

Sample of aphorisms
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Adversity as a teacher:

He that has never suffered adversity is but half acquainted with others, or with himself. Constant success shows us but side of the world. For, as it surrounds us with friends, who will tell us only our merits, so it silences those enemies from whom alone we can learn our defects.

Anger and Revenge:

The sun should not set upon our anger; neither should he rise upon our confidence. We should forgive freely, but forget rarely. I will not be revenged, and this I owe to my enemy; but I will remember, and this I owe to myself.

Death; as a liberator:

Death is the liberator of him whom freedom cannot release, the physician of him whom medicine cannot cure, and the comforter of him whom time cannot console.

Deliberate with caution, but act with decision:

Deliberate with caution, but act with decision, and yield with graciousness, or oppose with firmness.

Dining with the great:

He that likes a hot dinner, a warm welcome, new ideas and *old* wine, will not often dine with the great.

Drunkenness; a vice of good constitutions:

Drunkenness is the vice of a good constitution or a bad memory; of a constitution so treacherously good that it never bends until it break; or of a memory that recollects the pleasure of getting drunk, but forgets the pains of getting sober.

Enemies; who are to be pitied:

There are some men whose enemies are to be pitied much and their friends more.

Friends vs. Enemies:

An act, by which we make one friend, and one enemy, is a losing game, because revenge is a much stronger principle than gratitude.

Good and Evil; choosing between:

The clashing interests of society, and the double, yet equal and contrary demands arising out of them, where duty and justice are constantly opposed to gratitude and inclination, these things must make the profession of a statesman, an office neither easy nor enviable. It often happens that such men have only a choice of evils, and that in adopting either, the discontent will be certain and the benefit precarious. It is seldom that statesmen have the option of choosing between a good and an evil; and still more seldom that they can boast of that fortunate situation, where, like the great Duke of Marlborough, they are permitted to choose between two things that are good. His Grace was hesitating whether he should take a prescription recommended by the duchess; "I will be hanged," said she, "If it does not cure you." Dr. Garth, who was present, instantly exclaimed, "Take it then, Your Grace, *it is sure to good, one way or the other!*"

Happiness, anticipation of:

Men spend their lives in anticipations, in determining to be vastly happy at some period or other *when they have time*. But the present time has one advantage over every other: it is our own. Past opportunities are gone, future have not come. We may lay in a stock of pleasures, as we would lay in a stock of wine; but if we defer the tasting of them too long, we shall find that both are soured by age!

Hate; the kind we can all bear:

The hate we can all bear with the most Christian patience is the hate of those who envy us.

Impotence of the rich:

It is only when the rich are sick, that they fully feel the impotence of wealth.

Innovation; beware of:

We ought not to be over anxious to encourage innovation, in cases of *doubtful* improvement, for an old system must ever have two advantages over a new one; it is established, and it is understood.

Law and Equity:

Law and equity are two things which God hath joined, but which man hath put asunder.

Life; enjoyment of:

How small a portion of our life is that we really enjoy. In youth we are looking forward to things that are to come; in old age, we are looking backwards to things that have gone past. In things that are present, even that is too often absorbed in vague determination to be vastly happy on some future day, when we have time.

Little Men and Mischief;

To know exactly how much mischief may be ventured upon with impunity is knowledge sufficient for a *little* great man.

Living alone; benefits of:

Those who have resources within themselves, who can dare to live alone, want friends the least, but, at the same time, best knows how to prize them the most. But no company is far preferable to bad, because we are more apt to catch the vices of others rather than their virtues, as disease is far more contagious than health.

Love without jealousy:

Love may exist with out jealousy, although this is rare; but jealousy can exist without love, and this is common, for jealousy can feed on that which is bitter, no less than that which is sweet, and is sustained by pride, as often as by affection.

Ministers; upright and corrupt:

An upright minister asks, *what* recommends a man, a corrupt minister asks *who*?

Misfortunes; pity from others:

For one man who sincerely pities our misfortunes, there are a thousand who sincerely hates our successes.

Nothing to say? Say Nothing!

When you have nothing to say; say nothing, a weak defense strengthens your opponent, and silence is less injurious than a bad reply.

Obligations to Many; prudence in repayment:

If you are under obligations to many, it is prudent to postpone the recompensing of one, until it be in your power to remunerate all; otherwise you will make more enemies by what you give, than by what you withhold.

Our Reputation and our Life:

The two most precious things on this side of the grave are our reputation and our life. But it is to be lamented that the most contemptible whisper may deprive us of the one, and the weakest weapon of the other. A wise man, therefore, will be the more anxious to deserve a fair name than to possess it, and this will teach so to live, as not to be afraid to die.

Pedantry; effects of:

Pedantry crams our heads with learned lumber, and takes out our brains to make room for it.

Pleasing the Mob:

It is an easy and a vulgar thing to please the mob, and not a very arduous task to astonish them, but, essentially, to benefit and to improve them is a work fraught with difficulty, and teeming with danger.

Professions; differences among them:

Of the professions it may be said that the soldiers are becoming too popular, parsons too lazy, physicians too mercenary, and lawyers too powerful.

Rats and Conquerors:

Rats and conquerors must expect no mercy in misfortune.

Repentance; the seeds of:

The seeds of repentance are sown in youth by pleasure, but the harvest is reaped in age by pain

Religion; what men will do for it:

Men will wrangle for religion, write for it, fight for it, die for it; anything but live for it.

Royal Favorites; their obligations to their masters:

Royal favorites are often obliged to carry their complaisance farther than they meant. They live for their master's pleasure and they die for his convenience.

Saints and Sinners; intolerance of those saved:

No roads are so rough as those that have just been mended, so no sinners are so intolerant as those that have just turned saints,

Shakespeare Stands Alone:

All the poets are indebted more or less to those who have gone before them, even Homer's originality has been questioned, and Virgil owes almost as much to Theocritus in his Pastorals, but Shakespeare stands alone. His want of erudition was a most happy and productive ignorance; it forced him back upon his own resources, which were exhaustless. If his literary qualifications made it impossible for him to borrow from the ancients, he was more than repaid by the powers of his invention, which made borrowing unnecessary.

Soldiers; reasons for fighting:

An Irishman fights before he reasons, a Scotsman reasons before he fights. An Englishman is not particular to the order of precedence, but will do either to accommodate his customers. A modern general has said that the best troops would be as follows: An Irishman half drunk, a Scotsman half starved, and

an Englishman with his belly full.

True Friendship; its value:

True friendship is like sound health; the value of it is seldom known until it is lost.

Trumping the King:

King James held convocation at Perth and demanded of the Scotch barons that they should produce the charters by which they held their lands; they all with one simultaneous movement, rose up and drew their swords.