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

**Lyttelton, George <Lord>**

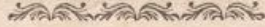
**London, 1774**

XXIX. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus - Caius Julius Cæsar.

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

PLUTARCH.

Minos does not esteem any thing frivolous that affects the morals of mankind; he punishes authors as guilty of every fault they have countenanced, and every crime they have encouraged; and denounces heavy vengeance for the injuries which virtue or the virtuous have suffered in consequence of their writings.



The Four following DIALOGUES, not printed in the three first Editions, are by the Author of the first Twenty-five.

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## DIALOGUE XXIX.

PUBLIUS CORNELIUS SCIPIO AFRICANUS.

CAIUS JULIUS CÆSAR.

S C I P I O.

**A**LAS, Cæsar! how unhappily did you end a life made illustrious by the greatest exploits in war, and most various civil talents!

C Æ S A R.

Can Scipio wonder at the ingratitude of Rome to her generals? did not he reproach her with it in the epitaph he ordered to be inscribed upon his tomb at Liternum, that mean village in Campania, to which she had driven the conqueror of Hannibal and of Carthage? I also, after subduing her most dangerous enemies, the Helvetians, the Gauls, and the Germans, after raising her name to the highest pitch of glory, should have been deprived of my province, reduced to live as a private man, under the power of my enemies and the enviers of my greatness; nay, brought to a trial, and condemned by the judge-

X x x

ment



ment of a faction, if I had not led my victorious troops to Rome, and by their assistance, after all my offers of peace had been iniquitously rejected, made myself master of a state, which knew so ill how to recompense superior merit. Resentment of this, together with the secret machinations of envy, produced not long afterwards a conspiracy of senators, and even of some whom I had most obliged and loved, against my life, which they basely took away by assassination.

S C I P I O.

You say you led your victorious troops to Rome—How were they *your* troops? I thought the Roman armies had belonged to the republic, not to their generals.

C Æ S A R.

They did so in your time. But before I came to command them, Marius and Sylla had taught them, that they belonged to their generals. And I taught the senate, that a veteran army, affectionately attached to its leader, could give him all the treasures and honours of the state without asking their leave.

S C I P I O.

Just gods! Did I then deliver my country from the invading Carthaginian, did I exalt it by victories above all other nations, that it might become a richer prey to its own rebel foldiers, and their ambitious commanders?

C Æ S A R.

How could it be otherwise? was it possible that the conquerors of Europe, Asia, and Africk, could tamely submit to descend from their triumphal chariots, and become subject to the authority of prætors and consuls, elected by a populace corrupted by bribes, or enslaved to a confederacy of factious nobles, who, without regard to merit, considered all the offices and dignities of the state as hereditary possessions belonging to their families?

S C I P I O.



If I thought it no dishonour, after triumphing over Hannibal, to lay down my fasces, and obey, as all my ancestors had done before me, the magistrates of the republic; such a conduct would not have dishonoured either Marius, or Sylla, or Cæsar. But you all dishonoured yourselves, when, instead of virtuous Romans, superior to your fellow-citizens in merit and glory, but equal to them in a due subjection to the laws, you became the enemies, the invaders, and the tyrants of your country.

CÆSAR.

Was I the *enemy* of my country, in giving it a ruler fit to support all the majesty and weight of its empire? did I *invade* it, when I marched to deliver the people from the usurped dominion and insolence of a few senators? was I a *tyrant*, because I would not crouch under Pompey, and let him be thought my *superior*, when I felt he was not my *equal*?

SCIPIO.

Pompey had given you a noble example of moderation, in twice dismissing the armies, at the head of which he had performed such illustrious actions, and returning, a private citizen, into the bosom of his country.

CÆSAR.

His moderation was a cheat. He believed that the authority his victories had gained him would make him effectually master of the commonwealth, without the help of those armies. But finding it difficult to subdue the united opposition of Crassus and me, he leagued himself with us; and, in consequence of that league, we three governed the empire. But, after the death of Crassus, my glorious achievements in subduing the Gauls raised such a jealousy in him, that he could no longer endure me as a partner in his power, nor could I submit to degrade myself into his subject.

Xxx 2

SCIPIO.



S C I P I O.

Am I then to understand, that the civil war you engaged in was really a mere contest, whether you or Pompey should remain *sole lord of Rome*?

C Æ S A R.

See Plutarch  
& Suetonius  
in Vit. Cæ-  
saris.  
Cæsar Com-  
ment. de  
Bello Civili,  
l. i.

Not so—for I offered, in my letters to the senate, to lay down my arms, if Pompey at the same time would lay down his, and leave the republic in freedom. Nor did I resolve to draw the sword, till not only the senate, overpowered by the fear of Pompey and his troops, had rejected these offers, but two tribunes of the people, for legally and justly interposing their authority in my behalf, had been forced to fly from Rome, disguised in the habit of slaves, and take refuge in my camp, for the safety of their persons. My camp was therefore the asylum of persecuted liberty; and my army fought to avenge the violation of the rights and majesty of the people, as much as to defend the dignity of their general unjustly oppressed.

S C I P I O.

You would therefore have me think, that you contended for the equality and liberty of the Romans, against the tyranny of Pompey and his lawless adherents. In such a war I myself, if I had lived in your times, would have willingly been your lieutenant. Tell me then, on the issue of this honourable enterprize, when you had subdued all your foes, and had no opposition remaining to obstruct your intentions, did you establish that liberty for which you fought? did you restore the republic to what it was in my time?

C Æ S A R.

I took the necessary measures to secure to myself the fruits of my victories; and gave a head to the empire, which could neither subsist without one, nor find another so well suited to the greatness of the body.



S C I P I O.

There the true character of Cæsar was seen unmasked.—You had managed so skilfully in the measures which preceded the civil war, your offers were so specious, and there appeared so much violence in the conduct of your enemies, that, if you had fallen in that war, posterity might have doubted, whether you were not a victim to the interests of your country. But your success, and the despotism you afterwards exercised, took off those disguises, and shewed clearly, that the aim of all your actions was tyranny.

C Æ S A R.

Let us not deceive ourselves with *sounds* and *names*.—That great minds should aspire to sovereign power, is a fixed law of nature. It is an injury to mankind, if the highest abilities are not placed in the highest stations. Had you, Scipio, been kept down by the republican jealousy of Cato the censor, Hannibal would have never been recalled out of Italy, nor defeated in Africk. And if I had not been treacherously murdered by the daggers of Brutus and Cassius, my sword would have avenged the defeat of Crassus, and added the empire of Parthia to that of Rome. Nor was my government tyrannical. It was mild, humane, and bounteous. The world would have been happy under it, and wished its continuance: but my death broke the pillars of the public tranquillity, and brought upon the whole empire a direful scene of calamity and confusion.

S C I P I O.

You say that great minds will naturally aspire to sovereign power. But, if they are *good*, as well as *great*, they will regulate their ambition by the laws of their country. The laws of Rome permitted me to aspire to the conduct of the war against Carthage; but they did not permit you to turn her arms against herself, and subject her to your will. The breach  
of



of one law of liberty is a greater evil to a nation than the loss of a province; and, in my opinion, the conquest of the whole world would not be enough to compensate for the total loss of their freedom.

CÆSAR.

You talk finely, Africanus—but ask yourself, whether the height and dignity of your mind, that noble pride which accompanies the magnanimity of a hero, could always stoop to a nice conformity with the laws of your country? is there a law of liberty more essential, more sacred, than that which obliges every member of a free community to submit himself to a trial, upon a legal charge brought against him for a public misdemeanour? in what manner did you answer a regular accusation from a tribune of the people, who charged you with embezzling the money of the state? You told your judges, that *on that day you had vanquished Hannibal and Carthage*, and bade them *follow you to the temples to give thanks to the gods*. Nor could you ever be brought to stand a legal trial, or justify those accounts, which you had torn in the senate, when they were questioned there by two magistrates in the name of the Roman people. Was this acting like the subject of a free state? Had your victory procured you an exemption from justice? had it given into your hands the money of the republic without account? If it had, you were *king of Rome*. Pharsalia, Thapsus, and Munda, could do no more for me.

SCIPIO.

I did not question the right of bringing me to a trial, but I disdained to plead in vindication of a character so unspotted as mine. My whole life had been an answer to that infamous charge.

CÆSAR.

It may be so: and, for my part, I admire the magnanimity of your behaviour. But I should condemn it as repugnant and destructive



destructive to liberty, if I did not pay more respect to the dignity of a great general, than to the forms of a democracy, or the rights of a tribune.

SCIPIO.

You are endeavouring to confound my cause with your's; but they are exceedingly different. You apprehended a sentence of condemnation against you for some part of your conduct, and, to prevent it, made an impious war on your country, and reduced her to servitude. I trusted the justification of my affronted innocence to the opinion of my judges, scorning to plead for myself against a charge unsupported by any other proof than bare suspicions and surmises. But I made no resistance: I kindled no civil war: I left Rome undisturbed in the enjoyment of her liberty. Had the malice of my accusers been ever so violent, had it threatened my destruction, I should have chosen much rather to turn my sword against my own bosom, than against that of my country.

CÆSAR.

You beg the question in supposing that I really hurt my country by giving her a master. When Cato advised the senate to make Pompey *sole consul*, he did it upon this principle, *that any kind of government is preferable to anarchy*. The truth of this, I presume, no man of sense will contest; and the anarchy, which that zealous defender of liberty so much apprehended, would have continued in Rome, if that power, which the urgent necessity of the state conferred upon me, had not removed it.

SCIPIO.

Pompey and you had brought that anarchy on the state, in order to serve your own ends. It was owing to the corruption, the factions, and the violence, which you had encouraged, from an opinion that the senate would be forced to submit to an absolute power in your hands, as a remedy against those intol-



rable evils. But Cato judged well in thinking it eligible to make Pompey *sole consul* rather than you *dictator*; because experience had shewn, that Pompey respected the forms of the Roman constitution, and, though he fought, by bad means as well as good, to obtain the highest magistracies, and the most honourable commands, yet he laid them down again, and contented himself with remaining superior in credit to any other citizen.

C Æ S A R.

If all the difference between my ambition and Pompey's was only, as you represent it, in a greater or less respect for *the forms of the constitution*, I think it was hardly becoming such a patriot as Cato to take part in our quarrel, much less to kill himself rather than yield to my power.

S C I P I O.

It is easier to revive *the spirit of liberty* in a government where the *forms* of it remain unchanged, than where they have been totally disregarded and abolished. But I readily own, that the balance of the Roman constitution had been destroyed by the excessive and illegal authority, which the people were induced to confer upon Pompey, before any extraordinary honours or commands had been demanded by you. And that, I think, your best excuse.

C Æ S A R.

Yes surely.—The favourers of the *Manilian law* had an ill grace in desiring to limit the commissions I obtained from the people, according to the rigour of certain obsolete republican laws, no more regarded in my time than the Sybilline oracles, or the pious institutions of Numa.

S C I P I O.

It was the misfortune of your time that they were not regarded. A virtuous man would not take from a deluded people such favours as they ought not to bestow. I have a right to  
say



say this, because I chid the Roman people, when, over-heated by gratitude for the services I had done them, they desired to make me *perpetual consul* and *dictator*. Hear this, and blush.—<sup>Livius, l. lxxxviii. Scet. 56.</sup> What I refused to accept, you snatched by force.

C E S A R.

Tiberius Gracchus reproached you with the inconsistency of your conduct, when, after refusing these offers, you so little respected the Tribunitian authority. But thus it must happen. We are naturally fond of the idea of liberty, till we come to suffer by it, or find it an impediment to some predominant passion; and then we wish to controul it, as you did most despotically, by refusing to submit to the justice of the state.

S C I P I O.

I have answered before to that charge. Tiberius Gracchus himself, though my personal enemy, thought it became him to stop the proceedings against me; not for my sake, but for the honour of my country, whose dignity suffered with mine. Nevertheless I acknowledge, my conduct in that business was not absolutely blameless. The generous pride of virtue was too strong in my mind. It made me forget I was creating a dangerous precedent, in declining to plead to a legal accusation, brought against me by a magistrate invested with the majesty of the whole Roman people. It made me unjustly accuse my country of ingratitude, when she had shewn herself grateful even beyond the true bounds of policy and justice, by not inflicting upon me any penalty for so irregular a proceeding. But, at the same time, what a proof did I give of moderation, and respect for her liberty, when my utmost resentment could impel me to nothing more violent than a voluntary retreat, and quiet banishment of myself from the city of Rome! Scipio Africanus offended, and living a private man, in a country-house at Liternum, was an example of more use to secure the

Y y y

equality



## DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD,

equality of the Roman commonwealth, than all the power of its tribunes.

CÆSAR.

I had rather have been thrown down the Tarpeian rock, than have retired, as you did, to the obscurity of a village, after acting the first part on the greatest theatre of the world.

SCIPIO.

An usurper exalted on the highest throne of the universe is not so glorious as I was in that obscure retirement. I hear indeed, that you, Cæsar, have been *deified* by the flattery of some of your successors. But the impartial judgement of history has consecrated my name, and ranks me in the first class of heroes and patriots: whereas the highest praise her records, even under the dominion usurped by your family, have given to you, is, that your courage and talents were equal to the object your ambition aspired to, the empire of the world; and that you exercised a sovereignty unjustly acquired with a magnanimous clemency. But it would have been better for your country, and better for mankind, if you had never existed.



## DIALOGUE XXX.

PLATO—DIOGENES.

DIOGENES.

PLATO, stand off.—A true philosopher, as I was, is no company for a courtier of the tyrant of Syracuse. I would avoid you, as one infected with the most noisome of plagues, the plague of slavery.

PLATO.

He, who can mistake a brutal pride and savage indecency of manners for freedom, may naturally think that the being in a

court