



IMMORTAL WORDS

— *S* —
HISTORY'S MOST
MEMORABLE
QUOTATIONS
AND THE STORIES
BEHIND THEM

— *S* —
TERRY BREVERTON



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
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YAYASAN
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PERDANA



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IMMORTAL WORDS

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‘Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body’

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SIR RICHARD STEELE

1672 1729

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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Quercus

INTRODUCTION

Over the last four and a half millennia, humankind has been inspired to humility, compassion, fortitude, bravery, and above all progress by the spoken and written word. The intention of this book is to give a sense of the power of words to move us, by the inclusion of some of the remarkable quotations that have passed down over the centuries. The absolute power of language across nations to make us feel courage, compassion, sadness – all the emotions is probably the greatest achievement of humanity.

The quotations in this book have been included for the emotion that they convey – for their remarkable power to inspire us or equally to make us reflect upon man's inhumanity to man. The language that makes up the book's content comes from statesmen, monarchs, poets, reformers, scientists, novelists and warriors. It has been gathered from monuments, gravestones, speeches, encomiums, broadcasts, books and pamphlets – in fact, from most of the evolving forms of communication over the years. Sometimes quotations may disclose an ignoble personality – perhaps Stalin or Goering – but in all cases their language has achieved an everlasting effect. They are included because, in the words of George Santayana (1863–1952): *'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'*

Some authors have not been included owing to space limitations, and for any notable omissions, I apologize unreservedly. There could be over 100 entries if all the worthy representations had been incorporated. On the other hand, some personalities such as William Shakespeare, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill have multiple entries. The genius of Shakespeare, as the foremost literary personality in the history of the English language, forces his prose and poetry into this work. Roosevelt, equally, shines through history, with his remarkable leadership of the world's greatest nation during the Depression and World War II. And Churchill's literary rhetoric inspired a nation upon its knees to defy the evils of Fascism in one of the very, very few 'just' wars in recorded history. When President Kennedy conferred honorary US citizenship upon Churchill in 1963, he alluded to the power of his speeches: *'He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.'*



We can change history, by the spoken and written word, by not electing demagogues or extremists. We can help other countries in distressing circumstances by pressurizing our politicians. We can stop the abuses of billionaires and multinationals. For humankind, language is our greatest – perhaps our only – weapon against injustice, iniquity and war. Perhaps the greatest anti-war slogan of all time came anonymously during World War II: *'A bayonet is a weapon with a worker at each end.'* Informed language is not only educative, but it is also our greatest force against greed and materialism, the twin axes of anti-humanitarianism. We can see that human good constantly overcomes human evil – we may re-invent a phrase originating with the Greeks, but we still have the same concerns, the same aspirations and hopefully the same sense of wonder as they did. All this is communicated by the universal medium of language.

This book has been organized chronologically – to rank quotations in order of their importance in history, or of the brilliance of their author, would be impossible. I have tried to place each quotation in order of when it was written or spoken. If this is impossible, the date of the author's death is used. Thus we have the author and their birth and death dates; a headline quotation and sometimes an extension of that quotation, with, where possible, the date on which the quotation was made. Each entry is accompanied by contextual information giving the circumstances in which it was said or written and a brief biography of the author. Sometimes the quotation speaks for itself and there is a shorter explanation, but collectively the entries have been picked from all the stages of history to reveal the absolute power of language to change our feelings or to make us think. The book is leavened by a few humorous quotations to balance those on the darker side of man's nature, and I hope that the selection is both thought-provoking and inspirational.

Terry Breverton

MOSES
1393-1273 BCE

‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me’

‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.’

The Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) were given to Moses by God, on one or two tablets of stone on Mount Sinai, and recorded in Exodus 20. Moses had led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt after the Ten Plagues, through the Red Sea. He then received the Ten Commandments during their 40 years of wandering in the desert. The Protestant, Catholic and Hebrew versions are slightly different. This version is from Exodus 20, but the tablet was broken and another version is given in Exodus 34.