
FRANCESCO'S FORTUNES

Or

The second part of GREENE'S NEVER TOO LATE

Wherein is discoursed the fall of love, the bitter fruits of folly's pleasure, and the
repentant sorrows of a reformed man.

Sero, sed serio.

Robertus Greene *in Artibus Magister.*

Imprinted at London for N.L. and John Busby.
1590.

To the right worshipful Thomas Burnaby, Esquire, Robert Greene wisheth increase of all honourable virtues.

The Athenians counted such men unworthy their commonwealth as were ingrateful, and Plato, seeing an unthankful man prosper, said: See, men of Greece, the gods are proved unjust, for they have laden a thistle with fruit. When (right worshipful) these reasons entered into my reach, and that I saw how odious in elder time ingrateful men were to all estates and degrees, lest I might be stained with such a hateful blemish, having received many friendly, nay fatherly favours at your hands, I resolved to endeavour how I might show the depth of my affection towards your worship, I found my ability was not answerable to my desires to proportionate equal requital to your deserts, so that I only thought to make thanks my pay-mistress, and so pass over your good turn with the old proverb, God and Saint Francis thank you. Yet when I perceived great men had taken little gifts, I took heart at grass and emboldened myself to present you with a pamphlet of my penning called my *Nunquam sera est*, which your worship so gratefully accepted, measuring my will more than the worth, that having made my second part, wherein is discoursed the sequel of Francesco's further fortunes, I thought to shroud it under your patronage; I have discovered herein the other follies of his youth, and how at last repentance struck in him such a remorse that his sorrow for his sins were more than the pleasures conceited in his vanities. I have from the love of a lascivious courtesan brought him to the wife of his youth, the story necessary for young gentlemen, and not offensive unto grave ears, for the most severe Stoic of all that seeks a knot in a rush may herein find some sentence worth the marking. And though you as Virgil hold Ennius, yet you may out of his dross gather some gold. They which think there is no God to their goddess may here find that wanton loves are the ready paths to prejudice, and that effeminate follies are the efficient causes of dire disparagement, and that there is no jewel like the gift of an honest wife. But whatsoever it is, all is shrouded under your favour, which hoping you will as gratefully patronage as the former, I wish your worship as many good fortunes as yourself can desire, or I imagine.

Your worship's adopted son in all humble duty to command,

Robert Greene.

To the gentlemen readers, health.

If (gentlemen) I had not promised the further discourse of Francesco's fortunes, this pamphlet had not come to the press, but seeing promise was debt, and sundry made challenge at the stationer's shop that I should be a man of my word, to satisfy therefore all my well-wishers, I have written what befell Francesco after he had forsaken his Infida, no great adventures, but you may see plotted down many passions full of repentant sorrows, and read many of his sonnets that he made in remorse of mind; such as they be, they are yours, or what my pen can do, but look for it in more deeper matters.

Yours, Robert Greene.

In Laudem Authoris.

*Though wanton Horace writ of love's delight,
And blithely chanted of his lass
Bonny and bright as any glass,
Yet did the poet odes and satires write
Wherein he taught fond youth
That folly hatcheth ruth,
And with his toys
Mixed virtues joys,
So by his works he reaped immortal praise.*

*Let him that writes the fall of lovers' fits,
Of beauty and her scorching fires,
And fancy and her fond desires,
If unto virtue's lore he wrest his wits,
And pen down folly's fall
Whereto young youth is thrall,
Have honour then
To grace his pen;
But envy lives too much in these our days.*

Richard Hake.

Virtutis comes inuidia.

R.S.

*The bee is praised for labour, not for ease,
The more she works, the richer is her hive;
The little ant that teacheth man to thrive
Is famed for that her labours never cease,*

*The more the fruit, more precious is the tree,
The more the fish, more valued is the stream,
The sweetest night when many stars do gleam,
The better ground that brings most grain we see,*

*The more it works, the quicker is the wit,
The more it writes, the better to be steemed,
By labour ought men's wills and wits be deemed,
Though dreaming dunces do inveigh against it.*

*But write thou on, though Momus sit and frown,
A carter's jig is fittest for a clown.*

Bonum quo communius, eo melius.

GREENE'S NEVER TOO LATE

Nunquam sera est ad bonos mores via.

No sooner did Phoebus burnish the heaven with his brightness, and decked in a glorious diadem of chrysolites had mounted him on his coach to lighten the lamp that makes Flora beauteous, but the palmer was up and at his orisons, being as devout in his thoughts as he was mindful of his travels; walking in the garden all alone, and seeing the sun new peeping out of the east, he began to meditate with himself of the state of man, comparing his life to the length of a span or the compass of the sun, who rising bright and orient, continueth but his appointed course, and that oft-times shadowed with so many clouds and strained with a sable veil of such thick fogs that he is more darkened with storms than beautified with light, and if it fortune his shine is without blemish, yet he setteth, and that more oft, in a fold of clouds than in a clear sky; so man, born in the pride of beauty or pomp of wealth, be his honours equal with his fortunes and he as happy as Augustus, yet his life hath but his limits, and that clogged with so many cares and crosses that his days are more full of miseries than of pleasures, and his disaster mishaps are more than his prosperous fortunes, but if the stars grace him with all favourable aspects, and that he live full of content in many honours and much wealth, yet his prime hath his autumn, his fair blossoms turns to tawny leaves, age will shake him by the shoulder, and nature will have his due, that at last he must set with the sun, and perhaps in such a cloud of sin as his rising may be in a storm of sorrows. Thus did the palmer meditate with himself, being penitent for the follies of his youth, that at last, thinking to be as musical to himself as the birds were melodious, he chanted out this ode.

The Penitent Palmer's Ode.

*Whilom in the winter's rage
A palmer old and full of age
Sat and thought upon his youth
With eyes, tears, and heart's ruth,
Being all with cares yblent
When he thought on years mis-spent,
When his follies came to mind,
How fond love had made him blind,
And wrapped him in a field of woes
Shadowed with pleasure's shows,
Then he sighed and said, alas,
Man is sin and flesh is grass.
I thought my mistress' hairs were gold,
And in their locks my heart I fold,
Her amber tresses were the sight
That wrapped me in vain delight,
Her ivory front, her pretty chin,
Were stales that drew me on to sin,
Her starry looks, her crystal eyes,*

*Brighter than the sun's arise,
 Sparkling pleasing flames of fire,
 Yoked my thoughts and my desire,
 That I gan cry ere I blin:
 Oh her eyes are paths to sin.
 Her face was fair, her breath was sweet,
 All her looks for love was meet,
 But love is folly, this I know,
 And beauty fadeth like to snow.
 Oh why should man delight in pride,
 Whose blossom like a dew doth glide;
 When these supposes touched my thought,
 That world was vain and beauty naught,
 I gan sigh and say, alas,
 Man is sin and flesh is grass.*

The palmer, having ended this ode, sat in a great dump in the garden when his host, accompanied with his wife, desirous to hear out Francesco's fortune, were come into the place and gave him the *bon giorno* thus. Courteous palmer, a kind salute to waken you from your morning's meditation; I see you keep the proverb for a principle, to bed with the bee and up with the lark; no sooner the sun in the sky but you are at your orisons, either ruminating passions or penance, either some old remembrance or some new reverse. Howsoever (gentle palmer), 'tis no manners to enter too far into your thoughts, and therefore leaving your secrets to yourself, *Come stato la vostra signoria questa matina?* The palmer, that had learned a little broken Italian, seeing his honest host in such a merry mood, made this answer: *Io sto ben, Signior, Diu merce, ringratiandoui sonnamenti di vostra grande cortesia*, holding it fit for my fortunes to have many cares and little sleep, that my penance may be great sith my sins are many; long slumbers are for idle persons, not for penitent palmers, and sweet dreams are no instances of hearty devotion; therefore do I watch with the mouse to argue myself miserable, and enjoin myself to much pains because I am cumbered with many passions. This morning, entering into this garden, I saw by the works of nature the course of the world, for when I saw Flora's glory shut up in the folds of Iris' frowns, I began to consider that the pride of man was like the pomp of a flower, that today glories in the field and tomorrow is in the furnace, that we be like the flies hemerae, that take life with the sun and die with the dew, that our honours are compared to the blossoms of a cedar which vanish ere they begin to burnish, and all our triumphs like characters written in snow, that printed in a vapour, at the least sunshine discover our vanity, for they are as soon melted as our pleasures are momentary. Tied by fates to this tickle state, we have nothing more certain than to die, nor nothing more uncertain than the hour of death, and therefore when I call to mind the follies of my youth, how they have been tickled with vice, I covet in the flower of mine years to repent and amend, for:

Nunquam sera est ad bonos mores via.

You do well, sir (quoth the gentleman), in all your actions to consider the end, for he that fore-repents foresees many perils. Had-I-wist is a great fault, and after-wits are bitten with many sorrows; therefore such as grieve at their follies & covet to prevent dangerous fortunes, they which take an antidote of grace against the deadly aconiton of sin, and with present remorse prevent ensuing vanities, such indeed, as they live well, shall die blessed. But leaving this humour till another time, you may see by our early rising how my wife and I were delighted with your evening's parley, for trust me, sir, desire of Francesco's further fortunes made us thus watchful, and therefore seeing the morning is grey and our longing great, and yet a good while to breakfast, if your leisure may afford so much, I pray you, sit down and tell us what was the end of his loves and the effects of his repentance. The palmer, very willing to pleasure his courteous host, sat him down in an arbour and began thus.

The Palmer's Tale Of Francesco.

As soon as Francesco awaked from his slumber and began to enter further into the consideration of Infida's cozenage, his heart throbbed at his follies and a present passion of his great misfortunes so pained him that all perplexed he began again to sing his former song, and to say that women's thoughts were like to the leaves of a date-tree that change colours with the wind, in a moment figuring out sorrow with tears, and in that instant deciphering pleasure with smiles, neither too resolute with the Stoics to yield to no passions, nor too absolute with the Esseni to surfeit with overmuch chastity; their desires (quoth he) resemble Aeolus' forehead, that next every storm contains a calm; their deeds are like almanacs that decipher nothing but uncertainty, either too scrupulous with Daphne to contemn all, or too voluptuous with Venus to desire all, and straight neither flesh nor fish, as the porpoise, but time-pleasers, to content themselves with variety of fancies. In this humorous melancholy he arose up and ranged about the city, despairing of his estate as a man penniless, and therefore impatient because he knew not how to redress his miseries; to rely upon the help of a courtesan he saw by experience was to hang hope in the air; to stand upon the favour of friends, that was bootless, for he had few in the city, as being but a stranger there, and such as he had were won with an apple, trencher-friends, and therefore to be left with the puff of the least blast of adversities. To go home to his wife, to fair Isabel, that was as hard a censure as the sentence of death, for shame of his follies made him ashamed to show his face to a woman of so high deserts. In this perplexity he passed over three or four days till his purse was clean empty, his score great, and his hostess would trust him for no more money, but threatened him, if present payment were not made, to lay him in prison. This news was hard to Francesco, that knew not how to avoid the prejudice; only his refuge was, to prevent such a misfortune, to carry his apparel to the broker's and with great loss to make money to pay for his diet, which once discharged, he walked up and down as a man forlorn, having neither coin nor credit. Necessity, that stingeth unto the quick, made him set his wits on the tenter and to stretch his brains as high as ela to see how he could recover pence to defray his charges by any sinister means to salve his sorrows; the care of his parents and of his own honour persuaded him from making gain by labour; he had never been brought up to any mechanical course of life. Thus every way destitute of means to live, he sight out this old-said saw: *Miserrimum est fuisse beatum*, yet at last, as extremities

search very far, he called to mind that he was a scholar, and that although in these days art wanted honour, and learning lacked his due, yet good letters were not brought to so low an ebb but that there might some profit arise by them to procure his maintenance. In this humour he fell in amongst a company of players, who persuaded him to try his wit in writing of comedies, tragedies, or pastorals, and if he could perform anything worth the stage, then they would largely reward him for his pains. Francesco, glad of this motion, seeing a means to mitigate the extremity of his want, thought it no dishonour to make gain of his wit, or to get profit by his pen, and therefore getting him home to his chamber writ a comedy, which so generally pleased all the audience that happy were those actors in short time that could get any of his works, he grew so exquisite in that faculty. By this means his want was relieved, his credit in his host's house recovered, his apparel in greater bravery than it was, and his purse well-lined with crowns.

At this discourse of Francesco, the gentleman took his guest by the hand and broke off his tale thus. Now, gentle palmer, seeing we are fallen by course of prattle to parley of plays, if without offence, do me that favour to show me your judgement of plays, play-makers, and players. Although (quoth the palmer) that some for being too lavish against that faculty have for their satirical invectives been well canvassed, yet seeing here is none but ourselves, and that I hope what you hear shall be trodden underfoot, I will flatly say what I can, both even by reading and experience. The invention of comedies were first found amongst the Greeks and practiced at Athens, some think by Menander, whom Terence so highly commends in his *Heauton Timorumenon*. The reason was that under the covert of such pleasant and comical events they aimed at the overthrow of many vanities that then reigned in the city, for therein they painted out in the persons the course of the world, how either it was graced with honour or discredited with vices; there might you see levelled out the vain life that boasting Thrases use, smoothed up with the self-conceit of their own excellence; the miserable estate of covetous parents, that rather let their sons taste of any misfortunes than to relieve them with the superfluity of their wealth; the portraiture of parasitical friends and flattering Gnathos, that only are time-pleasers and trencher-friends, which soothe young gentlemen subtilly in their follies as long as they may *ex eorum sullo viuere* was set out in lively colours. In those comedies the abuse of bawds that made sale of honest virgins and lived by the spoil of women's honours was deeply discovered. To be short, lechery, covetousness, pride, self-love, disobedience of parents, and such vices predominant both in age and youth were shot at, not only with examples and instances to feed the eye, but with golden sentences of moral works to please the ear. Thus did Menander win honour in Greece with his works, & reclaim both old & young for [sic?] their vanities by the pleasant effects of his comedies. After him this faculty grew to be famous in Rome, practiced by Plautus, Terence, and other that excelled in this quality, all aiming as Menander did in all their works to suppress vice and advance virtue. Now, so highly were comedies esteemed in those days that men of great honour and grave account were the actors, the senate and the consuls continually present as auditors at all such sports, rewarding the author with rich rewards according to the excellency of the comedy. Thus continued this faculty famous till covetousness crept into the quality, and that mean men greedy of gains did fall to practise the acting of such plays, and in the theatre presented their comedies but to such only as rewarded them well for their pains; when thus comedians grew to be mercenaries, then

men of account left to practise such pastimes, and disdained to have their honours blemished with the stain of such base and vile gains, insomuch that both comedies and tragedies grew to less account in Rome in that the free sight of such sports was taken away by covetous desires, yet the people (who are delighted with such novelties and pastimes) made great resort, paid largely, and highly applauded their doings, insomuch that the actors by continual use grew not only excellent, but rich and insolent. Amongst whom, in the days of Tully one Roscius grew to be of such exquisite perfection in his faculty that he offered to contend with the orators of that time in gesture as they did in eloquence, boasting that he could express a passion in as many sundry actions as Tully could discourse it in variety of phrases; yea, so proud he grew by the daily applause of people that he looked for honour and reverence to be done him in the streets, which self-conceit when Tully entered into with a piercing insight, he quipped at in this manner.

It chanced that Roscius & he met at a dinner, both guests unto Archias the poet, where the proud comedian dared to make comparison with Tully, which insolency made the learned orator to grow into these terms: Why Roscius, art thou proud with Aesop's crow, being pranked with the glory of others' feathers? of thyself thou canst say nothing, and if the cobbler hath taught thee to say Ave Caesar, disdain not thy tutor because thou pratest in a king's chamber; what sentence thou utterest on the stage flows from the censure of our wits, and what sentence or conceit of the invention the people applaud for excellent, that comes from the secrets of our knowledge. I grant your action, though it be a kind of mechanical labour, yet well done 'tis worthy of praise, but you worthless if for so small a toy you wax proud. At this Roscius waxed red, and bewrayed his imperfection with silence, but this check of Tully could not keep others from the blemish of that fault, for it grew to a general vice amongst the actors to excel in pride as they did exceed in excellence, and to brave it in the streets as they brag it on the stage, so that they revelled it in Rome in such costly robes that they seemed rather men of great patrimony than such as lived by the favour of the people. Which Publius Servilius very well noted, for he being the son of a senator, and a man very valiant, met on a day with a player in the streets richly apparelled, who so far forgot himself that he took the wall of the young nobleman, which Servilius taking in disdain, counterchecked with this frump: My friend (quoth he), be not so brag of thy silken robes, for I saw them but yesterday make a great show in a broker's shop. At this the one was ashamed and the other smiled, and they which heard the quip laughed at the folly of the one & the wit of the other. Thus, sir, have you heard my opinion briefly of plays, that Menander devised them for the suppressing of vanities, necessary in a commonwealth as long as they are used in their right kind, the play-makers worthy of honour for their art, & players men deserving both praise and profit as long as they wax neither covetous nor insolent. I have caused you, sir (quoth the gentleman), to make a large digression, but you have resolved me in a matter that I long doubted of, and therefore I pray you again to Francesco. Why then, thus, quoth the palmer. After he grew excellent for making of comedies he waxed not only brave, but full of crowns, which Infida hearing of, and having intelligence what course of life he did take, thought to cast forth her lure to reclaim him, though by her unkindness he was proved haggard, for she thought that Francesco was such a tame fool that he would be brought to strike at any stale; decking herself therefore as gorgeously as she could, painting her face with the choice of all her drugs, she walked abroad where she thought

Francesco used to take the air; love and fortune joining in league so favoured her that according to her desire she met him. At which encounter I guess more for shame than love, she blushed, and filled her countenance with such repentant remorse (yet having her looks filled with amorous glances) that she seemed like Venus reconciling herself to froward Mars. The sight of Infida was pleasing in the eyes of Francesco, and almost as deadly as the basilisk, that had he not had about him moly as Ulysses, he had been enchanted by the charms of that wily Circes, but the abuse so stuck in his stomach that she had proffered him in his extremity that he returned all her glances with a frown, and so parted. Infida was not amated with his angry mood, as one that thought love's furnace of force to heat the coldest amatist, and the sweet words of a woman as able to draw on desire as the sirens' melody the passengers. What, quoth she, though for awhile he be choleric, beauty is able to quench the flame as it sets hearts on fire; as Helen's faults angered Paris, so her favours pleased Paris; though she were false to Menelaus, yet her fair made him brook her follies; women are privileged to have their words and their wills, and whom they kill with a frown they can revive with a smile. Tush, Francesco is not so froward but he may be won; he is no saturnist to bear anger long; he is soon hot and soon cold, choleric and kind-hearted, who though he be scolded away with bitter words he will be reclaimed again with sweet kisses; a woman's tears are adamant, and men are no harder than iron, and therefore may be drawn to pity their passions. I will feign, flatter, and what not, to get again my Francesco, for his purse is full and my coffers wax empty. In this humour taking pen and paper, she wrote a letter to him to this effect.

Infida to Francesco wisheth what he wants in health or wealth.

If my outward penance (Francesco) could discourse my inward passions, my sighs bewray my sorrows, or my countenance my miseries, then should I look the most desolate of all as I am the most distressed of all, and the furrows in my face be numberless as the griefs of my heart are matchless, but as the feathers of the halcyons glisten most against the sorest storm, and Nilus is most calm against a deluge, so the sorrows of my mind are so great that they smother inwardly, though they make no outward appearance of mishap. All these miseries, Francesco, grow from the consideration of mine own discourtesies, for when I think of thy constancy, thy faith, thy feature, and thy beauty, and weigh with myself how all these, vowed unto Infida, they were lost by the disloyalty of Infida, I call it in question whether I had better despair and die, or in hope of thy favour linger out my life. Penance of free will merits pardons of course, and griefs that grow from remorse deserve to be salved with ruth. I confess, Francesco, that I wronged thee, and therefore I am wrung at the heart, but so doth the idea of thy perfection & the excellence of thy virtues frame a restless passion in my heart that although thou shouldst vow to loathe me, I cannot cease to love thee; oh consider, women have their faults and their follies, & act that in an hour which they repent all their life after. Though Mars & Venus brabbled, they were friends after brawls, for a lovers' jar ought not to be a perpetual discord, but like a sunshine shower, that be it never so sharp is accounted no storm; forgive and forget, Francesco, then heartily that I repent so deeply; grace thy Infida again with one smile, ease her impatient passions with thy sweet presence, and assure thyself she will satisfy with love what she hath offended with folly. Bones that are broken & after set again are the more stronger; where the beech-tree is cut, there it

grows most hard; reconciled friendship is the sweetest amity. Then be friends with thy Infida; look on her, and but visit her, and if she win not thy love with her words, and show herself so penitent that thou shalt pardon, then let her perish in her own misfortunes, and die for the want of thy favour. Farewell,

*Thine ever,
despairing Infida.*

This letter she sealed up and sent it by a secret friend to Francesco, who at the first, knowing from whence it came, would scarcely receive it, yet at last willing to hear what humour had made the courtesan write unto him, he broke open the seals and read the former contents, which when he had thoroughly perused, he found himself perplexed, for the cunning of her flattery made the poor man passionate. Insomuch that sitting down with the letter in his hand, he began thus to meditate with himself.

Why dost thou vouchsafe, Francesco, to look on her letters that is so lewd, to view her lines that are powdered with flattery, to hear her charms that seeks thy prejudice, to listen to such a Calypso that aims only at thy substance, not at thy person? While thou wert poor, her forehead was full of frowns, and in her looks sat the storms of disdain, but when she sees thou hast feathered thy nest, & hath crowns in thy purse, she would play the horse-leech to suck away thy wealth, & now would she be thy heart's gold while she left thee not one dram of gold. Oh Francesco, she hides her claws, but looks for her prey with the tiger; she weeps with the crocodile, and smiles with the hyena, and flatters with the panther, and under the covert of a sugared bait shrouds the intent of thy bane. Knowest thou not that as the marble drops against rain, so their tears fore-point mischief, that the favours of a courtesan are like the songs of the grasshopper, that ever foretell some fatal disparagement? Beware then, Francesco (*piscator ictus saepit*); she hath once burnt thee; fear fire with the child; she hath crossed thee with disdain; covet not her with desire; hate her, for in loathing such a one thou lovest thy God. Return not with the dog to the vomit; wallow not with swine in the mire; foresee not the best & follow the worst. And yet, Francesco, trust me, she is fair, beautiful, and wise; aye, but with that, a courtesan; perhaps she will now love thee faithfully; if she do, fond man, is not her hearty liking hateful lust, dangerous to thy body and damnation to thy soul? 'Tis a saying not so common as true that he which looketh continually against the sun shall at last be blind, that whoso handleth pitch must needs be defiled; the tree that abideth many blasts at last falleth by the carpenter's axe, the bird that striketh at every stale cannot long escape the snare, so long goeth the pitcher to the brook that at last it comes broken home, and he that securely swimmeth in sin shall surely be drowned in iniquity; whoso bindeth two sins together shall never be unrevenged in the one, and he that delighteth to offend in youth shall no doubt feel the punishment. *Quod desertur non aufertur*. Though God for a time suffer a man to wallow in his own wickedness, and to say unto his soul: Tush, the Lord regardeth not the way of sinners nor suspecteth the misdeeds of men, he is slow to wrath and prone to pity, yet the Lord at last looketh down from heaven and revengeth all his grievous sins with a heavy plague, yea, he rooteth him out from the face of the earth, and his place is no more seen. Consider then, Francesco, if the Lord suffer thee in thy iniquity, and defer present punishment, it is because his mercy may seem the more, and

thy sin the greater. He that hath the dropsy drinketh while he bursteth, and yet not satisfied; the horse-leech hath two daughters that never cry enough; whoso is stung with the serpent dipsas burneth but can never be cooled, and whoso is inflamed with sin thirsteth continually after wickedness until he hath supped the dregs of God's displeasure to his own destruction. Beware by this; fall not into the trap when thou seest the train, for knowing the sin, if thou offendest against thine own conscience, the Lord will send upon thee cursing, trouble, and shame in all that thou settest thy hand unto, and will not cease to revenge until thou perish from off the face of the earth. Oh hast thou not at home an Isabel that is the wife of thy youth and the only friend of thy bosom, endued with such exquisite beauty and exceeding virtue that it is hard to judge whether the pure complexion of her body or the perfect constitution of her mind holds the supremacy? And is not a peaceable woman and of a good heart the gift of the Lord? There is nothing so much worth as a woman well instructed; a shamefast and faithful woman is a double grace, and there is no treasure to be compared to her continent mind, but as the glistering beams of the sun when it ariseth decketh the heaven, so the beauty of a good wife adorneth the house, & as golden pillars do shine upon the sockets of silver, so doth a fair face in a virtuous mind. Shall the fear of God, then, Francesco, be so far from thine eyes as to leave thine own wife and embrace a courtesan, to leave the law of God and suffer thy heart to be subverted by lust? The lion so abhorreth this crime as he killeth the lioness for committing this fact. The stork never meddleth but with his mate. The jacinth stone will not be worn on the finger of an adulterer, nor the olive grow if planted by one that leadeth his life in unlawful lusts, and wilt thou show thyself more careless in this crime than brute beasts, more reckless than unreasonable creatures, more senseless than stones, yea, far less in virtue than a man, & far more in vice than a beast? Then will the Lord look down from heaven and plague thee with a heavy curse. At this clause standing a great while in a maze, at last he stepped to his standish and wrote this answer.

Francesco wisheth to Infida remorse of conscience & regard of honesty.

I have read thy letters, Infida, wherein I hoped to have found more honesty and less vanity, a sign of better thoughts and lines of more remorse, else had I left them sealed as I covet to leave thee unseen. But I perceive as no time will alter the panther from his spots, the mouse from her fear, not the tiger from his fierceness, so neither date nor reason will change the conditions of a courtesan; thou writest thou art penitent; so I think, but it is not for thy sins, but that thou hast not liberty enough to sin, enjoined by some overthwart neighbour to be more honest than thou wouldst be, which is as great a penance to one of thy trade as a long pilgrimage to a sorrowful palmer. A tear in a strumpet's eye is like heat-drops in a bright sunshine, as much to be pitied as the crocodile when she weeps; a courtesan's laughter is like to lightning that beautifies the heaven for a blaze, but fore-runs storms and thunder. Art thou in love with Francesco? marry, gip, giglet; thy love sits on thy tongue's end, ready to leap off as soon as thy mouth opens, and thine honesty hangs at thine eye, which falls away with every wink; thou art inveigled with my beauty? that is because thou hearest I have a rich purse, not a fair face, for thou valuest as much of beauty without pence as a horse of a fair stable without provender. Thou art enticed by my virtues? I wonder how that word virtue comes in thy mouth when it is so far from thy heart, and yet no marvel, for the most infectious

serpents have sweetest breaths, and the commonest courtesans the most courteous speeches.

Thou wouldst have me grace thee with my presence, and renew our old friendship? so I will, when I mean to give my body to the surgeon and my soul to the devil, for in loving thee I must needs grant this legacy. Thy reason is that bones once broken, united again, are the strongest; I would thy neck might make the experience, and then I would trust the instance. But why pester I so much paper to so lewd a person? as I found thee at the first, I leave thee at the last, even empty-gorged to bate at a full purse, incontinent, false, perjured, as far from God as thou art friend to the devil, and so adieu.

Francesco, penitent and therefore a persecutor of courtesans.

After he had written this letter he sent it to Infida, who reading it, and seeing she could get no favour at the hands of Francesco, that wrought she never so subtilly, yet her trains were discovered, that her painted lures could not make him stoop, so had he with reason refelled his former folly, when she perceived (I say) that all her sweet potions were found to be poisons though she covered them never so clerkly, she fell not in despair with overmuch love, but swore in herself to intend him some secret prejudice if ever it lay in her by any means to procure it, but leaving her to the justice of him that poiseth the deeds of such impenitent persons in his balance, and committing Francesco to the making of some strange comedy, I will show you how fortune made an assault to the unfeigned affection of fair Isabel.

The Discourse Of Isabel's Fortunes.

Isabel living thus pensive in that she wanted the presence of her Francesco, yet for her patience and virtue grew so famous that all Caerbranck talked of her perfections; her beauty was admired of every eye, her qualities applauded in every man's ear, that she was esteemed for a pattern of virtuous excellence throughout the whole city. Amongst the rest that censured of her curious favours there was one Signor Bernardo, a burgomaster of the city, who chancing on a time to pass by the door where Isabel sojourned, seeing so sweet a saint, began to fall enamoured of so fair an object, and although he was old, yet the fire of lust crept into his eyes and so inflamed his heart that with a disordinate desire he began to affect her, but the renown of her chastity was such that it almost quatted those sparks that heated him on to such lawless affection. But yet when he called to mind that want was a great stumbling-block, and saw the necessity that Isabel was in by the absence of Francesco, he thought gold would be a ready means to gain a woman's goodwill, and therefore despaired not of obtaining his purpose. After that this Signor Bernardo had well noted the exquisite perfection of her body, and how she was adorned with most special gifts of nature, he was so snared with the fetters of lascivious concupiscence as reason could not redress what lust had engrafted; his aged years yielded unto vanity, so that he turned away his mind from God, and durst not lift up his eyes unto heaven lest it should be a witness of his wickedness or a corrosive to his guilty conscience, for the remembrance of God is a terror to the unrighteous, and the sight of his creatures is a sting to the mind of the reprobate. He therefore feeling his

devilish heart to be perplexed with such hellish passions, carelessly cast off the fear of God from before his eyes, neither remembering that he was an elder to give good counsel, nor a judge in the city to minister right; his hoary hairs could not hale him from sin, not his calling convert him from filthiness, but he greedily drunk up the dregs of unrighteousness, and carefully busied his brains to oppress the simple, and to obtain his purpose laid his plot thus. Being the chief burgomaster in all the city, he determined to make a privy search for some suspected person, and being master of the watch himself, to go up into her chamber, and there to discover the depth of his desire; so he thought to join love and opportunity in one union, and with his office and his age to wipe out all suspicion. Age is a crown of glory when it is adorned with righteousness, but the dregs of dishonour when 'tis mingled with mischief, for honourable age consisteth not in the term of years, nor is not measured by the date of a man's days, but godly wisdom is the grey hair, and an undefiled life is old age. The herb-grace, the older it is, the ranker smell it hath; the sea-star is most black being old; the eagle, the more years, the more crooked is her bill, and the greater age in wicked men, the more unrighteousness, which this Signor Bernardo tried true, for desire made him hate delay, and therefore within two or three nights, picking out a watch answerable to his wish, he himself (as if it had been some matter of great import) went abroad, and to colour his folly with the better shadow, he searched divers houses, and at last came to the place where Isabel lay, charging the host to rise and to show him her chamber, for (quoth he) I must confer with her of most secret affairs. The goodman of the house obeyed willingly, as one that held Bernardo in great reverence, and brought him and the watch to the chamber-door. Bernardo, taking a candle in his hand, bade them all depart till he had talked with the gentlewoman, which they did, and he entering in, shutting the door, found her fast on sleep, which sight drave the old lecher into a maze, for there seeing nature in her pride, lust inveigled him the more, that he sat on the bed-side a great while viewing of her beauty; at last, starting up, he awaked her out of a sweet slumber. Isabel looking up, and seeing one of the burgomasters in the chamber (for Bernardo was known for his gravity and wealth of everyone in the city), she was amazed, yet gathering her wits together, raising herself up on her pillow she did him all the dutiful reverence she might, wondering what wind should drive him into the place; at last the old churl began to assail her thus.

Bernardo's Discourse To Isabel.

Be not amazed (fair gentlewoman) to see me thus suddenly and secretly arrived, neither let my presence appall your senses, for I come not cruelly as a foe, but courteously as a friend. If my coming seem strange, the cause is as straight, and where necessity forceth, there it is hard to strive against the stream; he that seeketh to weigh against his own will oftentimes kicketh against the prick, and he that striveth to withstand love hoppeth against the hill. These things considered (Mistress Isabel), if I offend in being too bold, your beauty shall bear the blame as the only cause of this enterprise, for to omit all circumstances and to come to the matter, so it is that since first mine eye fed of your sweet favour I have been so perplexed with the passions of love, and have been so deeply drowned in the desire of your person, that there is no torment so terrible, no pain so pinching, no woe so grievous as the grief that hath griped me since I burnt in love of your sweet self; sith therefore my liking is such, let my liking be repaid again with love; let my

firm fancy be requited with mutual affection, and in lieu of my goodwill, consent unto me, & be my paramour. That sin which is secretly committed is half pardoned; she liveth chastely enough that liveth charily. The chamber-door is shut; no man either can detect us of any crime, or dare suspect us of any folly. The credit which I carry in the city shall be sufficient to shroud you from shame, my office shall be able to defend you from mistrust, and my grey hairs a pumice-stone to race out all suspicion, and by this small offence (Isabel) thou shalt both content me, and purchase to thyself such a dutiful friend as in all service thou mayest command, not only ready to countenance thee with his credit, but to furnish all thy wants with his coin, for what treasure and gold I have shall be thine to use. Isabel, hearing this subtle serpent to breathe out such wily reasons, wondered to see a man of his calling so blinded with the veil of lascivious lust as to blaspheme so devilishly against his own conscience, insomuch that for a good space she sat astonished, until at last gathering her wits together she burst forth into these speeches.

Isabel's Reply To Bernardo.

'Tis a saying (Signor Bernardo) both old and true that whoso sinneth against his conscience sinneth against his own soul, and he that knoweth the law and wilfully disobeyeth is worthy to be beaten with many stripes, which sentence of Holy Writ I wish you to consider, and it will be a sufficient cooling card to your inordinate desire. Hath God placed you as a burgomaster of this city, and so a judge over his people to punish sin, and will you maintain wickedness? Is it your office to uphold the law, and will you destroy it? Nay, are you commanded to cut off this sin with infamy, and yet will you persuade a woman to defile her husband's bed? Is it your duty to drive us from all unclean lust, and will you draw me to such folly? Is this the office of a burgomaster, or beseemeth such thoughts to the mind of an elder? Doth the summons of death appear in your grey head, and yet fleshly desires reign in your heart? Doth thine old age impart a clear conscience, and your inward appetite fraught with concupiscence? Oh how pleasant a thing is it where grey-headed men minister judgement, and the elders can give good counsel, but how perilous a thing is it for the ruler to be unrighteous, or the judge of the people to delight in sin. Such a man shall have coals heaped upon his head, & the wrath of the Lord shall consume his heritage. Three sorts of men the Lord hateth, and he utterly abhorreth the life of them, a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, and an old adulterer that doteth and is unchaste. Hast thou then (Signor Bernardo) so sold thyself unto sin and sworn to work wickedness that thou wilt prefer fading pleasure before lasting pain, and for the fulfilling of thy filthy lust purchase perpetual damnation? But put case I were so careless of mine honour and honesty to yield to thy request, should not thyself be a witness of my disloyalty; would not mine own works cry out for vengeance to plague my wickedness? Yes, no doubt, after thou hadst glutted thy fancy with the loathsomeness of the sin, and the spirit of God had touched thy heart with the prick of thy offence, thou wouldst both detest me as a mirror of immodesty and account me forever as a common harlot, for the Lord suffereth not the wicked to go unrewarded. She (saith the wise man) that is common, & not content in her love, and yieldeth that which is proper to her husband into the possession of another man, disobeyeth the law, maketh breach of her plighted troth, and lastly playeth the whore in most hellish adultery; her children shall not take root, nor her branches bring forth no fruit; her name shall be forgotten. And shall I

then, knowing this, wilfully work mine own woe? Shall I repay the troth my husband repositeth in me with such treachery? Shall such guileful discourtesy be a guerdon for his goodwill? No, the fear of God is a fortress against such folly; the love that I bear to my husband is a shield to fence me from such shameless fancy, and the care of mine own honour is a conserve against such lawless concupiscence. Whenas you say that sin secretly committed is half pardoned, and that she liveth *caste* that liveth *caute*, that the chamber-door is shut, that no man can espy our folly, and the place so secret that the offence cannot be prejudicial to my good name, I answer that I more esteem the wrath of God than the words of men, that I dread more to commit such a fact before the sight of the Almighty than before the eyes of the world.

Man judgeth but the body, but God the soul, the one being a small pinch, the other a perpetual pain. He that breaketh wedlock, and thinketh thus in his heart: Who seeth me, the misty clouds have covered me and I am compassed about with a fog of darkness; my offence shall not be an object to any man's eyes, neither can my doing be discovered for I am shrouded within the walls; whom need I to fear, and as for the Lord, he is merciful and will not remember any man's sins; he is slow unto wrath, and promiseth speedily to pardon the faults of the wicked. Such a one as feareth more the eye of mortal man than the sight of an immortal God, and knoweth not that the looks of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the beams of the sun, beholding the very thoughts of men and searching the heart and the reins, the same man shall be punished with earthly plagues; he shall suddenly be taken in his own trap, and shall fall before the face of every man because he preferred his own pleasure before the fear of the Lord. But alas, it is unfit for the young fawn to lead the old buck, for a blind man to be guide to him that hath his sight, and as unmeet for a simple woman to instruct a burgomaster and elder of the city. Is it my part to exhort you unto virtue, or rather is it not your duty to persuade me from vice? but I hope this proffer is but a trial to make proof of mine honesty and to sift at my secret intent; if otherwise your will and your words be one, cease your suit, for you may long gape and yet never gain that you look for. Signor Bernardo, hearing Isabel so cunningly to confute his conclusive arguments, seeing she had infringed their reasons by the power of the law, thought to wrest her upon a higher pin, and to lay such a blot in her way as she should hardly wipe out, for although he knew she did rightly reffell his folly, and partly perceived her counsel cooled the extreme of his desires, yet the fear of God was so far from him that he prosecuted his intent thus.

Signor Bernardo's Answer To Isabel's Reply

Why Isabel (quoth he), thinkest thou thy painted speeches or thy hard denials shall prevail against my pretended purpose? No, he is a coward that yieldeth at the first shot, and he not worthy to wear the bud of beauty that is daunted with the first repulse. I have the tree in my hand and mean to enjoy the fruit; I have beaten the bush and now will not let the birds fly, and seeing I have you here alone, your stern looks shall stand for no sterling, but if you consent, be assured of a most trusty friend; if not, hope for no other hap but open infamy. For thou knowest (Isabel) that a woman's chiefest treasure is her good name, & that she which hath cracked her credit is half hanged, for death cuts off all miseries, but discredit is the beginning of all sorrows. Sith then infamy is worse than loss

of life, assure thyself I will sting thee to the quick, for I will presently send thee to prison, and cause some Russian in the city to swear that since the absence of thy husband Francesco he hath lien with thee, and for coin used thee as his concubine; so shall I blemish thine honour, tie thee to some open punishment, and make thee a laughing-stock to the world, odious to thy friends, and to live hated of thy husband; mine office and authority, my age and honour shall shadow my pretence, and help greatly to frame thy prejudice. Seeing then (fair Isabel) thou shalt by consent keep the report of thy chastity, & by denial gain shame and reproach, show thyself a wise woman, and of two evils choose the least. Isabel, hearing the mischievous pretence of this subtile lecher, and seeing he had so cunningly laid the snare that she could not avoid the trap, but either she must incur the danger of the body or the destruction of the soul, was so driven into such a passionate dilemma that she burst forth into tears, sighs, and plaints which she blubbered forth on this wise.

Alas (quoth she), most vile and unjust wretch, is the fear of God so far from thy mind that thou seekest not only to sack mine honour but to suck my blood? Is it not injury enough that thou seekest to spoil mine honesty but that you long to spill my life? Hath thy sweet love pretended such bitter taste? Is this the fruit of your feigned fancy? No doubt the cause must be pernicious when the effect is so pestilent. Flatter not yourself in this thy folly, nor soothe not thy thoughts in thy sins, for there is a God that seeth and will revenge, and hath promised that who bindeth two sins together shall not be unpunished in the one. But what availeth it to talk of wisdom to a fool, or of the wrath of God to a wilful reprobate? The charmer, charm he never so wisely, charms in vain if the adder be deaf, and he casteth stones against the wind that seeketh to draw the wicked from his folly; let me therefore (poor soul) more narrowly consider mine own case; I am perplexed with divers doubtful passions, and grievous troubles assaileth me on every side; if I commit this crime, though never so secretly, yet the Lord is [Greek word], and pierceth into the very thoughts, and mine own conscience will be a continual witness against me of this wickedness: *Stipendium peccati mors*; then what other hap can I hope for but perpetual damnation, sith the Lord himself hath promised to be a swift witness against all wilful adulterers, and if I consent not unto this unrighteous wretch, I am like to be unjustly accused of the like crime, and so shall I, being guiltless, have mine honour ever blemished with infamy. By this means what a discredit shall I bring to my parents, to my husband, and my children; the hoary hairs of my father shall be brought with sorrow unto the grave, Francesco shall be ashamed to show his face in the streets of the city, and my poor babes shall be counted as the seed of an harlot, and yet, alas, I myself altogether sackless. Why, my secret offence shall prevent all this open shame; the Lord is slow to wrath, and his mercy exceedeth all his works; he wisheth not the death of a sinner, and hearty repentance pacifieth his displeasure. But oh, vile wretch that I am, why do I blaspheme thus against the Lord and his law; why do I breathe out these hellish speeches? Can I say I will repent at my pleasure, or shall I therefore sin in hope because the Lord is merciful? No, no, it is better for me to fall into thy hands and not commit the offence than to sin in the sight of the Lord; shall I not rather fear God than man, and dread him more that killeth both soul and body than him that hath power but to kill the body only? Yet his fear shall be my defence. And with that she raised herself up, spitted in his face, and wished him to do his worst, whereupon he called up the watch and

commanded her to make her ready, for she should go to prison. Her host, wondering what the cause should be, as a man privy to her actions and the virtue of her life, would have given his word for her that she would the next day answer whatsoever should be objected against her, but his word would not be taken, for Bernardo was full of fury, & carried her away to prison, where deeply grieved, and yet smothering her sorrow with patience, she lay the rest of the night; the next morrow, as soon as day brake, she called for pen and ink and wrote this mournful sonnet.

Isabel's Sonnet That She Made In Prison

Veritas non quaerit angulos.

*No storm so sharp to rent the little reed,
For seld it breaks, though every way it bend,
The fire may heat but not consume the flint,
The gold in furnace purer is indeed.*

*Report, that seld to honour is a friend,
May many lies against true meaning mint,
 But yet at last
 Gainst slander's blast
Truth doth the silly sackless soul defend.*

*Though false reproach seeks honour to distain,
And envy bites the bud, though ne'er so pure,
Though lust doth seek to blemish chaste desire,
Yet truth, that brooks not falsehood's slanderous stain
Nor can the spite of envy's wrath endure,
Will try true love from lust in justice' fire,
 And maugre all,
 Will free from thrall
The guiltless soul that keeps his footing sure.*

*Where innocence triumpheth in her prime,
And guilt cannot approach the honest mind,
Where chaste intent is free from any miss
Though envy strive, yet searching time
With piercing insight will the truth out-find
And make discovery who the guilty is,
 For time still tries
 The truth from lies,
And God makes open what the world doth blind.*

Veritas Temporis filia.

Isabel wetting her sonnet with tears, and pronouncing every line with a sigh, sat in a dump. Whilst the fame of this fact was spread abroad throughout all Caerbranck, every man began sundry conjectures as affection led them; her friends, sorrowing, suspected the cankered mind of the burgomaster, yet for his calling durst not discover their suspicion; her foes, laughing, said that dissembled holiness was a double sin, and that the holiest countenance hath not always the honestest conscience, both friend and foe notwithstanding wondering at the strange chance, seeing her outward actions did manifest so many virtues. Well, to be brief, Signor Bernardo, assembling the other burgomasters of the town into the common hall, sent for Isabel thither, at whose coming (as the nature of man is desirous of novelties) a great press of people was present to hear the matter throughly canvassed; when Isabel was thus brought before the bar, Signor Bernardo (who had suborned a young man in the city solemnly to depose that he had lien with Isabel), began his invective thus. I am sorry, grave citizens and inhabitants of Caerbranck, that this day I am come to accuse Isabel, whose virtues hitherto hath won her many favours, and the outward show of her good qualities hath been highly applauded of all men, but my conscience constrains me not to conceal such heinous sin nor to smother up so great an offence without rebuke. I am one of the judges & elders of the people, appointed by God, chosen by the multitude, and constrained by the law to have no respect of persons, neither to be too rigorous to my foe nor too partial to my friend, but with the balance of equity to measure every man according to his merit, and with the sword of justice to uphold virtue and beat down vice; this considered, I am forced to discover a wicked deed that this Isabel hath committed, and that is this.

This young man here present for a certain sum of money compounded to lie with Isabel, and for pence had his pleasure on her, she alluring him with such wily amoretts of a courtesan that in her company he hath consumed all his substance; the young man's friends, seeing his folly, and that no persuasions could dissuade him from affecting her, made complaint unto me, whereupon I examined him and found him not only guilty of the crime, but tractable to be reclaimed from his folly; seeing then, citizens of Caerbranck, such a courtesan as this may under the colour of holiness shroud much prejudice & allure many of our youth to mischiefs, I thought it my duty to bring her into open infamy that she may be punished for her fault, known for a harlot, and from henceforth live despised and hated of all. For proof that she hath lived long in this lewd kind of life, this young man shall here before you all make present deposition, and with that he reached him a Bible whereon he swore that he had long time conversed dishonestly with Isabel ever since the departure of her husband. At which oath the people that were jurors in the cause, believing the protestation of Bernardo and the deposition of the youth, presently found her guilty, and then Bernardo and the rest of the burgomasters gave judgement that she should presently have some open and severe punishment, & after be banished out of the town. As soon as Isabel heard the censure she appealed for no mercy nor bashed any whit as one desirous of favour, but lifting up her eyes to heaven only said thus: O God, which seest the secrets of all hearts and knowest all things before they come to pass, which discernest the very inward thoughts and triest the heart and the reins, thou knowest that because I would not consent unto the filthy lust of this doting lecher, nor agree by defiling my husband's bed to fulfil his fleshly desires, that he hath slandered me with that crime whereof I was never guilty, that he hath produced this

young man by sinister subornation to perjure himself in a fault, whereas not so much as in thought I committed such a fact; he hath, to satisfy his malicious mind, without cause devised this false crime. I confess, O Lord, to be a most grievous offender and to deserve far greater punishment, but not for this deed. Hear then, O Lord, my prayer, and let the innocence of my case plead before thy divine majesty; if it be thy will, prevent his practices, confound his counsels, and let him which hath digged the pit for others fall into the snare himself. Thou hast never as yet, O Lord, left the succourless without help, but hast delivered them which fear thee from all adversity; thou didst set free Joseph from the hands of his brethren which sought to spill his blood, and didst prevent the practices of Saul intended against thy servant David; Eliseus, being besieged within Dotham, was not only freed from his foes but also guarded about with a troop of holy angels; Elias was preserved from the cruelty of Jezebel, and fed with ravens. But chiefly in my case, how mightily didst thou shroud Susanna from the treachery of the two elders in raising up young Daniel to maintain her right? Nay, who hath trusted in thy mercy which hath come to mishap, or who hath put his hope in thee and hath suffered harm? So, O Lord, if it be thy will, thou canst disclose the devise of this Signor Bernardo, and unfold the follies of this false witness; help then, O Lord, for in thee is my trust.

The people, hearing the solemn protestation of sorrowful Isabel thought she had spoken these words to excuse her fault, but not that she was guiltless of the fact, giving more credit to the reverend age of Bernardo and the oath of the young man countenanced out by the burgomaster than to the young years of a simple woman, supposing her speeches were more of custom to cloak her follies than of conscience to clear her of that crime, and therefore they would have returned her back again unto prison till the day assigned for her punishment. As she was ready to be carried way, he which had accused Isabel start up as a man lunatic, and cried out unto the people: Thus I have sinned, men of Caerbranck; I have sinned; the thought of my present perjury is a hell to my conscience, for I have sworn falsely against the innocent, and have consented to condemn Isabel without cause, and with that he discoursed at the bar how Signor Bernardo had suborned him against the gentlewoman, and how in all his life before he never was in her company. Upon which confession of the young man, the burgomasters examined the matter more effectually, and found that Isabel was clear, chaste, honest, and virtuous, and Bernardo was a dotting lecher, whereupon they not only amerced him in a great fine to be paid to Isabel, but put him forever after from bearing any office in the city.

Thus was Isabel delivered from her enemies, and reckoned more famous for her chastity through all Caerbranck. This strange event spread abroad through all the country, and as fame flies swift and far, so at last it came to the ears of Francesco, for he sitting in Troynovant at an ordinary amongst other gentlemen heard this fortune of Isabel reported at the table for strange news by a gentleman of Caerbranck, who brought in Isabel for a mirror of chastity, and added this more, that she was married to a gentleman of a ripe wit, good parentage, and well skilled in the liberal sciences, but (quoth he) an unthrift, and one that hath not been with his wife this six years. At this all the table condemned him as passing unkind, that could wrong so virtuous a wife with absence; he was silent and blushed, feeling the worm of his conscience to wring him, and that with such a sharp sting that as soon as he got into his chamber he fell to meditate with himself of the great

abuses he offered his wife; the excellence of her exterior perfection, her beauty, virtue, and other rare ornaments of nature presented themselves into his thoughts, that he began not only to be passing passionate, but deeply penitent, sorrowing as much at his former follies as his hope was to joy in his ensuing good fortunes; now he saw that *Omnia sub sole vanitas*, that beauty without virtue was like to a glorious flower without any operation which the apothecaries set in their shops for to be seen, but as soon as it withereth, they cast it into the furnace as an unprofitable weed, that the embracings of a courtesan, seem they never so sweet, yet they were the paths to destruction, that their looks were stales unto death, and the folds of their hands are fetters to snare men in sin. Now he saw that pride was extreme folly, for such as looked most high against the sun grew soonest blind, that Icarus caught his fall by soaring high, that time ill spent in vanity, in riotous company, amongst a crew of careless cavaliers that would boast it in the town not brave in the field, was neither to be recalled nor recompensed. Oh Francesco (quoth he), how fond hast thou been led away with every look, fed upon with trencher-flies, eaten alive with flatterers, given to look at a goddess more than thy God, more ready to a bowl than thy book, squaring in the streets when thou shouldst be meditating in thy chamber. If thou knowest these to be extreme parts of folly, repent and amend; the deer, knowing tamarisk is deadly to his nature, scorns to come near the tree. The unicorn will not brook to rest under a citron-tree for that he holds it mortal. The elephant will fly out of the company of a murderer. These brute beasts avoid what nature tells them is perilous; thou huntest after those harms with greediness that thou knowest are prejudicial.

Well Francesco, then now or else never, away with such follies; stop at the bottom and then it is *sero*, yet let it be *serio*; home to thy wife of thy youth; reconcile thyself to her; she will forgive and forget thy former fondness, and entertain her penitent paramour with as great kindness as he comes home with penance; what man, *Nunquam sera est ad bonos mores via*. With that Francesco took pen and paper, and wrote this sonnet.

Francesco's Sonnet Made In The Prime Of His Penance.

*With sweating brows I long have plowed the sands,
My seed was youth, my crop was endless care,
Repent hath sent me home with empty hands
At last, to tell how rife our follies are,
And time hath left experience to approve
The gain is grief to those that traffic love.*

*The silent thoughts of my repentant years
That fill my head have called me home at last,
Now love unmasked, a wanton wretch appears,
Begot by guileful thought with over-haste,
In prime of youth a rose, in age a weed,
That for a minute's joy pays endless need.*

*Dead to delights, a foe to fond conceit,
Allied to wit by want, and sorrow bought,*

*Farewell, fond youth, long fostered in deceit,
 Forgive me time disguised in idle thought,
 And love, adieu; lo, hasting to mine end
 I find no time too late for to amend.*

Having framed this sonnet, he gave the copy to some of his friends, making manifest to them his resolution to leave Troynovant and to go home, and by their help, who furnished him with such necessaries as he did want, he in short time took his journey. The day of his departure was joyful to all his friends, insomuch that as many as knew of his journey gathered themselves together and made him a banquet, where (very merry and pleasant) they caroused to the health of his Isabel; one amongst the rest who loved Francesco so tenderly, took a cup of wine in his hand, & with tears in his eyes said thus: Francesco, I have nothing to give thee, being myself pinched with want, but some precepts of wit that I have bought with much experience; those shalt thou have at my hands, which if thou put in practice, think I have given much treasure.

The Farewell Of A Friend.

1. *Let God's worship be thy morning's work, and his wisdom the direction of thy day's labour.*
2. *Rise not without thanks, nor sleep not without repentance.*
3. *Choose but a few friends, and try those, for the flatterer speaks fairest.*
4. *If thy wife be wise, make her thy secretary, else lock thy thoughts in thy heart, for women are seldom silent.*
5. *If she be fair, be not jealous, for suspicion cures not women's follies.*
6. *If she be wise, wrong her not, for if thou lovest others, she will loath thee.*
7. *Let thy children's nurture be their richest portion, for wisdom is more precious than wealth.*
8. *Be not proud amongst thy poor neighbours, for a poor man's hate is perilous.*
9. *Nor too familiar with great men, for presumption wins disdain.*
10. *Neither be too prodigal in thy fare, nor die not indebted to thy belly, but enough is a feast.*
11. *Be not envious, lest thou fall in thine own thoughts.*
12. *Use patience, mirth, and quiet, for care is enemy to health.*

And Francesco (quoth his friend) that thou mayest remember my precepts, I drink to thee. Upon this he pledged him, and so in pleasant chat they passed away the time till breakfast was done, and then he gat him to horse and then [sic?] brought him a mile out of the city. At last, although they played loath to depart, yet Francesco must away, but before he departed, when they were ready to shake hands, he pulled out of his sleeve a sonnet that he had made, and gave them it. The effects were these.

Francesco's Sonnet Called His Parting Blow.

*Reason, that long in prison of my will
Hast wept thy mistress' wants and loss of time,
Thy wonted siege of honour safely climb,
To thee I yield as guilty of mine ill.*

*Lo, (fettered in their tears) mine eyes are pressed
To pay due homage to their native guide,
My wretched heart, wounded with bad betide,
To crave his peace from reason is addressed.*

*My thoughts ashamed, since by themselves consumed,
Have done their duty to repentant wit,
Ashamed of all, sweet guide, I sorry sit,
To see in youth how I too far presumed.*

*Thus he whom love and error did betray
Subscribes to thee, and takes the better way.*

Sero sed serio.

As soon as he had delivered them the sonnet, shaking hands, he put spurs to his horse and rode onward on his journey; within five days he arrived at Caerbranck, where as soon as he was lighted he went to the house where his wife sojourned, and one of the maids, espying Francesco, yet knew him for all his long absence, and ran in and told it to Isabel that her husband was at the door; she being at work in her chamber sat at this news as one in an ecstasy until Francesco came up, who at the first sight of his wife, considering the excellency of her beauty, her virtues, chastity, and other perfections, and measuring her constancy with his disloyalty, stood as a man metamorphosed; at last he began thus.

Ah Isabel, what shall I say to thy fortunes or my follies; what exordium shall I use to show my penance, or discover my sorrows, or express my present joys? For I tell thee, I conceive as great pleasure to see thee well as grief in that I have wronged thee with my absence. Might sighs (Isabel), tears, plaints, or any such exterior passions portray out my inward repentance, I would show thee the anatomy of a most distressed man, but amongst many sorrowing thoughts there is such a confusion that superfluity of griefs stops the source of my discontent. To figure out my follies or the extremity of my fancies were but to manifest the bad course of my life and to rub the scar by setting out mine own scathe,

and therefore let it suffice I repent heartily, I sorrow deeply, and mean to amend and continue in the same constantly. At this Francesco stood and wept, which Isabel seeing, conceived by his outward griefs his secret passions, and therefore taking him about the neck, wetting his cheeks with the tears that fell from her eyes, she made him this womanly and wise answer.

What Francesco, comest thou home full of woes, or seekest thou at thy return to make me weep? Hast thou been long absent, and now bringest thou me a treatise of discontent? I see thou art penitent, and therefore I like not to hear what follies are past. It sufficeth for Isabel that henceforth thou wilt love Isabel, and upon that condition, without any more words, welcome to Isabel. With that she smiled and wept, and in doing both together, sealed up all her contrary passions in a kiss. Many looks passed between them, many odd fancies and many favours, but what they did, or how they agreed in secret, that I cannot tell, but forth they came great friends out of the chamber, where Francesco was welcomed home of his wife's host with great cheer, who to show his kindness the more had provided a solemn banquet, having bidden many of his neighbours to supper that they might accompany Francesco.

Well, supper being done and they sitting by the fire, the host, seeing them all in a dump, said that to drive them out of their melancholy he would tell them a tale, which they all desirous of, sat silent, and he began thus.

The Host's Tale.

In Thessaly, where nature hath made the soil proud with the beauty of shepherds, there dwelled a swain called Selador, ancient, as having age seated in his hairs, and wealthy, as enfeoffed with great possessions, and honest, as being endued with many virtuous qualities. This Selador had to joy him in his age a daughter of great beauty, so exquisite in her exterior feature as no blemish might eclipse the glory that nature bestowed in her lineaments. As thus she was fair, so was she wise, and with her wit joined virtue, that to behold, she was Helena; to hear, Pallas; and to court, a Daphne. This damosel, whose name was Mirimida, kept her father's sheep, & in a scarlet petticoat with a chaplet of flowers on her head went every day to the fields, where she plied the care of her father's folds with such diligence that she seemed with labour to enter arms against love, & with her hands-thrift to prevent her heart's grief. Using thus daily the plains of Thessaly, the shepherds delighted at the gaze of so excellent an object, and held their eyes fortunate when they might behold her feature, esteeming him happy that could lay his flocks nearest to her folds. Amongst the rest of all the swains that fed their thoughts on her favours, there was one called Eurymachus, a young youth that had the pride of his years triumphing in his countenance, witty and full of pleasant conceits, and that fortune might jump with love and make him gracious in women's eyes, he was wealthy, for gold is the chrysocoll of love. This Eurymachus always so plotted the course of his sheep-walk that he was next neighbour to Mirimida, insomuch that to discover his fancy, he did her often favours, for when any of her lambs went astray or anything grew amiss, then Eurymachus was the swain that endeavoured by his labour to redress every loss. By this means he waxed private and familiar with Mirimida, which was the means that wrought him into a

prejudicial labyrinth, for he did so near *accedere ad ignem* that he did *calescere plus quam satis*, for as none comes near the fume of the misselden but he waxeth blind, nor any touch the salamander but he is troubled with the palsy, so none could gaze on the face of Mirimida but they went away languishing. This did poor Eurymachus experience, for although he knew love's fires were fatal, and did not warm but scorch, yet he loved with the bird to fly to the flame though he burnt his wings and fell in the bush; he would not with Ulysses stop his ears, but sit and sing with the sirens; he feared no enchantment, but caroused with Circes till his overdaring drew him into a passionate danger, and so long sucked in the beauty of Mirimida with his ever-thirsty eyes till his heart was fuller of passions than his eyes of affections, yet discover his thoughts he durst not, but smothered up his inward pains with outward silence, having the oven the hotter within for that it was dammed up, and his griefs the deeper for that they were concealed. To manifest his malady to her, he durst not; he thought himself too homely a patient for such a physician; to utter his loves to another, and make any his secretary but himself, he supposed was to draw in a rival to his loves. Thus was Eurymachus perplexed, till at last, to give a little vent to the flame, sitting on a day on a hill he pulled forth pen and ink and wrote this fancy.

Eurymachus' Fancy In The Prime Of His Affection.

*When lordly Saturn in a sable robe
Sat full of frowns and mourning in the west,
The evening-star scarce peeped from out her lodge,
And Phoebus newly galloped to his rest,
Even then
Did I*

*Within my boat sit in the silent streams,
All void of cares as he that lies and dreams.*

*As Phao, so a ferryman I was,
The country lasses said I was too fair,
With easy toil I laboured at mine oar
To pass from side to side who did repair,
And then
Did I*

*For pains take pence, and Charon-like transport
As soon the swain as men of high import.*

*When want of work did give me leave to rest,
My sport was catching of the wanton fish,
So did I wear the tedious time away,
And with my labour mended oft my dish,
For why,
I thought
That idle hours were calendars of ruth,
And time ill spent was prejudice to youth.*

*I scorned to love, for were the nymph as fair
 As she that loved the beauteous Latmian swain,
 Her face, her eyes, her tresses, nor her brows
 Like ivory could my affection gain,
 For why,
 I said
 With high disdain: Love is a base desire,
 And Cupid's flames, why the' are but watery fire.*

*As thus I sat disdainning of proud love,
 Have over, ferryman, there cried a boy,
 And with him was a paragon for hue,
 A lovely damosel, beauteous and coy,
 And there
 With her
 A maiden covered with a tawny veil,
 Her face unseen for breeding lovers' bale.*

*I stirred my boat, and when I came to shore
 The boy was winged; methought it was a wonder;
 The dame had eyes like lightning, or the flash
 That runs before the hot report of thunder,
 Her smiles
 Were sweet,
 Lovely her face, was ne'er so fair a creature,
 For earthly carcass had a heavenly feature.*

*My friend (quoth she), sweet ferryman, behold
 We three must pass, but not a farthing fare,
 But I will give (for I am queen of love)
 The brightest lass thou lik'st unto thy share;
 Choose where
 Thou lovest,
 Be she as fair as love's sweet lady is,
 She shall be thine if that will be thy bliss.*

*With that she smiled with such a pleasing face
 As might have made the marble rock relent,
 But I, that triumphed in disdain of love,
 Bade fie on him that to fond love was bent,
 And then
 Said thus:
 So light the ferryman for love doth care
 As Venus pass not if she pay no fare.*

*At this a frown sat on her angry brow,
She winks upon her wanton son hard by,
He from his quiver drew a bolt of fire,
And aimed so right as that he pierced mine eye,*

And then

Did she

*Draw down the veil that hid the virgin's face,
Whose heavenly beauty lightened all the place.*

*Straight then I leaned mine arm upon mine ear,
And looked upon the nymph (if so) was fair,
Her eyes were stars, and like Apollo's locks
Methought appeared the trammels of her hair;*

Thus did

I gaze,

*And sucked in beauty till that sweet desire
Cast fuel on, and set my thought on fire.*

*When I was lodged within the net of love,
And that they saw my heart was all on flame,
The nymph away, and with her trips along
The winged boy, and with her goes his dame;*

Oh then

I cried:

*Stay, ladies, stay, and take not any care;
You all shall pass, and pay no penny fare.*

*Away they fling, and looking coyly back
They laugh at me, oh with a loud disdain;
I send out sighs to overtake the nymphs,
And tears as lures to call them back again,*

But they

Fly thence,

*But I sit in my boat with hand on oar,
And feel a pain but know not what's the sore.*

*At last I feel it is the flame of love,
I strive, but bootless, to express the pain,
It cools, it fires, it hopes, it fears, it frets,
And stirreth passions throughout every vein,*

That down

I sat,

*And sighing did fair Venus' laws approve,
And swore no thing so sweet and sour as love.*

Et florida pungunt.

Having made this canzon he put it in his bosom, and oft when he was by himself would read it, easing his passion with viewing the conceits of his own fancy; on a day having brought down his sheep, he espies Mirimida, and to her he goes, and after his wonted salute sat down by her and fell to such chat as occasion did minister, intermeddling his passion with so many sighs, and fixing his eye so effectually upon her face without remove that she perceived the shepherd had swallowed aconiton, and that there was none but she that bore the antidote. As thus she noted his passions, she espied a scroll of paper sticking out of his bosom, which she snatcheth forth and unfoldeth, and perceiving it was a sonnet, she read it, and then looking earnestly on Eurymachus, he blushed, and she with a friendly smile began to cross him with this frump.

What Eurymachus, cannot wonted labours wipe away wanton amours, nor thy sheep's care prevent thy heart's love? I had thought fancy had not trod on thy heel, nor affection presented any object to thine eye, but now I see as the chameleon cannot live without air, nor the salamander without fire, so men have no quiet in their life unless they acquaint them with love; I see swains are not such swads but they have thoughts and passions, and be they never so low, they can look at beauty. Corydon in his grey cassock had his fair Phyllis, and Menalcas could court Galatea in his shepherd's cloak, and Eurymachus, be he never so homely, will hazard; but at whom? there lies the question.

At whom? (quoth Eurymachus); ah Mirimida, at one that is too high for my thoughts and too beauteous for my fortunes, so that as I have soared with the hobby I shall bate with the bunting, & daring with Phaeton, I shall drown with Icarus; mine eye was too proud, my thoughts too forward; I have stared at a star but shall stumble at a stone, and I fear, because I have overlooked in love, I shall be overlaid in love. With that he sighed, and Mirimida smiled and made this reply. Why Eurymachus, a man or a mouse? what, is there any cedar so high but the slowest snail will creep to the top, any fortune so base but will aspire, any love so precious but hath his price? What Eurymachus, a cat may look at a king, and a swain's eye hath as high a reach as a lord's look. Vulcan in his leather suits courted Venus in her silks; the swain of Latmos wooed Luna; both dared, and both had their desires. What, love requires not wealth but courage, & parentage is not so high prized by fancy as personage; fear not, man; if thou hast looked high, follow thy thoughts and try love's favours, for denial is no dishonour. Eurymachus, hearing Mirimida in such an amorous humour, encouraged by her persuasions thought now to strike while the iron was hot, and therefore taking her by the hand began thus.

Truth, Mirimida, Venus' laws are bounded with constraint, and when love leadeth the eye, desire keeps no compass; when Paris courted Helena, though she were coy and denied, yet was she not discourteous & disdained, for she answered thus mildly: *Nemo etenim succenset amanti*. This (Mirimida) makes me hardy to take thee by the hand and to say I love Mirimida, for thou art the sun that hath eclipsed mine eyes, and thy beauty have I so long gazed on that, as they which were wounded with Achilles' lance could not be healed but by the same truncheon, so thine excellence hath fettered Eurymachus that thy courtesy must free Eurymachus. I confess I have looked too high, but I excuse my presumption by thine own principles, and if I have dared too much, why love allows it.

Then, fair nymph, if thou beest as beautiful as Venus, yet look at black Vulcan: low fortunes have high desires; if thou beest as lovely as Luna, stoop to Endymion: a swain may be as constant as a king; shepherds' loves are loyal, for their eyes are like emeralds that receive but one impression, and their hearts like adamants that will turn no way but to one point of the heaven. Mirimida, frowning at the folly of the shepherd, cut him off thus.

If thou knewest how bad the corn is, Eurymachus (quoth she), thou wouldst not put thy sickle so far in, and seeing your harvest is like to be so little, spare labour, & work not so hard; if you have looked at my beauty, your aim is not beyond compass; your high strains are but frumps, and so I take them, for he that calls a falcon a phoenix is but a flatterer, and such as term their leaves [sic] saints are thought but to utter words of course. Well, howsoever, if you love me, I like you, but so as Diana's fancy was to Apollo, to be his friend in the field & his foe in the chamber, to favour him as he was a huntsman, but to hate him when he chatted of love; so Eurymachus, so long as thou foldest thy flocks with Mirimida, thou art welcome to Mirimida, but if thou castest forth thy lure to have Mirimida love, then I will leave thee to thy folly, as one that hates to be drawn to fancy, for know that as the olive-tree will brook no touch of steel, the agate no heat of fire, so Mirimida's ears are not capable of any amorous persuasions, and therefore, friend Eurymachus, anything but love, and so I leave you.

Nay (quoth Eurymachus), and he took her fast by the arm, if I were sure you had power as Diana had to plague me with Actaeon's punishment, you pass not without a little more prattle; if I anger you, 'tis first a preparation to a good stomach, for choler is a friend to digestion; secondly, as the chrysocoll and the gold by long striving together grow to be one metal, so by our falling out we shall be better friends, for:

Amantium irae amoris redintegratio est.

Therefore (fair mistress) sit still and grant some favour to him that is so pained with fancy; I will love you though I am poor, and a king can do but so much; if you think my degree be too low for so high beauty, think of all parts the mean is the merriest, and that the shepherd's grey hath less grief than the lordly estates; I know women must be coy because they are women, and they must have time to be won or else they would be thought to be wantons; therefore whatsoever you say now, I hold it not authentical, yet for that I would have some hope, good Mirimida, let me see thee laugh. She could not but smile to see the shepherd so pleasant, and so Eurymachus rested content, and from amorous chat they fell to talk of other matters till evening grew on, and then they folded their sheep and with a friendly farewell parted.

Eurymachus was not alone thus enamoured of the fair Mirimida, but all the shepherds of Thessaly writ poems and ditties of her beauty and were suitors to her for favour; she like Daphne held love in disdain, and yet was courteous to all in any other kind of conference. Amongst the rest, Venus (belike) willing to be pleasant, had wrapped one in the labyrinth of love called Mullidor, a fellow that was of honest parents, but very poor, and his personage was as if he had been cast in Aesop's mould, his back like a lute and his face

like Thersites, his eyes broad and tawny, his hair harsh and curled like a horse-mane; his lips were of the largest size in folio, able to furnish a cobbler's shop with clouting-leather; the only good part that he had to grace his visage was his nose, and that was conqueror-like, as beaked as an eagle; nature, having made so proper a stripling, thought his inward qualities should not blemish his outward excellence, and therefore, to keep proportion, into his great head she put little wit, that he knew rather his sheep by the mark than the number, for he was never no good arithmetician, and yet he was a proper scholar and well seen in ditties. This ruffling shepherd amongst the rest, and more than any of the rest, was enamoured of Mirimida, so that he would often leave his sheep at random to pass by the fields where she sat, only to feed his eye with her favour. Well, as fools have eyes, so they have hearts, and those oft harbour fond desires; love sometimes looks low, and will stumble on a cottage as well as on a palace; fools are in extremities not easily to be persuaded from their bauble, and when they begin to love, folly whets them on to restless thoughts. So fell it out with Mullidor, for after he had tasted of the beauty of Mirimida he grew passionate, but with great impatience, and wasted away in the despair of his own desires that he was waxen pale and wan, which his old mother espying, marveling [sic] to see her son so discontent, for she loved him tenderly and thought him the sweetest youth and the bravest young man in all Thessaly. The crow thinks her fowls the fairest, and the ape accounts of his young as well-featured darlings; so Callena (for so was the old woman's name) thought Mullidor no less, though his ears were greater than an ass, but held him of a sweet personage and a rare wit. Well, the poor old wife, when her son came home at night, seeing how he looked, marvelled what should be the cause of this sudden change, yet because she would follow the principles of country physic, she thought to pass over speaking to him till supper were done to try what stomach he had. Well, the cloth was laid and the brown loaf set on the board; Mullidor, full of passions, sat down to his pottage and eat off his bowlful; the old woman stumbles to the pot again for a fresh mess. Ah mother (quoth he with a great sigh), no more broth tonight; with that she clapped her hand on her knee and swore her boy was not well that he forsook his supping, yet he fell to a piece of bacon that stood on the board, and a tough barley-pudding, but he rose before the rest and gat him into a corner, where folding his arms together he sat thinking on his love. As soon as the rest of the swains were up from the table and turning crabs in the fire, she took her son into the cellar, and sitting down in her chair began thus.

Son Mullidor, thy cheeks are lean and thou lookest like Lenten, pale & wan; I saw by thy stomach tonight thou art not thine own man; thou hadst alate (God save thee) a lovely fat pair of cheeks, and now thou lookest like a shotten herring; tell me, Mullidor, and fear not to tell me, for thou tellest it to thy mother, what ailest thou? Is it grief of body or of mind that keeps thee on holidays from frisking it at the football? Thou art not as thou wert wont, & therefore say what thou ailest, and thou shalt see old women have good counsel.

At these speeches of his mother Mullidor fetched a great sigh, and with that (being after supper) he brake wind, which Callena hearing, oh son (quoth she) 'tis the colic that troubles thee; to bed, man, to bed, and we will have a warm pottled [sic]. The colic, mother; no 'tis a disease that all the cunning women in the country cannot cure, and

strangely it holds me, for sometimes it pains me in the head, somewhiles in mine eyes; my heart, my heart, oh there mother it plays the devil in a mortar; somewhile it is like a frost, cold; sometimes as a fire, hot; when I should sleep then it makes me wake, when I eat it troubles my stomach, when I am in company it makes me sigh, and when I am alone it makes me cry right out, that I can wet one of my new lockram napkins with weeping. It came to me by a great chance, for as I looked on a fair flower, a thing, I know not what, crept in at mine eyes and ran round about all my veins and at last gat into my heart, and there ever since hath remained, and there, mother, ever since so wrings me that Mullidor must die, and with that he fell on weeping.

Callena, seeing her son shed tears, fell to her hempen apron and wiped her bleared eyes, and at last demanded of him if it were not love. At that question he hung down his head and sighted. Ah my son (quoth she), now I see 'tis love, for he is such a sneaking fellow that if he but leap in at the eyelid and dive down into the heart, and there rests as cold as a stone, yet touch him and he will skrike; for tell me, Mullidor, what is she that thou lovest, and will not love thee? If she be a woman as I am, she cannot but fancy thee, for mine eye, though it be now old (and with that up went her apron and she wiped them clear), hath been a wanton when it was young, and would have chosen at the first glance the properest springal in the parish, and trust me, Mullidor, but be not proud of it, when I look on thee I find thee so lovely that I count her worse than accurst would not choose thee for her paramour. With these words Mullidor began to smile, and troubled his mother ere she had half ended her tale on this manner.

Mother, I may rightly compare the church to a looking-glass, for as a man may see himself in the one and there see his proportion, so in the other the wenches' eyes are a testificate, for upon whom you see all the girls look, he for foot and face carries away the bell, and I am sure for these two years I never came into the church and was no sooner set but the wenches began to wink one on another to look on me and laugh. Oh ware, mother, when a dog wags his tail he loves his master, and when a woman laughs, for my life she is over the head & ears in love. Then if my fortune serve me to be so well thought on, why should I not venture on her I love? It is (mother) Selador's daughter, Mirimida. Now, God's blessing on thy heart (quoth Callena) for loving such a smug lass; marry her (my son) and thou shalt have my benison in a clout. Mirimida? marry, 'tis no marvel if thy cheeks are fallen for her; why, she is the fairest blossom in all the town; to her, son, to her; trick thyself up in thy best reparrel & make no bones at it, but on a-wooing, for women's desires, I may tell thee, boy, are like children's fancies, won oft with an apple when they refuse an angel, and Mullidor, take this with thee and fear not to speed: a woman's frown is not ever an instance of choler; if she refuse thee outwardly, she regards thee inwardly, and if she shake thee up and bid thee be packing, have the better hope; cats and dogs come together by scratching; if she smile, then, son, say to thyself she is thine, and yet women are wily cattle, for I have seen a woman laugh with anger, and kiss him she hath desired to kill; she will be coy (Mullidor), but care not for that; 'tis but a thing of course; speak thou fair, promise much, praise her highly, commend her beauty above all and her virtue more than all, sigh often and show thyself full of passions, and as sure as thy cap is of wool, the wench is thine.

Mullidor, hearing his mother give such good counsel, said he would jeopard a joint, and the next day have a fling at her. With that he said his heart was eased and his stomach somewhat come down with her good persuasions, whereupon the ambry was opened, and he turned me over the cantle of a cheese, and went to bed. The next morning up he rose, and his holiday robes went on, his stand-ups new blacked, his cap fair brushed, and a clean lockram band. Thus attired, away flings Mullidor to the field, and carried away his sheep & led them into the plains where Mirimida sought to feed her flocks; coming there, he met her all alone sitting under a beech-tree weaving of nets to catch birds; as soon as Mullidor spied her his heart leapt for joy, and she seeing him, laughed, which was a great help to his courage, that rushing roughly towards her he said thus. Mistress Mirimida, here is weather that makes grass plenty & sheep fat; by my troth, there never came a more plenteous year, and yet I have one sheep in my fold that's quite out of liking; if you knew the cause, you would marvel. The other day as he was grazing he spied a spotted ewe feeding before him; with that he fell to gaze on her, and that so long that he wagged his tail for very joy; he came to her, and with a sheepish courtesy courted her; the ewe was coy, and butted him, which struck him so to the heart that casting a sheep's eye at her, away he goes, and ever since he lies by himself and pines away; I pray you, Mistress Mirimida, what think you of this ewe? Mirimida perceiving by his simile that little wit had oft fancies, & fools were within the compass of love's warrant, whereupon thinking to bring him into a paradise, she made this answer.

I am an ill judge, Mullidor, and yet because I am a shepherdess and this is a sheepish question, that the ewe should be the first that should be fatted in all the flock, and in revenge of her cruelty sold to the butcher. For I tell thee, Mullidor, she that is cruel in love is like to a rose that pricks when it should be gathered. Say you so, Mirimida (quoth he), then may I be the bolder to break out my mind unto you, for surely I am the sheep, that ever since I marked your beauty have been inflamed with your sweet looks, and not daring bolt out my affection, have pined away, as you may see by my cheeks, and refuse my food, and you, Mirimida, are the ewe that hath so caught Mullidor captive. Therefore now that I utter how I love, and covet that you should love again, take heed you refuse not, for if you do, by my judgement you shall be sold to the butcher for your cruelty. Mirimida, hearing the ass ruffle in his rude eloquence, smiled to herself, and thought that Venus' fires as well warm the poor as the rich, and that deformity was no means to abridge fancy, whereupon she replied thus. Why Mullidor, are you in love, and with me; is there none but Mirimida that can fit your eye, being so many beautiful damsels in Thessaly? take heed, man, look before you leap lest you fall in the ditch; I am not good enough for so proper a man as yourself, especially being his mother's only son; what Mullidor, let me counsel you, there are more maids than malkin, and the country hath such choice as may breed your better content; for mine own part, at this time I mean not to marry. 'Tis no matter, quoth Mullidor, what you say, for my mother told me that maids at first would be coy when they were wooed, and mince it as 'twere a mare over a mouthful of thistles, and yet were not a whit the worse to be liked, for 'twas a matter of custom. Well then, Mullidor, quoth Mirimida, leave off for this time to talk of love, and hope the best; tomorrow perchance it will be better, for women are like unto children, that will oft refuse an apple and straight cry for the paring, and when they are most hungry, then for sullenness fast; this, Mullidor (quoth she), is the frowardness of love;

marry then, quoth he, if they have children's maladies, 'twere good to use children's medicines, and that's a rod, for be they never so froward, a jerk or two will make them forward, and if that would bring women to a good temper, my mother hath a stiff cudgel, and I have a strong arm.

Thus these two passed away the day till presently they espied afar off a gentleman with a hawk on his fist to come riding towards them, who drawing nigh and seeing so fair a nymph, reined his horse and stood still, as Actaeon when he gazed at Diana; at last he alighted, and coming towards her saluted her thus courteously. Fair virgin, when I saw such a sweet saint with such a crooked apostle, I straight thought Venus had been walking abroad to take the air with Vulcan, but as soon as mine eyes began narrowly to make survey of thy beauty, I found Venus blemished with thy rare excellency; happy are these sheep that are folded by such a paragon, and happy are these shepherds that enjoy the presence of such a beauteous creature; no marvel if Apollo became a swain or Mercury a neatherd when their labours are recompensed with such loves. Myself, fair damsel, if either my degree were worthy or my deserts any, would crave to have entertainment to become your dutiful servant; all this while Mirimida held down her head and blushed; at last, lifting up her eyes full of modesty and her face full of chaste colours such as flourish out the fronts of Diana's virgins, she made the gentleman this answer. My servant, sir? (quoth she) no, your worth is far above my wealth, and your dignity too high for my degree; poor country damsels must not aim too high at fortune nor fly too fast in desires, lest looking at their feet with the peacock they let fall their plumes, and so shame at their own follies, but if my gree were so great as to entertain such servants, I must bestow upon them some changeable livery to show the variety of their minds, for men's hearts are like to the polyp that will change into all colours but blue, and their thoughts into all affects but constancy. In that, sir, your eye dazzled and mistook me for Venus, you gazed against the sun and so blemished your sight, or else you have eaten of the roots of hemlock, that makes men's eyes conceit unseen objects; howsoever (as I take you for a gentleman), so I take your praise for a frump, and so your way lies before you; we must fold our flocks, and you may be gone when you please. In faith, quoth he, Oenone chose Paris for her fere in her labours & her fellow in her loves, thinking the sweetest face the best fairing for a gentlewoman's eye, but you, contrary, have got a smoky Vulcan as Venus to set out your excellency, for as crystal placed by jet seems the more pure, so a beauteous paragon shows the more fair joined with a deformed peasant; Mullidor, hearing the gentleman thus abuse his patience, as a man conceited in his own properness, and especially afore Mirimida, thwarted him thus. You, master meacock, that stand upon the beauty of your churn-milk face, as brag with your buzzard on your fist as a sow under an apple-tree, know that we country swains, as we are not beholding to nature for beauty, so we little account of fortune for any favour; tush, man, my crook-back harboureth more honest conditions than thy fleering countenance, and these coarse suits can fetch more pence than thy silks, for I believe thou makest a sponce of the mercer's book; thou hast made such sure entrance there that thou wilt never from thence till thou beest come out by the ears. Goodman courtier, though we have backs to bear your frumps, yet we have queasy stomachs that will hardly brook them, and therefore, fine fool, begone with your fowl or I will so belabour you as you shall feel my fingers

this fortnight; and with that Mullidor heaved up his sheep-hook & bent his brows so that the gentleman, giving Mirimida the adieu, he put spurs to his horse and went his way.

At this manly part of Mullidor, Mirimida laughed heartily, and he took a great conceit that he had showed himself such a tall man; upon this, Mirimida gave him a nosegay which stuck in her bosom for a favour, which he accepted as gratefully as though another had given him a tun of gold. Night drew on, and they folded their sheep and departed, she to her father and he towards old Callena, as joyful a man as Paris when he had the promise from Venus; he plodded on his way with his head full of passions and his heart full of new thoughts, and still his eye was on the nosegay, insomuch that he stood in a doubt whether it were love or some other fury worse than love that thus hinged him and pinched him; at last he fell with himself into this meditation. Now do I perceive that love is a purgation and searcheth every vein, that though it enter at the eye it runs to the heart, and then it keeps an old coil where it worketh like a juggler's box. Oh love, thou art like to a flea which biteth sore and yet leapest away and art not to be found, or to a pot of strong ale that maketh a man call his father whoreson; so both of them bewitch a man's wits that he knoweth not a B from a battledore. Infortunate Mullidor, and therefore infortunate because thou art over the ears in love, and with whom? with Mirimida, whose eyes are like to sparks of fire, and thine like a pound of butter like to be melted with her beauty, and to consume with the frying flame of fancy. Ah Mullidor, her face is like to a red & white daisy growing in a green meadow, & thou like a bee that comest and sucketh honey from it and carriest it home to the hive with a heave & ho, that is as much to say. as with a head full of woes & a heart full of sorrows and maladies. Be of good cheer, Mirimida laughs on thee, & thou knowest a woman's smile is as good to a lover as a sunshine day to a haymaker; she shows thee kind looks, & casts many a sheep's eye at thee, which signifies that she counts thee a man worthy to jump a match with her; nay more, Mullidor, she hath given thee a nosegay of flowers wherein as a topgallant for all the rest is set in rosemary for remembrance; ah Mullidor, cheer thyself, fear not; love & fortune favours lusty lads; cowards are not friends to affection; therefore venture, for thou hast won her, else had she not given thee this nosegay. And with this, remembering himself, he start up, left off his amorous passions, and trudgeth home to his house, where coming in, old Callena stumbles to see in what humour her son came home; frolic he was, & his cap on the one side; he asked if supper were ready; his mother, seeing his stomach was good, thought there was some hope of her son's good fortunes, and therefore said there was a pudding in the pot that is almost enough, but son, quoth she, what news, what success in thy loves, how doth Mirimida like thee? Ah ah, quoth Mullidor, and he smiled; how should I be used but as one that was wrapped in his mother's smock when he was born? Can the sun want heat, and the winter cold, or a proper man be denied in his suits? No mother, as soon as I began to circumglaze her with my sophistry, & to fetch her about with 2 or three venies from mine eyes, I gave her such a thump on the breast that she would scarce say no; I told her my mind, & so wrapped her in the prodigality of my wit that she said another time should, but then we parted laughing, with such a sweet smile that it made me loose in the haft like a dudgeon-dagger; she gave me this nosegay for a favour, which how I esteemed it, guess you; thus have I used her in kindness and she used me in courtesy, & so I hope we shall make a friendly conclusion. By my troth, son, quoth she, & I hope no less, for I tell you, when maids give gifts, they mean well,

and a woman, if she laugh with a glancing look, wisheth it were neither to do nor undone; she is thine, my son, fear not, and with that she laid the cloth and set victuals on the board, where Mullidor tried himself so tall a trencher-man that his mother perceived by his drift he would not die for love. Leaving this passionate lubber to the conceit of his loves, let us return to the young courtier called Radagon, who trotting a soft pace upon his courser, seeing the sun now bright and then overshadowed with clouds, began to compare the state of the weather fantastically to the humour of his Mirimida's fancies, saying when Phoebus was eclipsed with a vapour, then she loured; when he showed his glory in his brightness, then she smiled. Thus he dallied in an uncouth motion so long that at last he began to feel a fire that fretted to the heart. Riding thus in a quandary he entered into the consideration of Mirimida's beauty, whereupon frolicly in an extemperate humour he made this sonnet.

Radagon's Sonnet.

*No clear appeared upon the azured sky,
A veil of storms had shadowed Phoebus' face,
And in a sable mantle of disgrace
Sat he that is yclept heaven's bright eye,
As though that he,
Perplexed for Clitia, meant to leave his place,
And wrapped in sorrows did resolve to die,
For death to lovers' woes is ever nigh,
Thus folded in a hard and mournful haze,
Distressed sat he.*

*A misty fog had thickened all the air,
Iris sat solemn, and denied her showers,
Flora in tawny hid up all her flowers,
And would not diaper her meads with fair,
As though that she
Were armed upon the barren earth to lour,
Unto the founts Diana nild repair,
But sat as overshadowed with despair,
Solemn and sad within a withered bower,
Her nymphs and she.*

*Mars malcontent lay sick on Venus' knee,
Venus in dumps sat muffled with a frown,
Juno laid all her frolic humours down,
And Jove was all in dumps as well as she,
'Twas fate's decree,
For Neptune (as he meant the world to drown)
Heaved up his surges to the highest tree,
And leagued with Aeol, marred the seaman's glee,
Beating the cedars with his billows down,*

Thus wroth was he.

*My mistress deigns to show her sun-bright face,
The air cleared up, the clouds did fade away,
Phoebus was frolic when she did display
The gorgeous beauties that her front do grace,
So that when she
But walks abroad, the storms then fled away,
Flora did chequer all her treading-place,
And Neptune calmed the surges with his mace,
Diana and her nymphs were blithe and gay
When her they see.*

*Venus and Mars agreed in a smile,
And jealous Juno ceased now to lour,
Jove saw her face and sighed in his bower,
Iris and Aeol laugh within a while,
To see this glee,
Ah born was she within a happy hour
That makes heaven, earth, & gods and all to smile,
Such wonders can her beauteous looks compile
To clear the world from any froward lour,
Ah blest is she.*

When Radagon had framed this fancy, he began with sundry inseeing thoughts to consider that she was beautiful & of a base country breed, where virtue as soon dwelleth as in high dignities, that her wit was sharp, and nature had done her part to make her every way excellent, as well in exterior perfection as in inward qualities; though her fortunes were low, yet her desires were modest, & proud she could not be, as being poor; to be peevish were bootless, in that her hope did not aspire; her looks bewrayed she was no wanton, and her blushing, that she was bashful; every way she seemed virtuous as she was beautiful. The consideration of this excellency so pierced the heart of Radagon that from liking he fell to love, from small praises to great passions. Tush, quoth he, though wedlock be a thing so doubtful & dangerous to deal withal as to seek roses amongst thorns, eels amongst scorpions, and one pure potion amongst a thousand boxes of confection, yet nature doth establish it as necessary, law as honest, & reason as profitable. Some Cynic, as Diogenes, will thwart it with a dilemma, & say that for young men 'tis too soon, for old men too late to marry, concluding so enigmatically it were not good to marry at all; other will say as Arminius, a ruler of Carthage, said, who being importunately persuaded to marry, answered: No, said he, I dare not, for if I chance upon one that is wise, she will be wilful; if wealthy, then wanton; if poor, then peevish; if beautiful, then proud; if deformed, then loathsome, & the least of these is able to kill a thousand men. Indeed I cannot deny but oft *sub melle latet venenum*, that beauty without virtue is like a box of ivory containing some baleful aconiton, or to a fair shoe that wrings the foot; such love as is laid upon such a foundation is a short pleasure full of pain, and an affection bought with a thousand miseries, but a woman that is fair and virtuous

maketh her husband a joyful man, and whether he be rich or poor, yet always he may have a joyful heart. A woman that is of a silent tongue, shamefast in countenance, sober in behaviour, and honest in condition, adorned with virtuous qualities correspondent, is like a goodly pleasant flower decked with the colours of all the flowers of the garden, and such a one (quoth he) is Mirimida, and therefore though she be poor, I will love her and like her, and if she will fancy me, I will make her my wife. And upon this he resolved to prosecute his suit towards her, insomuch that as soon as he came home and rested himself awhile, he stepped to his standish and wrote her a letter.

Radagon was not more pained with this passionate malady than poor Eurymachus, who could take no rest, although every day in her presence he fed his eye with the beauty of her face, but as the hidaspis, the more he drinks the more thirsty he is, so Eurymachus, the more he looked the more he loved, as having his eye deeply enamoured of the object; reveal any more his suit he durst not, because when he began to chat of love she shook him off, and either flung away in a rage or else forced him to fall to other prattle, insomuch that he determined to discourse his mind in a letter, which he performed as cunningly as he could & sent it her.

Mullidor, that ass, rapped out his reasons divers times to Mirimida until she was weary of the groom's importunate fooleries, and so with a sharp word or two nipped him on the pate, whereupon asking his mother's counsel, she persuaded him to write unto Mirimida, although he and a pen were as fit as an ass and a harp; yet he bought him paper, and stealing into the churchyard under an apple-tree, there in his muses he framed a letter and sent it her.

Thus had fortune (meaning to be merry) appointed in her secret synod that all these three should use one means to possess their loves, & brought it so to pass that the three letters from these three rivals were delivered at one instant, which when Mirimida saw, she sat her down and laughed, wondering at the rareness of the chance that should in a moment bring such a conceit to pass; at last (for as then she was leading forth her sheep) she sat her down, and looking on the superscription said to herself: What adamants are fair faces that can draw both rich, poor, & fools to lodge in the labyrinth of their beauties; at this she sighed, & the first letter she broke open, because he was her first lover, was Eurymachus'. The contents whereof were these.

Eurymachus the shepherd to Mirimida, the goddess of Thessaly.

When (Mirimida) I sit by thy sweet self & wonder at thy sight, feeding as the bee upon the wealth of thy beauties, the conceit of thine excellency drives me into an ecstasy, that I became dumb with overmuch delight, for nature sets down this as an authentic principle:

Sensibile sensui suppositum nulla sit sensatio.

If the flower be put in the nostril, there is no smell; the colour clapped close to the eye blemisheth the sight; so a lover in presence of his mistress hath the organs of his speech tied, that he conceals with silence, and sighs out his smothered passions with sorrows.

Ah Mirimida, consider that love is such a fire as either will burst forth or burn the house; it is such a stream as will either have his course, or break through the banks & make a deluge, or else force their heart-strings crack with secrecy. Then, Mirimida, if I be lavish in my pen, blame me not that am so laden with love; if I be bold, attribute it to thy beauty, not my impudency, & think what I overdare in, it grows through the extremity of loyal affection, which is so deeply imprinted in my thoughts as neither time can diminish nor misfortune blemish. I aim not (Mirimida) at thy wealth, but at thy virtues, for the more I consider thy perfection, the more I grow passionate, & in such an humour as if thou deny, there is no means to cure my malady but that salve which healeth all incurable sores, & that is death. Therefore (sweet Mirimida) consider of my loves, & use me as my loyalty deserves; let not my poverty put in any bar, nor the baseness of my birth be any excuse of thy affection; weigh my desires, not my degrees, & either send me a speedy plaster to salve my despairing passions or a corrosive to cut off my lingering sorrows, either thy favour with life, or thy denial with death, between which I rest in hope till I hear thine answer.

*Thine, who can be no other's but thine ,
the shepherd Eurymachus.*

To the end of this letter (for that he would run descant upon his wit) he set down a sonnet written in the form of a madrigal, thus.

Eurimachus In Laudem Mirimidae.

His motto

Inuita fortuna dedi vota concordia.

*When Flora, proud in pomp of all her flowers,
Sat bright and gay,
And gloried in the dew of Iris' showers,
And did display
Her mantle chequered all with gaudy green,
Then I,
Alone,
A mournful man in Erycine was seen.*

*With folded arms I trampled through the grass,
Tracing as he
That held the throne of fortune brittle glass
And love to be,
Like fortune, fleeting as the restless wind
Mixed
With mists,
Whose damp doth make the clearest eyes grow blind.*

*Thus in a maze I spied a hideous flame,
I cast my sight*

*And saw where blithely bathing in the same
 With great delight
 A worm did lie, wrapped in a smoky sweat,
 And yet
 'Twas strange,
 It careless lay, and shrunk not at the heat.*

*I stood amazed and wondering at the sight
 While that a dame
 That shone like to the heavens' rich sparkling light
 Discoursed the same,
 And said: My friend this worm within the fire
 Which lies
 Content,
 Is Venus' worm, and represents desire.*

*A salamander is this princely beast,
 Decked with a crown
 Given him by Cupid as a gorgeous crest
 Gainst fortune's frown,
 Content he lies, and bathes him in the flame,
 And goes
 Not forth,
 For why, he cannot live without the same.*

*As he, so lovers lie within the fire
 Of fervent love,
 And shrink not from the flame of hot desire,
 Nor will not move
 From any heat that Venus' force imparts,
 But lie
 Content
 Within a fire, and waste away their hearts.*

*Up flew the dame, and vanished in a cloud,
 But there stood I,
 And many thoughts within my mind did shroud
 Of love, for why,
 I felt within my heart a scorching fire,
 And yet
 As did
 The salamander, 'twas my whole desire.*

Mirimida, having read this sonnet, she straight (being of a pregnant wit) conceited the drift of his madrigal, smiled and laid it by, and then next took up Radagon's letter, which was written to this effect.

Radagon of Thessaly to the fair shepherdess Mirimida, health.

I cannot tell (fair mistress) whether I should praise fortune as a friend or curse her as a foe, having at unwares presented me with the view of your perfection, which sight may be either the sun of my bliss or the beginning of my bale, for in you rests the balance either to weigh me down my due with courtesy, or my denial with extreme unkindness. Such as are pricked with the bones of the dolphin hear music, and they are presently healed of their malady; they which are envenomed with the viper rub the sore with rhubarb and feel a remedy, and those which drink aconiton are cured by antidotes. But love is like the sting of a scorpion; it must be salved by affection, for neither charm, herb, stone, nor mineral hath virtue to cure it, which made Apollo exclaim this passion:

Hei mihi quod nullis amor est medicabilis herbis.

With the same distress (sweet Mirimida) am I pained, who lighting by chance as Paris did in the vale of Ida upon Venus, have seen a brighter dame than Venus, but I fear me less courteous than Venus. I have no golden apple (fair nymph) to present thee with, so to prove thee supreme of beauty, but the devotion of my thoughts is offered humbly at thy feet, which shall ever confess none so beauteous as Mirimida. Then as Venus for reward gave Paris Helena, so courteous nymph be prodigal of thy favours and give me thy heart, which shall be to me more dear than a hundred Helens.

But here perhaps thou wilt object that men's pleas are like painters' pencils, which draw no substance, but shadows, that to the worst proportions give the richest colours, and to the coarsest pictures the finest glasses, that what we write is of course, and when we feign passions, then are we least passionate, having sorrowful pens when we have secure hearts, and luring looks when we have laughing thoughts. I cannot deny (sweet mistress) but that hot loves are like a bavin's blaze, and that men can promise more in a moment than they will perform in a month. I know there was a Demophoon that deceived Phyllis, an Aeneas that falsified his faith to Dido, a Theseus that forsook his Ariadne, yet measure not all by some men's minds; of a few particular instances, conclude not general axioms; though some have been fleeting, think not all to be false; try me; I refer your passions to my proof, and as you find me loyal, so reward me with love. I crave no authentical grant, but a superficial favour; say (Mirimida) that Radagon shall be welcome if he be faithful, and then my hope shall comfort my heart. In which suspense I rest confused at the bar of your courtesy. Farewell.

Mirimida's Radagon, though she will not be Radagon's Mirimida.

This she read over twice and blushed at it, as feeling a little heat, but straight she sighed and shaked it from her heart, and had laid it by but that turning over the next page she espied certain verses, which was a canzon penned thus.

Radagon In Dianam.

Non fuga Teucus [sic?] amat; quae tamen odit habet.

*It was a valley gaudy green
Where Dian at the fount was seen,
 Green it was
 And did pass
All other of Diana's bowers
In the pride of Flora's flowers.*

*A fount it was that no sun sees,
Circled in with cypress trees,
 Set so nigh
 As Phoebus' eye
Could not do the virgins scathe
To see them naked when they bathe.*

*She sat there all in white.
Colour fitting her delight,
 Virgins so
 Ought to go,
For white in armory is placed
To be the colour that is chaste.*

*Her taffeta cassock might you see
Tucked up above her knee
 Which did show
 There below
Legs as white as whale's bone,
So white and chaste was never none.*

*Hard by her upon the ground
Sat her virgins in a round
 Bathing their
 Golden hair
And singing all in notes high:
Fie on Venus' flattering eye.*

*Fie on love, it is a toy,
Cupid witless and a boy,
 All his fires
 And desires
Are plagues that God sent down from high
To pester men with misery.*

*As thus the virgins did disdain
Lovers' joy and lovers' pain,*

*Cupid nigh
 Did espy,
 Grieving at Diana's song
 Slyly stole these maids among.*

*His bow of steel, darts of fire,
 He shot amongst them sweet desire,
 Which straight flies
 In their eyes,
 And at the entrance made them start,
 For it ran from eye to heart.*

*Calisto straight supposed Jove
 Was fair and frolic for to love,
 Dian she
 Scaped not free,
 For well I wot hereupon
 She loved the swain Endymion,*

*Clitia Phoebus, and Cloris' eye
 Thought none so fair as Mercury,
 Venus thus
 Did discuss
 By her son in darts of fire,
 None so chaste to check desire.*

*Dian rose with all her maids,
 Blushing thus at love's braids,
 With sighs all
 Show their thrall,
 And flinging hence pronounce this saw:
 What so strong as love's sweet law?*

Mirimida, having read the letter of Radagon, perceived that love was in his eyes and perhaps had slyly touched his heart, but she that was chary of her choice and resolute not to fetter herself with fancy did pass over these passions as men do the shadows of a painter's pencil, which while they view they praise, and when they have praised, pass over without any more remembrance, yet she could not but enter into the humorous reach of his conceit, how he checked the coy disdain of women in his sonnet; she blushed, and her thoughts went away with her blood, and so she lighted on the letter that Mullidor had sent her, which drove her into a pleasant vein. The effects of his passions were these.

Mullidor the malcontent, with his pen clapped full of love, to his mistress Mirimida, greeting.

After my hearty commendations remembered, hoping you be in as good health as I was at the making hereof, this is to certify you that love may well be compared to a bottle of hay, which once set on fire will never be quenched, or to a cup full of strong ale, which when a man hath once tasted, he never leaves till he hath drunk it all up; so, mistress Mirimida, after the furious flames of your two eyes had set my poor heart on the coals of love, I was so scorched on the gridiron of affection that I had no rest till I was almost turned to a coal, and after I had tasted of the liquor of your sweet physiognomy, I never left supping of your amiable countenance till with love I am almost ready to burst. Consider with yourself, fair shepherdess, that poor men feel pain as well as princes, that Mullidor is sick of such a malady as by no means can be cured unless yourself lay a cerecloth to draw away my sorrows; then be pitiful to me lest you be counted disdainful to put so trusty a lover out of his right wits, for there's no ho but either I must have you, or else for very plain love run mad. It may be (Mirimida) you think me too base for your beauty; why, when you have married me I am content to serve you as a man, and to do all those endeavours that belongs to a servant, and rather to hold you for my mistress than my wife. Then seeing you shall have the sovereignty at my hands, which is the thing that all women desire, love me, sweet Mirimida, and think this, if you match with me, old Callena my mother hath that in a clout that will do us both good. Thus hoping you will ponder my passions in your mind, and be more courteous than to cast away a young man for love. Farewell.

Yours half mad because he would be yours, Mullidor the malcontent.

Such a poetical fury took Mullidor in the brains that he thought to show his vein in verse, and therefore annexed to his letter this pleasant ditty.

Mullidor's Madrigal.

*Dildido, dildido,
Oh love, oh love,
I feel thy rage rumble below and above.*

*In summer-time I saw a face
Trop belle pour moi, hélas, hélas,
Like to a stoned horse was her pace,
Was ever young man so dismayed?
Her eyes like wax torches did make me afraid,
Trop belle pour moi, voila mon trespas.*

*Thy beauty (my love) exceedeth supposes,
Thy hair is a nettle for the nicest roses,
Mon Dieu aide moi,
That I with the primrose of my fresh wit
May tumble her tyranny under my feet,
He donc je serai un jeune roi,
Trop bell pour moi, hélas, hélas,*

Trop belle pour moi, voila mon trespas.

Mirimida, having read this humorous fancy of Mullidor, began thus to meditate with herself. Listen not, fond wench, to love, for if thou dost thou learnest to lose; thou shalt find grief to be the gains and folly the pay-mistress that rewards all amorous travails. If thou wed thyself to Radagon thou aimest beyond thy reach, and looking higher than thy fortunes thou wilt repent thy desires, for Mirimida, affects beyond compass have oft-time infortunate effects; rich robes have not ever sweet consent [sic?], and therefore the mean is the merriest honour [sic?]. What then, must Eurymachus of all these three be the man that must make up the match? he is a shepherd, and harbours quiet in his cottage; his wishes are not above his wealth, nor doth his conceit climb higher than his deserts. He hath sufficient to shroud thee from want, and to maintain the state of an honest life. Shepherds wrong not their wives with suspicion, nor do country swains esteem less of their loves than higher degrees. But Mirimida, mean men have frowns as well as kings; the least hair hath his shadow, the fly her spleen, the ant her gall, and the poorest peasant his choler. Peasants can wield a cudgel better than a great lord, and dissension will have a fling amongst the meanest. If therefore marriage must have her inconvenience, better golden gyves than iron fetters. What sayest thou then to Mullidor? that he is Mullidor, and let that suffice to shake him off for a fool, for it were thy discredit to have only a woodcock to keep the wolf from the door. Why then, meanest thou not to love? No, fond lass, if thou be wise, for what is sweeter than liberty, and what burden heavier than the fist of a froward husband? Amongst many scorpions thou lookest for an eel, amongst a hedge full of nettles for one flower, amongst a thousand flatterers for one that is faithful, & yet when thou hast him thy thoughts are at his will and thy actions are limited to his humours. Beware, Mirimida; strike not at a stale because it is painted; though honey be sweet, bees have stings; there is no sweeter life than chastity, for in that estate thou shalt live commended and uncontrolled.

Upon this she put up the letters, and because she would not lead her lovers into a labyrinth of hope, she appointed them all to meet her at the sheepfolds on one day and at one hour, where the wooers, that stood upon thorns to hear her censure, met without fail. After salutes passed between Mirimida and them, she began to parley with them thus.

Gentlemen, all rivals in love and aimers at one fortune, though you three affect like desire to have Mirimida's favour, yet but one of you can wear the flower, and perhaps none, for it is as my fancy censures; therefore are you content that I shall set down which of you, or whether none of you, shall enjoy the end of your suits, and whoso is forsaken to part hence with patience and nevermore to talk of his passions? To this they all agreed, and she made this answer. Why then, Radagon and Eurymachus, wear you two the willow garland, not that I hold either your degrees or deserts worthless of a fairer than Mirimida, but that the destinies do so appoint to my desires that your affects cannot work in me any effects. At this Radagon and Eurymachus frowned, not so much that they were forsaken, but that so beautiful a creature would wed herself to such a deformed ass as Mullidor, and the fool, he simpered it in hope to have the wench. Now (quoth she) Mullidor may hope to be the man, but trust me, as I found him I leave him, a dolt in his loves and a fool in his fortunes. At this they laughed, and he hung his head, and she left them all, Radagon

taking his hawk to go fly the partridge, Eurymachus marching with his sheep-hook to the folds, Mullidor hieing home to his mother to recount his mishaps, and Mirimida singing that there was no goddess to Diana, no life to liberty, nor no love to chastity.

Francesco, Isabel, and all the rest of the guests applauded this discourse of the pleasant host, and for that it was late in the night they all rose, and taking their leave of Francesco, departed, he and his wife bidding their host good night and so going to bed, where we leave them to lead the rest of their lives in quiet.

Thus (quoth the palmer) you have heard the discovery of youth's follies, and a true discourse of a gentleman's fortunes.

But now, courteous palmer (quoth the gentleman), it rests that we crave by your own promise the reason of your pilgrimage to Venice. That (quoth the palmer) is discoursed in a word, for know, sir, that enjoining myself to penance for the folly of my youth's passions, having lived in love and therefore reaped all my loss by love, hearing that of all the cities in Europe Venice hath most semblance of Venus' vanities, I go thither not only to see fashions but to quip at follies, that I may draw others from that harm that hath brought me to this hazard. The gentlewomen of Venice, your neighbours, but unknown to me, have more favours in their faces than virtue in their thoughts, and their beauties are more curious than their qualities be precious, caring more to be figured out with Helen than to be famed with Lucrece; they strive to make their faces gorgeous but never seek to fit their minds to their God, and covet to have more knowledge in love than in religion; their eyes bewray their wantonness, not their modesty, and their looks are lures that reclaim not hawks, but make them only bate at dead stales; as the gentlewomen, so are the men, loose livers and strait lovers, such as hold their conscience in their purses and their thoughts in their eyes, counting that hour ill spent that in fancy is not mis-spent. Because therefore this great city of Venice is holden love's paradise, thither do I direct my pilgrimage, that seeing their passions I may, being a palmer, win them to penance by showing the miseries that Venus mixeth with her momentary contents; if not, yet I shall carry home to my countrymen salves to cure their sores; I shall see much, hear little, and by the insight into other men's extremes return both the more wary and the more wise. What I see at Venice (sir) and what I note there, when I return back I mean to visit you and make you privy to all.

The heedful host, having judicially understood the pitiful report of the palmer, giving truce to his passions with the tears he spent, and resolved to requite that thankfully which he had attended heedfully, gave this catastrophe to his sad and sorrowful discourse. Palmer, thou hast with the ketrel [sic] foreshowed the storm ere it comes, painting out the shapes of love as lively as the grapes in Zeuxis' tables were portrayed cunningly; thou hast lent youth eagle eyes to behold the sun, Achilles' sword to cut and recure, leaving those medicines to salve others that hast lost thyself, and having burnt thy wings with the fly by dallying too long with the fire, thou hast bequeathed others a lesson with the unicorn to prevent poison by preserves before thou taste with the lip. The only request I make in requital of my attention is that thou leave certain testimonies on these walls whereon, whensoever I look, I shall remember Francesco's follies and thy foresight.

The palmer, esteeming the courteous reply of his host, and desirous to satisfy his request, drawing blood from the vein cephalia (on an arch of white ivory erected at the end of an arbour adorned with honeysuckles and roses) he wrote thus with a pencil.

*In greener years whenas my greedy thoughts
 Gan yield their homage to ambitious will,
 My feeble wit, that then prevailed noughts,
 Perforce presented homage to his ill,
 And I, in folly's bonds fulfilled with crime,
 At last unloosed, thus spied my loss of time.*

*As in his circular and ceaseless ray
 The year begins, and in itself returns,
 Refreshed by presence of the eye of day.
 That sometimes nigh and sometimes far sojourns,
 So love in me (conspiring my decay)
 With endless fire my heedless bosom burns,
 And from the end of my aspiring sin
 My paths of error hourly doth begin.*

Aries.

*When in the Ram the sun renews his beams,
 Beholding mournful earth arrayed in grief,
 That waits relief from his refreshing gleams,
 The tender flocks, rejoicing their relief,
 Do leap for joy and lap the silver streams.
 So at my prime, when youth in me was chief,
 All heifer-like with wanton horn I played,
 And by my will my wit to love betrayed.*

Taurus.

*When Phoebus with Europa's bearer bides,
 The spring appears, impatient of delays,
 The labourer to the fields his plow-swains guides,
 He sows, he plants, he builds at all assays.
 When prime of years, that many errors hides,
 By fancy's force did trace ungodly ways,
 I blindfold walked, disdainingly to behold
 That life doth vade, and young men must be old.*

Gemini.

When in the hold whereas the Twins do rest

*Proud Phlaegon, breathing fire, doth post amain,
The trees with leaves, the earth with flowers is dressed.
When I in pride of years with peevish brain
Presumed too far, and made fond love my guest,
With frosts of care my flowers were nipped amain,
In height of weal who bears a careless heart,
Repents too late his over-foolish part.*

Cancer.

*When in aestival Cancer's gloomy bower
The greater glory of the heavens doth shine,
The air is calm, the birds at every stour
To [sic?] tempt the heavens with harmony divine.
When I was first enthralled in Cupid's power,
In vain I spent the May-month of my time,
Singing for joy to see me captive thrall
To him whose gains are grief, whose comfort small.*

Leo.

*When in the height of his meridian walk
The Lion's hold contains the eye of day,
The riping corn grows yellow in the stalk.
When strength of years did bless me every way,
Masked with delights of folly was my talk,
Youth ripened all my thoughts to my decay,
In lust I sowed, my fruit was loss of time,
My hopes were proud, and yet my body slime.*

Virgo.

*When in the Virgin's lap earth's comfort sleeps,
Bating the fury of his burning eyes,
Both corn and fruits are firmed, & comfort creeps
On every plant and flower that springing rise.
When age at last his chief dominion keeps,
And leads me on to see my vanities,
What love and scant foresight did make me sow
In youthful years is ripened now in woe.*

Libra.

*When in the Balance Daphne's leman blins,
The plow-man gathereth fruit for passed pain.
When I at last considered on my sins,*

*And thought upon my youth and follies vain,
I cast my count, and reason now begins
To guide mine eyes with judgement bought with pain,
Which, weeping, wish a better way to find
Or else forever to the world be blind.*

Scorpio.

*When with the Scorpion proud Apollo plays,
The wines are trod and carried to their press,
The woods are felled gainst winter's sharp affrays.
When graver years my judgements did address,
I gan repair my ruins and decays,
Exchanging will to wit and soothfastness,
Claiming from time and age no good but this,
To see my sin, and sorrow for my miss.*

Sagittarius.

*Whenas the Archer in his winter hold
The Delian harper tunes his wonted love,
The plow-man sows and tills his laboured mould.
When with advice and judgement I approve
How love in youth hath grief for gladness sold,
The seeds of shame I from my heart remove,
And in their steads I set down plants of grace,
And with repent bewailed my youthful race.*

Capricornus.

*When he that in Eurotas' silver glide
Doth bain his tress beholdeth Capricorn,
The days grows short, then hastes the winter-tide,
The sun with sparing lights doth seem to mourn,
Grey is the green, the flowers their beauty hides.
Whenas I see that I to death was born,
My strength decayed, my grave already dressed,
I count my life my loss, my death my best.*

Aquarius.

*When with Aquarius Phoebe's brother stays,
The blithe and wanton winds are whist & still,
Cold frost and snow the pride of earth betrays.
When age my head with hoary hairs doth fill,
Reason sits down and bids me count my days,*

*And pray for peace, and blame my froward will,
In depth of grief, in this distress I cry:
Peccavi, Domine, miserere mei.*

Pisces.

*When in the Fish's mansion Phoebus dwells,
The days renew, the earth regains his rest.
When old in years, my want my death foretells,
My thoughts & prayers to heaven are whole addressed,
Repentance youth by folly quite expels,
I long to be dissolved for my best,
That young in zeal, long beaten with my rod,
I may grow old to wisdom & to God.*

The palmer had no sooner finished his circle but the host over-read his conceit, and wondering at the excellency of his wit, from his experience began to suck much wisdom, & being very loath to detain his guest too long, after they had broken their fast and the goodman of the house courteously had given him thanks for his favour, the palmer set forward towards Venice; what there he did, or how he lived, when I am advertised (good gentlemen) I will send you tidings. Meanwhile let everyone learn (by Francesco's fall) to beware, lest at last (too late) they be enforced to bewail.

FINIS.