

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
SEVEN WISE
Masters,
Of Rome.

CONTAINING ;

Many excellent and delightful Examples,
with their Explanations,
and modern Significations, which
(by way of allusion) may be termed,
An historical comparison of Sacred and Civil

TRANSACTIONS.

The better to managé impression
ON THE MINDS OF MEN

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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Seven Wise Masters.

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THERE reigned in the city of Rome, a famous Emperor, whose wife excelled in virtue all the rest of her sex; he had by this wife one son named Dioclesian. The Emperor assembled his nobles to advise how he might train up his son. Their opinion was that he should send for the Seven wise Masters. The young Prince thus disposed of his mother, the queen, soon after died; and the Emperor having lived single for some time, the Roman Lords besought him to take a second wife. At this all the courts of Europe were searched for an accomplished lady; at length they pitched on the King of Castile's daughter, of whom the Emperor much approved; the marriage being concluded she came to Rome and there, with pomp, the nuptials were celebrated. Th

young Empress having no child, studied how she might destroy the young Prince: and the better to do it, prevailed with her Lord to send him to court. But the hasty and unexpected message caused the masters to suspect some evil; they consulted the Planets and found that, if the Prince went at that time and spoke at all, he would die a violent death; and yet if he went not, they would lose their heads, which they would rather do than hazard his life. Whilst they were in this anxiety, the Prince came down and demanded the cause of their troubles? the which they related, with their resolution.

—With that he viewed the firmament, and found the constellation more propitious, for it now appeared, that if he abstained from speaking seven days, he would escape the death threatened, desiring his masters to intercede in his favour and make an apology to the Emperor for his not speaking for such a time; and withal told them a dream that he had dreamed, viz. That his bed chamber seemed to be turned upside down. From which they presaged good success, promising to do their utmost for his preservation, and whereupon set him upon a stately horse clothed in purple and gold, and attended him to his father's court. The Emperor came forth and embraced him, enquiring for his welfare, to which the prince gave no answer; whereat the Emperor marvelled, yet supposing it was so ordered by the masters, he

conducted him to the palace and seated him next the throne; interrogating many things but he answered to none. While the Emperor's thoughts were taken up in wondering at his son's silence, the Empress came adorned with costly robes, and understanding which was her son-in-law, received him with becoming kindness, and taking him aside by the Emperor's consent she undertook to make him speak.

Though with intent his virtue to betray,
That to his life she might make easy way,

CHAP. II.

The Empress' wicked scheme.

The Empress, fired with the beauty of the young Prince, sought many means to entice him to a rich alcove, telling him that she would die and leave her royalty if he denied her love. Thus he refused, though in silence; whereupon she brought him pen, ink, and paper, desiring him to write a reply which he did to this effect; Great Madam, the laws of my Creator forbid so great wickedness, as to defile my father's bed; fatal, Madam, would be the consequence, both from avenging heaven, and my father's Wrath, therefore on my knees, I implore you would proceed no farther; hereupon he

fell upon his knees. The Empress seeing this, turned her love into hatred, tearing her face and robes in a most wretched manner, crying out for help. At this alarm the Emperor came and demanded the cause, when she declared that the Prince would have been rude with her, and forced her to lewdness. The Emperor commanded him to be put to death directly upon which the nobles fell on their knees before their Lord, and begged a respite for his execution; to which the Emperor agreed; which pleased all but the Empress.

C H A P. III.

Pantilius, the first Master's Intercession.

THE Empress grieving at the delay of the Prince's execution told the Emperor the following example, saying, if this son lived, it would fare with him as with a Roman Nobleman, who had in his orchard a fair tree bearing fruit, but one day he saw springing from the root thereof a young scion, at which he rejoiced, saying, This will be a very fair tree; but finding that it increased not in growth asked the Gardener the reason, who answered, That the large branches of the old tree kept the sun and falling showers from it: whereupon he caus-

ed many to be cut off, yet finding the body of the old tree impaired the nourishment of the young scion, he caused it to be hewn down, which done, the young scion withered. Even so, said she is your case; you are the tree, and your son the scion, that is inciting your subjects to rise against your life, that he may reign. That shall not be, said the Emperor, for to-morrow he shall surely die.

The day appointed being come, the Prince was delivered unto the executioner: Which Pantilius the first master hearing, he hasted to the palace, and told the Emperor the following example.

There once lived a knight in this city who had a son whom leaving to the care of some nurses, he often went abroad delighting in hawking and hunting; among his dogs he had a greyhound. One day going to a tournament, he left his hound and falcon at home, at which time, the cradle, in which the son was, was standing in the hall the nurses having left it, and the grey-hound sleeping by it, the falcon espied a serpent coming out of a hole in the wall, going towards the child, upon which, shaking and fluttering his bells, he awaked the greyhound, who killed the serpent and saved the child, yet, in the bustle, the cradle was overturned, and the child was whelmed under it, the grey-hound, lying down by it and licking its hounds; which the servant

seeing ran and told the lady and knight who with them concluded the hound had devoured his son; whereupon the father struck off the hound's head, but afterwards found his mistake. So said the master, it will happen unto you—Then said the Emperor, *My Son shall not die.*

CHAP. IV.

Lentullus, the second Master's Intercession.

The Empress hearing that the Master had prevailed with the Emperor, came, and mournfully besought him that his son might be put to death lest it happen to him as to a wild boar, thus; There was a mighty Emperor, whose empire was wasted by a boar, which obliged the Emperor to proclaim that whosoever killed him, should have his daughter in marriage, and the crown after his disease; Many attempted but in vain until a shepherd with only a staff, resolved to venture on him, but beholding his great tusks, &c. was afraid to touch him, therefore betook to a tree, on which grew delicious fruit but the boar shaking it so, he was fearful of its falling, therefore threw down the fruit thereof, which so satisfied him that he lay down to sleep, in the interim the shepherd descended,

struck the beast to the heart ; and so won what the Emperor had promised.—Consider then my Lord the case is yours ; you are the mighty boar, against which open force cannot prevail, but secret fraud may deprive you of your life and empire while you hearken to these masters. Then, said the Emperor, *he shall die.*

The second master, named Lentullus, on hearing that the Empress had again prevailed came before the Emperor, entreating him to spare his son's life, lest it happen to him as it did to a Roman knight that espoused a beautiful wife, and fearing she would stray, locked the doors every night, laying the key under his head, but she stole it from thence, and sported with her gallants, but one night, missing her, he bolted the door : she returned and knocked, but he upbraided her for inconstancy, saying, she should stay till the watch seized her : whereupon she took two large stones, and threw them in a well that was in the court-yard, then hid herself under the door. On which the knight thinking she had jumped into the well, came down to relieve her ; when upon his opening the door, she slipped in and bolted him out, calling for the watch to seize him ; who adjudged him to stand in the pillory.—This story so much moved the Emperor, that, says he, this day *my son shall not die.*

C H A P. V

Cratoa, the third Master's Intercession,

The Empress being exceedingly outrageous, the Emperor could find nothing that would divert her fury, but promised her his death once more. There lived says she, a Knight at Rome who spent great riches and was reduced to poverty, so that he was about to sell his inheritance: but his son and his two daughters urged the contrary; whereupon he resolved with his son to break into the kings treasury; he did so, and took thence as much gold as both could carry. They attempted it again a second time, and the father going first, was caught in a trap; whereupon he told his son to strike off his head, lest on being discovered, his family should die. The son accordingly complied and bore away the head: but the next morning, the body being found, was, by the Emperor's orders, dragged about the city, with command, that wherever they heard any weeping, as the body passed by, to enter that house and convey those therein, to the gallows, for of that house was he lord; when the body came near the knight's house, the daughter shrieked, when, to prevent the discovery, the son wounded him-

self, and insinuated that was the cause the officers were satisfied, and carried the body to the place of execution, and hanged it up, yet the son would neither take it down nor bury the dead, though the father died to save his life.—Even so, said she is your case with your son, who seeks your life and my honour. That shall not be, for to-morrow *he shall die*, said the Emperor.

When she had told her story, Cratoa, the third master came in, saying, Dread Sovereign if your son die it shall happen to you as it did to a knight who killed a pye, that he exceedingly loved—thus—A knight married a wife, who took to unlawful pleasures which being perceived by the pye, (whom the knight had taught most languages) he told his master what had happened in his absence, for which the lady hated him, and to prevent it or the future, she untiled the house, and cast down sand stones and water upon him which the pye took for hail, rain, and snow; so, when his lord came home, he told he was almost killed by reason of the heavy tempest that fell upon him. The wife hearing him say so answered, my Lord, you may now see error in crediting this bird, for there has not been a fairer day in the memory of man. The Knight, upon this, inquired of his neighbours, who confirmed what she said. He therefore, broke the neck of the

Pye: but after the deed, he saw the house un-tiled, with the gravel, &c. standing on the top of the house, which persuaded him the Pye had been deceived.—Deceived indeed, said the Emperor, and, for the example's sake, *my Son shall not die this day.*

The Empress hearing this, answered, My Lord, in this city reigned an Emperor named Tiberius, who had seven counsellors, who being skilled in Magic, so ordered by their charms, that the Emperor's eyes had a continual mist before them; but the Empress sitting at the table with her Lord, comforted him in the best way, desiring to command his chief counsellors, on pain of death, to restore him to sight; the Emperor then sent for the seven Magic counsellors, and charged them to tell the reason of his blindness, and to find a cure. After long puzzling, they found a youth who interpreted a dream of a spring, which rising small, soon overflowed the ground, and the man accordingly digging, found a great treasure, as the youth had interpreted. They desired him to go with them, and he would be rewarded. Coming before the Emperor, he desired to be let into the royal bed-chamber, where, casting down the bed-clothes, there appeared a seeming well, fed with seven springs, which the youth said must be stopped, ere he could have his sight in another place. Then he demanded of him, how must they be stopped? to which the youth an-

swered ; the seven springs signified his seven counsellors, who had usurped his royal authority, casting a mist of delusion before his eyes, that he might not behold their extortions ; therefore, strike off their heads said he, and the springs shall cease. To this he consented, the springs vanished, and his sight was restored.—Just so, said she, is it with you and your seven masters. On this he again consented *his Son should die.*

PART. VI.

Malquidrake, the fourth Master's Intercession.

Know, Great Sir, said Malquidrake to the Emperor. There formerly lived in this city, an old Knight, who married a young Lady, who complained to her mother, that she was unhappy in the marriage of this old man, designing to open her case to some priest. From this her mother persuaded her, urging her to try his temper. The means she used were, to cut down the finest plant in the garden, and put a fire under it ; at another time, she dashed out the brains of his favourite hound ; and lastly, when he and his friends were sitting at dinner, she threw all the dishes from off the table. Yet with her excuses he seemed satisfied, and that morning she intended to go to the priest, he brought a surgeon in-

to the chamber; commanded her to rise and be bled, whereupon she began to intreat; but said he, your mad blood must be let out, and if you refuse that I will have your heart's blood.

—Upon this she permitted him to bleed her in both arms, till she fainted away: but recovering, she sent for her mother and told her the usage. Her mother, being glad to hear of this correction, said, That old men's revenge was sure, though slow; asking her how she liked the priest? The devil take the priest, said she, I'll strive to please none but my husband. The Emperor hearing this, sent to spare his Son.—The Empress understanding it, came and said, My Lord, over this city reigned Octavius, who being troubled with the rebellion of his subjects, ordained his magician to devise a way how he might know, at any time, the state of the provinces: Upon which Virgilius, the most crafty of them, raised a tower, and placed in it as many images as provinces, and in the hand of each a bell, which, by the secret instinct of Magic, rung out, if any revolt happened in the province it was assigned guardian of, so that the citizens instantly arriving, suppressed the foes ere they could make head; which being known to the tributary nations, desirous to cast off the Roman yoke, they devised how to destroy the tower, and which, after a long debate, was undertaken by four knights, who bringing great treasure, hid it in four pla-

ees near the walls of the city, and entering in, they pretended to be sooth-sayers, and would discover hidden treasure; which being known to the Emperor, he sent for them, who, pretending to dream, discovered the treasure they had hid; at last they pretended to dream that under the tower lay a great treasure, and, if the Emperor would permit, they would take it out; to which he consented: whereupon they undermined the tower, and at break of day, left the city, and were out of sight when it fell. At which the citizens being grieved, came to the Emperor and acquainted him with it; but understanding that through his covetousness, the mischief befel them, they carried him to the market-place, and poured melted lead down his throat, and so buried him. The enemy soon after came upon the town, and took it, and destroying the inhabitants, took all their riches.—The Empress then demanded, if he knew the meaning? who replied in the negative. Well then, said she, the tower with the images signify your body, with its intellectual faculties; as long as they remain strong, and on a good foundation, you are safe; but if you give yourself up to the flattery of the masters you must expect to fall. Rather than so, said he, *they shall die with my Son.*

C H A P. IV.

Josephus, the fifth Master's Intercession.

DREAD SIR! may I beg your attention to the following example?——Hippocrates, a famous physician took to assist him his cousin Galenious, who soon became more expert than he, whereat he endeavoured to hide his art from him, though in vain, for his prompt wit supplied other defects; So that sending him to visit great persons in their sickness, he always cured them; which created such jealousies in Hippocrates that he killed and buried him. But he falling sick, ordered his scholars to fill a cask of water, which they did, and, though an hundred holes were bored in it, yet none would issue hence; whereupon, he said he was a dead man, for as no water came out of the cask, so no virtues came out of the herbs to heal his disease; but if his cousin had been alive he would have cured him; thus complaining he died. For this example, said the Emperor, *my Son shall not die.*

The Empress hearing of this new reprieve, came, and said; Great Sir, when the King of the Goths invaded Rome, he had a steward named Goadus, when one evening, being merry
ng him a beau-

tiful woman, and he would have a great reward ; whereupon the Steward compelled his wife to lie with the King, bargaining for a thousand pieces of silver, and the Lady to depart ere morning. To this the king consenting, she was brought, and the king enjoyed her ; when, before day her husband came, and entreated his Lord to dismiss her, but the king refused, saying, she pleased him so well that she should sleep with him longer, whereat he being much disturbed, told him she was his wife, and that, for lucre, he had forced her to his arms : At which, the king moved to anger, bade him depart on pain of death, which he did ; and the King maintained her as his own wife. For this example, said the Emperor, *my Son shall die, to-morrow.*

CHAP. VII

Cleophas, the sixth Master's Intercession.

CLEOPHAS came and said, There lived in this city, a knight, who married an extraordinary beautiful Lady, whose voice was so charming, that she ravished the hearers.—One day as she sat singing, with the casement open, three favourite knights of the Emperor passed by, they were all much taken with her voice and person ; they each took convenient times

(without acquainting one another) to treat about enjoyment; to which she seemingly consented, In consideration as she was but poor they brought a hundred florids a-piece, and she appointed them to come to her at different times and she would receive them: which done she acquainted her husband, advising him to stand with his sword drawn, and, as they entered, to kill them, which he performed and taking away their money, threw their bodies into the sea. Soon after the knight and his Lady quarelled, and he striking her, she cried out in the hearing of many, O you Monster! will you kill me, as you did the three knights. They being missed, created a suspicion, upon which they were both seized, confessed the fact, and were afterwards executed.—Then, said the Emperor, *my Son shall not die.*

Upon this, the empress came, and said, My Lord, In Armenia reigned a king, who had a beautiful wife, on whom he doated; and that none other might enjoy her he confined her in a castle, and kept the keys himself.

The queen, after four days confinement, dreamed she saw a knight, who was enamoured with her, and she no less with him.—Now there was a knight who had dreamed of her beauty, and left his country to see her, but finding she was confined, rode about the castle, hoping that he would see her looking out at the window, and he found means to discover his

passion: Not long did his expectations fail, for the Lady beholding him, concluded he was the man she beheld in her dream; and as he daily frequented the place, she took an opportunity to drop a letter, which he took up, and so departed consulting with himself how he determined thus: That he would insinuate himself into the king's favour which he did by his great wisdom in state affairs, insomuch that the king made him steward of his household; and, accordingly, ordered a house to be built adjoining to the castle for him, through the great building of which, the Knight contrived to cut the wall, and so to make a private way into the castle, and then for secrecy, slew the workmen. When he entered, he was joyfully received by the queen, who permitted him to take his fill of love, giving him the ring which the king gave her on the wedding day; which the king noticed as he slept in his presence; but he perceiving the discovery, feigned sick, and obtained licence to retire, conveying the ring to her again, ere the king came to enquire after it: Nay, he often brought her to the king's table, pretending she was a lady of his acquaintance whom he intended shortly to wed. Then the king looking earnestly said, Well, if I had not the keys of the castle, I should almost swear it was my queen; before he could go to prove it, she was returned in her usual dress. In the end, the Knight desired the King to give him this Lady

in marriage, which he did giving them great riches, with a ship to convey them to a port in Greece, where the Knight had large possessions, and solemnly taking leave, they set sail, the King sending his eyes after them, till they were out of sight, and afterwards, went to divert himself with the Queen, but coming into the castle, behold she was fled! and he, suspecting the scheme, fell into great lamentations.— Even so, said she, will it befall if you, if you thus give way to your masters. To prevent the like, said the Emperor, *they, with my Son, to-morrow shall die.*

C H A P. IX.

Diocles, the Seventh Master's Intercession.

THE seventh Master named Diocles, came and thus spake: Know Sir, that in Ephesus lived a Knight who married a Lady, upon whom he doated so, that he could not endure her out of his sight; but playing at chess, and he holding a pen-knife in his hand, she hit her finger against it, which the Knight seeing, fell into a swoon, and gave up the ghost: Whereupon she staid mourning by his tomb. So her friends built her a house nigh to it to mourn in.—Now when a malefactor was to be hanged, 'twas the law of the country, that the sheriff

was to watch him on the gallows the ensuing night. The Sheriff discovering a light in the window of the above house came then to warm himself, and on returning, found the thief stolen; Whereat he concluded to go back to the window, and there bewail his misfortune, and desired her to put him in a way what to do. Whereupon she pausing, told him that at the price of his love, she would put him in a way what to do, which was this: A few days ago, says she, my Lord was buried, take and hang him up instead of the thief. But, said he Sheriff, the thief had lost his ears, his teeth, and his stones, as likewise in being taken, received a wound on his head. It is in thy power then, said she, to serve my Lord so: Nay, said he, not I. Then, said she, for the love of you, I will perform it: And taking a sword, she accordingly did it. So they dragged him to the gallows, and so hanged him up. This done, she very urgently demanded of the Sheriff to fulfil his promise: But he replied, O thou wickedest of women, how could thou be so cruel to the dead body of thy husband? Therefore I will keep my word, and not marry you while thou livest. And with that drew his sword, and slew her.—Then, said the master, you have understood what I related? To which he replied, Full well, and am of opinion that she was the worst of women, therefore, for the words of a woman, *my Son shall not die.*

C H A P. X.

The Prince's Complaint of the Empress.

THE seventh day the Masters brought the young Prince to the Emperor, who said, Hail, Royal Father, Heaven can witness the falsity of the accusation laid against me; for instead of my having tempted the chastity of the Empress if was she that tempted me to lewdness with her, which I refused; and because I would not speak (the planets having threatened my life, if in seven days I spoke one word) she fell into a rage and accused me; Nor is she nice in her honor, for, under the cover of a female garment, she keeps a youth to supply your place; and send for her attendants, and I will make it appear. At this the Emperor ordered all of them to be called in, and the person the Prince pitched upon, proved to be a man, who confessed he had lain with the Empress, that he had them cast into prison, and the prince told the following story.—In Palestane lived a knight, who had one son whom he held in high esteem; and for his noble accomplishments, caused him to be taught all the arts and sciences; in which being perfected, sent for him to come home, and while he sat at dinner, a nightingale sung sweetly, at

which the knight said, Ah, how sweet a song is this, could any person but interpret it! to which the youth answered, that he would undertake it, if he would not be displeas'd; but his father commanded him to interpret it. Then said the youth, the bird in her song, expressed that I would be a great Lord, and that my father would hold the water, and my mother a towel to wash my hands. Whereupon the father growing angry, took him up and running to the sea, cast him in, where he swam to an uninhabited island, and stayed there three or four days, till a ship passing, took him up, and sold him to a duke in Egypt, who finding him wise, made him ruler of his house. It happened the King of that country was troubled with the cry of three ravens, and demanded of the wise men the cause, but they could not resolve him, therefore, he proclaimed, that if any could tell the meaning, or cause the noise to cease, he should have his daughter to wife, and the kingdom after his decease. Upon this, Alexander (the youth's name) went to the King, saying, that the ravens were the two old ones and their young one, which the male declared was his right, seeing he had fed him in the time of a famine, when the female flew unto a far country to shift for herself, and left him to perish; when on the other side, the female acknowledged, she had taken pains in laying the egg and brooding it, wherefore the young one appertained to her. And now O King, said

Alexander, they come to you to decide the controversy; give judgment, and then the ravens shall trouble you no more.—Then, replied the King, it seems good to me, that the young one abide with the male; and on saying this the ravens took wing and so returned no more.—The Monarch thus delivered, confirmed his promise, and advanced Alexander to places of dignity. Alexander travelled to Rome, and there became carver to Titus, whose daughter became in love with him, but his heart being in Egypt, Lodowick was sent in his stead, and Alexander sailed into Egypt. But one named Guido discovering an intrigue between Lodowick and the Emperor's daughter, sent him a challenge, who engaged Alexander, but he being to celebrate the nuptials, sent Lodowick to celebrate them in his place, on condition that he would not rifle the princess of her virginity.

Alexander arrives at the court; the Emperor supposing him to be Lodowick, rejoiced and the list being ready the combatants entered, and, after a fierce fight, Alexander cut off his foe's head, and sent it to the princess.—The Emperor highly extolled him; but he saying his father was sick took his leave, and went back to Egypt.—Some time after, Alexander was made king of that country, and visited his father and mother; one day, before dinner according to the interpretation he had given of the bird's language, his father brought him the

bason, and his mother the towel but he refused to let them hold either commanding his servants to do it.—Dinner being ending, he asked them, how many children they had, they said none. Had you ever any? said the king, Alas! said the father, we had one son, but he was drowned long ago; well look you to it, said the king, for if I find it otherwise, you must expect no mercy. Then they fell upon their knees and confessed the whole matter; then the king mildly raising them from the ground discovered

Upon hearing this story, the Emperor resigned the government to his son Dioclesian, who demanded justice on the Empress and her paramour, which was granted, the former being burned and the latter hanged and quartered. And the Emperor dying soon after, left his son in full possession of the empire.

F I N I S.