

History Reading #3 – From Alexander to Cleopatra

[In the year 401 B.C. the Persian prince Cyrus II conspired to overthrow his brother, King Artaxerxes II, and enlisted Greek mercenary soldiers to fight for him. Xenophon the Athenian, who was a participant in this operation, wrote the Anabasis in which he tells us the story of the march of the ten thousand Greek soldiers of Cyrus from Sardis to Babylon and their return to the Black Sea. It was in the early days of this campaign, when the army had camped at Tyriaeum, that Queen Epyaxa, wife of King Syennesis of Cilicia, asked the Persian prince to display his soldiers for her. The following excerpt clearly illustrates the martial spirit and smartness of ancient Greek soldiers.]

Greek Professional Soldiers – The Army of Cyrus II: Xenophon, Anabasis, 1.3.14-18

The Queen of Cilicia is said to have asked Cyrus to show her his army. To satisfy her request he staged on the plain a review both of his Greek and Asian troops. The Greeks were ordered to march in their regular battle array with each of their commanders marshalling his own men. They paraded in units four men deep, Meno and his regiment being on the right wing, Clearchus with his on the left, while the other commanders were placed in the centre.

Cyrus began with a review of the Asian soldiers who marched past in columns of cavalry and squadrons of foot soldiers and then proceeded to the inspection of the Greeks, driving by in an open carriage while the Queen drove in a closed one. All the troops paraded in helmets of bronze, wearing purple tunics, and with their shields uncovered. After driving along the entire length of the line, he halted his carriage in front of its centre and dispatched his interpreter Pigres to the commanders of the Greeks with orders to present arms and advanced along the entire front. The commanders conveyed the orders to their men who, with the sound of the trumpet, presented arms and advanced. But as their pace accelerated and they began to cheer, the troops broke into a march at double time toward the camp, a sight which caused such a panic among the Asians that the Queen fled in her carriage. Even the sutlers ran away, leaving their wares behind. By the time they arrived at the camp the Greeks were unable to control their laughter.

The smartness and the discipline of the troops amazed the Queen, while the fear which the Greeks had inspired in the Asians delighted Cyrus.

[The Sacred Band was an elite corps of the Theban army formed by Gorgidas in 378 B.C. and used mostly as shock troops. It was largely responsible for the brief period of Theban hegemony in Greece following the battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C. On that occasion it fought under the command of Pelopidas and on the left wing of the army of Epaminondas, which defeated the Spartans and killed their king, Cleombrotus. The Sacred Band had the distinction of never losing a battle until Philip of Macedon demolished the combined armies of Thebes and Athens at Chaeronea in 338 B.C.]

The Theban Sacred Band: Plutarch, Pelopidas, 18

According to some authorities, Gorgidas first formed the Sacred Band out of three hundred picked men who were encamped on the citadel and were provided by the city with everything necessary for their maintenance and exercise. They were called the city band, for citadels were once known as cities. Others, however, claim that the band was made up of young men attached to each other by bonds of love, and a witty saying of Pammenes is recorded, that Nestor in Homer was not displaying a great tactical skill when he suggested that the Greeks should rank tribe with tribe and clan with clan “so that tribe may aid tribe, and clan aid clan” – he should have suggested that lovers be ranked with their beloved. This is because kinsmen and members of the same tribe do not care much for each other in times of danger, while a unit of men united by the friendship of lovers is unbreakable and invincible, since a lover is ashamed to display cowardice in front of his beloved and, as a consequence, both face danger willingly in order to protect one another. This is not surprising in view of the fact that they have more regard for the opinions of their absent lovers than for those who are present. This is revealed in the case of a man who, when he was about to be killed, earnestly begged his adversary to cut him through the breast, so that his lover might not be embarrassed by seeing him wounded in the back. Likewise, Iolaus, the man who fought at the side of Heracles and assisted him in his labours, was his lover, according to tradition; in fact, Aristotle has recorded that even in his own time lovers gave pledges of their faith on the tomb of Iolaus. This may well be the reason that this band was called sacred, for Plato calls a lover a divine friend. It is also said that the Sacred Band was never beaten before the battle of Chaeronea and that, after the battle, when Philip examined the corpses of the slain and halted at the place where the three hundred who had fought his phalanx lay, all mingled together, dead, he was astonished, and on realizing that this was the Band of lovers, he shed tears and uttered: “Destroy anyone who suspects these men of doing or suffering anything ignoble.”

[This famous inscription on the statue of Epaminondas has been preserved in the work of Pausanias, a second century A.D. traveler and writer of guidebooks. It records the most important achievements of Epaminondas, the founder of Theban hegemony in Greece, namely his military triumph over Sparta, his creation of an independent Messenia and a free Arcadia, and his emancipation of the Greeks from Spartan oppression.]

An Inscription on a Statue of Epaminondas: Pausanias, Description of Greece, 9.15.5

Because of my counsel Sparta has been shorn of glory,
holy Messene receives her children after many years,
Megalopolis has been crowned with the weapons of Thebes
and all of Greece governs itself in freedom!

The Corinthian Congress – The End of Greek Independence: Diodorus, Historical Library, 16.89

[After the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C., when the combined forces of Athens and Thebes were demolished by Philip II and resistance against the Macedonian king collapsed, a congress of the new Hellenic League was called at Corinth, where Philip announced his plans to invade Persia. In essence, the Corinthian congress marked the end of an era, for the once independent Greek city-states were now brought under the sway of a single ruler.]

At this time [337/6 B.C.] King Philip, proudly aware of the significance of his victory at Chaeronea and of the fact that he had astounded the most important of the Greek city-states, aspired to become the leader of all Greece. He circulated the word that he wanted to fight the Persians for the sake of the Greeks and to punish them for the violation of the temples, and so he won the goodwill of the Greeks. He treated everyone with kindness and consideration, both privately and in public, and declared to the city-states that he wanted to confer with them on matters of common interest. As a consequence, a general congress was held at Corinth where he spoke about the war against the Persians and, by raising great hopes, won over the delegates. After the Greeks had elected him general plenipotentiary of Greece, he began great preparations for his campaign against the Persians. Then, having decided on the number of soldiers which each city-state should contribute to the alliance, he returned to Macedonia.

Marriage and Politics – The Case of Philip II of Macedon: Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, XIII 557b-e

Philip of Macedon certainly did not bring women along with him in his wars, as did Darius, the king deposed by Alexander who, while fighting for his very survival, had with him three hundred and sixty concubines, as Dicaearchus relates in the third book of his *Life of Greece*. Philip, however, always married before fighting a new war. As Satyrus writes in his *Life of Philip*, in the twenty-two years of his reign he married Andata of Illyria and had by her a daughter, Cynna, and he also married Phila, the sister of Derdas and Machatas. Desiring to appropriate for himself the Thessalian nation, he had children by two women of Thessaly, one of whom was Nicesipolis of Pherae, who bore him Thettalonice, and the other Philinna of Larissa, by whom he fathered Arrhidaeus. Likewise, he came to possess the kingdom of the Molossians through his marriage to Olympias, by whom he fathered Alexander and Cleopatra. And again, when he conquered Thrace, the Thracian king Cothelas came to him bringing his daughter Meda and many presents. Philip married her, thus taking another wife besides Olympias. After this he married the sister of Hippostratus and niece of Attalus, Cleopatra, with whom he had fallen in love. But Philip threw his whole life into chaos by bringing her over to take the place of Olympias. For shortly thereafter, during the wedding celebration, Attalus remarked: "Now, indeed, real kings, not bastards, will be born." When Alexander heard this he threw the goblet that he held in his hand at Attalus, who responded by hurling his own cup at him. After this episode, Olympias fled to the land of the Molossians, while Alexander fled to Illyria.

Alexander and Oecumene: Plutarch, *On the Fortune of Alexander*, Discourse I, 5-8

First of all, consider, if you will, a paradox concerning the difference between the students of Alexander and those of Plato and Socrates. The two philosophers instructed men who had been blessed with natural gifts and who spoke the same language. Thus, if nothing else, they at least understood Greek. And yet Plato and Socrates did not persuade many of them to follow their teachings. Instead, their pupils – Critias, Alcibiades and Cleitophon – spat out their teachings like the bit of a bridle and turned away from the right path in life.

But if you look at the instruction given by Alexander you will see that he taught the Hyrcanians to marry and instructed the Arachosians in the art of agriculture. He

persuaded the Sogdians to take care of their parents instead of killing them, and the Persians to honour their mothers rather than marry them. O wondrous philosophy! Through you the Indians came to revere the gods of the Greeks, and by your power the Scythians began to bury their dead, and no longer ate them. We marvel at the power of Carneades, who Hellenized Cleitomachus, a Carthaginian formerly known as Hasdrubal. We stand in awe of Zeno, who convinced Diogenes the Babylonian to become a philosopher. But when Alexander civilized Asia her people began to read Homer, and the children of the Persians, Susianians and Gedrosians recited the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. Socrates was convicted by the testimony of slanderers when he was brought to trial on the charge of introducing foreign deities in Athens, but through Alexander Bactria and the Caucasus learned to worship the gods of Greece. Plato wrote a book about the ideal constitution, but no one was persuaded to put its principles into practice because of their severity. Alexander, on the other hand, founded more than seventy cities among the barbarian tribes, sowed all Asia with Greek institutions, and thereby put an end to the savage and brutal way of life in that place. Only a few of us have read Plato's *Laws*, but countless thousands of men have obeyed, and continue to obey, the laws promulgated by Alexander. Those peoples who were subdued by him are more fortunate than those who escaped, for the conqueror caused the former to be happy, but the latter had no one to free them from a way of life that made them miserable. And so it is quite appropriate to cite here a saying of Themistocles, who received great gifts from King Artaxerxes of Persia when he was in exile in that land. These gifts included three cities from which he received tribute, one of them supplying him with wheat, another with wine, and yet another with meat. When he had taken possession of these cities Themistocles said, "My children, if we had not already been undone this would be our undoing." This statement might be applied more justly to the peoples conquered by Alexander, for they would never have been civilized if he had not subdued them. Egypt would not have Alexandria; Mesopotamia would be without Seleucia; Sogdiana would not have Prophthasia; India would not have its Bucephalia; and the Caucasus would be without that Greek city [i.e., Alexandria in the Caucasus] which lies close by. It was by living as citizens of these cities that the wildness of the conquered peoples was extinguished, and the inferior qualities in each of them were improved through familiarity with better ways of life. Indeed, since philosophers pride themselves most on their ability to refine the harsh and boorish aspects of human nature, Alexander, who has manifestly reformed the bestial natures of countless nations, may quite reasonably be considered a great philosopher.

Zeno, the philosopher who founded the Stoic sect, wrote the popularly acclaimed *Republic*, a work whose substance is expressed by this one point: we should not live in such a way that we are divided by cities and towns and their different conceptions of justice, but

should think of all humankind as constituting a single people and a single polity and sharing a common life and society, just as a flock of sheep graze together in a common pasture. When Zeno wrote this it was as though he was committing to writing an image from a dream, an image of a state built on good laws and philosophy. And yet it was not Zeno, but Alexander, who transformed the written word into a reality. Alexander did not take the advice of Aristotle, who urged him to be a leader to the Greeks and a master to the barbarians, to care for the former as friends and relatives while treating the latter as if they were only animals or plants. If he had followed this advice his leadership would have been undermined by many wars, banishments and rebellions. But Alexander believed that he had been sent by the gods to bring the whole world together as its governor and arbiter, and whenever a people was not convinced by reason to join with the others he subdued them by the power of his weapons, thereby uniting all peoples from all places. And then, as if blending them together in a cup of friendship, he mixed together their lives, customs, marriages and ways of life. He decreed that every man should regard the whole of the inhabited world as his native country, consider his camp as a fortress guaranteeing his safety, think of all good men as members of his family, and regard only the evil as foreigners. He desired that no one should identify another as Greek or barbarian on the basis of such insignificant criteria as his cloak, shield, sword and garment, but that a man should be considered a Greek if he is virtuous and a barbarian if he shows himself to be wicked. And it was his wish, too, that customs, foods, marriages and ways of life should be the same everywhere, mixed together by the mingling of blood and children. When Demaratus the Corinthian (one of Philip's good friends) saw Alexander in Susa he was overjoyed and said that the Greeks who had died before then had been robbed of a great delight, for they had not seen Alexander sitting on the throne of Darius. But, by the gods, I do not envy those who beheld this sight. It was, after all, only something brought about by Fortune, a thing common to all kings. No, I think I would rather have been present at that beautiful and sacred wedding when a hundred Persian brides and a hundred Macedonian and Greek bridegrooms stood within a single golden tent and at a common hearth and table. Alexander himself, crowned with a wreath of flowers, began the chanting of the wedding hymn, and it was as if he was singing a song of friendship between the two greatest and most powerful nations in the world. He was the bridegroom of one bride, but for all the others he assumed the roles of escort, father and marriage-arranger as he united them with their grooms in wedlock. Had I been there to behold this sight I would have been overcome with happiness and shouted, "O barbaric and foolish Xerxes, who worked so hard and so senselessly to bridge the Hellespont! Wise kings do not join Asia to Europe with boards or planks, nor with ties which are inanimate and without feelings; no, nations are joined together by the bonds of love sanctioned by law, wise marriages, and sharing in the begetting of children."

With this in mind Alexander gave much thought to styles of dress and preferred Persian clothing to Median, since the Persian was plain and simple. Indeed, he had no use for the strange and ostentatious styles of the foreigners such as the headdress, the flowing robe and trousers. Thus, according to the account of Eratosthenes, he wore a combination of Persian and Macedonian fashions. Of course, since he was a philosopher he was not much concerned with what he wore; but, as the leader and philanthropic king of many conquered peoples, he sought to cultivate their goodwill by showing his respect for their various forms of dress so that they would remain firm in their love for the Macedonians as rulers instead of hating them as enemies. This attitude set him in direct opposition to the stupid and vain men who admire tunics of solid colour and turn their noses up at those with purple borders, or perhaps scorn the former while approving of the latter. Men such as these are like foolish children who cling tenaciously to whatever kind of clothing the custom of their country, like a child's nurse, has dressed them in. Now, when men go off to hunt wild beasts they dress themselves in deerskins, and when they want to snare birds they wear chitons covered with feathers; similarly, they make sure that bulls do not see them when they are dressed in red, or elephants when their clothes are white, for these animals are provoked to anger when they see these colours. How, then, can we criticize a great king who takes advantage of this same principle when he attempts to civilize stubborn and warlike peoples and succeeds in calming and controlling them simply by wearing clothes which they know and like, taming them by living as they do? Shouldn't we be impressed by the wisdom of a man who, by making a minor change in the way he dressed, made himself the leader of all Asia, a man who triumphed over the bodies of the foreigners by force of arms but won their hearts with his clothes? How strange it is that men are in awe of Socrates' disciple Aristippus because he managed to project an aura of elegance whether he wore a worn out cloak or a Milesian robe, and yet blame Alexander for respecting the dress of conquered peoples along with that of his native land while he was building a great empire. He did not trample on Asia like a robber or ransack and pillage it as if the land had been given to him as booty and loot by an unexpected stroke of luck. This was how Hannibal behaved when he invaded Italy, and the Treres when they despoiled Ionia, and the Scythians when they fell upon Media. But Alexander's wish was to unite all the earth under one law of reason and a single government, and to make all human beings members of one nation. Indeed, he directed his every action toward this goal.

If the god who sent the soul of Alexander down into the world had not called it back so quickly all men would now be governed by one law and would look to a single form of justice as if to a light shining on them all. But this was not to be, and so a part of the earth remains without sun – that part which never saw Alexander.

Character Sketches: Theophrastus, Characters, 12 and 16

12

Tactlessness is bad timing, timing so bad that it is painful. Your tactless man will accost a busy friend and ask him for advice, or serenade his girlfriend when she is in bed with a fever. He will approach someone who has posted bail and lost it and ask him to post bail for him, and will guarantee for the court the correctness of his earlier testimony only after the verdict is given. Invite him to a wedding and he will badmouth women. Return from a long journey and he will invite you out for a walk. He will bring you a second party willing to pay a higher price when you have just struck a deal with the first and will rise from his seat to tell once again a story that everyone present has heard a hundred times before. He eagerly commits you to doing what you don't want to do but cannot graciously decline. On the day you make a sacrifice of a victim you could barely afford he drops by to ask for the money you owe him. He stands there, while you flog your servant, and tells you that one of his own servants hanged himself after just such a flogging. At an arbitration he sets at odds the parties who were on the verge of reconciliation, and when he wants to dance he grabs a partner who is not yet drunk.

16

Superstitiousness, it goes without saying, appears to be a kind of cowardness with respect to the divine. Your superstitious man will not so much as walk out of his front door in the morning until he has washed his hands and sprinkled himself at the Nine Springs and put a piece of bay leaf from a temple into his mouth. If a cat crosses his path he will go no further until someone else has gone by or he has thrown three stones across the street. If he notices a red snake in his house he will pray to Sabazius; if it is a sacred snake he will build a temple then and there. When he comes upon one of the smooth stones set up at a crossroads he anoints it with oil from his flask and will not continue his journey until he has gone down on his knees and worshiped it. If a mouse gnaws a hole in his pouch of barley cakes he will go to a seer and ask what he should do; if the answer is "have the shoemaker patch it," he will ignore the advice and free himself from contamination by performing the rites of aversion. He is constantly purifying his house, explaining that Hecate has been there. If owls hoot while he is abroad he is greatly upset and will not go a step further until he has shouted "Athena, protect me!" He will not set foot on a grave or go near a corpse or a woman in childbirth lest he be polluted. On the fourth and seventh days of each month he serves mulled wine to his household and goes out shopping for

myrtle branches, frankincense and holy pictures; when he returns he spends the entire day offering sacrifices to the Hermaphrodites and placing garlands around them. He has never had a dream that he has not taken to an interpreter, prophet or augur to ask which god or goddess he should appease, and when he is preparing to be inducted into the sacred order of Orpheus he visits the priests each month with his wife or, if she does not have the time, with his children and their nurse. He always seems to be on his way to the seashore to sprinkle himself, and whenever he sees one of those garlic-wreathed images of Hecate at the crossroads he runs home to wash his head and call the priestesses who purify him by walking around him with a squill or a puppy. If he catches sight of a madman or an epileptic he shudders and spits on his chest.

Diogenes the Cynic and the Simple Life: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 6.20-78

When he came to Athens (from Sinope) he approached Antisthenes, and though he was turned away by him because he did not accept pupils, Diogenes eventually managed to force the issue by persisting. Once, when Antisthenes raised his staff against him, he offered his head and said, "Strike, for you will never find a piece of wood hard enough to keep me away from you as long as it appears to me that you have something important to say." After that he became his pupil and, being an exile, began to practice a simple life.

Theophrastus tells us in his Megarean dialogue that, having observed a mouse running here and there, neither searching for a place to lie down nor fearing the dark or desiring any of the things people consider enjoyable, he found a way to cope with his environment.

According to some authorities he was the first man to fold his cloak, for he had to sleep in it as well as wear it; he carried with him a wallet in which he kept his victuals; and he used any place for any function, for eating breakfast, for sleeping or for conversation.

Sometimes, pointing to the porch of Zeus and the Hall of Processions, he would say that the Athenians had furnished him with places to live. He leaned upon a staff only when he grew infirm; he carried it everywhere, not only in the city, but also on the road, along with his wallet.

Once he had written to someone asking him to try to provide him with a small house, but when the man was slow to respond he took as his residence the tub in the Metroön, as he himself makes clear in his letters. And he would roll in hot sand in the summer and in the

winter he would embrace snow-covered statues, making every effort to accustom himself to hardship.

He was skilful in ridiculing other people. The *schole* [school] of Euclides he called *chole* [bile] and Plato's *diatribe* [lecture] he called *katatribe* [waste of time]. He characterized the performances of the Dionysia as great marvels for fools and the demagogues as servants of the mob. He would also say that when he saw steersmen and physicians and philosophers at work, he thought man to be the most intelligent of the animals; on the other hand, when he saw interpreters of dreams and seers and those who paid attention to them, or those who were swelled with conceit and wealth, he considered no animal to be more foolish. And he always used to say that to prepare for life one needs either reason or a halter....

When he was asked in what part of Greece he saw good men he said, "men nowhere, but boys in Sparta." Once, when he was discussing important matters and nobody was paying attention to him, he began to whistle; as people gathered around him he reproached them for being so quickly drawn to nonsense, and so slowly attracted by important issues. He used to say that men try hard and undergo all sorts of preparations in order to excel in athletic contests, but nobody tries hard to become a truly good man.

He was amazed that scholars should investigate the shortcomings of Odysseus while ignoring their own. And he marvelled that musicians should tune the strings of their lyres while leaving the temper of their souls in disarray; also that mathematicians should observe the sun and the moon, while overlooking matters of everyday life.

To those who told him, "You are old, take it easy," he replied, "What? If I were competing in the long distance course at the stadium ought I to slow down at the end of the race? Shouldn't I rather put on speed?"

Once, when he saw a child drinking out of his hands, he threw away the cup from his wallet saying, "A child has given me a lesson in plain living." Likewise, he discarded his bowl when he observed a child who, having broken his place picked up his lentils with the hollow part of a piece of bread. He would also reason as follows: "All things are of the gods. The wise are friends of the gods, and friends hold things in common. Therefore, everything belongs to the wise."

But he was loved by the Athenians. When a child once broke up his tub, they punished him with a flogging and furnished Diogenes with another tub. After the battle of Chaeronea, as Dionysius the Stoic says, he was arrested and brought before Philip; and when he was asked who he was, he replied, "A spy on your greed." He was admired for his reply, and was released.

There was a husky harp player who was criticized by all and praised only by Diogenes. When he was asked why, Diogenes said, "Because, although he is of such enormous size, he plays his harp and doesn't rob people."

When he was asked why athletes are so senseless he replied, "Because they are built up of the flesh of pigs and oxen." Once he was begging aloud from a statue, and when he was asked why he replied, "I am learning how to accept failure."

He considered good men to be images of the gods, and love the pastime of the idle. Being asked what is wretched in life, he said, "An old man without means of support."

When someone asked him, "In your opinion, what kind of man is Diogenes?" he replied, "A Socrates gone mad." When asked what was the best time to marry, he said, "If you are a young man, not yet, if an old man, never at all."

Once he saw a youngster blushing. "Courage," he said, "this is the colour of virtue."

On being asked what kind of wine he enjoyed drinking, he replied, "The kind for which others pay." When he was asked why people give money to beggars but not to philosophers, he said, "Because they fear that they may become lame or blind someday, but they never expect to become philosophers." He was begging of a miser once, and when the latter was slow to oblige him, he said, "My good man, I am asking you for food, not for burial expenses."

When he was asked what benefits he had gained from philosophy, he said, "If nothing else, how to be prepared for any eventuality." When asked where he had come from, he replied, "I am a *cosmopolites* [citizen of the world]."

When he was asked if death is a bad thing, he said, "Why should death be bad when we are not aware of its presence?" When Alexander stood in front of him and asked, "Don't you fear me?" he said, "What are you, a good or an evil force?" "Good," Alexander replied. "Who, then, fears the good?" said Diogenes. "Education," he proclaimed, "is a moderating influence on the young, a consolation to the old, wealth to the poor, and an embellishment to the rich."

It is said that Diogenes died when he was nearly ninety years old. There are several versions of his death. Some say that he ate a raw octopus and was afflicted with colic, which caused his death. Others, however, say that he held his breath and died voluntarily. His pupils erected a pillar over his grave and placed a statue of a dog made of Parian marble on top of it. Afterward, the citizens also honoured him with bronze statues on which they inscribed the following:

Even bronze ages with time, but your glory, Diogenes, defies all eternity.

For you alone showed to mortals the glory of self-sufficiency and the easiest way of life.

Hipparchia of Maroneia – A Cynic Philosopher: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 6.96-98

She fell in love with the philosophy and the lifestyle of Crates and would not pay deference to any of her suitors, ignoring their wealth, their high birth, and their physical beauty. To her, Crates was everything. She even threatened her parents that she would kill herself if she were not given to him in marriage. They begged Crates to dissuade the girl, and he tried his best. But in the end, being unable to persuade her, he stood up, took off his clothes in front of her and said, "This is the bridegroom and these are his possessions. Consider them before you make your decision, for you will not become my companion if you do not accept my pursuits."

The girl made her choice and, adopting his form of dress, she followed her husband and lived with him openly, often going out to dinners with him. Once, when she came to a banquet offered by Lysimachus, she put Theodorus, called the atheist, in his place by proposing the following sophism: "Whatever Theodorus does which cannot be characterized as wrong cannot be called wrong if done by Hipparchia. Theodorus does no wrong when he strikes himself; therefore, neither is Hipparchia guilty of wrongdoing when she strikes Theodorus." He had nothing to offer in reply to this argument, but tried to pull up her cloak. Hipparchia was neither astounded nor perturbed, as is natural in a woman. And when he asked: "Is this really she who gave up the weaver's comb and loom?" she replied, "Yes, it is I, Theodorus. Do you think that I have been badly advised if, instead of wasting my time working at the loom, I pursue an education?" These and countless other tales are told of the female philosopher.

Epicurus – "Letter to Pythocles"

Epicurus to Pythocles, greeting:

In your letter to me, of which Cleon was the bearer, you continue to show me affection which I have merited by my devotion to you, and you try, not without success, to recall the

considerations which make for a happy life. To aid your memory you ask me for a clear and concise statement respecting celestial phenomena; for what we have written on this subject elsewhere is, you tell me, hard to remember, although you have my books constantly with you. I was glad to receive your request and am full of pleasant expectations. We will then complete our writing and grant all you ask. Many others besides you will find these reasonings useful, and especially those who have but recently made acquaintance with the true story of nature and those who are attached to pursuits which go deeper than any part of ordinary education. So you will do well to take and learn them and get them up quickly along with the short epitome in my letter to Herodotus.

In the first place, remember that, like everything else, knowledge of celestial phenomena, whether taken along with other things or in isolation, has no other end in view than peace of mind and firm convictions. We do not seek to wrest by force what is impossible, nor to understand all matters equally well, nor make our treatment always as clear as when we discuss human life or explain the principles of physics in general—for instance, that the whole of being consists of bodies and intangible nature, or that the ultimate elements of things are indivisible, or any other proposition which admits only one explanation of the phenomena to be possible. But this is not the case with celestial phenomena: these at any rate admit of manifold causes for their occurrence and manifold accounts, none of them contradictory of sensation, of their nature.

For in the study of nature we must not conform to empty assumptions and arbitrary laws, but follow the promptings of the facts; for our life has no need now of unreason and false opinion; our one need is untroubled existence. All things go on uninterruptedly, if all be explained by the method of plurality of causes in conformity with the facts, so soon as we duly understand what may be plausibly alleged respecting them. But when we pick and choose among them, rejecting one equally consistent with the phenomena, we clearly fall away from the study of nature altogether and tumble into myth. Some phenomena within our experience afford evidence by which we may interpret what goes on in the heavens. We see how the former really take place, but not how the celestial phenomena take place, for their occurrence may possibly be due to a variety of causes. However, we must observe each fact as presented, and further separate from it all the facts presented along with it, the occurrence of which from various causes is not contradicted by facts within our experience.

A Late Greek Stoic of the Roman Empire – Epictetus of Hierapolis: Selected Fragments

A human life at the mercy of Fortune resembles a torrent: it is turbulent and muddy, difficult to cross, moody, noisy and short.

When a soul resides with Virtue it resembles a spring that flows forever. It is like a pure, clear and wholesome drink – sweet, rich and plentiful – that causes neither injury nor destruction.

It is a disgrace that people who sweeten their drinks with honey, the gift of the bee, should also embitter Reason, the gift of God, with vice.

The eyes of the dead are picked out by ravens only when the dead no longer need them. Flatterers, on the other hand, injure the soul of the living and blind the soul's eyes.

Do not carry a sharp knife or an undisciplined, loose tongue.

Man has been endowed by Nature with two ears but only one tongue so that he may listen to others twice before he speaks once.

Do not pronounce judgement in any court before you have been judged yourself in the tribunal of Justice.

It is a disgrace for a judge to be judged by laymen.

The shorter and nobler life is in every way preferable to a life which is longer, but less noble and devoid of accomplishments.

The name of virtue is freedom, that of vice, slavery. No person whose acts are free is really a slave!

Pleasures enjoyed most infrequently give the greatest satisfaction.

Act in excess and the greatest pleasures become the least pleasurable.

An ape's wrath and a flatterer's threat should be treated with equal consideration.

Control your passions, for they will avenge themselves on you.

Free is the man who is a master of himself.

A ship should not rely on one anchor nor a human life on a single hope.

Strengthen yourself with self-satisfaction, for it is an unconquerable defense.

A person who loves money, pleasure and glory cannot also love humanity; only those who love things fair and good are lovers of humanity.

The thought of God should come to you more frequently than breath.

One should adopt the noblest way of life, for custom can make it pleasurable to those who follow it.

Daily renewal of your talk of God should take precedence over the renewal of your supply of meat and drink.

As the Sun needs no prayers and songs to rise in the sky, but sends forth its warmth and brightness and is beloved by all, so you also should not need applause and loud praise to perform your duty. Do good of your own volition and you will be loved like the Sun.

No one can be loved by someone incapable of loving.

If only you could remember that God is standing near you to observe and evaluate all of your needs, bodily and spiritual, you would certainly abstain from all errors in prayer or action, and God would be with you.

An Ancient Copernicus – Aristarchus of Samos: Archimedes, *Sandreckoner* (ed. Heiberg, II, 218.7-18)

Aristarchus of Samos published certain writings consisting of some hypotheses, and in these writings it appears that he makes the assumption that the universe is many times larger than we now conceive it to be. He hypothesizes that the fixed stars and the sun remain unmoved, that the earth revolves around the sun in a circular path, the sun being situated in the middle of the orbit, and that the sphere of the fixed stars, located around the same centre as the sun, is of such great size that the circle in which he hypothesizes the earth to revolve has such a proportion to the distance of the fixed stars as the centre of the sphere has to its surface.

Eratosthenes Measures the Circumference of the Earth: Cleomedes, *On the Circular Motion of the Heavenly Bodies*, I. 10.52

...Such, then are the means which Posidonius first employed to measure the size of the earth, but the approach of Eratosthenes is based on a geometric method and appears to be somewhat more obscure. His sayings will become clear, however, with these

presuppositions: first, let us assume here again that Syene and Alexandria are located under the same meridian circle; second, that the distance separating these two cities is 5000 stades; third, that the rays emitted from different parts of the sun to different parts of the earth are parallel, for the geometers assume them to be so; fourth, let us suppose that, as the geometers have proven, straight lines falling on parallel lines create alternate angles that are equal; fifth, let us finally assume that the arcs subtended by equal angles are similar, which means that they have the same proportion and the same ratio to their appropriate circles, as has been proven by the geometers as well (for when arcs are subtended by equal angles, if one of them is, for example, a tenth of its appropriate circle, the rest of the arcs will be tenth parts of their appropriate circles).

He who understands these principles will not find it difficult to comprehend the investigative approach of Eratosthenes described below. He says that Syene and Alexandria are located under the same meridian. Since meridian circles are great circles in the universe, it follows that the circles of the earth that lie under them must also be great circles. Thus, whatever size he proves the circle on the earth that passes through Syene and Alexandria to be, that will also be the size of the great circle on the earth. He goes on to say, and rightly so, that Syene lies under the summer tropic circle. Thus, when the sun finds itself in the Cancer during the summer solstice and is exactly in midheaven, the indices of the sundials necessarily cast no shadows as the sun is located in an exact vertical line above them; and this is true, as it is said, over an area of 300 stades in diameter. At the very same point in time, however, the indices of the sundial in Alexandria cast shadows because this city is located rather to the north of Syene. Since these two cities lie under the same meridian great circle, if we trace an arc from the end of the shadow of the index to the base of the index of the sundial at Alexandria, this arc will become a part of a great in the bowl of the sundial, since this bowl lies under the great circle. So, if we imagine straight lines sent out from each of the indices through the earth they will all come together in the same place, *i.e.*, the centre of the earth. But since the sundial at Syene lies vertically under the sun, if we imagine a straight line traced from the sun to the end of the index of the sundial, the line extending from the sun to the centre of the earth will be one straight line. If we, then, imagine another straight line traced from the end of the shadow of the index of the sundial at Alexandria rising through the top of the index to the sun, this straight line and the straight line previously mentioned will be parallel, since they are straight lines extended between different parts of the sun to different parts of the earth. On these lines, then, which are parallel, falls the straight line which is traced from the centre of the earth to the index of Alexandria, thus making the alternate angles equal. One of these occurs at the earth's centre by the intersection of the straight lines which are traced from the sundials to the earth's centre, the other at the point of intersection of the end of the index at Alexandria and

the straight line which ascends from the end of its shadow to the sun through the point where it touches the index. But this angle subtends the arc which has been traced around from the end of the shadow of the index to its base, while the angle at the centre of the earth subtends the arc which extends from Syene to Alexandria. However, the arcs are similar to each other as they are subtended by equal angles. Thus, whatever ratio exists between the arc in the bowl and its appropriate circle, the same ratio will occur in the case of the arc that extends from Syene to Alexandria. And the arc in the bowl of the sundial is calculated to be one-fiftieth of its appropriate circle. Thus, it must necessarily be that the distance between Syene and Alexandria is one-fiftieth of the great circle of the earth, and the distance between them is 5000 stades. Therefore the circumference of the earth measures 250 000 stades. This is the approach of Eratosthenes.

A Greek Geometer: Apollonius of Perga, *Conica I*, Preface (ed. Heiberg, I 2.20-4.28)

Apollonius to Eudemus, greetings:

If you are physically healthy and all other things are as you wish them to be, everything is well. I, too, am relatively well. During the time I spent with you at Pergamum I became aware of how anxious you were to learn about my work in the field of conics. For this reason I've sent you the first book, which I have corrected, and will send you the remaining books when I am completely satisfied with them. I assume that you have not forgotten that I undertook the study of this subject at the urging of Naucrates the geometer when he visited Alexandria and spent some leisure time with me and that, upon the completion of my study in eight books, I delivered them to him in too great a hurry because he was about to sail from the city. I didn't have time to purge them of errors, but recorded those that came to my attention with the intention of correcting them later. These days, whenever I get the opportunity, I publish those parts of the work which have been revised. And, because it has happened that certain other persons who have been associated with me received the first and second books before they were corrected, do not be surprised if you run into them in a different form.

Of the eight books, the first four constitute a basic introduction. The first book contains the means of producing the three sections and the opposite branches [of the hyperbola] and their basic properties, these being worked out more completely and generally here than in writings previously published by others. The second book contains the properties of the diameters and the axes of the sections and the *asymptotes* and other matters which provide the general and necessary means of determining *diorismoi* [limits of possibility]; and from

this book you will also learn my definitions of diameters and axes. The third book contains many and marvellous theorems which are useful for the syntheses of solid loci and for determining limits of possibility. Most of these theorems, and especially the best of them, are new; their discovery made me aware that Euclid had not really solved the problem of the synthesis of the locus with regard to three and four lines but had only chanced upon a part of it, and even that without much success since it was not possible to accomplish the above synthesis without much success since it was not possible to accomplish the above synthesis without a knowledge of the theorems that I've discovered. The fourth book deals with the problem of discovering how many times the sections of the cones can meet one another and the circumference of a circle, as well as other problems which have not been investigated in the works of those who wrote before me; I am speaking specifically of the problem of determining at how many points a section of a cone or a circumference of a circle can meet [the branches of hyperbolas opposite to them].

The other books are mostly supplementary material. One of them deals exhaustively with *minima* and *maxima*, another with equal and similar conic sections, another with theorems regarding the determination of limits, and another with determinate conic problems. Naturally, when all books are published it will be up to those who read them to evaluate them according to their own judgement.

Farewell!

Archimedes of Syracuse – Scientist and Engineer: Plutarch, *Marcellus*, 14-19

...Then Marcellus left with his entire army and marched against Syracuse. He encamped near the city and sent ambassadors to explain to the Syracusans what had happened at Leontini. But this action did not bring any results; the Syracusans were not persuaded, since the partisans of Hippocrates were now in control of the affairs of the city. Then Marcellus attacked Syracuse by land and sea simultaneously with Appius in command of the land forces while he himself approached with sixty quinqueremes full of all kinds of arms and missiles. He constructed an engine on a great platform made of eight vessels chained together and advanced toward the rampart, counting on the great quantity and excellence of his preparations and on his own personal glory. But all this posed no threat to Archimedes and his machines. This great man did not view his inventions as serious work; most of them were for him nothing more than mere games of geometry. He had constructed them before the war in compliance with King Hiero's desire and appeal that he turn from the theoretical to the concrete and somehow mix his abstract knowledge with

something tangible, thus rendering his theories, through practical applications, more comprehensible to the masses of the people.

The first pioneers of this highly-prized and renowned science of mechanics were Eudoxus and Archytas, who cleverly employed it to illustrate geometric principles and to solve by means of practical experiments and actual instruments problems which were not easily understood by logical and geometric demonstrations. Such was the problem, for example, of finding the two mean lines of proportion frequently required in constructing geometric figures....Plato, however, was indignant at this practice and severely reproached them for corrupting and destroying the good of geometry by abandoning abstract and intellectual notions, becoming involved with material bodies, which demand much degrading manual labour. So, its reputation fallen, mechanics became separated from geometry; and, scorned for a long time by philosophy, it became one of the military arts. However, Archimedes wrote to King Hiero, his friend and relative, that with a given force it is possible to move any given weight. And it is said that, relying on the strength of his demonstration, he even boasted that if he had another earth to stand upon he could move this one. Hiero, in amazement, begged him to put his theory into practice and to show him some great mass moved by a small force. Archimedes took a three-masted ship from the royal navy which had just been drawn out of the docks with great effort and the labour of many men and, placing in this vessel many passengers and the usual cargo, he sat some distance away and without any great effort, but by calmly pulling with his hand the end of the pulley, dragged the ship toward him smoothly and evenly, as if it were sailing in the sea. The king marvelled at this demonstration and, having grasped the power of the art, convinced Archimedes to construct for him machines for all kinds of siege operations, offensive and defensive. The king never used these machines, however, since he spent most of his life in peaceful and literary pursuits; but now they were ready to be used by the Syracusans, their inventor himself being there along with them. As the Romans attacked the city on two sides at once, the Syracusans were at first struck with fear, thinking that they could not possibly resist such violence and force. But when Archimedes fired his engines he hurled on the land forces of the Romans all kinds of missiles and stones of huge size which landed with an unbelievable noise and violence that no man could withstand; for they crushed those upon whom they fell in heaps and threw their ranks into confusion. Some of the ships were suddenly seized by poles thrust from the walls and plunged to the bottom of the sea by the great weights which the Syracusans dropped on them from above; other ships they caught by iron hands or beaks resembling those of cranes and, lifting them up into the air by their bows, the Syracusans set them upright on their sterns and plunged them into the water; or, by using engines worked inside the city, they drew some ships out of the water, whirled them about, and dashed them against the

cliffs and steep rocks round under the walls, inflicting heavy casualties on their crews. Frequently a ship would be lifted out of the sea into the air and – a horrible sight to behold as it swayed back and forth until the crew were thrown out or overcome with slingshots – it would crash, empty of men, into the walls, or would fall into the sea when the beaks were released.

The engine that Marcellus was bringing up on the platform, which was called a *sambuca* [harp] because it bore some resemblance to that musical instrument, was hit while still at some distance from the walls by a stone weighing ten talents [about 830 pounds], and then by a second and a third which fell with such great noise and force that the platform on which it stood was damaged, the result being that its fastenings loosened and it was completely dislodged from its base. Marcellus, not knowing what to do, promptly withdrew his fleet and ordered his land forces to retreat.

Then, in a war council, the Romans decided to assault the city walls again, this time by night, if possible; for the stretched cords which Archimedes used to fire his missiles, they thought, required long distances to be effective and would be entirely useless if fired at short range since the missiles would fly over the heads of the soldiers without causing them any harm. But Archimedes, in anticipation of just such an eventuality, had long before prepared engines effective at any distance, short or long, and shorter missiles; and from a series of small openings pierced through the wall, which were numerous and well-spaced, short-range engines invisible to the enemy and known as “scorpions” were waiting to be fired. As the Romans attacked, thinking that they would not be detected, they found themselves instantly exposed to a shower of darts and other missiles, and when stones fell upon them from above and they were shot with arrows from all parts of the wall they retreated. But then, as they were going away, missiles of a longer range were fired on them in their retreat, causing many casualties among the men and the collision of many ships; the Romans were unable to retaliate in any way against the enemy. Since most of the engines under the wall had been constructed by Archimedes, and since thousands of darts were falling on them from invisible hands, they thought they were fighting against the gods! Marcellus escaped the danger unscathed, however, and, deriding his own technicians and engineers, he asked them, “Are we to quit fighting this geometrical Briareus who, to our shame, is playing games with our ships, using them as goblets to draw water out of the sea, and who is surpassing the legendary one hundred-handed giants in hurling against us so many darts at once?” And, in fact, all the other Syracusans constituted the body of the organism created by Archimedes; he was the soul and mind that moved and directed everything. For all other arms were laid aside and the city used only his weapons for its defense and security. Finally, realizing that the Romans had become so afraid that if they merely saw a rope or a little beam over the wall

they would turn and run away shouting that Archimedes was bringing some engine to fire at them, Marcellus abstained from all combat and assault operations, counting on a long siege to reduce the city. Archimedes possessed so elevated and profound a mind and had acquired such a wealth of scientific knowledge that although these inventions gave him a reputation of an intelligence not human, but divine, he did not want to leave behind him any writings on these matters. He considered mechanics and, in general, all the arts that touched on the needs of everyday life, as base and ignoble, and devoted his zeal only to those pure speculations whose beauty and excellence are not affected by material needs – speculations which cannot be compared to any others, and in which the proof rivals the subject, the one providing grandeur and beauty, the other accuracy and a supernatural power. For it is not possible to find in all of geometry more difficult and abstract propositions explained on simpler and clearer principles than in his work. Some attribute this to his natural genius, others to his excessive industry thanks to which each of his works seems to have been accomplished easily and without labour. For no one could discover through his own efforts the solutions to his problems, though as one studies them he is made to think that he himself would have found them, so smoothly and rapidly he leads one along the path of proof. Thus, one cannot doubt what has been said about Archimedes, that he was always bewitched by some familiar and domestic siren so that he would forget to eat his food and neglect the care of his person, that when forcibly dragged to be bathed and to have his body anointed and perfumed he would draw geometrical figures in the ashes of the fire, and that when his body was oiled he would trace diagrams on it with his finger, for he was prey to an extreme passion and was truly possessed by the Muses. He was the discoverer of many admirable things, and it is said that he had begged his friends and relatives to place on his tomb, after his death, a sphere enclosing a cylinder, and to indicate on it the proportion of the volumes of the containing solid to the contained

Theocritus – “Idyll V”

The Battle of the Bards.

COMETAS.

Goats, from a shepherd who stands here, from Lacon, keep away:

Sibyrtas owns him; and he stole my goatskin yesterday.

LACON.

Hi! lambs! avoid yon fountain. Have ye not eyes to see
Cometas, him who filched a pipe but two days back from me?

COMETAS.

Sibyrtas' bondsman own a pipe? whence gotst thou that, and how?
Tootling through straws with Corydon mayhap's beneath thee now?

LACON.

'Twas Lycon's gift, your highness. But pray, Cometas, say,
What is that skin wherewith thou saidst that Lacon walked away?
Why, thy lord's self had ne'er a skin whereon his limbs to lay.

COMETAS.

The skin that Crocyllus gave me, a dark one streaked with white,
The day he slew his she-goat. Why, thou wert ill with spite,
Then, my false friend; and thou would'st end by begging me quite.

LACON.

Did Lacon, did Calaethis' son purloin a goatskin? No,
By Pan that haunts the sea-beach! Lad, if I served thee so,
Crazed may I drop from yon hill-top to Crathis' stream below!

COMETAS.

Nor pipe of thine, good fellow--the Ladies of the Lake
So be still kind and good to me--did e'er Cometas take.

LACON.

Be Daphnis' woes my portion, should that my credence win!
Still, if thou list to stake a kid--that surely were no sin--
Come on, I'll sing it out with thee--until thou givest in.

COMETAS.

'_The hog he braved Athene._' As for the kid, 'tis there:
You stake a lamb against him--that fat one--if you dare.

LACON.

Fox! were that fair for either? At shearing who'd prefer
Horsehair to wool? or when the goat stood handy, suffer her
To nurse her firstling, and himself go milk a blatant cur?

COMETAS.

The same who deemed his hornet's-buzz the true cicala's note,
And braved--like you--his better. And so forsooth you vote
My kid a trifle? Then come on, fellow! I stake the goat.

LACON.

Why be so hot? Art thou on fire? First prythee take thy seat
'Neath this wild woodland olive: thy tones will sound more sweet.

Here falls a cold rill drop by drop, and green grass-blades uprear
Their heads, and fallen leaves are thick, and locusts prattle here.

COMETAS.

Hot I am not; but hurt I am, and sorely, when I think
That thou canst look me in the face and never bleach nor blink--
Me, thine own boyhood's tutor! Go, train the she-wolf's brood:
Train dogs--that they may rend thee! This, this is gratitude!

LACON.

When learned I from thy practice or thy preaching aught that's right,
Thou puppet, thou misshapen lump of ugliness and spite?

COMETAS.

When? When I beat thee, wailing sore: yon goats looked on with glee,
And bleated; and were dealt with e'en as I had dealt with thee.

LACON.

Well, hunchback, shallow be thy grave as was thy judgment then!
But hither, hither! Thou'lt not dip in herdsman's lore again.

COMETAS.

Nay, here are oaks and galingale: the hum of housing bees
Makes the place pleasant, and the birds are piping in the trees.
And here are two cold streamlets; here deeper shadows fall

Than yon place owns, and look what cones drop from the pinetree tall.

LACON.

Come hither, and tread on lambswool that is soft as any dream:

Still more unsavoury than thyself to me thy goatskins seem.

Here will I plant a bowl of milk, our ladies' grace to win;

And one, as huge, beside it, sweet olive-oil therein.

COMETAS.

Come hither, and trample dainty fern and poppy-blossom: sleep

On goatskins that are softer than thy fleeces piled three deep.

Here will I plant eight milkpails, great Pan's regard to gain,

Bound them eight cups: full honeycombs shall every cup contain.

LACON.

Well! there essay thy woodcraft: thence fight me, never budge

From thine own oak; e'en have thy way. But who shall be our judge?

Oh, if Lycopas with his kine should chance this way to trudge!

COMETAS.

Nay, I want no Lycopas. But hail yon woodsman, do:

'Tis Morson--see! his arms are full of bracken--there, by you.

LACON.

We'll hail him.

COMETAS.

Ay, you hail him.

LACON.

Friend, 'twill not take thee long:

We're striving which is master, we twain, in woodland song:

And thou, my good friend Morson, ne'er look with favouring eyes

On me; nor yet to yonder lad be fain to judge the prize.

COMETAS.

Nay, by the Nymphs, sweet Morson, ne'er for Cometas' sake

Stretch thou a point; nor e'er let him undue advantage take.

Sibyrtas owns yon wethers; a Thurian is he:

And here, my friend, Eumares' goats, of Sybaris, you may see.

LACON.

And who asked thee, thou naughty knave, to whom belonged these flocks,

Sibyrtas, or (it might be) me? Eh, thou'rt a chatter-box!

COMETAS.

The simple truth, most worshipful, is all that I allege:

I'm not for boasting. But thy wit hath all too keen an edge.

LACON.

Come sing, if singing's in thee--and may our friend get back
To town alive! Heaven help us, lad, how thy tongue doth clack!

COMETAS. [_Sings_]

Daphnis the mighty minstrel was less precious to the Nine
Than I. I offered yesterday two kids upon their shrine.

LACON. [_Sings_]

Ay, but Apollo fancies me hugely: for him I rear
A lordly ram: and, look you, the Carnival is near.

COMETAS.

Twin kids hath every goat I milk, save two. My maid, my own,
Eyes me and asks 'At milking time, rogue, art thou all alone?'

LACON.

Go to! nigh twenty baskets doth Lacon fill with cheese:
Hath time to woo a sweetheart too upon the blossomed leas.

COMETAS.

Clarissa pelts her goatherd with apples, should he stray
By with his goats; and pouts her lip in a quaint charming way.

LACON.

Me too a darling smooth of face notes as I tend my flocks:

How maddeningly o'er that fair neck ripple those shining locks!

COMETAS.

Tho' dogrose and anemone are fair in their degree,
The rose that blooms by garden-walls still is the rose for me.

LACON.

Tho' acorns' cups are fair, their taste is bitterness, and still
I'll choose, for honeysweet are they, the apples of the hill.

COMETAS.

A cushat I will presently procure and give to her
Who loves me: I know where it sits; up in the juniper.

LACON.

Pooh! a soft fleece, to make a coat, I'll give the day I shear
My brindled ewe--(no hand but mine shall touch it)--to my dear.

COMETAS.

Back, lambs, from that wild-olive: and be content to browse
Here on the shoulder of the hill, beneath the myrtle boughs.

LACON.

Run, (will ye?) Ball and Dogstar, down from that oak tree, run:
And feed where Spot is feeding, and catch the morning sun.

COMETAS.

I have a bowl of cypress-wood: I have besides a cup:

Praxiteles designed them: for _her_ they're treasured up.

LACON.

I have a dog who throttles wolves: he loves the sheep, and they

Love him: I'll give him to my dear, to keep wild beasts at bay.

COMETAS.

Ye locusts that o'erleap my fence, oh let my vines escape

Your clutches, I beseech you: the bloom is on the grape.

LACON.

Ye crickets, mark how nettled our friend the goatherd is!

I ween, ye cost the reapers pangs as acute as his.

COMETAS.

Those foxes with their bushy tails, I hate to see them crawl

Round Micon's homestead and purloin his grapes at evenfall.

LACON.

I hate to see the beetles that come warping on the wind.

And climb Philondas' trees, and leave never a fig behind.

COMETAS.

Have you forgot that cudgelling I gave you? At each stroke
You grinned and twisted with a grace, and clung to yonder oak.

LACON.

That I've forgot--but I have not, how once Eumares tied
You to that selfsame oak-trunk, and tanned your unclean hide.

COMETAS.

There's some one ill--of heartburn. You note it, I presume,
Morson? Go quick, and fetch a squill from some old beldam's tomb.

LACON.

I think I'm stinging somebody, as Morson too perceives--
Go to the river and dig up a clump of sowbread-leaves.

COMETAS.

May Himera flow, not water, but milk: and may'st thou blush,
Crathis, with wine; and fruitage grow upon every rush.

LACON.

For me may Sybaris' fountain flow, pure honey: so that you,
My fair, may dip your pitcher each morn in honey-dew.

COMETAS.

My goats are fed on clover and goat's-delight: they tread
On lentisk leaves; or lie them down, ripe strawberries o'er their head.

LACON.

My sheep crop honeysuckle bloom, while all around them blows
In clusters rich the jasmine, as brave as any rose.

COMETAS.

I scorn my maid; for when she took my cushat, she did not
Draw with both hands my face to hers and kiss me on the spot.

LACON.

I love my love, and hugely: for, when I gave my flute,
I was rewarded with a kiss, a loving one to boot.

COMETAS.

Lacon, the nightingale should scarce be challenged by the jay,
Nor swan by hoopoe: but, poor boy, thou aye wert for a fray.

MORSON.

I bid the shepherd hold his peace. Cometas, unto you
I, Morson, do adjudge the lamb. You'll first make offering due
Unto the nymphs: then savoury meat you'll send to Morson too.

COMETAS.

By Pan I will! Snort, all my herd of he-goats: I shall now
O'er Lacon, shepherd as he is, crow ye shall soon see how.
I've won, and I could leap sky-high! Ye also dance and skip,
My horned ewes: in Sybaris' fount to-morrow all shall dip.
Ho! you, sir, with the glossy coat and dangerous crest; you dare
Look at a ewe, till I have slain my lamb, and ill you'll fare.
What! is he at his tricks again? He is, and he will get
(Or my name's not Cometas) a proper pounding yet.

A Hellenistic Queen – Cleopatra VII of Egypt: Plutarch, *Antony*, 27-28

The next day Antony invited her in turn to supper and made it a point of honour to surpass her in splendour and elegance; he found, however, that he had failed miserably in this, and was the first to mock the shabbiness and grossness of his preparations. But Cleopatra, seeing that Anthony's railleries savoured more of the soldier and the comer, accepted the situation without showing any sign of reluctance or reserve. They say that her actual beauty was by no means unparalleled or of the kind that struck those who saw her, but that her presence was irresistible to those who were familiar with her and that the attractiveness of her person, joined with her seductive conversation and the natural grace that attended all her words and actions, was magical. When she spoke it was a pleasure to hear the sound of her voice; her tongue was like an instrument of many strings with which she could effortlessly switch to whatever language she chose to speak, for there were very few barbarian nations with which she communicated through an interpreter. She personally responded to most of them, as, for example, the Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, and Parthians. It is said that she also learned several other languages, whereas the Ptolemaic kings who preceded her had scarcely bothered to learn the Egyptian language, some of them even having lost the ability to speak Macedonian.