

PLUTARCH (c. 50-120 CE), GREEK PHILOSOPHER AND HISTORIAN. For a brief biography of Plutarch and selections from his *Moralia*, see the print anthology, pp. 251-55.

EDITIONS AND CONTEXTS:

For selected early modern and modern translations of Plutarch's works, as well as a brief account of his reception, reputation, and translation in early modern England, see the essay 'Plutarch' in "Classical Writers, their Early Modern Reputations and Translations" (*Online Companion*).

JAMES SANDFORD (fl. 1567-1582), TRANSLATOR AND POET. We know little of the personal or educational background of James Sandford, although he was apparently fluent in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. In addition to Plutarch's *Amorous and Tragical Tales* [*Amatoriae Narrationes*], Sandford translated works by Epictetus and Henry Cornelius Agrippa, as well as produced some original verse. Traditionally included in Plutarch's *Moralia*, the *Amatoriae Narrationes* is no longer generally thought to be one of Plutarch's works.

THE AMOROUS AND TRAGICAL TALES OF PLUTARCH¹ (1567)

OF A BOY THAT WAS RENT IN PIECES, PARTLY BY HIM THAT OFFERED VIOLENCE UNTO HIM, AND PARTLY BY HIS FATHER RESCUING HIM

When a certain man called Phidon, practiced wiles² to bear rule and dominion over the Peloponnesians, and would have the city Argiva, where he was born, to govern other cities, first he practiced deceit with the Corinthians, for he sent unto them for a thousand young men, excelling as well in strength as in valiant courage. Afterward they were sent Dexander, being their captain. Therefore, when Phidon was minded to entrap them, that he might weaken Corinth, and that she³ did all things at her will and pleasure, (for he perceived that to be as it were the only defence of all Peloponnesus), he made some of his fellows partakers with him in the whole matter. Among them also there was a certain man called Abron abiding with Dexander, which disclosed and showed all the conspiracy, whereby it came to pass, that before the time of conspiracy all departed from Corinth in safety. Phidon searched diligently for the bewrayer⁴ of that secret, and did all his endeavour about that.

¹ The title further announces that the volume contains "The history of Cariclea and Theagenes, and the sayings of the Greek philosophers."

² *practiced wiles* employed trickery, deception.

³ *she* i.e., Corinth.

⁴ *bewrayer* revealer, betrayer.

Abron, truly being afraid, he together with his wife and family went to Corinth, and dwelled in Melissus, which is a village belonging to the territory of Corinth. There he begat a son, which after the name of the place was called Melissus. This Melissus had a son called Acteon, excelling both in beauty and modesty among his equals. Very many loved him, but most fervently of all, Archias one of the Heraclidians' stock and kindred, which surmounted all the Corinthians both in riches and power. When he had tempted the young man, but all in vain, he sought by force to obtain his desire. He then going a-banqueting and revelling to Melissus his house,⁵ environed⁶ and accompanied with a great company of his friends and servants, assayed to carry away the boy. His father, then resisting together with his neighbours, which came in all haste to help him, a-drawing back towards them the silly⁷ wretch, in the resisters' hands, Acteon was rent in pieces. This done, every man went home. But Melissus brought the boy his carcass into the place of judgement, and there showed it with great dolour⁸ and lamentation, and also earnestly required punishment for the authors of that villainous deed. All truly took pity of the old man, yet did they nothing beside. Therefore, when he came home, the matter being not ended, observing and watching for the time when the great assemblies of the people were at Isthmus, climbing upon the temple of Neptune, lamentably desired the Corinthians, and reckoned up the benefits of his father Abron, and when he had called upon the gods, he cast himself down headlong from the temple. Not long after, a great violence of the sea and pestilence invaded the city. The oracle, then being demanded as concerning the health of the city, answered, that it was the wrath of Neptune which should not cease until they did revenge Acteon his death. Archias hearing this (for he was present at the oracle) returned not to Corinth, but sailing into Sicilia, built Syracuse, and when he had there begotten two daughters, Telephus whose flower of age he had plucked, who went also with him into Sicilia, conspired his death.

PLUTARCH'S *LIVES*

SIR THOMAS NORTH (1535-1603), TRANSLATOR. Apart from his famous translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, North produced two other well-respected works: a translation of a French treatise called *The Dial of Princes* (1557; 2nd edition, 1568), and the entertaining collection of fables, *The Moral Philosophy of Doni* (1570). Plutarch's *Lives*, however, remains the work for which North is still read and remembered. Knighted in 1591, North took up a position as justice of the peace in Cambridge the following year, and he also served intermittently in Ireland as a captain during the earl of Desmond's rebellion. In later years, his financial situation was increasingly insecure, and he was granted an annual pension of £40 by Queen Elizabeth I in 1601.

⁵ *Melissus his house* i.e., Melissus' house.

⁶ *environed* encircled, surrounded by.

⁷ *silly* innocent, helpless, defenceless.

⁸ *dolour* grief.

LIVES OF THE NOBLE GRECIANS AND ROMANS (1597)⁹

[...]

From THE LIFE OF LYCURGUS¹⁰

[...] he willed that the maidens should harden their bodies with exercise of running, wrestling, throwing the bar and casting the dart, to the end that the fruit wherewith they might be afterwards conceived, taking nourishment of a strong and lusty body, should shoot out and spread the better, and that they by gathering strength thus by exercises should more easily away with the pains of child bearing.

And to take away from them womanish daintiness and fineness, he brought up a custom for young maids and boys to go as it were a procession and to dance naked at solemn feasts and sacrifices, and to sing certain songs of their own making in the presence and sight of young men. To whom by the way they gave many times pretty mocks of purpose, as pleasantly hitting them home for things wherein before they had forgotten their duties, and sometimes also in their songs for their virtues, wits or manners they praised them which had deserved it. By this means they did set young men's hearts afire to strive to win most praise and honour. [...] And though the maids did show themselves thus naked openly, yet there was no dishonesty seen nor offered,¹¹ but all this sport was full of play and toys, without any youthful part of wantonness, and rather carried a show of demureness and a desire to have their best-made bodies seen and spied. [...]

Furthermore, these plays, sports, and dances the maids did naked before the young men were provocatives to draw and allure the young men to marry, not as persuaded by geometrical reasons, as sayeth Plato,¹² but brought to it by liking and of very love. Those which would not marry he made infamous by law, for it was not lawful for such to be present where these open games and pastimes were showed naked. Furthermore the officers of the city compelled such as would not marry, even in the hardest time of the winter, to environ the place of these sports and to go up and down stark naked and to sing a certain song made for the purpose against,¹³ which was, that justly were they punished because that law they disobeyed. Moreover, when such were old they had not the honour and reverence done them which old married men received. Therefore there was no man that misliked or reproved that which was spoken to Dercillidas, albeit

⁹ The full title is: *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, compared together by that grave, learned philosopher and historiographer, Plutarch of Chaeronea; translated out of Greek into French by James Amyot; and out of French into English by Thomas North.* (London, 1579). Where it seems useful, I have given some alternate translations of particular words and phrases from *Plutarch's Lives Translated from the Greek by Several Hands; to which is prefixed the Life of Plutarch* (5 vols., London: Printed by T. Hodgkin for J. Tonson, 1683-1686). John Dryden was responsible for some of the translations, but this multi-volume work was a collaborative effort.

¹⁰ *Lycurgus* (b. c. 1000-776 BCE), ancient Spartan lawgiver, and the traditional founder of Sparta's most characteristic institutions.

¹¹ *no dishonesty seen nor offered* i.e., the girls were not wanton or licentious, and the boys did attempt to seduce or otherwise treat the girls as sexual objects.

¹² *not ... Plato* In his *Republic*, Plato argued that in the ideal republic marriages would serve the wider interests of the state rather than responding to the narrow emotional desires of the individuals involved; such marriages would often be temporary, arranged by the society's rulers in order to maximize benefits to the state in healthy children.

¹³ *against* in preparation for.

otherwise he was a noble captain. For, coming into a presence, there was a young man which would not vouchsafe to rise and do him reverence nor to give him place for to sit down. And worthily quoth he, ‘because thou hast not gotten a son who may do so much for me in time to come.’

[...]

Moreover they did ascribe the good or ill opinion conceived of the children unto every of their favourers and lovers,¹⁴ which did affect and entertain them, inasmuch as they say a young boy upon a time fighting with another and a cry ’scaping out of his mouth which his faint cowardly heart did yield, his favourer and lover was straight condemned by the officers of the city to a fine. Albeit this love was a thing even incorporated into them, that the most honest and virtuous women loved the young maids thus also,¹⁵ yet there was no jealousy nor suspicion that grew thereof, but rather to the contrary there grew a marvellous mutual love and kindness between them which loved in one self place. For either of them by all the means they could did devise to make the child they loved in common, the wisest, the gentlest and the best conditioned above all other.

[...]

From THE LIFE OF ALCIBIADES¹⁶

Alcibiades by his father’s side was anciently descended of Eurysaces that was the son of Ajax, and by his mother’s side of Alcmaeon, for his mother Dinomacha was the daughter of Megacles. His father, Clinias, having armed and set forth a galley at his own proper costs and charges, did win great honour in the battle by sea that was fought amongst the coast of Artemisium, and he was slain afterwards in another battle fought at Coronea against the Boeotians. His son Alcibiades’ tutors were Pericles and Aripheon, Xanthippus’ sons, who were also his near kinsmen. They say—and truly—that Socrates’ good will and friendship did greatly further Alcibiades’ honour.

[...]

Now for Alcibiades’ beauty, it made no matter if we speak not of it, yet I will a little touch it by the way, for he was wonderful fair, being a child, a boy, and a man, and that at all times, which

¹⁴ *the children ... lovers* 1683 (*Plutarch’s Lives*, vol. 1): “It is a thing remarkable that their lovers and favourers had a share in the young lads’ honour or disgrace” (p. 174).

¹⁵ *The most . . . also* 1683: “by the way, so much in fashion was this sort of love among them that the most staid and virtuous matrons would own publicly their passion to a modest and beautiful virgin” (p. 174).

¹⁶ In the 1683 *Plutarch’s Lives*, “The Life of Alcibiades” is translated by John Sommers (i.e., Somers), later Baron Somers (1651-1716), lawyer, politician, and writer. Somers is somewhat more willing than North to clearly attribute male same-sex erotic desires and sexual liaisons to Alcibiades See below. *Alcibiades* See Glossary (print anthology).

made him marvellously amiable and beloved of every man. For where Euripides sayeth that of all the fair times of the year, the autumn or latter season is the fairest, that commonly falleth not out true. And yet it proved in Alcibiades, though in few other, for he was passing¹⁷ fair even to his latter time, and of good temperature of body. They write of him also that his tongue was somewhat fat and it did not become him ill, but gave him a certain natural pleasant grace in his talk, which Aristophanes mentioneth, mocking one Theorus that did counterfeit a lispings grace with his tongue.

This Alcibiades with his fat lispings tongue
 Into mine ears, this trusty tale and song full often sung.
 Look upon Theolus (quoth he) to there he bows,
 Behold his comely crowbright face with fat and* flatlings blows.¹⁸
 The son of Clinias would lisp it thus somewhiles,
 And sure he lisped never a lie, but rightly hit his wiles.

And Archippus another poet also, mocking the son of Alcibiades, sayeth thus,

Because he would be like his father every way,
 In his long trailing gown he would go jetting day by day.¹⁹
 And counterfeit his speech, his countenance and face,
 As though Dame Nature had him given therein a likewise perfect grace.
 To lisp and look aside and hold his head awry,
 Even as his father looked and lisped, so would he prate and pry.

For his manners they altered and changed very oft with time, which is not to be wondered at, seeing his marvellous great prosperity, as also adversity that followed him afterwards.

[...]

Furthermore, in the accusations Antiphon wrote against Alcibiades it is declared that when he was a boy he fled out of his tutor's house into the house of Democrates, one of his lovers, and how Ariphton, one of his tutors, thought to have made a beadle²⁰ cry him through the city. But Pericles would not suffer him, saying that 'if he were dead they should know it but one day sooner by crying of him, and, if he were alive, that it would be such a shame to him while he lived, that he had been better he had never been heard of again.' The same Antiphon accuseth him further that he had killed a servant of his that attended on him, in the wrestling place of Sibyrtius, with a blow of a staff. But there is no reason to credit his writing, who confesseth he speaketh all the ill he can of him, for the ill will he did bear him.

Now straight there were many great and rich men that made much of Alcibiades, and

¹⁷ *passing* surpassingly, extremely.

¹⁸ *flatling* flat. North's marginal note says he has chosen this phrase over "flattering brows, observing the grace of lispings" (p. 211).

¹⁹ *jetting* strutting about arrogantly.

²⁰ *beadle* herald; perhaps, more specifically, a warrant officer or parish constable.

were glad to get his good will.²¹ But Socrates' love unto him had another end and cause, which witnessed that Alcibiades had a natural inclination to virtue, who, perceiving that virtue did appear in him and was joined with the other beauty of his face and body, and fearing the corruption of riches, dignity and authority and the great number of his companions as well of the chiefest of the city as of strangers seeking to entice him by flattery and by many other pleasures, he took upon him to protect him from them all and not to suffer so goodly an *imp*²² to lose the hope of the good fruit of his youth. For Fortune doth never so entangle nor snare a man without, with that which they commonly call riches, as to let and hinder him so that philosophy should not take hold on him with her free, severe, and quick reasons. So Alcibiades was at the beginning assayed with all delights, and shut up as it were in their company that feasted him with all pleasures, only to turn him that he should not hearken to Socrates' words, who sought to bring him up at his charge, and to teach him. But Alcibiades notwithstanding, having a good natural wit, knew what Socrates was and went to him, refusing the company of all his rich friends and their flatteries and fell in a kind of familiar friendship with Socrates. Whom when he had heard speak, he noted his words very well, that they were no persuasions of a man seeking his dishonesty,²³ but one that gave him good counsel, and went about to reform his faults and imperfections, and to pluck down the pride and presumption that was in him;²⁴ then, as the common proverb sayeth:

Like to the craven cock, he drooped down his wings,
Which cowardly doth run away or from the pit outflings.

And did think with [him]self that all Socrates' love and following of young men was indeed a thing sent from the gods and ordained above for them whom they would have preserved and put into the pathway of honour.

Therefore he began to despise himself and greatly to reverence Socrates, taking pleasure of his good using of him, and much embraced his virtues; so as he had (he wist²⁵ not how) an image of love graven in his heart, or rather (as Plato sayeth) a mutual love, to wit, an holy and honest affection towards Socrates.²⁶ Insomuch as all the world wondered at Alcibiades to see him commonly at Socrates' board, to play, to wrestle, and to lodge in the wars²⁷ with Socrates, and contrarily to chide his other well-willers, who could not so much as have a good look at his hands, and besides become dangerous to some, as it is said he was unto Anytus, the son of

²¹ Somers' 1683 translation is not as reticent here about the sexual nature of these men's interest in Alcibiades: "It was manifest that the many persons of quality who were continually waiting upon him, and making their court to him, were surprised and captivated by his extraordinary beauty only" (p. 6).

²² *imp* a promising young person (a scion or child of a noble house).

²³ *dishonesty* sexual corruption or staining.

²⁴ Compare 1683 (Somers): "And in a little time they grew into a familiarity: Alcibiades observing that his discourses aimed not at any effeminate pleasures of love, nor sought anything wanton or dishonest, but laid open to him the imperfections of his mind, and repressed his vain and foolish arrogance" (p. 7).

²⁵ *wist* knew.

²⁶ *an holy and honest affection towards Socrates* 1683 (Somers) does not include this emphasis, nor do modern translations; North seems at pains to emphasize the Platonic, non-sexual nature of Alcibiades' and Socrates' mutual love for each other.

²⁷ *in the wars* 1683 (Somers) and modern translations have instead "in the same tent" (p. 8).

Anthemion, being one of those that loved him well.²⁸ Anytus making good cheer to certain strangers his friends²⁹ that were come to see him, went and prayed Alcibiades to come and make merry with them, but he refused to go, for he went to make merry with certain of his companions at his own house, and after he had well taken in his cups³⁰ he went to Anytus' house to counterfeit the fool amongst them, and staying at the hall door and seeing Anytus' table and cupboard full of plate of silver and gold, he commanded his servants to take away half of it and carry it home to his house. But when he had thus taken his pleasure, he would come no nearer into the house but went his way home. Anytus' friends and guests, misliking this strange part of Alcibiades, said it was shamefully and boldly done so to abuse Anytus. "Nay gently done of him," said Anytus, "for he hath left us some, where he might have taken all."

All other[s] also that made much of him, he served after that sort,³¹ saving³² a stranger that came to dwell in Athens, who being but a poor man as the voice went, sold all that he had, whereof he made about a hundred stateres³³ which he brought unto Alcibiades, and prayed him to take it at his hands. Alcibiades began to be merry and being very glad to understand his good will towards him, took his honest offer and prayed him to come to supper to him; so he welcomed him very heartily and made him good cheer. When supper was done he gave him his money again, and commanded him not to fail the next morning to meet him where the farms and lands of the city are wont to be let out³⁴ to those that bid most, and charged³⁵ him he should outbid all. The poor man would fain³⁶ have excused himself, saying the farms were too great for him to hire, but Alcibiades threatened to whip him if he would not do it. For besides the desire he had to pleasure him, he bore a private grudge against the ordinary farmers of the city. The next morning the stranger was ready in the market place where they did cry out the letting of their farms, and he raised one to a talent more than all other did offer. The other farmers were as mad with him as they could be, that they all did set upon him, crying out, "Let him put in surety straight," supposing he could have found none. The stranger was marvellously blank³⁷ thereat and began to shrink back. Then cried Alcibiades out aloud to the officers that sat there to take the best offers, "I will be his surety," sayeth he. "Put me in the book, for he is a friend of mine." The farmers hearing him say so were at their wits' end, and wist³⁸ not what to do, for they being always accustomed to pay their yearly rent as it went before by the help of the rest of the years that followed after, perceiving now that they should not be able to pay the arrearages of the rents due

²⁸ *one of those that loved him well* 1683 (Somers): "one who was very fond of him (p. 8).

²⁹ *certain strangers his friends* either 'certain strangers of his friends' or certain strangers [i.e., visitors from another place] who were Anytus' friends.'

³⁰ *he ... cups* i.e., after Alcibiades had drunk quite a lot.

³¹ *All other[s] also that made much of him, he served after that sort* 1683 (Somers) has instead: "He behaved himself after the same sort to all others who courted him" (p. 9). Modern translations are clearer in describing these 'others' as Alcibiades' 'lovers.'

³² *saving* with the exception of.

³³ *stateres* an ancient coin.

³⁴ *wont ... let out* by custom, are to be leased or rented.

³⁵ *charged* ordered, commanded.

³⁶ *fain* willingly.

³⁷ *blank* taken aback, stunned.

³⁸ *wist* knew.

to the commonweal, and seeing no other remedy, they prayed him³⁹ to take a piece of money and to leave the bargain. Then Alcibiades would in no wise he should take less than a talent, which they gave him willingly. So Alcibiades suffered the stranger then to depart and made him gain by his device.⁴⁰

Now Socrates' love which he bore him, though it had many mighty and great adversaries,⁴¹ yet it did stay⁴² much Alcibiades, sometime[s] by his⁴³ gentle nature, sometime[s] by his grave counsel and advice, so as the reason thereof took so deep root in him and did so pierce his heart that many times the tears ran down his cheek. Another time also being carried away with the enticement of flatterers that held up his humor⁴⁴ with all pleasure and delights, he stole away from Socrates and made him run after him to fetch him again, as if he had been a slave that had run away from his master's house, for Alcibiades stood in awe of no man but of Socrates only, and indeed he did reverence him, and did despise all other. And therefore Cleanthes was wont to say that Alcibiades was held of Socrates by the ears, but that he gave his other lovers hold which Socrates never sought for;⁴⁵ for to say truly, Alcibiades was much given over to lust and pleasure. And peradventure it was that Thucydides⁴⁶ meant of him when he wrote that he was incontinent⁴⁷ of body and dissolute of life. [...]

From THE LIFE OF PELOPIDAS⁴⁸

[...]

But among all the excellent gifts and good parts in either of them,⁴⁹ and that most won them honour and estimation in the world, they were only commended and singularly noted of wise men for the perfect love and friendship that was ever inviolably kept between them until their deaths, having been joined together in so many battles, wars, charges of armies, and otherwise in

³⁹ *he* i.e., the poor man.

⁴⁰ *device* stratagem, cunning plan.

⁴¹ *adversaries* 1683 (Somers): "rivals."

⁴² *stay* support.

⁴³ *his* i.e., Socrates'.

⁴⁴ *humour* dominant quality in his character; perhaps, also 'whim.'

⁴⁵ *And therefore Cleanthes . . . sought for* 1683 (Somers): "And therefore it was that Cleanthes said, He had given his ears to Socrates, but to his rivals, other parts of his body, with which Socrates would not meddle" (p. 10).

⁴⁶ *Thucydides* (c. 460-c. 400 BCE), Greek historian.

⁴⁷ *incontinent* given in an unrestrained way to sexual and sensual pleasure.

⁴⁸ Following is the fullest description from antiquity of the Sacred Band of Thebes (instituted, 387 BCE). In the 1683 *Plutarch's Lives*, "The Life of Pelopidas" is translated by Thomas Creech (1659-1700), classicist and translator of Lucretius, Horace, Ovid, and Theocritus, who is more willing than North to call this a band of lovers and their beloveds. See below.

⁴⁹ *them* i.e., Pelopidas and Epaminondas. *Pelopidas* (c. 410-364 BCE) was a Theban statesman and general; he led the battle to liberate Thebes in 379/8, and led the Sacred Band to victory in 375 and 371. Plutarch celebrates the relationship between this exemplary ancient warrior and governor and his dear friend, Epaminondas (d. 362 BCE) also a Theban statesman and general. Together, Pelopidas and Epaminondas oversaw the liberation and ascendancy of Thebes as a Mediterranean power, and reduced the influence and power of the Spartans (the *Lacedaemonians*); this pair became a by-word in the early modern period for ideal friendship and masculine martial virtue.

matters of state and government. For if a man will consider and look into the doings of Aristides, Themistocles, and Cimon, of Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades,⁵⁰ how full of dissensions, envies, and suspicions they were one against another in governing the commonweal,⁵¹ and again will consider the love, honour, and kindness that continued always betwixt Pelopidas and Epaminondas, no doubt they will say these two are more worthy to be called brethren in war (as they say) and companions in government than any of them we have named before—whose care and study was always rather to overcome one another than to overcome their enemies—and the only cause thereof was their virtue. For their acts showed they did not seek glory nor riches for themselves (the covetousness whereof doth always breed quarrels and envy), but both of them from the beginning fell one in love with another, with a great kindness and estimation of themselves, to see their country flourish and grow to great honour through their service and in their time; and so they reckoned all the good exploits both of the one and the other that tended to that end as their own.

The most part of writers think that great and earnest love th'one did bear to another did grow first between them in a journey they made together unto Mantinia to aid the Lacedaemonians,⁵² that were at that time confederate of the Thebans. For they being both set in battle ray,⁵³ one hard⁵⁴ by another among the footmen, against the Arcadians that stood before them, it fortuned that the point of the battle⁵⁵ of the Lacedaemonians, in the which they were, gave back, and many of them ran away. But they, determining to die rather than to fly, stood close together and fought with the enemies that came upon them, until such time as Pelopidas being hurt in seven places before,⁵⁶ fell down at the last upon a heap of dead bodies, as well of their own soldiers as of their enemies, even one upon another. Then Epaminondas, thinking he⁵⁷ had been slain, stepped notwithstanding before him to defend his body and armour, and he alone fought against many, being willing to die rather than to forsake Pelopidas lying among the dead bodies, until himself being thrust into the breast with a pike, and sore cut on his arm with a sword, was ready to give over,⁵⁸ when Agesipolis, king of the Lacedaemonians, came with the other point of the battle in happy hour, who saved both their lives past all hope.

[...]

⁵⁰ *Aristides* (530-468 BCE), Athenian general and statesman, famed for his justice. *Themistocles* (c. 524-459 BCE), Athenian general and statesman; cast out of Athens in 472/471 BCE. *Cimon* (c. 510-450 BCE), Athenian statesman and military leader; cast out of Athens in 461 BCE. Aristides, Themistocles, and Cimon came into conflict over their joint desire for political power in Athens. *Pericles* (c. 495-429 BCE), *Nicias* (c. 470-413 BCE), and *Alcibiades* (c. 450-404 BCE) were all Athenian statesmen and generals, and like Aristides, Themistocles and Cimon, they were in conflict over status and power in Athens' government. For Alcibiades, see 'The Life of Alcibiades,' above.

⁵¹ *commonweal* commonwealth, state.

⁵² *Lacedaemonians* i.e., the Spartans, the classical world's most famous warrior society.

⁵³ *battle ray* in battle formation.

⁵⁴ *hard* close.

⁵⁵ *the point of the battle* the front of the advancing force.

⁵⁶ *before* i.e., on his chest and the front of his body generally (emphasizing that he has never turned to retreat).

⁵⁷ *he* i.e., Pelopidas.

⁵⁸ *give over* i.e., give himself up to death.

And for the holy band we mentioned before, it is said, Gorgidas was the first erector of the same. They were three hundred chosen men entertained by the state,⁵⁹ and they always kept within the castle of Cadmea, and the band was called ‘the town’s band,’ for at that time, and specially in that part of Greece, they called the castles and great holds in cities, the ‘towns.’ Other[s] say it was a band of footmen that were in love one with another.⁶⁰ And therefore Pammenes’ pleasant words are noted, saying, that Nestor could no skill⁶¹ to set an army in battle ray, seeing he gave the Grecians counsel, in the *Iliads* of Homer, that they should set them in battle ray, every country and tribe by themselves:

That by affection’s force, and links of kindly love,
That one might always help at hand, that other to behove.

For, said he, one friend should rather be set by another that loves together, because in danger, men commonly do little regard their countrymen or such as are of their tribe. But men that do love one another can never be broken nor overcome, for the passion of love that entertaineth⁶² each other’s affection for affection sake doth keep them from forsaking one another, and those that are beloved, being ashamed to do any vile or dishonest thing before those that love them, for very love will stick one by another to the death.⁶³ And sure the reason is good, if it be true that lovers do indeed more regard them they love, though they be absent, than other that be present. As appeareth by the example of him that being stricken down to the ground, his enemy lifting up his sword to kill him, he prayed him he would give him his death’s wound before, lest his friend that loved him, seeing a wound on his back, should be ashamed of him. It is reported also, that Iolaus,⁶⁴ being beloved of Hercules, did help and accompany him in all his labours and quarrels. Whereupon Aristotle writeth, that unto his time, such as loved heartily together became sworn brethren one to another upon Iolaus’ tomb. And therefore methinks it is likely, that this band was first called ‘the holy band’ by the self same reason that Plato calleth a lover ‘a divine friend,’ by God’s appointment. It is written also, that this band was never broken nor overthrown before the battle of Chaeronea. After that battle, Philip⁶⁵ taking view of the slain bodies, he stayed in that place where the four hundred men of that band lay all dead on the ground, one hard by another, and all of them slain and thrust through with pikes on their breasts, whereat he wondered much; and being told him that it was the lovers’ band, he fell a-weeping for pity, saying, “Woe be to them that think these men did or suffered any evil or dishonest thing.”

And to be short, the misfortune of Laius, that was slain by his own brother Oedipus, was not the first original cause of this custom that the Thebans began to be in love one with another,

⁵⁹ *entertained ... state* i.e., supported at state charge.

⁶⁰ *Other[s] say ... a band of footmen ... love one with another* 1683 (Creech): “Others say, that it was composed of lovers and their beloved[s]” (p. 364).

⁶¹ *could no skill* i.e., had no ability or skill.

⁶² *entertaineth* cherishes.

⁶³ *But men that do ... to the death* 1683 (Creech): “But a band cemented by friendship grounded upon love is never to be broken, and is invincible, since the lovers, ashamed to be base in the sight of their beloved, and the beloved before their lovers, willingly rush into danger for the relief of one another” (p. 365)

⁶⁴ *Iolaus* another of the demi-god Hercules’ beloved youths; he helped Hercules defeat the monstrous Hydra. Cf. ‘Hercules and Hylas,’ Glossary (print anthology).

⁶⁵ *Philip* King Philip of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great.

as the poets write,⁶⁶ but they were their first lawmakers, who perceiving them to be a stout and fierce nation of nature, they sought even from their youth to make them gentle and civil, and therefore in all their actions both of sport and earnest, they continually acquainted them with playing of the flute, being highly esteemed of them in those days. They brought in the use also to make love, in the midst of all their youthful sports and exercises of their bodies, to frame the young men's manners and to bring them to a civil life. And therefore they had reason that gave the goddess Harmonia to the Thebans for defender and patroness of their city, who was begotten (as they say) between Mars and Venus. For that giveth us to understand, that where force and warlike courage is joined with grace, to win and persuade, all things by this union and accord are brought to a goodly, profitable, and most perfect government.

Now, to return again to the matter of this holy band of the Thebans: Gorgidas dividing it in the former ranks, and placing it all alongest the front of the battle of the footmen, it did not appear what they were able to do of themselves, for that he brought them not all into one body: so as thereby they might see what service the whole company could do, being together, considering that it was divided and mingled amongst many other that were a great deal of less value than themselves. But Pelopidas—that had made good proof of their valiantness before, when they fought about him of themselves, without others by them, at Tegyra—would never after divide nor separate them one from the other, but keeping them together as one entire body that had all his members, he would always begin with them to give a charge, in his most dangerous battles. For, as we see in running of coaches at games, that horses being tied all together in a front do run faster and stronger than they do when they are loose and put to it alone, and not for that they being many together do break through the air better, but for that the contention and envy between them to outrun one another doth indeed set their hearts and stomachs afire: even so he thought that valiant men, giving one another a desire and envy to do well, should have the more courage, and would be of greater force, when they fought one in another's sight. [...]

From THE LIFE OF DEMETRIUS⁶⁷

[...]

Now for Demetrius, though he was a very big man, he was nothing so high as his father,⁶⁸ but yet

⁶⁶ A somewhat covert reference to the Greek myth that represents the origins of pederasty: Euripides' fragmentary play *Chrysippus* identifies Laius, king of Thebes, as the first man to practice pederasty. He carried off and raped Chrysippus, the young son of his host, King Pelops of Elis. North is somewhat in error here, since Plutarch identifies Laius as the father, not the brother, of Oedipus.

⁶⁷ The 1683 translation is by John Nalson (1637-1686), Church of England minister and author of religious polemics. Unlike North, Nalson was clearly more than uncomfortable with Demetrius' homosexuality. See below for his transformation of Demetrius's boys into girls. *Demetrius* surnamed 'Poliorcetes' (destroyer of towns), successful Greek general, and later king of Macedonia; his courage in battle and his skill in military tactics, as well as his licentiousness in his private life, were well-known.

⁶⁸ *his father* Antigonus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, ruler (after Alexander's death) of Pamphylia, Lycia, and Phrygia.

so passing and wonderful⁶⁹ fair, that no painter could possibly draw his picture and counterfeit to his likeness. For they saw a sweet countenance, mixed with a kind of gravity in his face, a fear with courtesy, and an incomparable princely majesty accompanied with a lively spirit and youth, and his wit and manners were such that they were both fearful and pleasant unto men that frequented him. For as he was most pleasant in company, having leisure, and most given to banqueting, pleasant life, and more wantonly given to follow any lust and pleasure than any king that ever was, yet was he always very careful and diligent in dispatching matters of importance. And therefore he marvellously commended, and also endeavoured to follow, Dionysius, (as much to say, as Bacchus) above all the other gods, as he that had been a wise and valiant captain in war, and that in peace invented and used all the pleasure that might be.⁷⁰ He marvellously loved and revered his father, and it seemeth that the dutifulness he showed unto his mother was more to discharge the due obedience and duty of a son, than otherwise to entertain his father, for fear of his power, or hope to be his heir.

[...]

But so much did Demetrius honour his wife Phila, and all his other wives he married, that he was not ashamed to keep a number of courtesans, and other men's wives besides: so that he only of all other kings in his time was most detected with this vice of lechery.

[...]

Now Antigonus was at that time little less than four score⁷¹ year old, but yet his fat and corpulent body was more cumbersome to him than his years. Therefore, being grown unmeet⁷² for wars, he used his son in his place, who for that he was fortunate, as also skilful through the experience he had gotten, did wisely govern the weightiest matters. His father besides did not pass for⁷³ his youthful parts, lavish expenses, and common drunkenness he gave himself unto. For in time of peace, he was given over to all those vices; but in time of war, he was as sober and continent as any man so born by nature. [...] Another time Demetrius sent his father word that he was not well. Thereupon Antigonus went to see him, and coming thither, he met a fair, young boy at his door.⁷⁴ So he went up to his chamber, and sitting down by his bedside, he took him by the hand

⁶⁹ *passing and wonderful fair* i.e., surpassingly and wonderfully beautiful.

⁷⁰ Dionysus (the Roman *Bacchus*) is well-known as the god of wine and revelry, whose religious rites often involved sensual, ecstatic pleasure; he is less well-known for his achievements in war; he marched into the East, conquering those lands without bloodshed, and extending his worship.

⁷¹ *four score* eighty.

⁷² *unmeet* unfit.

⁷³ *pass for* raise objections to.

⁷⁴ *Thereupon ... he met a fair boy at his door* In the 1683 translation, Nalson has "[...] Antigonus had the curiosity to make him a visit: and coming to his apartment, out bolts a young sprightly *girl" (*Plutarch's Lives*, vol. 5, p. 46). In a marginal Latin comment (*Hic & albi mutavi sexum, eum Plutarchus αἰσχρολογεῖ[...]ω insinuat; quod scelus innominandum & Christianis auribus indignum existimavi), Nalson alerts the reader (but only the Latin and Greek literate reader) to his disguising of the gender of Demetrius' object of desire: "Here and elsewhere I have changed the sex, [although] Plutarch implies the masculine [gender]; because I have judged this wicked deed unnameable and most unworthy for the ears of Christians" (p. 46).

to feel his pulse. Demetrius told him that his fever had left him but a little before. "I know it well," said Antigonus, "for I met the young boy even at the door as I came in." So Antigonus did gently bear with his son's faults, in respect of his many other virtues he had.

[...]

And Demetrius, that should have revered the goddess Minerva, though for no other respect but because he called her his eldest sister, (for so he would she should be called) he defiled all the castle where was the temple of these holy virgins with horrible and abominable insolencies, both towards young boys of honest houses, as also unto young women of the city. So that this place seemed to be most pure and holy at such time as he lay with his common courtesans Chrysis, Lamia, Demo, and Anticyra. It shall not be greatly for the honour of the city of Athens to tell particularly all the abominable parts he committed there, but Democles' virtue and honesty deserveth worthy and condign remembrance.⁷⁵ This Democles was a young boy that had no hair on his face, of whose beauty Demetrius being informed by the surname he had, as commonly called through the city 'Democles the Fair,' he sought divers ways to entice him, both by fair means, large promises and gifts, and also with threats besides. But when he saw no man could bring him to the bent of his bow,⁷⁶ and that the young boy in the end, seeing him so importunate upon him, came no more to the common places of exercise where other children used to recreate themselves, and that to avoid the common stoves,⁷⁷ he went to wash himself in another secret stove, Demetrius, watching his time and hour of going thither, followed him, and got in to him being alone. The boy, seeing himself alone and that he could not resist Demetrius, took off the cover of the kettle or chawdron⁷⁸ where the water was boiling, and leaping into it, drowned himself. Truly he was unworthy of so lamentable an end, but yet he showed a noble heart, worthy of his beauty and country.

But he did not as another called Cleanetus, the son of Cleomedon, who brought letters from Demetrius directed to the people, whereby, through Demetrius' intercession and request, his father's fine of fifty talents in the which he was condemned (and for non-payment remained prisoner) was clearly remitted and forgiven. But by this act, he not only shamed and dishonoured himself, but also troubled all the city. For the people thereupon released Cleomedon of his fine, but therewith they made a decree that no citizen should henceforth bring any mo[r]e letters from Demetrius. But afterwards, understanding that Demetrius was marvellously offended with this decree, they did not only revoke their first decree, but they did also put some of them to death which were the procurers and authors of the decree, and others also they banished. And further they made a law that the people of Athens should account all religious to the gods and just unto men whatsoever it pleased Demetrius to order and appoint. [...]

⁷⁵ *But Democles' ... remembrance* In 1683, Nalson has "one jewel of severe virtue and chastity, whose name deserves to be transmitted to posterity in the records of honour, the young *Damoclea" (p. 56). Nalson's marginal comment ("Hic quoque mutavi sexum" ['Here also I have changed the sex']) again alerts the Latin-literate reader to the change of sex here from Plutarch's original masculine 'Democles' to the feminine 'Damoclea.'

⁷⁶ *no man ... bent of his bow* i.e., no man could persuade Democles to accommodate himself to Demetrius' desires.

⁷⁷ *stoves* hot air-baths, sweating-rooms, or saunas.

⁷⁸ *chawdron* cauldron.