the glories of my reign: your's was illustrated only by battles.—Upon the whole, though, from some resemblance between us, I should naturally be inclined to decide in your favour, yet I must give the priority in renown to your enemy, Peter Alexowitz. That great monarch raised his country; You ruined your's. He was a *legislator*; you were a *tyrant*.

Cardinal XIMENES—Cardinal WOLSEY.

WOLSEY.

YOU seem to look on me, Ximenes, with an air of superiority, as if I was not your equal. Have you forgotten that I was the favourite and first minister of a great king of England?

England? that I was at once lord high chancellor, bishop of Durham, bishop of Winchester, archbishop of York, and cardinal legate? On what other subject were ever accumulated so many dignities, such honours, such power?

XIMENES.

In order to prove yourself my equal, you are pleased to tell me what you *had*, not what you *did*. But it is not the having great offices; it is the doing great things, that makes a great minister. I know that for some years you governed the mind of king Henry the Eighth, and consequently his kingdom, with the most absolute fway. Let me ask you then, what were the *acts of your reign?*

WOLSEY.

My *acts* were those of a very skilful courtier and able politician. I managed a temper, which nature had made the most difficult to manage, of any, perhaps, that ever existed, with such consummate address, that all its passions were rendered entirely subservient to my inclinations. In foreign affairs I turned the arms of my master, or disposed of his friendship, whichever way my own interest happened to direct. It was not with *him*, but with *me*, that treaties were made by the Emperor or by France; and none were concluded, during my ministry, that did not contain some article in my favour, besides secret assurances of aiding my ambition or resentment, which were the real springs of all my negotiations. At home I brought the pride of English nobility, which had resisted the greatest of the *Plantagenets*, to bow submissively to the son of a *butcher of Ipswich*. And, as my power was royal, my state and magnificence were suitable to it: my buildings, my furniture, my household, my equipage, my liberality, and my charities, were above the rank of a subject.

XIMENES.

From all you have said I understand that you gained great advantages *for yourself* in the course of your ministry, too great

great indeed for a good man to desire, or a wise man to accept. But what did you do for your sovereign, and for the state?

— You make me no answer. — What I did is well known.

I was not content with forcing the arrogance of the Spanish nobility to stoop to my power, but used that power to free the people from their oppressions. In you they respected the royal authority; I made them respect the majesty of the laws. I also relieved my countrymen, the commons of Castile, from a most grievous burthen, by an alteration in the method of collecting their taxes. After the death of Isabella I preserved the tranquillity of Arragon and Castile, by procuring the regency of the latter for Ferdinand, a wise and valiant prince, though he had not been my friend during the life of the queen. And when, after his decease, I was raised to the regency by the general esteem and affection of the Castilians, I administered the government with great courage, firmness, and prudence; with the most perfect disinterestedness in regard to myself, and most zealous concern for the public. I suppressed all the factions which threatened to disturb the peace of that kingdom in the minority and the absence of the young king; and prevented the discontents of the commons of Castile, too justly incensed against the Flemish ministers, who governed their prince and rapaciously pillaged their country, from breaking out, during my life, into open rebellion, as they did, most unhappily, soon after my death. These were my civil acts: but to complete the renown of my administration, I added to it the palm of military glory. At my own charges, and myself commanding the army, I conquered Oran from the Moors, and annexed it, with its territory, to the Spanish dominions.

W O L S E Y.

My soul was as elevated and noble as your's; my understanding as strong, and more refined. But the difference of our conduct arose from the difference of our objects. To raise your reputation, and secure your power in Castile, by making

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that kingdom as happy, and as great as you could, was your object. Mine was to procure *the triple crown* for myself by the assistance of my sovereign, and of the greatest foreign powers. Each of us took the means that were evidently most proper to the accomplishment of his ends.

XIMENES.

Can you confess such a principle of your conduct without a blush? But you will at least be ashamed, that you failed in your purpose, and were the dupe of the powers with whom you negotiated; after having dishonoured the character of your master, in order to serve your own ambition. I accomplished my desire, with glory to my sovereign, and advantage to my country. Besides this difference, there was a great one in the methods by which we acquired our power. We both owed it indeed to the favour of princes; but I gained Isabella's by the opinion she had of my piety and integrity: you gained Henry's by a complaisance and course of life, which were a reproach to your character and sacred orders.

WOLSEY.

I did not, as you, Ximenes, did, carry with me to court the austerity of a monk; nor, if I had done so, could I possibly have gained any influence there. Isabella and Henry were different characters, and their favour was to be sought in different ways. By making myself agreeable to the latter, I so governed his passions, unruly as they were, that, while I lived, they did not produce any of those dreadful effects, which after my death were caused by them in his family and kingdom.

XIMENES.

If Henry the Eighth, your master, had been king of Castile, I would never have been drawn by him out of my cloister. A man of virtue and spirit will not be prevailed with to go into a court, where he cannot rise without baseness.

WOLSEY.

WOLSEY.

The inflexibility of your mind had like to have ruined you in some of your measures: and the bigotry, which you had derived from your long abode in a cloister, and retained when a minister, was very near depriving the crown of Castile of the new-conquered kingdom of Granada, by the revolt of the Moors in that city, whom you had prematurely forced to change their religion. Do you not remember how angry king Ferdinand was with you on that account?

XIMENES.

I do, and must acknowledge that my zeal was too intemperate in all that proceeding.

WOLSEY.

My worst complaisances to king Henry the Eighth were far less hurtful to England, than the unjust and inhuman court of inquisition, which you established in Granada, to watch over the faith of your unwilling converts, has been to Spain.

XIMENES.

I only revived and settled in Granada an ancient tribunal, instituted first by one of our saints against the Albigenses, and gave it greater powers. The mischiefs which have attended it cannot be denied. But if any force may be used for the maintenance of religion (and the church of Rome has, you know, declared authoritatively that it may) none could be so effectual to answer the purpose.

WOLSEY.

This is an argument rather against the opinion of the church, than for the inquisition. I will only say, I think myself very happy, that my administration was stained with no action of cruelty, not even cruelty *sanctified by the name of religion*. My temper indeed, which influenced my conduct more than my principles, was much milder than your's. To the proud I

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was proud; but to my friends and inferiors benevolent and humane. Had I succeeded in the great object of my ambition, had I acquired the popedom, I should have governed the church with more moderation, and better sense, than, probably, you would have done, if you had exchanged the see of Toledo for that of Rome. My good-nature, my policy, my taste for magnificence, my love of the fine arts, of wit, and of learning, would have made me the delight of all the Italians, and have given me a rank among the greatest princes. Whereas in you, the four bigot and rigid Monk would too much have prevailed over the prince and the statesman.

XIMENES.

What either of us would have been in that situation does not appear. But, if you are compared to me *as a minister*, you are vastly inferior. The only circumstance in which you can justly pretend to any equality is the encouragement you gave to learning, and your munificence in promoting it, which was indeed very great. Your two colleges founded at Ipswich and Oxford may vie with my university at Alcala de Henara. But in our generosity there was this difference: all my revenues were spent in well-placed liberalities, in acts of charity, piety, and virtue: whereas a great part of your enormous wealth was squandered away in luxury and vain ostentation. With regard to all other points my superiority is apparent. You were only a favourite: I was the friend and the father of the people. You served yourself: I served the state. The conclusion of our lives was also much more honourable to me than you.

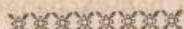
WOLSEY.

Did not you die, as I did, in disgrace with your master?

XIMENES.

That disgrace was brought upon me by a faction of foreigners, to whose power, as a good Spaniard, I would not submit. A minister, who falls a victim to such an opposition, rises by his fall. Your's was not graced by any public cause, any merit to the nation.

nation. Your spirit therefore sunk under it; you bore it with meanness. Mine was unbroken, superior to my enemies, superior to fortune; and I died, as I had lived, with undiminished dignity and greatness of mind.



DIALOGUE XXII.

LUCIAN—RABELAIS.

LUCIAN.

FRIEND Rabelais, well met.—Our souls are very good company for one another. We both were great wits, and most audacious freethinkers. We laughed often at Folly, and sometimes at Wisdom. I was indeed more correct and more elegant in my style: but then, in return, you had a greater fertility of imagination. My *True History* is much inferior, in fancy and invention, in force of wit and keenness of satire, to your *History of the Acts of Garagantua and Pantagruel*.

RABELAIS.

You do me great honour: but I may say, without vanity, that both those compositions entitle the authors of them to a very distinguished place, among memoir-writers, travellers, and even historians ancient and modern.

LUCIAN.

Doubtless they do. But will you pardon me if I ask you one question? Why did you chuse to write such absolute *nonsense*, as you have in some places of your illustrious work?

RABELAIS.

I was forced to compound my physic for the mind with a large dose of nonsense, in order to make it go down. To own the truth to you, if I had not so frequently put on *the fool's cap*, the freedoms I took, in other places, with *cowls*, with *red hats*, and *the triple crown itself*, would have brought me into great danger.