GREENE'S FAREWELL TO FOLLY

Sent to courtiers and scholars as a precedent to warn them from the vain delights that draws youth on to repentance

Sero sed serio

Robert Greene

Vtriusque Academiae in Artibus magister

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To the honourable-minded gentleman, Robert Carey, esquire, Robert Greene wisheth as many good fortunes as the honour of his thoughts do merit

Having waded, noble-minded courtier, through the censures of many both honourable and worshipful in committing the credit of my books to their honourable opinions, as I have found some of them not only honourably to patronize my works, but courteously to pass over my unskilful presumption with silence, so generally I am indebted to all gentleman that with favours have overslipped my follies. Follies I term them, because their subjects have been superficial, and their intents amorous, yet mixed with such moral principles that the precepts of virtue seemed to crave pardon for all those vain opinions love set down in her periods.

Seeing then, worthy Maecenas of letters, that my works have been counted follies, and follies the fruit of youth, many years having bitten me with experience, and age growing on bidding me *petere grauiora,* to satisfy the hope of my friends and to make the world privy to my private resolution I have made a book called my *Farewell to Follies*, wherein as I renounce love for a fool, and vanity as a vein too unfit for a gentleman, so I discover the general abuses that are engrafted in the minds of courtiers and scholars, with a cooling card of counsel suppressing those actions that stray from the golden mean of virtue. But, right Worshipful, some are so peremptory in their opinions that if Diogenes stir his stumps they will say it is to mock dancers, not to be wanton; that if the fox preach, 'tis to spy which is the fattest goose, not to be a ghostly father; that if Greene write his *Farewell to Folly*, 'tis to blind the world with folly, the more to shadow his own folly. My reply to these thought-searchers is this: I cannot Martinize, swear by my fay in a pulpit & rap out Gog's wounds in a tavern, feign love when I have no charity, or protest an open resolution of good when I intend to be privately ill, but in all public protestations my words and my deeds jump in one sympathy, and my tongue and my thoughts are relatives.

But omitting these digressions, right Worshipful, to my book, which as it is the farewell to my follies, so it is the last I mean ever to publish of such superficial labours, which I have adventured to shroud under the shelter of your Worship's patronage, as under his wing whose general love, bought with honourable deserts, may defend it from the injury of every envious enemy. I can shadow my presumption with no other excuse but this, that seeking to find out some one courtier whose virtuous actions had made him the hope of many honours, at whose feet I might lay down the follies of my youth, & bequeath to him all the profitable fruits of my ensuing age, finding none that either fame could warrant me, or my own private fancy persuade to be of more hope than yourself, I set down my rest, and ventured boldly on your Worship's favour, which if as I have found before, I obtain now, I shall think myself as fortunate in getting so honourable a patron for my new endeavours as unhappy for blemishing my forepassed youth with such frivolous labours. And thus hoping my honest resolution to do well shall be countenanced with your Worship's courteous acceptance, I commit you to the Almighty.

Your Worship's in all humble service,
Robert Greene.

To the gentlemen students of both universities, health.

Gentlemen and students, my old friends and companions, I presented you alate with my *Mourning Garment*. How you censure of the cloth or cut I know not, but the printer hath passed them all out of his shop, and the pedlar found them too dear for his pack, that he was fain to bargain for the life of Tomliuclin [sic for 'Tom o' Lincoln'?] to wrap up his sweet powders in those unsavoury papers. If my *Garment* did any gentleman good, I am glad; if it offended none, I am proud. If good man find fault that hath his wit in his eyes, and can check what he cannot amend, mislike it, I am careless, for Diogenes hath taught me that to kick an ass when he strikes were to smell of the ass for meddling with the ass.

Having therefore, gentlemen, in my opinion mourned long enough for the misdeeds of my youth, lest I should seem too Pharisaical in my fasts, or like our dear English brethren that measure their prayers by the hour-glass fall asleep in preaching of repentance, I have now left off the intent and am come to the effect, and after my mourning present you with my *Farewell to Follies*, an *ultimum vale to* all youthful vanities, wishing all gentlemen, as well courtiers as scholars, to take view of those blemishes that dishonour youth with the quaint show of pleasant delights.

What a glorious show would the spring present if the beauty of her flowers were not nipped with the frosts? How would autumn boast of her fruits if she were not disguised with the fall of the leaf? And how would the virtues of youth shine (polished with the ripe conceit of wit) if they were not eclipsed with the clouds of vanity? Then, sweet companions and love-mates of learning, look into my *Farewell*, and you shall find the poisons which infect young years, and turning but the leaf, read the antidotes to prevent the force of such deadly confections. Lay open my life in your thought, and beware by my loss. Scorn not in your age what you have learned in your accidence, though stale, yet as sure as check, *Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum* [=Fortunate the man who learns caution from the perils of others].

Such wags as have been wantons with me, and have marched in the mercers' book to please their mistress' eye with their bravery; that (as the frolic phrase is) have made the tavern to sweat with riotous expenses; that have spent their wits in courting of their sweethearts and emptied their purses by being too prodigal, let them at last look back to the follies of their youth, and with me say farewell unto all such vanities. But those young novices that have not yet lost the maidenhead of their innocency, nor have heard the melody of such alluring sirens, let them read that they may loathe, and that seeing into the depth of their folly, they may the more detest that whose poisoned sweetness they never tasted. Thus generally I would wish all to beware by me, to say with me farewell to folly. Then should I glory that my seed sown with so much goodwill should yield a harvest of so great advantage.

But by your leave, gentlemen, some over-curious will carp, and say that if I were not beyond [sic?], I would not be so bold to teach my betters their duty and to show them the sun that have brighter eyes than myself. Well, Diogenes told Alexander of his folly, and yet he was not a king. Others will flout, and over-read every line with a frump, and say

'tis scurvy, when they themselves are such scabbed jades that they are like to die of the farcin, but if they come to write or publish anything in print, it is either distilled out of ballads, or borrowed of theological poets which for their calling and gravity, being loath to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other Bathyllus to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery. And he that cannot write true English without the help of clerks of parish churches will needs make himself the father of interludes. O, 'tis a jolly matter when a man hath a familiar style and can indite a whole year and never be beholding to art, but to bring scripture to prove anything he says, and kill it dead with the text in a trifling subject of love, I tell you is no small piece of cunning, as for example, two lovers on the stage arguing one another of unkindness, his mistress runs over him with this canonical sentence: *A man's conscience is a thousand witnesses,* and her knight again excuseth himself with that saying of the apostle: *Love covereth the multitude of sins*. I think this was but simple abusing of the scripture; in charity be it spoken, I am persuaded the sexton of Saint Giles without Cripplegate would have been ashamed of such blasphemous rhetoric. But not to dwell in the imperfections of these dunces, or trouble you with a long commentary of such witless coxcombs, gentlemen, I humbly entreat pardon for myself, that you will favour my *Farewell*, and take the presentation of my book to your judicial insights in good part, which courtesy if I find at your hands, as I little doubt of it, I shall rest your as ever I have done.

Robert Greene.

GREENE HIS FAREWELL TO FOLLY

When the state of Italy was pestered with the mutinous factions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines so that the commonwealth groaned under the burden of their seditious tumults, and the church, infected with sundry schismatical opinions, was stained with that blemish of dissension, Florence, a city greatly molested with this civil controversy, instead of palms that presented peace was stored with armour that denounced wars; the streets that were a mart for the traffic of merchants served for a place wherein to marshal soldiers; the senate went not in robes of purple to challenge reverence but in coats of steel to maintain their safety. Age, honour nor religion bare no privilege in their foreheads, but the nobility with ambition and the commons with envy so dissented in their several thoughts that the particular ruin of the city and the general subversion of the weal public was daily expected

Yet amidst these broils the house of the Farnese so behaved themselves with such equal proportion that they were neither friends to the Guelphs nor foes to the Ghibellines, but with an indifferent poise of affections countermanded the factious mutiny of those two mortal enemies. The chief of these was Jeronimo Farnese, a nobleman honourable for his parentage and honoured for his virtue, one that in his youth armed his actions with prowess and in his age made a proof of his life by wisdom, who discovering the misery of time by experience, found that sweeter was the dew that dropped from peace than the showers that poured down from wars; that the garland of Mercury was more precious than the helmet of Mars; that quiet and content sooner rested under the marble altar of Pallas than under the silver targets of Bellona, not that the nobleman thought it dishonourable to be martial, but that he counted it prodigal to be factious. To avoid, therefore, all suspicion that might ensue by his residence in so troublesome a city, setting his household affairs in some good order, accompanied with his wife, three daughters, and four young gentlemen allied unto him by affinity, he departed from Florence, seated himself in a farm of his about six miles distant from Vienna [sic for 'Siena'?]. The eldest of his daughters was named Margaret, the second Frances, the youngest Katherine, all which, as joining in a sympathy of their parents' propagation, were beholding to nature for beauty, to fortune for wealth, and to the gods for wisdom and virtue. The young gentlemen were these: Signior Peratio, Signior Bernardine [sic for 'Bernardino'?], Signior Cosimo, and Messire Benedetto, all, as I said before, allied to Farnese by affinity, and therefore honourable, and directing the course of their lives after his compass, and therefore virtuous.

These thus associated both in nature and nurture accompanied the old county to his house, where arriving they found a grange place by situation melancholy, as seated in the midst of a thicket, fitter for one given to metaphusial [=metaphysical] contemplation than for such young gentleman as desired sooner to dance with Venus than to dream with Saturn, whose thoughts aimed not at the stoic content of Pythagoras, but at an exterior conceit of honest pleasure, which contrary to their expectation in such a century or country cottage they found, for Jeronimo Farnese, seeing the picture of discontent shadowed in their foreheads, conceiving this froward humour to come for that the place

of their abode was so solemnly seated, began at the enteraunce [sic for 'entrance'] into the base-court to use these words:

Gentlemen, the learned and wise worldlings whom experience and wisdom hath privileged to censure rightly of the due expense of time have thought with the physician that as the stomach hath his orifice strengthened as well with the juice of bitter wormwood as with the sap of sweet liquorice, so the mind oft steppeth as soon to content by being passionate as pleasant. Desire hangs not always on the heels of delight; man hath his time to meditate, and Holy Writ tell us that as we have a day of mirth, so we have a day to mourn. Solomon, whose content passed all proportion of measure, counted all things vanity that stooped to the centre of the earth. Alexander, amidst all ye embassadors at Babylon, stole three days to be solitary. Philip would be put in remembrance of his mortality. And we, gentlemen, that have lived pleasantly at Florence wearing out time with vanity, may now refine our senses, dulled with the taste of sundry vain objects, and for a week or two betake ourselves to this solitary place, wherein I think to find no other pleasure but a sweet meditation and friendly conference of the vain suppose of such as think none philosophers but epicures, and none religious but atheists. Thus, gentlemen, I appoint your penance, and therefore show me your opinion by your countenance.

Signior Peratio, who was nephew to Jeronimo, made answer for the rest, and said they were all content, wherewith the old county leading the way entered the house, where finding all things in a readiness, they went to dinner. The fresh air had procured a good appetite, that little talk passed till they had ended their repast. Dinner being done, counting it physic to sit awhile, the old Countess spying on the finger of Signior Cosimo a ring with a death's-head engraven, circled with this posy, *Gressus ad vitam*, demanded whether he adored [sic?] the signet for profit or pleasure.

Signior Cosimo, speaking in truth as his conscience willed him, told her that it was a favour which a gentlewoman had bestowed upon him, and that only he wore it for her sake.

Then, quoth the Countess, *'tis a whetstone to sharp fancy.*

If it be, madam, quoth Cosimo, *I am not so old but I may love.*

Nor so young, sir, quoth she, *but that you may learn by that to leave such folly as love. No doubt nature works nothing vain. The lapidary cuts not a stone but it hath some virtue; men wear not gems only to please the sight, but to be defensives by their secret operations against perils, & so, Signior Cosimo, would I have you use the gentlewoman's favour, not for a whetstone to further folly, but for a cooling card to inordinate vanities. Themistocles wore in his shield the picture of a stork, his motto antipelargein [=Repay kindness you have received], for that he would not be stained with ingratitude. Socrates had but one toy in his house, and that was the counterfeit of patience, for that he had a shrew to his wife.*

By your leave, madam, quoth Cosimo, *had not Socrates' counterfeit also a sentence?*

Yes, answered Farnese, *but my wife plays like the priest that at his elevatio left out his memento. The motto was this: Neque haec sufficit, meaning patience was as good a medicine to cure a waspish woman of sullenness as an ant's egg in syrup for him that is troubled with the sciatica.*

The gentlemen laughed at the dry frump of Farnese, and the Countess, for that she had talked of patience, took it for a precedent, and prosecuted her intent in this manner:

Jest how you please, gentlemen; still I say, that well cannot be gainsayed, how the image of death figured in Cosimo's ring should be a glass whereby to direct his actions, that the pagans who build their bliss in the sweet conceit of fame used the picture of death as a restraint to all forward follies. Alexander, when he named himself the son of Jupiter, was revoked from heresy by the sight of a dead man's skull that Callisthenes presented to him in a casket. Augustus Caesar set on the door of his banqueting house the scalp of a dead man, lest extremity should turn delight to vice. So, Signior Cosimo, use you your mistress' favour as a benefit to profit the mind, not as a toy to please fancy.

Cosimo was driven into a dump with this sudden insinuation of the Countess, as indeed he stood like the picture of silence, whereat Bernardin, smiling, made the countess this answer:

I cannot deny, madam, but you say well, yet your censure is a little too peremptory, neither can I gainsay but such a resolution would do well in age, whose sap, shrunk from ye branches, consorts(?) the water, but affords no blossom. Your hairs being silver had a summons unto death, therefore, to be armed with devotion, our years, grown & budding forth, a restless desire to pleasure, which if we should cut off with a continual remembrance of death, we should prevent time, & metamorphose ourselves by conceit into a contrary shape. The astronomer by long staring at the stars forgets the globe [sic for 'glebe'?] at his feet; so fearful was Phaeton of the sign in the zodiac that he forgat his course, & so would you have the delight of youth dashed with the sight of a death-head, that laying aside all recreation we should fall to be flat Saturnists. By this doctrine, madam, you would erect again the Academy of the Stoics, & make young men either apathoi, to live without passions, or else so holy to die without sin.

The gentlemen were glad that Bernardino had made such an answer, & Farnese, to draw them farther into talk, told his wife that he thought she was driven to a non plus.

No, sir, quod she, *but the gentleman mistakes me, for I mean not to have him so holy as to live without sin, but so honest as to live without follies, which our Florentines shroud under the shadow of youth, that indeed are mere enemies to the glory of youth.*

Messire Benedetto interrupted the Countess, as one amongst all the company most given to folly, for he was a fine courtier, and was thus quick to his reply:

I remember, madam, that Phocion carped at all men that went shod because he himself was ever barefoot. Antisthenes admitted no guest but geometricians. None supped with Cassius but such as never laughed, and they which feel your humour must (though not in years, yet in action) be as old as you, or else they are fondlings. But they which stood at Diogenes' tub came as well to laugh as to learn, and we that hear you may sooner fall asleep than follow your doctrine, for I perceive under this word 'folly' you abridge young gentlemen of every laudable pleasure and delight, allowing mirth in no measure unless poured out after your proportion, as to hunt, to hawk, to dance, to love, to go cleanly, or whatsoever else that contenteth youth his folly. And thus by an induction you conclude omnia vanitas [=all vanity].

The Lady Katherine, hearing her mother so sharply shaken up by Messire Benedetto, protecting her boldness with a modest blush, made this answer:

And sir, quoth she, *they which laughed at Diogenes perhaps were as foolish as he was cynical, & might with Alexander, whatsoever they brought, take a frump for a farewell. My mother sets not down peremptory precepts to disallow of honest recreation, but necessary persuasion to dissuade men from vanity. She seeks not with Tully to frame an orator in conceit, with Plato to build a commonwealth upon supposes, nor with Baldassar to figure out a courtier in impossibilities, but seeing the wings of youth tricked up with folly's plumes, seeks to persuade him with Icarus from soaring too high.*

And I pray you, quoth Benedetto, *what term you follies? Women's fancies?*

No, sir, quoth she, *men's favours. Silenus' ass never saw a wine-bottle but he would winch, and you cannot bear the name of folly but you must frown, not that you mislike of it in thought, but that decked in your pontificalibus a man may shape & cetera by your shadow.*

Benedetto let not this bitter blow fall to the ground, but told her her Latin was very bad and worst placed, for '& cetera' was no word of art for a fool, but indeed he did remember parrots spake not what they think, but what they are taught.

And so, quoth Cosimo, *you make a bare exchange with Lady Katherine, for a fool to deliver a popinjay, but indeed, to take her part in this, we Florentines, nay more generally we Italians, over-wise in our own conceit, stand so much upon wit that folly, treading upon our heels, bids us oft look back unto repentance.*

Signior Farnese, taking time by the forehead, jumped in with Cosimo, and said that not only Italians but other nations whatsoever were faulty in that imagination, and that folly was as common as love, and love so common that he was not a gentleman that was not in love.

And by this argument, quoth Cosimo, *you conclude all gentlemen both fools and lovers.*

I reason not, answered Farnese *a coniugatis, but seeing that we are thus far entered into the anatomy of follies, let us spend this afternoon in discoursing of the fondness of such our countrymen as, overgrown with self-love, drowns themselves in that folly which all the world gives unto us as due, I mean pride, which, Signior Peratio, for that I know you always to have borne the profession of a scholar, I commit unto your charge.*

Not to me, sir, quoth Peratio. *I pray you, keep decorum; let the Lady Katherine discourse of that which best beseemeth her sex, for if we may give credit to men very skilful and excellent in chronography, the first pattern of pride came from Eva, the mother of women and the mistress of that fault.*

You mistake the matter, quoth the Lady Katherine. *Eva was obedient and simple, following nothing but what her husband foreshowed and foretaught her.*

Let us leave women, quoth Farnese, *and privilege them a little to be proud. Only, Signior Peratio, touch you the folly of our Italians, and we will be silent auditors to your good philosophy.*

The gentlemen settled themselves in silence, which gave a proof to Peratio that they agreed to Farnese's request, and therefore he began his talk in this manner:

Although, gentlemen, it hath pleased the county to give me in charge the discourse of such a weighty matter as the discovery of pride, yet I know my sufficiency so far unable to perform his request as of force I must crave pardon if either my censures be too rash or verdict offensive. Resting therefore in hope of your courteous patience, thus to the purpose.

The learned clerks whose experience may avouch their sayings for oracles affirm this folly to descend by course of propagation as naturally inserted into the mind of man ab ipsis incunabilis, setting down by physical reasons that pride doth possess the inward senses of infants as sensum communem & phantezian before any exterior object can delude the sense with vanity, which Plato considering in his Timaeo, calleth it anthropomasia [sic?], the scourge of man, as a vice so deeply bred by the bone as it will hardly be rooted out of the flesh, alluding the reason that his master Aristotle did for the heart, which living first, dieth last; so pride, entering at the cradle, endeth in the grave.

Scipio Africanus the Great, whose triumphs had filled the streets of Rome with trophies, being demanded why the state of Rome began to ruinate, what made him forsake the senate, why he lived solitary from the civil government, why he tasted not the fruits of his forgotten glories, answered to all these demands briefly: For that Rome waxeth proud, meaning that pride as ill befitteth a crown as a cottage. What overthrew the house of the Tarquins but pride, what wrought the confusion of Babel but the pride of Nemroth? Pride overthrew the pomp of Alexander, and had not pride hatched ambition, the Romans had never bewailed the death of Pompey. To repeat a catalogue of infinite examples were frivolous, and therefore leaving this general discourse, let us come to a more particular discovery of this folly.

Our Florentines which profess themselves to be soldiers are wedded to this vein, as men shadowing the very substance of pride with the two colours of fame and honour, for what attempts they seek to achieve by martial prowess, what exploits they perform in wars, what days and nights they spend in watching either to prevent or prejudice the enemy, still claim the final cause of those actions to be fame or honour, but who heareth the sundry and several bravadoes our martialists make of their strange encounters, how cunningly they ordered their squadrons, how courageously they encountered the enemy, how stoutly they assayed the push of the pike, how strongly they bare the shock of the horse, what lances they brake, what massacres they made, what stratagems they performed, what cities they both assaulted and sacked shall find this report to taste of self-love, and these warlike endeavours to savour as much of pride as either of fame or honour. But grant their allegations true they covet to be famous and honourable, yet shall we find the end of these virtuous imaginations to be touched a little with the stain of this folly, for the desire of fame aimed with aspiring thoughts soareth so high that, seeking with Phaeton to rule aloft, his very prescription draweth them in a self-conceit of their own glories. Had not Hannibal found pride in the hope of fame, he had never scaled the Alps to besiege Capua. Had not Alexander been proud in the glory of his victories and conquests, he had never sighed that there was but one world to subdue. Hercules was proud of his labours, Hector of his combats with the Grecians, and to be short, the meanest soldier getting either fame or honour by sundry hardy and happy attempts glories so much in the glorious reward of his endeavour that willingly he passes his proportion, and cometh within the compass of this folly.

Signior Bernardino, who all his lifetime had professed himself a soldier, seeing Peratio so peremptorily to appeach his profession of pride, made this answer:

I cannot think, Signior Peratio, but your nativity, being rightly calculated, hath Mercury so predominant as we may censure without offence that you are far more bookish than wise, especially in martial affairs, whose honourable conceit I see is so far beyond the reach of your capacity that in gazing at a star you stumble at a stone, and in aiming particularly at a soldier, you generally load him with the fault of the whole world. Are you so simple yourself as to account every humour that fitteth man with delight to be pride, that the desire of fame and honour is nothing else but self-love? Then, sir, let me say that Minerva's owl was proud for perking under her golden target, and that Apelles' boys aimed at self-love for grinding colours for their master's shadows. But it did not prejudice the valour of Themistocles to be called coward at the mouth of Aristot, because the fool was a fiddler, and knew scarce a spear from a spigot. Neither may soldiers take offence to be thought proud at your hands, which never saw battle but in your book. And yet I cannot deny but there be such fantastic martialists as you talk of, whose tongues are more hardy than their hands, and dare sooner scale the heavens with a brave than anger a man with a blow. Such, Signior Peratio, as thrasonically countenance themselves with the title of a soldier, comprehend you within the compass of folly, but these personages which in defence of their country and despite of the enemy seek after fame and honour, and glory in the gain of such a golden benefit, let them triumph in their conquest, &

delight themselves in recounting those favours which fame hath bestowed upon them for their warlike endeavours.

But sir, in this discourse of pride you are partial, & play like Diogenes, who harping at the beggary of Antisthenes, never marked the patch on his own cloak. Silenus would oft inveigh against drunkenness with a bottle of wine in his hand. Thersites appeached Menalcas of deformity, himself being most ill-favoured, and you, sir, induce a soldier as prologue to your comedy of pride, whereas you scholars ought to be foremost in the scene, for he that maketh but a step into the university of Padua, where the youth of Florence chiefly flourish, and with a deep insight marketh the nature of our Mercurialists, shall find as fit a harbour for pride under a scholar's cap as under a soldier's helmet, and that as great self-love lurketh in a side gown as in a short armour. Tell me, good Signior Peratio, is not Mercury as arrogant as Mars is presumptuous? The one is figured with wings, as bewraying his aspiring thoughts; the other pictured in arms, as importing a resolution. Turn they not over many leaves, read they not large volumes, consume they not long time, apply they not their wits and wills, some in astronomy to gaze at the stars, some in physic to search out the nature of simples, other in the mathematics to work out metaphysical experiments, every a particularity in every art, spending all his life to have the world give a plaudite of their studies? Is this not, Signior Peratio, a tickling humour of self-love that may bring scholars within the compass of pride? Tully gadded the streets of Rome that the people might call him pater patriae [=father of the country]. Demosthenes took such a conceit of his eloquence that he walked up & down Athens to have the citizens say, Hic est ille Demosthenes [=Here is that Demosthenes]. Plato was so proud that he scarce thought King Dionysius his fellow, and not only in learning, but in life and apparel so neat that Diogenes, seeing a brave courser richly decked with golden trappers, demanded of him when he was in Cumaeo, as taking the horse for one of Plato's disciples. And I think ye scholars of Padua have so long read Plato's works that ye taste of Plato's vanities, I mean not of his philosophy but of his follies, for now he beareth no touch in Padua that cannot as well brave it with Plato as reason with Plato, that covet as well to imitate Aristotle in the sumptuousness of his apparel as the subtileness of his arguments, that hath not a tailor as well to picture out his lineaments as a stationer to furnish out his library. Therefore, Signior Peratio, look to your own last; measure not the length of another man's foot by your own shoe, but join the soldier and scholar in one syllogism, and then, the premises equal, conclude how you list.

Signior Farnese and the rest smiled at the sharp replay of Bernardino, and among the rest Messire Benedetto galled Peratio with this gleek:

By my faith, gentlemen, Signior Bernardino in my opinion hath done well, not only in his defence of a soldier, but in his satirical invective against scholars, wresting argumentum coniunctum against Peratio himself. I hope, sir, you are a bachelor, and therefore this kind of phrase gives the less offence.

Peratio thought to push him with the pike as he had hit him with the lance, resembling the fall of Hector, who while he unarmed Patroclus was unhorsed himself. Peratio,

somewhat choleric, & not well able to brook the frump of Benedetto, was thus rough with him:

Mass Courtier, I am glad you keep so good a decorum as to let the lightness of your head & lavishness of your follies so well to agree in eode tertio. You take Bernardino's part, but when the gentleman ran so merry a descant on the pride of scholars, had he by hap but glanced at the gaudiness of your apparel, he had spoken far more reverently of scholars than he did. For you Florentine courtiers, nay to be flat, we Florentine gentlemen, to bring myself within the same predicament, discover ourselves to be the very anatomies of pride, for he that marketh our follies in being passing humourous for the choice of apparel shall find Ovid's confused chaos to afford a multitude of diffused inventions. It was objected to Caesar for a fault in his youth that he ever used to go untrussed, and we count it a glory by a careless clothing of ourselves to be counted malcontent. Sardanapalus was thrust from his empire for that he was a little effeminate, and we strive to be counted womanish by keeping of beauty, by curling the hair, by wearing plumes of feathers in our hands which in wars our ancestors wore on their heads, they feared of men, we to be favoured of women. Alexander fell in hate of his Macedons, being the monarch of the whole world, for wearing a Persian robe embroidered with gold, and we Florentines, that are scarce masters of one town, so deck ourselves in costly attire, so rich and so rare that did the Macedons live and see our follies, they would grant Alexander to wear his robe without envy as a privilege. Yea, now-a-days time hath brought pride to such perfection in Italy that we are almost as fantastic as the English gentleman that is painted naked with a pair of shears in his hand, as not being resolved after what fashion to have his coat cut.

In truth, quoth Farnese, *to digress a little from our matter, I have seen an English gentleman so diffused in his suits, his doublet being for the wear of Castile, his hose for Venice, his hat for France, his cloak for Germany, that he seemed no way to be an Englishman but by the face.*

And, quoth Peratio, *to this are we Florentines almost grown, for we must have our courtesies so cringed, our congees delivered with such a long accent, our speeches so affected, as, comparing our conditions with the lives of our ancestors, we seem so far to differ from their former estate that, did Ovid live, he would make a second metamorphosis of our estates. Now, Mass Benedetto, are not you and the scholar fellow-compeers in follies? Hath not pride taught the one as large principles as the other? Are not courtiers as proud of their coats as we of our books? Nay, gentlemen, not soldiers, scholars and courtiers only, but all other estates whatsoever are comprised within the compass of our inquisition, and may very well and rightly be appeached of this folly.*

But Signior Peratio, quoth the old Countess, *what, do you think everyone proud that weareth costly apparel?*

No madam, quoth Peratio, *neither do I think but very beggars have their pride, and therefore appoint the seat of this folly in the heart, not in the habit, for as the cowl makes not the monk nor the grey weed the friar, so sumptuous attire procureth not always*

presumption, neither doth pride ever harbour in silks. Pride looketh as low as the cottage, and poverty hath his conceit tainted with self-love. Crates was more proud of his scrip and wallet than Croesus of all his wealth. Plato had such an insight into the peevish pride of Diogenes that he durst boldly say: Calco superbia Diogenis. The beggar Irus that haunted the palace of Penelope would take his ease in his inn as well as the peers of Ithaca. Thoughts are not measured by exterior effects, but by inward affects. Robes made not Agathocles leave to drink in earthen vessels, but rags shrouded a proud mind in Eubulus, that presumed to call him the son of a potter. 'Tis as bad a consequent to call a king proud for his treasure as a beggar humble for his want, and therefore, in my opinion, from the king to the beggar no estate is free from this folly, but pride, as the predominant quality in every sex, degree and age, challengeth in everyone's mind some special and particular prerogative. To confirm which, gentlemen, if you will give me leave, I will rehearse you a pleasant history.

The county and the rest of the gentlemen and ladies desirous to hear Peratio's tale, settled themselves to silence, and he began in this manner.

The tale of Peratio

While the city of Buda remained free from the invasion of the Turk and was one of the chief promontories of Christendom, there reigned as king Johannes Vadislaus, a man so possessed with happiness in the prime of his youth as it seemed the stars in his nativity had conspired to make him fortunate. By parentage royal, and rightly descended from the ancient kings of Hungaria, by birth sole king and monarch of all the transalpine regions, nature had so curiously performed his charge in the lineaments of his body, & the planets by happy aspects so carefully enriched his mind with sundry gifts, as it was in question which of all these might challenge by right the supremacy. But as the purest crystal hath his strakes, the clearest sky his clouds, the finest dye his stain, so Vadislaus, amidst all these golden legacies bequeathed to him by nature, fortune and the gods, had yet a blemish darkened all his other glories with disgrace, for his mind was so puffed up with a disdainful kind of pride that he purchased not only a special envy of his nobility but a general hate of his commons. Seated thus by his own conceit in a secure content, although in very deed daily standing upon thorns for that the lives of kings pinched with envy are as brittle as glass, he thought fortune had been tied to his thoughts in a string, and that the forehead of time had been furrowed with no wrinkles, that kings might command the heavens, and that such monarchs as he might attempt with Xerxes to tie the ocean in fetters.

But experience taught him that the counterfeit of fortune was like the picture of Janus, double-faced, in the one presenting flattery, in the other spite; that time had two wings, the one plumed with the feather of a dove to foreshow peace, the other with the pens of an eagle to denounce wars; that kings might determine, but God dispose; that a sceptre was no warrant to privilege them from misfortune; that every bliss hath his bane; that every pleasure hath his pain, and every dram of delight counterpoised with a whole tun of misery. But in the blossoms of his youth, when self-love tickled him forward to overween of his own estate, consideration, the enemy of untimely attempts, had not trod

on his heel, but taking the reins of liberty in his hands, he ran with Phaeton headlong into his own misfortune.

For on a day, as oft he desired to delight his senses with the fragrant verdure of the meads, intending to be solitary, for he hated disport in that he scorned any of his nobility should bear him company, he passed secretly out at a postern gate only accompanied with one of his nobles whom amongst all the rest he admitted into private familiarity (an earl he was, and called Selides), and went to a grove hard adjoining to the palace, where in an arbour that nature without the help of art had most curiously wrought, he passed away part of the day in melancholy mediation. At last, tickled with a deep conceit of his own happiness, commanding his nobleman apart, he began thus to soothe himself in his own follies:

Hast thou not heard, Vadislaus, nay, dost thou not know that kings are gods (and why gods, because they are kings); that a crown containeth a world of pleasures, and fortune ever cometh at the sight of a sceptre; that the majesty of a prince is like the lightning from the east, and the threats of a king like the noise of thunder? What saist thou, Vadislaus, are kings gods? What, dost thou so much abase thyself? Kings are more than gods, for Jupiter for all his deity was glad to reign a petty king in Crete; Saturn sued for the diadem of Italy; both gods, if poets say true, and yet both inferior unto thee in crown and kingdom. The transalpine regions that border upon the Rhine are thine; thou art sole king in all those dominions. The stars fears to cross thee with any contrary aspect; the temple of peace opens her gates at thy presence. Rich thou art, featured thou art, feared thou art, happy thou art; [+to] conclude, all that may be said either of honour, favour or fortune, a king thou art, Vadislaus, yea, so surely seated in the monarchy as did the heavens oppose themselves against thy prosperity and happiness, their spite were in vain to determine thy ruin and overthrow. Therefore, Vadislaus, bring not contempt to such a royal dignity by too much familiarity. Disdain in a king is the figure of majesty. 'Tis glorious for princes to let their subjects fear at the thought of their sovereign. So then, Vadislaus, let this censure be ratified, and from henceforth use thy nobility as necessary members to perform thy command, but for companions, none, Vadislaus, but kings.

At this he swelled, and being drunk with the dregs of his own folly, desirous to be soothed in this imagination he called unto him the County Selides, unto whom he uttered these words:

Thou seest, Selides, I am a king, to be feared of men because honoured of the gods. Tell me freely without flattery, what dost thou think either of me or my government?

The county, who all his lifetime had been a courtier, and yet never learned nor loved with Aristippus to be Dionysius' spaniel, craved pardon of the king, which granted, he framed his talk in this manner:

I cannot deny, mighty Sovereign, but kings are gods in that they ought to resemble their deities in government and virtue, but yet as the fairest cedar hath his water-boughs, the

richest margarite her fault, and the sweetest rose his prickle, so in a crown is hidden far more care than content, for one moment of perfect ease a whole month of disquiet thoughts, that were the perils apparent that are hid in a diadem, hardly would ambition boast in such triumphs. The gold of Tholosse [=Tolosa] glistered, and yet it was fatal; Sejanus' horse was fair to the eye, yet unlucky; a sceptre beset with stones is beautiful, but dangerous. Kings, my liege, are men, and therefore subject to miss; mortal, and therefore bondslaves unto fortune, and yet the title of a crown oft puffeth up their minds so with pride, as forgetting themselves they suddenly prove infortunate. Polycrates so swelled in the conceit of his happiness as he thought the heavens could not countermand his prosperity, yet experience taught him that time and fortune stood on a globe, and therefore mutable, that the calmest sea hath his storm, and the highest steps to felicity the deepest fall to misfortune, for the beginning of his youth was not so prosperous as the end of his age was tragical. Nero was proud, and therefore tyrannous, for the one is a consequent to the other, and so by pride lost both life and lordship. Kings, my liege, have found this by experience, & have feared to make proof of it by trial, so that Philip had a boy to put him in mind of his mortality. Alexander would be called the son of Jupiter, but Callisthenes made him deny such arrogancy in Babylon. Croesus was proud of his pelf, but Solon pulled down his plumes by preferring Byton before him in happiness.

Kings' heads are not impaled with fame for that they are kings, but because they are virtuous. Augustus Caesar was not famous for his empire, but for his clemency. Severus was not chronicled for his treasure, but for his justice. Antoni[n]us Pius had not his picture placed in the Capitol because of his sceptre, but for he was merciful. So, my Lord, to your question, I think your Majesty a king indeed, with large dominions, and honoured with royal titles of dignity, and it fitteth not a subject to mislike of his prince's government. Only this I conclude, and this heartily I wish, that your Highness may live favoured of the gods, and loved and honoured of men. He that bruiseth the olive-tree with hard iron fetcheth out no oil, but water, and he that pricketh a proud heart with persuasion draweth out only hate and envy.

[-For] Vadislaus so grudged at the friendly advertisements of the County Selides that, choking his choler with silence, he made no reply, but went home to the palace, where, for the receipt of a fish thinking to repay a scorpion, he whetted his thoughts only on revenge. And fortune, who still thought to favour him in his follies, soothed him with success in his envy, that raising him to the highest sphere of self-conceit she might throw him down to the lowest centre of despair, for many days had not passed before, by some sinister means, he had wrought so with the rest of his nobility that the county was found faulty by false witness in a penal statute that his goods were confiscated unto the king's use, his body exiled into Germany, and his only daughter, for one and but one he had, as a distressed virgin was reft at once both of parents and patrimony.

The county, arming his thoughts with patience against the despite of fortune, counting it good counsel to make a virtue of necessity, left his daughter instead of a dowry to enrich her marriage, fatherly doctrine to increase her manners, for giving her coin that envy had reft, leaving her advice and counsel that experience had taught, counting it more happiness to have his daughter prove wise than wealthy, as preferring the gifts of the

mind far before the goods of fortune. Parting thus from his only child, from his friends and from his country, he could not but sorrow, and yet in such measure as despair could take no advantage of his passions. The lady, as made of a more tender complexion, let loose the fountains of her tears, and having taken her farewell of her father, lamented his case as far as the reach of her eye could keep the bark within ken, and after the ship was out of sight, and she left alone and comfortless on the shore, she began after this manner to complain with herself:

Distressed and sorrowful Maesia (for so was her name), *where shalt thou begin to recount thy griefs or make an end of thy despairing sorrows, the prime of youth, which to others is a summer of good hap, being to thee a frosty winter of misfortune? Now doth experience teach thee for truth which erst thou accounted'st for a fable, that the privilege of honour is sealed with the signet of time, that the highest degrees have not the surest seats, that nobility is no warrant against mishap, that the highest cedars are blasted with lightning when the lower shrub waves not with the wind. Small brooks bubble forth silent streams when greater seas are troubled with tempests. Envy, yea, envy, the very caterpillar of content spareth the touch of a cottage when he endeavours the ruin of a palace; he scorneth a beggar when he striketh a king, and vouchsafeth not to check poverty when he giveth honour the mate.*

Then, Maesia, what reason hast thou to bewail thy present fall, and not rather to joy at thy future hap? Accuse not fates or fortune as thy foes when their despite redounded not to thy loss but thy liberty. Whilom thou wert honourable, and therefore fearful, now thou art poor, and therefore secure. Alate restless, fear of mishap disquieted thy sleeps in a palace; now a quiet content shall afford thee sweet slumbers in a cottage. There didst thou sigh in silks; here mayest thou sing in russet. There nobility was counterpoised with care; here poverty is enriched with quiet. Then, Maesia, change thy affections with thy fortunes; live as though thou wert born poor, and hope as one assured to die rich, for there is no greater honour than quiet, nor no greater treasure than content. But alas, my father, mine aged father!

Scarce had she uttered these words but grief presented such a heap of distressed thoughts that either the heart must burst by smothering such scalding sorrows, or else the tongue and eyes resolve unto plaints and tears.

Ah, despiteful and injurious fortune, quoth she, *well did Zeuxis paint thee blind, and yet without a veil, as having thine eyes not covered with a lawn, but darkened with despite. The frost nippeth the bud when he spareth the root; the gods slew the brats of Jocasta, but spared Oedipus. The wrinkles of age should be warrants of weal; the silver hairs should be pledges of peace. But fiend or fury as thou art, thou hast threatened my father with a contrary malice, in the cradle giving him sweet syrups, at the grave presenting him with bitter potions; in the prime of his youth bring [sic for 'bringing'] him asleep with honour, in the end of his days disquieting his thoughts with poverty.*

Silence, Maesia, lest fortune, hearing thy complaints, joy in her own spite, and triumph in thy sorrows. The sweetest salve of mishap is patience, and no greater revenge can be

offered fortune than to rest content in misery. Tears are not cures for distress, neither can thy present plaints pleasure thy absent father. Then Maesia, comfort thyself, and what time thou shouldst bestow on discoursing thy misfortunes, spend in orisons to the gods to redress thy father's cares, and revenge his injuries.

And upon this resolution she rested, and for that she would keep a decorum as well in her attire as in her actions, she put off her rich robes, and put on homely rags, transforming her thoughts with her apparel, travelled from the court into the country, where seeking for service, she had not passed long before she met with a wealthy farmer's son, who, handsomely decked up in his holiday hose, was going very mannerly to be foreman in a morris-dance, and as near as I can guess, thus he was apparelled. He was a tall, slender youth, clean made, with a good indifferent face, having on his head a strawen hat steeplewise, bound about with a band of blue buckram. He had on his father's best tawny worsted jacket, for that this day's exploit stood upon his credit. He was in a pair of hose of red kersey, close trussed with a point afore. His mother had lent him a new muffler for a napkin, & that was tied to his girdle for losing. He had a pair of harvest gloves on his hands, as showing good husbandry, & a pen & ink-horn at his back, for the young man was a little bookish. His pumps were a little too heavy, being trimmed startups made of a pair of boot-legs tied before with two white leather thongs. Thus handsomely arrayed, for this was his Sunday suit, he met the Lady Maesia, and seeing her so fair and well-formed, far passing their country maids in proportion, and nothing differing in apparel, he stood half amazed, as a man that had seen a creature beyond his country conceit, and indeed she was passing fair, for this I remember was her description:

Her stature and her shape was passing tall,
Diana-like, when longst the lawns she goes;
A stately pace like Juno when she braved
The queen of heaven fore Paris in the vale;
A front beset with love and majesty;
A face like lovely Venus when she blushed
A seely shepherd should be beauty's judge;
A lip sweet ruby-red, graced with delight;
Her eyes two sparkling stars in winter night
When chilling frost doth clear the azured sky;
Her hairs in tresses twined with threads of silk
Hung waving down like Phoebus in his prime;
Her breasts as white as those two snowy swans
That draw to Paphos Cupid's smiling dame;
A foot like Thetis when she tripped the sands
To steal Neptunus' favour with her steps;
In fine, a piece despite of beauty framed,
To see what nature's cunning could afford.

Thus have I heard the lady described, and this her rare form drove this country youth into this marvellous admiration. At last Maesia, seeing the poor fellow in a maze, after salutations done as country-like as she could, and yet too courtly for his calling, she

inquired of him if he knew any good and honest house where she might be entertained into service. The young man, who all this while had stared her in the face, told her that she came in pudding-time, for his mother wanted a maid, and if she could take any pains, no doubt she should find a house fit for her purpose.

And, quoth he, *I have such good hope that you will prove well, that although this day I should have been foreman in a May-game, yet I will rather mar the play than your market, and so will turn back to lead you the way to our house.*

Maesia gave him thanks, and together they went to his father's, where after the young springal had talked awhile with his mother, for he was his father's eldest son, the goodwife had such liking of the maid that she gave her an earnest-penny to serve her for a year, and so hired her before the constable. Maesia being thus honestly placed, by her good behaviour grew into such favour with all the house that the old fools began to think her a fit match for their eldest son, and in this hope used her marvellous well.

But leaving her to her country content, at last to Vadislaus, who having now glutted envy with revenge in banishing the good earl, perked so high with Danidas' [sic for 'Demades'?] parrot that at last he fell to the ground, for pride had taught him this principle, that princes' wills ware [sic for 'were'] laws, and that the thoughts of kings could not err. Disdain and contempt, two monsters of nature, had so sotted his mind with self-love that as his actions grew to be insolent, so his government began to be tyrannous, commanding as fancy willed him to affect, not as justice wished him to afford. He sought not with Augustus to be called *Clemens*, but with Tarquin to glory in the title of *Superbus*, alluding the distich which Virgil wrote in the praise of Caesar to himself: *Diuisum imperium cum Ioue Caesar habet* [=Caesar divides the empire with Jove]. He would not with Philip be called martial, but with Alexander be honoured as the son of Ammon. He sought not to sit in his throne with a branch of palm, to govern with peace, but used a sword as a sceptre to rule with constraint. Long he did not continue in this life but that he grew in mortal hate with his subjects. The poor commons grudged and groaned under the burden of his cruelty. The nobility began to consider with themselves that more did the state of Rome ruinate in one year under the government of the Emperor Caligula than it prospered in many under the virtuous regiment of Trajan, that more blossoms die the first nip in a morning than the heat of the sun can revive in a whole day, and more harm doth the pride of a king in a moment than good policy can restore in a month, whereupon they determined to forewarn him of his follies, and to persuade him from that course of life which would in time bring the commonwealth to mischief and himself to misfortune. Finding fit time and opportunity, with a general consent they began to dissuade him from his presumption, but Vadislaus, who brooked not to be countermanded by any of his nobles, returned them this scornful answer:

My Lords, as the sun is set in the heavens, so kings are seated upon earth, the one too glorious an object for every eye to gaze at, the other too full of majesty for any man to control. The wolf had his skin pulled over his ears for prying into the lion's den. The actions of princes are like the pearls of Arabia, the one too costly for every merchant to prize, the other too honourable for every base person to censure of. Dare the proudest

bird bear wing against the eagle? Is not the print of a lion's claw a seal of his safety, and the very title, nay the very thought of a king a warrant of his bliss? Take heed, my Lords; let the prejudice of others be a precedent for you to beware. Methink the County Selides' mishap might warn you from pressing too much on my favour. Seneca, by grudging at Nero's bliss, procured his own bane. Callisthenes, checking the thoughts of Alexander, wrought his own overthrow. Kings must not be controlled for that they are kings, and therefore from henceforth doom not of my doings, lest . . . .

And with that he flung from them in a rage, as one aiming at revenge if hereafter they misliked of his government. The nobles, whom disdain had armed to despair, began to murmur at the king's wicked resolution, and [+resolved?] either to free the commonwealth from misery or by attempting such an enterprise to procure their own mishap. Amongst them all Rodento, a nobleman more bold than the rest, burst forth into these passions:

My Lords and worthy peers of Buda, feared for your valour and famous for your victories, let not the private will of one man be the ruin of such a mighty kingdom. Kings are gods; then let them govern like gods, or give us leave to account them worse than men. Let the examples of other nations tie us to the consideration of our present estate. The Athenians preferred the weal of their country before the pride of Alcibiades, Caesar was slain in the senate for his pride, Hannibal twice exiled Carthage for his presumption, Dionysius banished out of Sicily for his insolency. Crowns, my Lords, are no placards of wickedness. Security waiteth not any longer upon a sceptre than it is swayed with equity; a diadem is no longer glorious than it is decked with virtue. So ye [sic for 'that'?] occasion presents us a double proffer, either by soothing ye king in his pride to suffer the commonwealth to perish, or by rooting out such a prince, to save both ourselves and the kingdom from prejudice. Now, my Lords, the balance is poised. Choose which part you please.

Rodento having set their hearts on fire with these words, they all consented to recall County Selides from banishment, and if at the second persuasion the king would not take a better course, to make him sole monarch of Buda. They were not slack in their purposed intent, but dispatched letters secretly by a speedy post into Germany, which the County Selides receiving, suspected at the first a further mischief, but at last throughly satisfied by the messenger of their faithful intent, he cut over with as much speed as might be, & secretly in the night came to the house of Rodento, where being honourably entertained, the next day all the nobles assembled, and there in council told the County Selides how in requital of his exile they meant either to set him in his former state, or else to enrich him with the benefit of a crown. The county was unwilling to grant to their requests, yet at last seeing denial could not prevail, he consented, and all jointly went together to the court where they found the king walking according to his wonted manner in his accustomed melancholy, who scarce saluting his lords with a good look, yet straight had espied the County Selides, at whose sight, with a face inflamed with choler, and eyes sparkling hate, he demanded why the County Selides was revoked from exile, how he durst presume so nigh to approach his presence, or which of his lords was so hardy as to admit him into their company.

Rodento, speaking for the rest, made answer that as the County Selides was banished without cause, so he might lawfully return without pardon; that offences measured with envy were to be salved without entreaty, & therefore did no more than they all present were ready to justify, and further, whereas his Majesty was so sotted in self-conceit that he held his will as a law, and made a metamorphosis of a monarchy into a flat government of tyranny, they were come to persuade his Highness from such folly, wherein if he resolved to persist, they were determined not only to deprive him of his crown and kingdom, but before his face to celebrate the coronation of Selides.

Vadislaus, hearing this peremptory resolution of his lords, was nothing dismayed, but with a countenance overshadowed with disdain, told them he feared not their braves:

For, quoth he, *the treacherous attempt of a subject cannot dismay the princely courage of a king. When the slaves of Scythia rebelled against their lords, they were not subdued with weapons, but with whips. Cyrus punished traitors, not with the axe to infer death, but with a fool's coat to procure perpetual shame. Therefore, my Lords, I charge you upon your allegiance, take hold of that outlaw Selides, put him in prison till he hear farther of my pleasure, and for your own parts, submit yourselves and crave pardon.*

The noblemen played like the deaf adder that heareth not the sorcerer's charm, neither could they be dissuaded from their intent by the threats of a king, but following their purpose, presently deposed him of all regal dignity and celebrated the coronation of Selides, who seated in the regal throne had no sooner the sceptre in his hand but envy began to grow in his heart, and revenge haled him on to seal up his comical success with tragical sorrow, for he commanded Vadislaus to be pulled out of his robes and put into rags; instead of a crown, to give him a scrip; for a sceptre, a palmer' staff, making general proclamation that none of what degree soever should allow him any maintenance, but that his inheritance should be the wide fields, and his revenues naught else but charity. Vadislaus, thus at one time deposed and metamorphosed from a king to a beggar, was now disdained of those whom before he did scorn, and laughed at by such as before he did envy. The nobility shaked him off as a refuse, the commons used him as a bad companion; both jointly forgat that he had been their king, and smoothly smiled at his misfortune. Vadislaus, as a man in a trance, being passed a little from his palace, seeing the place which whilom was the subject of pleasure now the object of discontent, that where he did command as a king, he was controlled as an abject, he fell into these distressed passions:

Is youth, the wealth of nature, to be wracked with every flaw? Is honour, the privilege of nobility, subject to every fall? Hath majesty, that makes us fellow-partners with the gods in dignity, no warrant to grant a sympathy of their deities that, as we are equal in highness, so we may be immortal in happiness?

Why dost thou enter, Vadislaus, into such frivolous questions, when thy present misfortune tells thee kings are but men, and therefore the very subjects of fortune? Ah, unhappy man, hadst thou confessed as much as proof sets thee down for a principle, the

overflowing gale of self-love had never brought thy bark perforce to so bad an harbour. Hadst thou governed like a god in equity, thou hast still ruled like a god in honour, but pride, persuading thee a crown had made thee more than a man, hath now induced time to assure thee that thou art the worst of all men. King's seats are like the rooms that Egistus made for strangers, wherein being placed, the ear was delighted with melody, the eye with sundry shows of content, the smelling with sweet savours, but to countervail these pleasures, over their heads hung naked swords in slender fillets of silk, which procured more fear than the rest did delight. Majesty is like the triple string of a lute, which let too low, maketh bad music, and stretched too high, either cracketh or setteth all out of tune. Fortune's favours resemble the pricks of a porcupine, that carelessly gazed at, pleaseth the eye and the touch, but narrowly handled, both hurteth the sight and the sense. Ah, Vadislaus, had consideration foretaught thee these untimely principles, thou hadst neither found the seats of kings unsure, majesty out of time, nor fortune but as she is to all men, inconstant.

But pride, what saist thou of pride, Vadislaus? Was it not lawful for thee to be prouder than all men that wert higher in dignity than all men? Might not a crown yield to thee a self-conceit in thy actions? What didst thou, being king, that beseemed not a king? Disdain, I tell thee, is the glory of a sceptre, and in that still be resolute. Beest thou never so poor in estate, be still a prince in thought. Parentage is without the compass of fortune; the gods may dispose of wealth, but not of birth. Imagine thy palmer's bonnet a prince's diadem; think thy staff a sceptre, thy grey weeds costly attire. Imaginations are as sweet as actions, and seeing thou canst not be a king over nobility, be yet a king over beggars. Hold poverty as a slave by thinking thy want store, and still disdain all that art despised of all. Dionysius was for the same brave mind exiled out of his kingdom, but he kept a school in Corinth, and there, although he were not a prince over men, yet he was a king over boys, and the force of his imagination soothed him in a princely content. Tush, Vadislaus, never shrink at this shot; now thou art more than a king, for thou art a monarch both over fates and fortune, and yet this privilege is left thee that none in Buda can challenge: thou mayest boast thou hast been a king, and whosoever gives thee for alms, never yield him thanks, for he bestows but what once was thine.

Vadislaus, arming himself thus with a desperate kind of patience, passed poorly disguised and despised through his own country, and Selides, safely seated in the kingdom, after he had set the affairs of the weal public in good order, took all his care to know where his daughter was bestowed, but hearing no news where she was harboured, made general proclamation through all his dominions that whoso could tell news what was become of the Lady Maesia, the king's daughter, should be greatly advanced in calling, and have a thousand crowns for his pains. The farmer's son happened to be with his mother's butter at the market when this proclamation was made, and coming home told it in secret for great news how that the king was deposed from his crown, & Selides created in his place, and that whosoever could tell where Maesia was should be well rewarded for his labour. The old farmer, nodding his head at these news, made answer:

You may see, son, quoth he, *what it is to be a great man. I tell you, the gay coats of kings covers much care; as they have many pleasures, so they have mickle perils. The*

ploughman hath more ease than a king, for the one troubles but his body with exercise; the other disquiets his mind with weighty affairs. I warrant, thee, wife, we have as much health with feeding on the brown loaf as a prince hath with all his delicates, and I steal more sweet naps in the chimney-corner in a week than (God save his Majesty) the king doth quiet sleeps in his beds of down in a whole month. Oft have I heard my father say (and I tell thee, our predecessors were no fools) that a husbandman plowed out of the ground three things: wealth, health and quiet, which, quoth he, is more worth than a king's ransom. But 'tis no matter; let not us meddle with kings' affairs. But if the council have thought it good to put down Vadislaus, he may thank his own pride, which, son, learn of me is the root of all mischiefs, and if they have crowned Selides, we see a goodly example, he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. But I would I could tell where the king's daughter were, for he that reaps favour and wealth gets a double benefit.

Maesia, who heard these news of her father's preferment, smiled in her own conceit that fortune had made so sharp and short a revenge, and that now after many miseries passed over with patience, she might not only say: *Dabit Deus his quoque finem* [=God will bring also these to an end], but *Haec olim moeminisse iuuabit* [=One day even these things will be pleasant to recall]. The remembrance of honour tainted her cheeks with a purple dye at the sight of her present drudgery; the hope of dignity tickled her mind with a sudden joy to think what a metamorphosis should happen at her pleasure, but when she called to mind the country sayings of her old master, and saw by proof how fickle fortune was in her favours, and had considered what mishap lay in majesty, and what a secure life it was to live poor, she found dignity overshadowed with danger, whereas poverty slept quietly at his plough-beam. Honour willed her to bewray what she was; quiet persuaded her that content was a kingdom. Perplexed thus with sundry thoughts, after her house was handsomely and housewifely dressed up, she took her spinning-wheel to the door, and there setting herself solitarily in the shade, she had not drawn forth three or four threads but Vadislaus in his beggar's robes came to the door, and seeing so neat a country wench at her wheel, without any salutations after his cynical manner began to gaze on her beauty. The maid, taking him for no other but some stout beggar, as country maids use to solace themselves, began to carol out a song to this effect:

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content,
The quiet mind is richer than a crown;
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent,
The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown;
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss
Beggars enjoy when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest,
The cottage that affords no pride nor care,
The mean that grees with country music best,
The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare,
Obscured life sets down a type of bliss,
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

The song of Maesia somewhat touched the mind of Vadislaus, that marvelling what pretty musician this should be that had so sweet a voice and so pithy a ditty, he began to interrupt her melody in this sort:

Fair maid, for so I may term you best, in that I give thee but thy due to say thou art beautiful and allow thee a favour in thinking thou art honest, tell me, is this country cottage thy father's house, and if it be thy birth is so base, & thy bringing up so bad, how hap thou hast found disquiet with dignity, and care contained in a crown? Hast thou seen the court, and so speakest by experience, or learned this ditty as a song of course, and so hittest the crow by hap?

Maesia, hearing so well-ordered an answer to come from such a disordered person, began to note more narrowly the lineaments of his face, & at last perceived it was the quondam king Vadislaus, but still dissembling what both she thought and knew, made him this answer:

Friend, if I have shot awry, blame the mark that I aimed at, and not my censure by outward show, for we country maids are so homely brought up that we count none kings but what wear crowns, and all beggars that carry scrips and crave alms. If your degree be above your show, it was your own fault and not my folly that made me so foolish. My song, I hope, whatsoe'er ye be, hath given none offence. If thou hast been rich, it tells thee what disquiet is in dignity, and that the cottage affords more quiet than a kingdom; if thou wert never but as thou art, then mayest thou see what content is in poverty, and learn that the obscure life containeth ye greatest bliss. Kings are men, and therefore subject to mishap. Fortune is blind, and must either miss of her aim, or shoot at a great mark; her bolts fly not so low as beggary, when honour is pierced with every blow, and therefore Marcus Curtius, that had thrice been dictator, and as many times triumphed, hid himself in a poor farm to be free from the injury of fortune.

Vadislaus, driven into a passion with this parle, asked her why she told him of the stratagems of kings, seeing herself was a beggar.

For that, quoth Maesia, *thou didst scorn even now to be counted a beggar.*

Nay, quoth Vadislaus, *for that thou knowest, or at the least doth suspect, that I am a king.*

Maesia told him she had small reason to make such a surmise, but desired that she might know if he were Vadislaus, that of late was deposed.

I am, quoth he, *the same; I tell thee, maid, every way the same, for mishap hath no whit altered my mind.*

Then, quoth Maesia, *hath fortune done ill, to join in thee both poverty and pride, for either hath report a blister on her tongue, or thy fall did ensue of disdainful insolency. Thy fault hath been always the fall of princes, the ruin of states, and the utter subversion of kingdoms. Diocletian the Roman was so proud that he called himself brother to the*

sun, and was the first that ever made edict to have the feet of emperors kissed in sign of servile submission. His end was madness. The pride of Pompey was his overthrow. The desire of kingly title caused Caesar to die in the senate-house. But thy harvest is out of grass, and my counsel cometh now as a shower of rain doth when the corn is ripe, yet seeing you are fallen into poverty, let me advise thee how to bear it with patience. Want is not a deprivation of virtue, but a release of care and trouble. Epaminondas was not called half a god, no [sic for 'nor'] Lycurgus a saviour because they abounded in wealth and were slaves to their passions, but because they were princes, and yet content with poverty. Then let their lives be a mark whereby to direct your actions, that as you are fallen from dignity by default, so you may live in poverty with patience, & so die a more honourable beggar than thou didst live a king. And if thou marvel who it is that gives thee such friendly counsel, know I am the daughter of Selides, who driven by thy injustice to this distress, although my father now a king, yet I find such content in poverty as I little haste to exchange this life with dignity.

Vadislaus carefully marking the weight of every word, especially proceeding from her whom he had injured, blushed at the sight of her patience, and yet as a man whom despair had hardened on to mishap, nothing relented at her persuasions, but in a melancholy fury flung from the door without saying one word, or bidding her farewell. Maesia, noting still the perverse stomach in the man, said to herself: *What folly is there greater than pride, which neither age nor poverty can extinguish?*

What afterward became of Vadislaus, the annals of Buda makes not mention, but only of this, that he died poor, and yet proud. For Maesia, pitying her father's sorrows that he made for her absence, more for his content than for any delight in dignity, shortly after she forsook the country and went to the court.

Peratio having ended his tale, the whole company commended his discourse, and especially the old Countess, who not only gave him praise as a laurel for his labours, but thanks, as due to him by deserts, saying that indeed pride was one of those sins which nature had framed without change, that fortune was a mistress over other passions and time had a medicine for other maladies; only pride and the gout hath his [sic for 'this'?] similitude in effects, that they were incurable.

Well, madam, quoth Bernardino, *Peratio hath done well, but pray God he resemble not the rich Bishop of Cologne, that preaching against covetousness had a poor man's lease to pawn in his hands, which he used as an instrument to act against usury. He is a scholar, madam, and therefore within the compass of his own conclusions, for we see those university men overcome themselves deeply in this folly, insomuch that, not content to be proud at home, they seek by travel to hunt after vanity.*

As I cannot, quoth Peratio, *excuse myself, so I will not accuse all generally because the premises are too peremptory that infer such censurers [sic?], but no doubt scholars are men, and therefore subject to this fault.*

And so be courtiers, quoth Lady Katherine, *for you may smell their pride by their perfumes.*

'Tis well, quod Benedetto, *that Signior Farnese hath made an exception of women, otherwise Peratio had never made an end of his discourse.*

Peratio taking hold of Lady Katherine's talk, thought to cross Benedetto over the thumbs, and therefore made this reply:

Truth it is that Tully writ to Atticus, that the conquest of Asia had brought five notable follies into the city of Rome: to make glorious sepulchres, to wear rings of gold, to use spice in meats, to allay wine with sugar, and to carry about sweet perfumes and smells. These, Messire Benedetto, Tully counts follies, and ye use as favours; he thought them prejudicial, and ye courtiers count them as necessary, and therefore argue how you list, I will have you within the compass of my discourse.

I can smile, quoth the Lady Katherine, *to see how Messire Benedetto, thinking to wring water out of a stone, hath stumbled on a flint, which striking too hard hath brought fire.*

Yet, quoth Cosimo, *his luck was good, for he burnt but his own clothes.*

Signior Farnese, hearing these dry blows, broke off their talk at this time by commanding one of his men to cover for supper, which done, sitting down with his guests about him, everyone plied his teeth more than his tongue, Benedetto excepted, who was so chafed in conceit at the Lady Katherine that his thoughts only were employed after dinner how to be revenged, which indeed he performed in this sort.

The second discourse of folly

After Farnese & the rest had satisfied their stomachs with meat & their minds with mirth, Cosimo, seeing Benedetto so passionate, began to whet him on to prattle in this manner:

Mass Courtier, quod he, *to draw you out of your dumps with a demand, I pray you answer me to this question: why do ye painters, in figuring forth the counterfeit of love, draw her blind & covered with a veil, whenas we see that in nothing there is a deeper insight than in love?*

Benedetto seeing Cosimo put forth this question only to move talk, told him that if he had spent but as many idle hours about ye substance of affection as he had done days about the quiddities of fancy, he would willingly have answered his demand, but seeing 'twere for a solider to teach Orpheus how to handle his harp, he would answer him as Zeuxis did King Perseus, who desiring him to show how he could draw the picture of envy, presently brought him a looking-glass, wherein Perseus perceiving his own physiognomy, blushed.

And yet for all this, quod Bernardino, *Signior Cosimo doth not change countenance, and yet we all know him to be a lover.*

And therefore, quoth the Lady Frances, *within the compass of folly, for this I remember that Anacreon saith, Cupid was deprived of his sight not by nature but by injury, for the gods summoning a parliament whereat appeared all the heavenly deities, Cupid by hap, or rather by fatal presence of the destinies, met with folly, who surcharged with overweening passions, began to dispute of their several powers. The boy, not able to brook comparisons, bent his bow and was ready to discharge an arrow against folly, but she being readier furnished with weapons, neither regarding his youth, beauty nor deity, scratched out his eyes, in requital whereof she was by the gods appointed his guide.*

Then by this, quoth Peratio, *there is no love without folly.*

That I deny, answered the Lady Frances, *for true and perfect love is beyond the deity of Cupid, and therefore without the compass of folly. But such love as you young gentlemen use, that hath as great a confusion of passions as Ovid's chaos had of simples, is that which I mean; in truth it is lust, but shadowed with the name of love, which rightly Euripides calleth a fury.*

I am glad, quoth Farnese, *that we are entered into the discourse of love, for I will enjoin this night's work to be about the discovery of the very substance of lust, which, drowned in voluptuous pleasures, haleth on the mind to the foul deformed sin of lechery, a fault that we Italians greatly offend in, and yet the custom of sin hath so taken away the feeling of the offence that we shame not oft-times to glory in the fault. And for that, Signior Cosimo, I have known you amongst all the rest to be most amorous, though I must needs confess always honestly, yet for that you have been acquainted with such passions, I commit the charge unto your hands.*

Cosimo, seeing the company smile in that the county had tied him to such a task, willingly would have surrendered up his right into another man's hands, but fearing to displease Farnese, and by shrinking to discover where his shoe wrung him, arming himself with patience, seemed very content, and therefore began to frame his speech in this manner:

Although, gentlemen, Hipparchion could play on his flute, yet he was not to dispute of music in that he knew more by the practice of his finger than by skill of the concords. Hephestion could handle Bucephalus, but not ride Bucephalus. Menecas [sic?] the Macedonian was a very good simpler, but knew not how to confect a potion, as one aiming at the virtue of the herb, not at the quality of the disease, so although I have, as a novice, gazed at the temple of Venus, yet I am not able to discourse of the deity of Cupid. 'Tis no consequent that by feeling a few passions I should be able to set down principles, or that a spark of fancy should kindle a whole flame of wanton affections, yet that I be not accused to be more scrupulous than courteous, I will say what I have heard and read of this folly.

The Cyrenaic philosophers, as Aristippus, Metrodorus and Epicurus, who founded their summum bonum in pleasure, to shadow their brutish principles with some show of reason drew, as Phidias did over his deformed pictures, curtains of silk that the outward veil might countenance the imperfection of his art, placing the substance of pleasure under the simple superficies of virtue, covering an envenomed hook with a fair bait, and like Janus presenting a double face, the foremost of flattery, the hindmost of sorrow. Hercules, meeting vice and virtue, found the one gorgeously tricked up in ornaments of gold, the other coarsely attired in simple clothing; virtue barefaced wearing in [+her?] forehead the counterfeit of truth, vice veiled with a mask to cover the deformity of her visage wherein appeared the stains of pleasure as the infection of leprosy, which Plutarch noting, being demanded what pleasure was, answered: A sweet step to repentance, alluding unto the censure of Phocion, who wrote of the picture of Venus this sentence: Ex vino Venus ex venere ruina & mors.

But seeing my charge is not to speak generally of pleasure, but of that folly which, claiming the name of pleasure, most besotteth the senses of all other objects with deceit, I mean lust, which the better to bring in credit is honoured with the title of love, I must confess myself herein to be of Aristotle's opinion, who being demanded by Alexander the Great what love was, answered: A metamorphosis of men's bodies and souls into contrary shapes, for after that the impression of lust, inveigled by the fading object of beauty, hath crept in at the eye and possessed the heart, we wholly deliver ourselves as slaves to sensuality, forgetting our God for the gain of a goddess whose altars savours of stinking perfumes, and whose temple is not perfumed with roses but infected with hemlock. They which sacrifice unto Vesta offer up incense with fire; they which stand at the shrine of Venus offer up bladders only filled with wind, the one representing the pureness of chastity, the other the lightness of affection.

You say truth, quoth the Lady Frances, *Venus' coffers are always empty, and therefore giving great sound; her garments embroidered with feathers, as noting inconstancy, for he that marketh the confused estate of you Florentines who covet to be counted lovers shall find how under that one folly you heap together a mass of mischievous enormities. For the gentleman that, drawn by a voluptuous desire of immoderate affections, seeks to glut his outward senses with delight, first layeth his platform by pride, seeking to allure a chaste eye with the sumptuous show of apparel, under that mask to entice the mind unto vanity; others by an eloquent phrase of speech to tickle the ear with a pleasing harmony of well-placed words, well-placed in congruity, though ill-construed in sense; some by music to inveigle the mind with melody, not sparing to spend part of the night under his mistress' window, by such pains to procure her dishonour and his own misfortune. These, gentlemen, be fruits of your loves, if I term it the best way, and yet follies in that they prejudice both purse and person.*

The same bait is flattery, which giveth the sorest battery to the bulwark of their chastity, for when they see the mind armed with virtue, hard to be won, and like the diamond to refuse the force of the file, then they apply their wits and wills to work their own woe, penning down ditties, songs, sonnets, madrigals and suchlike, shadowed over with the pencil of flattery, where from the fictions of poets they fetch the type and figure of their

feigned affection, first deciphering her beauty to be more than superlative, comparing her face unto Venus, her hair unto gold, her eyes unto stars, nay more, resembling her chastity unto Diana when they seek only to make her as common as Lais; then how her feature hath fired their fancy, how her sight hath besotted their senses, how beauty hath bewitched them, painting out their passions as Apelles did puppets for children, which inwardly framed of clay, were outwardly tricked up with fresh colours. They plunge in pain, they wail in woe, they turn the restless stone with Sisyphus and allege the torments of Tantalus. What grief, what pain, what sorrow, what sighs, what tears, what plaints, what passions, what tortures, what death is it not they endure till they obtain their mistress' favour, which got, infamy concludeth the tragedy with repentance, so that I allow those pleasing poems of Guazzo, which begin: Chi spinto d'amore, thus Englished:

He that appalled with lust would sail in haste to Corinthum,
There to be taught in Lais' school to seek for a mistress,
Is to be trained in Venus' troop, and changed to the purpose;
Rage embraced, but reason quite thrust out as an exile,
Pleasure a pain, rest turned to be care, and mirth as a madness,
Fiery minds inflamed with a look, enraged as Alecto;
Quaint in array, sighs fetched from far and tears, marry, feigned,
Pen-sick sore, deep plunged in pain, not a place but his heart whole;
Days in grief and nights consumed to think on a goddess,
Broken sleeps, sweet dreams but short fro the night to the morning;
Venus dashed, his mistress' face as bright as Apollo,
Helena stained, the golden ball wrong given by the shepherd;
Hairs of gold, eyes twinkling stars, her lips to be rubies,
Teeth of pearl, her breast like snow, her cheeks to be roses;
Sugar-candy she is, as I guess, fro the waist to the kneestead;
Naught is amiss, no fault were found if soul were amended,
All were bliss if such fond lust led not to repentance.

So that of these verses I conclude that such young gentlemen as, tickled with lust, seek to please their senses with such pernicious delights, may justly come within the compass of this folly.

May [+we?], quoth the Lady Margaret, *let the selfsame predicament comprehend such fantastic poets as spend their times in penning down pamphlets of love, who with Ovid seek to nourish vice in Rome by setting down Artem amandi [=the art of love] and giving dishonest precepts of lust and lechery, corrupting youth with the expense of time upon such frivolous fables, and therefore deserve by Augustus to be banished from so civil a country as Italy amongst the barbarous Getes to live in exile?*

Stay there, quoth Messire Benedetto, *your commission is too large, and your censure too satirical. We read not that any woman was ever Stoic or Cynic either to be so strict in passions or bitter in invectives and [sic for 'as'?] to write of love, not to favour the folly but to condemn the fault, and therefore, madam, either be more partial or more particular.*

These glances, quoth Farnese, *are nothing to the purpose, and therefore, Signior Cosimo, to your charge.*

I know, sir, answered Cosimo, *that Madam Frances hath said well in painting out the fantastic description of a lover, yet hath she been favourable in figuring out their follies, for this love, or rather lust, endeth not till it tasteth of the very dregs of adulterous lechery, a folly, nay a sin so in hate with God and contempt with man as Seleucus forbade it to be named amongst the Locrians. The end of concupiscence is luxuria, saith Socrates in his disputation with Euthydemus, from whom floweth, as from a sea of wickedness, incest, murder, poison, violence, subversion of kingdoms and infinite other impieties. Aristotle, being demanded what adultery was, made answer: A curious inquiry after another's man's love, and being desired to pen down the effects, wrote these or suchlike words: He that seeketh by a plausible shadow of flattery to seduce a mind from chastity to adultery sinneth against the law of nature in defrauding a man of his due, his honour and reputation, spoiling him of a most precious jewel, which is the loss of his wife's love and friendship, for as the shittim-tree being cut or pearted [sic for 'pierced'?] with brass straight perisheth, so the league of marriage, violated by adultery, extinguisheth love, and leaveth behind, at the most, naught but the painted veil of flattery. The peace of the house is changed into discord; dissension, instead of laurel, presenteth a sword, and content sleepeth not with Mercury's melody, but waketh with Alecto's disquiet. The face that in form being honest resembleth the sun in beauty, stained with adultery blusheth to see the same, as guilty of her own deformity; credit hath suffered shipwreck, and fame as [sic for 'is'?] spotted with the foil of dishonour, all these hateful discommodities ensuing by the voluptuous desire of such young gentlemen as, wedded to vanity, glory in the title of this folly.*

I marvel, then, quoth Peratio, *what woman (these effects considered) will listen unto the melody of such sirens whose allurements persuades them to such misfortunes, or how they can think that man to love them which, by fulfilling his momentary lust, procureth their perpetual discredit and subversion both of soul and body.*

Know you not, quoth Benedetto, *the reason of that? Are not the thoughts of women like the inhabitants of Scyrum, which knowing that the savour of dates is deadly unto their complexion, yet never cease till they die with dates in their mouths?*

You mis-state [sic for 'mistake'?] it, quoth the Lady Frances, *it is because men consume themselves into tears with the crocodile till they have gotten their prey, and then they neither respect their honour nor honesty.*

Howsoever it be, quoth Cosimo, I have not to deal with women. But for our Florentines, I know none more addicted unto this folly, which to conclude, hath been so odious amongst our ancestors that it hath been chastened with severe punishments. Alexander greatly blamed Cassander because he offered but to kiss a minstrel's maid. Augustus Caesar made the law Julia, which permitted the father to kill the daughter for adultery. Cato banished a senator for kissing his wife in his daughter's presence. Marcus Antonius

Carcalla [sic?] was banished his empire for lust, with infinite other whose miseries, mishaps and misfortunes were innumerable only for this folly, as Tarquinus Superbus for Lucrece; Appius Claudius for Virginia; Julius Caesar for Cleopatra; John, County Armiake for his own sister; Anthony Venereus, Duke of Venice, for his secretary's wife; Abusahid, King of Fez, for the wife of Cosimo de Cheri, as Leon in his description of Afric setteth down, but amongst all these, gentles, an history at large for the confirmation of this my discourse.

The tale of Cosimo

While Ninus, the son of Belus, reigned as sovereign over the dominions of Egypt, and kept his court royal in Babylon, there dwelled in the suburbs of the city a poor labouring man called Menon, who was more honest than wealthy, and yet sufficiently rich for that he lived content amongst his neighbours. This poor man accounted his possessions large enough as long as he enjoyed and possessed his ground in quiet, imitating Cincinnatus in his labours, who found health of body and quiet of mind the chiefest treasure by tilling his field with continual toil. But as content had satisfied his thoughts in this, so Menon was as greatly favoured of fortune, for he had a wife of the same degree and parentage, so beautiful as there was none so fair in Babylon, so honest as there was none more virtuous, so courteous that there was not one in the whole city who did not both love and like of Semiramis, the wife of Menon, for so was her name, insomuch that Ninus desired to have a sight of her beauty, and in disguised apparel went to the poor man's house, where seeing such a heavenly saint about her homely housewifery, fitter (as he thought) to be a paramour for a prince than a wife for a subject, sighed and sorrowed that she was not in his power to command, yet favouring her for that she was honest, as fancying her for that she was beautiful, he departed with resolution to be master of his own affections, and not to deprive the poor man of so great good. After he was returned to the palace, and was solitary by himself, the idea of her perfection representing a human shape of a heavenly creature so assaulted his mind with sundry passions that, giving the reins of liberty to his wanton appetites, he fell into these terms:

Unhappy Ninus, and therefore unhappy because a king and subject to sensuality, shall the middle of thy years be worse than the prime of thy youth? Shall love conquer that fortune could never subdue? Shall the heat of affection search that in the fruit that it could never hurt in the bud? Shalt though govern a kingdom, and canst not subdue thine own passions? Peace, Ninus; name not so much as love. Race out fancy with silence, and let the continency of other kings be precedents for thee to direct thy course aright. Alexander made a conquest of his thoughts when the beauty of Darius' wife bade him battle. Cyrus abstained from the sight of Panthea because he would not be intemperate. Pompey would not speak to the wife of Demetrius, his freeman, for that she was fair.

And what of this, Ninus? Yet had Alexander concubines, Cyrus a leman, and Pompey was not so chaste but he liked Phrinia, and so mayest thou make a choice of Semiramis. She is poor, and unfit for a king. Aye but she is fair, and fit for none but a king; love filleth not the hand with pelf, but the eye with pleasure. She is honest. Truth, but thou art a monarch, and the weight of a sceptre is able to break the strongest chastity. But that is

more, Ninus, she is another man's wife. But her husband is thy subject, whom thou mayest command, and he dare not but obey. Have not beggars their affections as well as kings? May not Semiramis, nay, doth she not love poor Menon better than ever she will like Ninus? Yea, for crowns are as far from Cupid as cottages; princes have no more privilege over fancy than peasants. Yet, Ninus, fear not; love and fortune favoureth not cowards. Command Semiramis, nay, constrain Semiramis to love thee, and upon this resolve, for kings must have power both over men and love.

Ninus, resting upon this resolution, determined to try the mind of Semiramis, how she was affected towards her husband, and therefore dispatched a letter to her to this effect:

It may seem strange, Semiramis, that the monarch of Egypt should write to the wife of a poor labourer, seeing the proportion of our degrees are so far unequal, but if it be considered that kings are but men, and therefore subject to passions, sooner shalt thou have cause to sorrow for my griefs than muse at my writings. Did my desire aim at a kingdom, I would attempt to satisfy desire with my sword. Did envy cry for content, then could I step to revenge. Were my thoughts as insatiate as Midas, the world is a storehouse of treasures. These desires are to be satisfied with friends or fortune, but the restless sorrow that so pincheth my mind with disquiet only resteth in thy power to appease. It is, Semiramis, the deity of beauty, which is privileged far above dignity, that gods have obeyed, and men cannot resist. The sight of thy perfection entered at the eye, the report of thy virtues tickling the ear, and both jointly assaulting the heart with sharp and furious alarums, have so snared my mind as naught pleaseth the eyes that is not thy object, and nothing contenteth the ear but Semiramis. Seeing then the Egyptian monarch, who hath triumphed over all the nations of the south and east climate with many bloody conquests, is by them brought as a captive, servile to thy beauty & his own passions, boast that love hath lotted thee such a victory, and be not ingrateful to the gods by denying me that I deserve, favour.

But perhaps thou wilt object thou art married, and therefore tied to poor Menon (for love hath taught me thy husband's name), that honesty beareth blossoms as well in a cottage as in the court, that virtue haboureth as soon with beggars as princes, that fame or infamy can stoop as low as they can soar high, that report and envy sooner stingeth want than plenty. This Semiramis, I confess, but yet the picture of the eagle placed over the temple of Venus feared the falcon for offending her doves. Damaetus' [sic for 'Demades'?] popinjay perched under a dragon of brass to avoid the vultures' tyrannies. Dishonour touches not the vesture of a king, and the concubines of princes purchase renown, not infamy. Menon is poor, and will joy to have such a rival as Ninus. The want of Semiramis darkens the glory of her beauty, which the love of a king shall enrich with ornaments. Then, Semiramis, pity his plaints who is thy sovereign and might command, and yet desirous to be thy paramour seeks a conquest not by constraint but by entreaties, in granting which thou climbest to dignity and sleepest at the foot of a sceptre. Honour and quiet entertains thee with delight, and to these thou addest thy friends' preferment and thy husband's welfare. If as thou art poor thou art proud, and self-conceit arms thee with disdain, consider that the counterfeit of kings cannot be drawn without the shadow

of duty, and that the pill that purgeth the choler of a prince is revenge. This think, and farewell.

Ninus, Monarch of Egypt.

He committed this letter to the charge of one of his secretaries, whom he made privy to the contents, who posting in haste to the house of Semiramis found her bringing one of her babes asleep with a song. The secretary, delighted with the pleasing harmony of her voice, stood a little listening to her melody, at last stepped into the house, at whose presence the poor woman, amazed for that her cottage was not accustomed to such guests, she blushed, which gave such a glory to her former beauty and such a precedent of her inward virtue that the secretary envied the happy placing of his sovereign's passions, yet after her homely fashion she entertained him, greatly fearing when he delivered her the letters that they had been some warrant to apprehend her husband for some fault, but by the superscription she perceived they were directed to her. Having set before ye secretary a mess of cream to busy him, she stepped aside to read the contents, which when she perceived and well noted the effects, not only alluring with promises but persuading with threats, she burst into tears, cursing that day where ye king had a sight of her face as dismal and infortunate, falling at last from tears into these fearful complaints:

Are the destinies, poor Semiramis, forepointers of good or ill, so inequal allotters of mishap that some they bless with daily favours, and others they cross with continual hard fortunes? Had the fates no proportion in their censures? Could it not suffice thou wert poor but thou must be miserable? Cannot envy paint the picture of content at thy cottage door but she must grudge? Is there no shrub so low but it is subject to the wind, no woman so poor, if she be fair, but some, blazing her beauty, aimeth at her chastity? Then, Semiramis, be patient but resolute; rather choose despite and sorrow than disgrace and infamy. Is labour an enemy to love; how then should affection touch me, who am never idle? Therefore, fond fool, doth love envy thee because thou art not idle, but by labour showest thyself a recreant to his law.

But yet, Semiramis, consider who it is that persuades thee to love, Ninus, a king, a monarch, and thy sovereign, one whose majesty may shadow thy miss, and whose very name may warrant thee from the prejudice of envy. If thou offend, dignity countervails the fault, and fame dare not but honour the concubines of kings. For shame, Semiramis, soothe not thyself in such follies. Are not kings' seats objects for every eye to gaze at? Are not their actions censured by every base person? As the pyramids are marks for the sea, so their doings are notes for the world. Doth not fame build in the foreheads of princes? Yes, Semiramis, kings' faults, though they are passed over with fear, yet they are judged of with murmur. The greater the dignity, the greater the offence. Shame followeth vice everywhere, and adultery, if laws were not partial, deserveth punishment as well in a king as in a beggar. Menon is poor, but thy husband; in loving him thou pleasest the gods. Ninus is rich, and a monarch; in contenting him thou dishonourest thyself, and discontentest the heavens. Hath Babylon counted thee fair? So thou art still by reserving thy beauty. Hath Babylon counted thee honest? So remain still by preserving thy chastity. Be not more chary over thy beauty than over thine honesty, for

many know thee by fame that never saw thy face. Then, Semiramis, answer the king's passions with denial. But alas, he threat'neth revenge. Sweeter it is to die with credit than live with infamy. Then why stayest thou thus fondly debating with thyself? Reply as one that preferreth fame before life.

And with that she stepped to a standish, and taking paper, wrote a letter to this effect:

Kings are gods, not that they are immortal, but for they are virtuous. Princes have no privilege to do ill. Fame is not partial in her trump. The chiefest treasure is not gold, but honour. To conquer a kingdom is a favour of fortune; to subdue affection is a gift from the gods. Love in kings is princely, but lust is pernicious. Kings therefore wear crowns because they should be just. Justice give[s] everyone his due. Semiramis is Menon's wife, and therefore his inheritance. The gods threaten princes as well as poor men. Hot love is soon cold; the eye is variable, inconstant and insatiate. Adultery is odious, though graced with a sceptre. Beauty is a slippery good. Princes' concubines prize honour too dear in selling the precious jewel of honesty for gold. Death is [-a] far more sweet than discredit, fame to be preferred before friends. Ninus is a king whose seat is [+a?] sure sanctuary for the oppressed. Semiramis is poor, yet honest, loved of Menon in her youth, and loyal to him in her age, resolved rather to die that be proved unchaste. Subjects pray for their sovereigns, wishing they may live princely and die virtuous.

Semiramis, the faithful wife of poor Menon.

This confused chaos of principles being written and sealed up, she delivered it to the secretary, who courteously taking his leave, hied in haste to the court, where the king, carefully expecting his coming, receiving the letter, unripped the seals, where instead of an amorous reply he found nothing but a heap of philosophical axioms, and yet his doom answered to the full. The pithy sentences of Semiramis, whom by her pen he found to be poor, honest, beautiful and wise, did not take ye effect which, poor soul, she aimed at, for instead of cooling his desires with good counsel, she inflamed his mind with a deeper affection, for where before he only was allured with her beauty, now he was enticed with her wisdom. Pallas gave him a deeper wound than Venus, and the inward virtues were more forcible than the outward shadows, so that he persisted in his passions, and began to consider with himself that the means to procure his content was only the simplicity of Menon, with whom he would make an exchange rather than be frustrate of his desire, an exchange, I mean, for Ninus, being a widower, had one only child, which was a daughter about the age of sixteen years. Her he determined to give in marriage unto Menon rather than he would not enjoy Semiramis, thinking that the fear of his displeasure, the burden of his own poverty, the hope of preferment, the tickling conceit of dignity, would force the poor vassal to look twice on his fair wife before he refused such a proffer. Thinking this pretence to be his best policy, he resolved presently to put it in execution, and therefore forthwith commanded a pursuivant to fetch Menon unto the court, who coming with commission unto the poor man's house found him and his wife at dinner, to whom after he had declared the sum of his message, he departed, willing him with as much speed as might be to repair unto the court.

Menon, although amazed with this news, yet for that his conscience was clear, feared not, but with as much haste as was possible made himself ready to go. Semiramis dissembled the matter, fetched her husband forth his new hose and his best jacket, thinking to sponge him up after the cleanliest fashion, that Ninus might see she had cause to love and like so proper a man. Setting her husband therefore forth in print, he took his way unto the court, where at the gate the secretary awaited to bring him into presence, whither no sooner he was entered but the king, taking the poor man aside, began to common with him in this manner:

Menon, for the sovereign to make a long discourse unto the subject were frivolous, seeing as the one for his majesty is privileged to command and constrain, so the other by obedience is tied to obey; therefore omitting all needless preambles, thus to the purpose. Menon, thou art poor, and yet a lord over fortune for that I hear thou art content, for it is not richesse to have much, but to desire little, yet to thy want thou hast such a favour granted thee by the destinies as every way may countervail thy poverty, I mean the possession of thy wife Semiramis, whom mine eye can witness to be passing fair and beautiful. Envy, that grudged at thy happiness, and love, that frowned at my liberty, joining their forces together have so disquieted my mind with sundry passions as only it lies in thy power to mitigate the cause of my martyrdom, for know, Menon, I am in love with thy wife, a censure, I know, which will be hard for thee to digest, and yet to be borne with more patience for that thou hast a king and thy sovereign to be thy rival. Her, Menon, I crave of thee to be my concubine, which if thou grant [-not], think as now thou hast poverty with quiet, so then thou shalt have both content & dignity.

The poor man, who thought by the king's speeches that his wife had been consenting to this pretence, framed the king this answer:

I know, right mighty Sovereign, that princes may command where poor men cannot entreat; that the title of a king is a writ of privilege in the court of love; that chastity is of small force to resist where wealth and dignity, joined in league, are armed to assault. Kings are warranted to command, and subjects to obey; therefore if Semiramis be content to grant the interest of her affections into your Majesty's hands, I am resolved to redeliver up my fee simple with patience.

No, Menon, quod Ninus, *as thy wife is fair, so she is honest, and therefore where I cannot command I will them [sic for 'then'?] constrain, I mean, that thou force her to love me.*

Menon, grieving at the words of the king, made this reply:

If my wife, mighty Ninus, be contented to prefer a cottage before a crown, and the person of a poor labourer before the love of a prince, let me not, good my Lord, be so unnatural as to resolve upon such a villainy as the very beasts abhor to commit. The lion killeth the lioness being taken in adultery; the swan killeth her make for suspicion of the same fault, and shall I, whom reason willeth to be chary of my choice, force my wife perforce to such a folly? Pardon, my liege, never shall the loyalty of my wife be revenged with such treachery; rather had I suffer death than be appeached of such discourtesy.

Ninus, hearing the poor man so resolute, thought there was no adder so deaf but had his charm, no bird so fickle but had her call, no man so obstinate but by some means might be reclaimed. Therefore he made him this answer:

Menon, be not so fond as to prefer fancy before life, nor so insolent as to refuse the favour of a king for the affection of an inconstant woman. Though I mean to deprive thee of a present joy, so I mean to countervail it with a greater bliss: for the exchange of Semiramis, I mean to give thee my daughter Sarencida in marriage, so of a subject to make thee a son and my equal, so that nothing shall be different betwixt us but a crown and a kingdom. For a poor wife thou shalt have a rich princess; from poverty thou shalt rise to honour; from a beggar to a duke. Consider with thyself, then, Menon, how I favour thee, which might possess my desire by thy death, and yet seek it at thy hands by entreaty and preferment. Take time now by the forehead. She is bald behind, and in letting her turn her back thou bid'st farewell to opportunity. If thou refuse dignity, my daughter, and the favour of a sovereign, hope not to live nor enjoy thy wife, for this censure hold for an oracle: Ninus before night will enjoy the love of Semiramis.

This severe resolution of the king drove poor Menon into a thousand sundry passions, for he considered with himself that Semiramis was a woman, and in the middle of her age, and though she were beautiful, she was but a woman, and had her equals. He knew that Sarencida was honourable, of royal parentage, the daughter of a king, beautiful, young and rich. He felt poverty to be the sister of distress, and that there was no greater woe than want. Dignity presented to his imagination the glory that dews from honour, the sweet content that preferment affords, and how princely a thing it was to be the son-in-law to a king. These unacquainted thoughts sore troubled the mind of the poor man, but when he called to remembrance the constancy of Semiramis, how the motion of such a mighty monarch was in vain to mitigate one spark of her affection, that neither dignity nor death, no, not the majesty of a king could persuade her to falsify her faith, returned Ninus this answer:

As, my liege, kings have honour to countenance their actions, so poor men have honesty whereby to direct their lives. Diogenes was as desirous of good fame as Alexander was of glory. Poverty is as glad to creep to credit as dignity, and the thoughts that smoke from a cottage are oft as sweet a sacrifice to the gods as the perfumes of princes. The heavens are equal allotters of mishap, and the destinies impartial in their censure, for as oft doth revenge follow majesty for injustice as poverty for doing amiss; the one offends with intent, the other either by ignorance or necessity. Then, my liege, if your Highness offer me wrong by taking away my wife perforce, assure yourself that honour is not privilege against infamy, neither will the gods sleep in revenge of poor Menon. For your proffers, know this: I account preferment in ill discredit, not dignity, and the favour of a prince in wickedness, the frown of God in justice. For your daughter, I am sorry the unbridled fury of lust should so far overrule the law of nature as to alienate the love of a father for such folly. Her I utterly refuse, not that I contemn the princess, but that I pity her estate, and wish her better fortune. For death, which your Highness threatens, I scorn it, as preferring an honest fame before mishap, and the love of my wife before

death, were it never so terrible, for poverty denies me to make other requital for her unfeigned affection than constancy, which I will pay as her due, though with the loss of my life.

Why should not the examples which historiographers pens down for precedents serve as trumpets to encourage poor men in honest and honourable resolutions? When Marcus Lepidus, the Roman consul, was driven into banishment, and heard that the senate in despite had given his wife unto another, he presently died for sorrow; when Nero, the tyrant (pardon, my liege, I infer no comparisons), inflamed with lust towards the wife of Sylaus, a Roman, neither respecting the law Julia made to the contrary by his predecessor, Augustus, neither justice nor the gods, but opposing himself to the heavens reft the poor citizen of his wife, Sylaus slew himself at the place gate, which brought the emperor in great hate with his commons. I infer not these examples as fearful of your Highness' disfavour, but as one determined to follow these Romans in their fortunes, and either with quiet to live still the husband of Semiramis in Babylon, or to let the world witness I never was so cowardly to deliver up so dear an interest but by death.

Ninus, storming at the answer which poor Menon made, did not take his speeches as persuasions from his folly, but as preparatives to further choler, for so deep was the unsatiable desire of filthy lust engraven and imprinted in his mind, and the foul imagination of adulterous thoughts had so blinded his senses, that as a man half fraught with a lunacy he became furious, that in a rage taking a sword that hung at his bed's-head, he rushed upon the poor man and slew him. This cruel deed being thus unjustly executed, he felt no remorse in his conscience, but as a man wholly sold over unto mischief proceeded in his purpose, and presently sent his secretary for Semiramis, who no sooner heard the message, but fearing that her husband for her cause might come to mishap, in her worst attire, as she was, hied to the court, where being brought into the king's chamber, Ninus having caused the dead body before to be carried away, told her briefly all the matter, how her husband was slain, and that now he had sent for her not to make her his concubine, but queen.

Semiramis no sooner heard of the death of her husband but she fell into a pasme, and was hardly brought to life, but at last being revived, she burst forth into fountains of tears & into bitter exclamations against the tyrant, who sought to appease her with sundry sweet promises, but seeing nothing could prevail, he sent for his daughter Sarencida, to whom the committed the charge of Semiramis, as of one that should be a queen and her mother. Sarencida, as nothing daring (whatsoever she thought) to disobey her father's command, led her by the hand into her chamber, & as women's persuasives are best confectaries [sic?] for women's sorrows, did somewhat mitigate some part of her grief, that she ceased from her tears, till at night, being alone in her bed, the idea of her husband's person presented itself, thought not an object to her eyes, yet to her imagination, that overcome with the passions of love, thinking to take the benefit of the place and time, & determining to follow her husband in his fortunes, took her knife in her hand, and standing in her smock by the bedside, fell into these furious terms:

Semiramis, this day hath been the beginning of thy sorrows, and the end of thy good fortunes. The fame of thine honesty, so generally blazed abroad through all Babylon, shall this day without desert be spotted with infamy. The bloody action of Ninus shall be attributed to thee for a fault, and the intent of his death harbour under the suspicion of thy dishonesty. If thou livest and become queen, yet shall this deed make thee a table-talk amongst beggars. Honour shall not privilege thee from the hate of them which are honest, neither shall the glory of a crown shroud thee from discredit.

Then, Semiramis, use the knife thou hast in hand as a means to requite thy husband's love and to warrant thy former honesty. Panthea, the wife of Abradatus, seeing her husband slain in the camp of Cyrus, sacrificed herself on his dead corps; when Julia, the wife of Pompey, saw but a gown of her husband's bloody, suspecting some mishap, fell into a trance & never revived. Portia, the wife of Brutus, hearing of her husband's death, choked herself with hot burning coals. Aria, the wife of Caecinna, died with her condemned husband before the Capitol. Let the resolute love of these noble dames encourage thee to the like constancy. Consider, Semiramis, thy husband is dead, and deeds done cannot be revoked; Ninus means to make thee his wife. His wife? Cowardly wretch as thou art, answer to this foolish objection which Pisca, the wife of Pandoerus did, who being slain by the King of Persia, after the slaughter of her husband, he proffered her marriage, but holding, as thou dost, the instrument of death in her hand, she uttered these words: The gods forbid that to be a queen I should ever wed him that hath been the murderer of my dear husband.

And with this she was ready to stab herself to the heart, but staying herself, and pausing awhile, she began, as women are prone to conceit revenge, to think with herself how in time better to quite the injury proffered by Ninus to her poor husband. This, gentlemen, I conjectured was her imagination, for she suddenly let fall her knife, leapt into her bed, & passed the rest of the night in a sound sleep. And indeed, had not the sequel proved the contrary, it might have been conjectured that the hope of a crown had been a great persuasion from her desperate resolution.

But letting these supposes pass, to Ninus, who made it his morning's work, as soon as he was up, to visit Semiramis, and finding her in a better tune than he left her, conceived such joy in the appeasing of her passions that presently he summoned all his lords to a parliament, where he unfolded unto them the intent he had to make Semiramis queen, and therefore craved their consents. The nobility, whatsoever they thought, durst not gainsay the will of their prince, but assented to his demand, so that all things were prepared for the coronation. But when the bruit of Menon's death was noised abroad in Babylon, everyone after their sundry and several imaginations began to confer of the action, all generally marvelling that so honest a wife should commit so heinous a fact, for everyone thought her an actor in the tragedy, yet they considered that ambitious honour was a mortal enemy to honesty, and that few women were so chaste but dignity could draw to folly.

Well, murmur what they list, the king's purpose took effect. The day came, and the coronation was most solemnly and sumptuously performed, the king conceiving such

felicity in his new wife that he continued the feast for ten days, which term ended, everyone departed to their home, and the late married couple lived so contentedly to every man's conjecture that Semiramis won her fame half lost by her obedience, and especially she gained the love of the commons, for preferment had not puffed her up with pride, nor dignity made her disdainful of the glory of a crown, nor the title of a queen had made no metamorphosis of her mind but in this, that as she grew in honour, so she increased in courtesy, bountiful to all that were poor, and envious to none that were noble, preferring the suits of them were wronged, and seeming as near as she could to cause the king do justice to all. This her virtuous disposition not only stole the hearts of the commons., but also the love of her husband, who to increase affection more had a son by her called Ninus.

Passing thus three or four years in great pleasure, the king, surcharged with content, commanded his wife to ask whatsoever she would that was within the compass of his Babylonish monarch, and it should be granted her. Semiramis refused such a proffer, but the king being urgent, summoned all his lords to the court, and there made them privy what a free grant he made to his wife. The noblemen, although smiling at the fondness of the king that so wilfully would put a naked sword into a madman's hand, yet outwardly seemed to allow of his will, so that Semiramis demanded that she might absolutely without check or controlment rule the Babylonian empire as sole queen for three days. The king, who no whit mistrusted that revenge could so long harbour in the heart of a woman, granted her request, and therefore presently with all convenient speed caused a sumptuous scaffold in form of a theatre to be erected in the midst of Babylon, whither calling his nobles and commons by the sound of a trumpet upon the next festival which was holden in honour of their god Iphis, he there in presence of all his subjects resigned up his crown and sceptre into the hands of Semiramis, placing her in the imperial throne as sole queen, monarch and governess of Egypt.

Semiramis, being thus invested with the diadem and regal power, first publicly declared the effect of the king's grant, how she was for the term and space of three days to reign as sovereign over the land, to have as great authority to do justice and to execute martial law as her husband, to confirm which Ninus as a subject did her reverence, and jointly with the rest of the nobility swore to perform whatsoever she should command, and to obey her as their sole and sovereign princess. After the king had solemnly taken his oath, Semiramis uttered these or suchlike speeches to the people:

It is not unknown, worthy peers of Egypt and inhabitants of Babylon, that I lived in my youth the wife of poor Menon, with credit fit for my degree and with fame equal to the honesty of my life. Occasion never armed report to stain me with disgrace, neither was the wife of Menon accounted to be prodigal of her affections, although perhaps a little proud of her beauty. The poverty of my husband never touched me with mislike, nor the proffers of preferment could persuade me to inconstancy, but fortune, that is ever fickle in her favours, and envy, that grudgeth at quiet, seeing we lived securely in love and content, set King Ninus to be the means of my overthrow, for he, inflamed with the sight of my beauty, yielded presently to the alarums of lust, and sought with the golden bait of dignity to hale me on to the wrack of my honesty, which by no means he could bring to

pass. Joining murder with the pretence of adultery, he slew my husband in his bedchamber, so the better to obtain his purpose, after whom [sic for 'which'?], I call the gods to witness, I have lived for no other cause but to see this day, neither hath the gain of a crown countervailed my former content. The glistering show of dignity hath not tickled my mind with delight; the vain pleasure of preferment never made me proud. Only, worthy peers of Egypt, the hope that one day I should make revenge of poor Menon's injury hath made me live in such contented patience, which now is come, for it befitteth a queen in justice to be impartial, and two mischiefs are never found to escape mishap. Therefore how saist, thou, Ninus, quoth she, *declare here before the lords and commons of Egypt, wert thou not the sole murderer of my husband without my consent?*

Ninus answered, as one half afraid at the countenance of Semiramis:

I confess that only Menon was murdered by me, but for the love of thee, which I hope thou holdest not in memory while this time.

Yes, Ninus, and now will I revenge the injury offered to Menon, and therefore I command that without further delay thy head be here smitten off as a punishment due for murder and adultery.

The nobility and commons, hearing the severe sentence of Semiramis, entreated for the life of their sovereign, but it was in vain, for she departed not from the scaffold till she saw her command executed, which done, she entombed his body royally, and in so famous a sepulchre that it was one of the seven wonders of the world, and after swayed the kingdom with politic government until her son Ninus was of age to rule the kingdom.

Signior Cosimo having ended his tale, Farnese greatly commended the discourse, applying the effect of this history to the gentlemen present, telling them that indeed the youth of Florence were greatly given to this folly, as a vice predominant amongst them. Peratio, who meant to be pleasant with the old county, told him that he had learned this fruit in astronomy, that the influence of Venus and Saturn kept the same constellation to infer as well age as youth, and that respect and experience had taught him that old men were like leeks, grey-headed, and oft green-tailed, that they would find one foot at the door for a young wife when the other stumbled in the grave to death, so that Diogenes, being demanded where a man left off from lust: *Unless, quoth he, he be virtuous, not until the coffin be brought to his door,* meaning that time never wore out this folly but by death.

And yet to see, quoth Benedetto, *what cynical axioms age will prescribe to youth when they themselves are never able to perform their own precepts, allowing more privilege to their silver hairs than to our green years, and shrouding under the shadow of virtue the very substance of vice, being as intemperate in the frosty winter of their age as we in the glowing summer of our youth, and yet for that they are old, and though they cannot deal more caste, yet will work more caute, and simply conceal that we rashly reveal. They are in age generally taken for gods, when compared even with youth they are mere devils.*

Yet by your leave, Messire Benedetto, quoth the Lady Margaret, *you speak too generally of age, for the very constitution of the natural temperature of our bodies is able to infringe your reasons, seeing that same naturalis calor is overpressed with a cold dryness in age, which in youth, furthered with moisture, causeth such voluptuous motions. Cupid is painted a child, Venus without wrinkles in her face, and they which calculate the influence of Saturn set not down many notes of venery.*

How philosophically you speak, quoth Peratio, *and yet small to the purpose, for although natural heat be extinguished in age, yet remains there in the mind certain scintillulae voluptatis, which confirmed by a saturnal impression, were harder to root out than were they newly sprung up in youth; neither did Messire Benedetto conclude generally of old men, but brought in as a premise or proposition that age as well as youth was infected with this folly. But well it is, Lady Margaret, that our discourse stretcheth not so far as women, nor to talk of their wanton affections, lest happily we had untied such a labyrinth of their lascivious vanities as might have made us sooner desire our rest than end the discourse.*

You are always glancing at women, quoth Cosimo, *not that you are a Pythagorian, and hate that sex, for, sir, I know your lips can digest such lettuce, but that your mouth were out of temper if once a day you had not a woman in your mouth, herein resembling Marcus Lepidus, who made an invective against sumptuousness of diet, himself being called the glutton of Rome, not that he was sparing in his cheer, but that Athens [sic for 'others'?] abstaining from dainty cates might leave the market more stored with delicate dishes.*

Benedetto was nipped on the head with this sharp reply, especially for that all the whole company laughed to see how he answered with silence, & Farnese, about whom the talk began, made this answer:

I cannot deny, gentlemen, but anger [sic for 'age'?] is subject to many foolish and intemperate passions, & therefore to be comprehended within the compass of this folly, but either age or youth, it breedeth many enormities, so that for this night I will take in hand to send you all to bed with a farewell of four verses which I read once in the monastery of Santo Marco in Venice. The author I know not. The verses are these:

Quatuor his poenis Certo afficietur adulter,
Aut Egenus erit Subita vel morte peribit,
Aut Cadet in causam qua debet Iudice vinci,
Aut aliquod membrum casu vel Crymine perdit.

The time of the night being somewhat late, they took his jest for a charge, and solemnly taking their leave, every man departed quietly unto his lodging.

The third discourse of folly

The morning being come, and the sun displaying her radiant beams upon the gloomy mantle of the earth, Flora presented her glorious objects to the eye and sweet-smelling perfumes to the nose with the delight of sundry pleasing and odoriferous flowers, when these young gentlemen, ashamed that Titan should summon them from their beds, passing into the garden found the old county, his wife and four daughters walking for health and pleasure in a fresh and green arbour, where after they had saluted each other with a mutual God morrow, they joined all in several parties, amongst the rest Bernardino, spying a marigold opening his leaves a little by the heat of the sun, pulling Lady Frances by the sleeve, began his morning matins on this manner:

The nature of this herb, Lady Frances, which we call the marigold, and the Grecians helitropion, and the Latinists sol sequiam, is thought by the ancient philosophers to be framed only by nature to teach the duty of a wife towards her husband, for seeing that as Aristides said a woman was the contrary of a man, this flower presents a precedent of her affection, for which way soever the sun turneth, it still openeth the leaves by degrees, and as ye sun declineth, so it shutteth, that Phoebus being gone to bed, the marigold denies any longer to show her glory; so, saith Plato, should a good wife imitate her husband's actions, directing herself after his course, in his presence being pleasant to content the eye and humour of her husband, in his absence with a modest bashfulness scare with the wife of Tarquin to look out of her window.

Indeed, quoth the Lady Frances, *I have heard say that young men's wives and maidens' children are always well taught. No doubt, sir, your economical precepts are very good, and happy is she that hears them and never believes them. I pray God your wife may be a marigold whensoever you are married, that to avoid jealousy you may ever wear her pinned on your sleeve.*

Peratio, overhearing, stepped in and asked the Lady Frances if she thought Bernardino would be jealous.

I have not, quoth the lady, *such assured sight in physiognomy as I dare avouch it for truth, but I promise you, sir, the gentleman is well forehanded and well foreheaded, two of the nine beauties, to have a fine finger and a large brow; now take the pains to conclude how you list.*

Peratio laughed, and Bernardino replied:

'Tis no marvel if men be jealous when Hesiodus affirms that he which trusteth to the love of a woman resembleth him that hangs by the leaves of trees in autumn.

But in earnest, Bernardino, quoth Peratio, *what dost think of him that is married?*

That he is, quoth he, *arrested with a grievous action, for no doubt young gentlemen should fly up to heaven if they were not kept back with such an arrest, but for better answer to thy question, take the reply of Metellus to Piso, that asked him why he married*

his son, being so young, and before he was wise: Because, Piso, quoth he, if my son grow to be wise, he will never marry.

Nor if you were wise, quoth the Lady Frances, *would ye speak so unreverently of marriage. But 'tis no matter; we shall find you in time like Crates the Cynic philosopher, who inveighing greatly against this honourable society, was seen begging a piece of bread at Lais' door in Corinth. If the law that Euphorius of Lacedaemonia constituted were kept, such as refused marriage should be banished, but I think, Bernardino, if you were brought within the forfeiture of such a statute, you would take that for a shift which a Lacedaemonian banished did, being produced before Lycurgus for the like crime.*

And what was that, madam? quoth Peratio.

Marry, sir, quoth she, *being assigned to exile, he brought forth witness that he had begotten three children, and upon that excuse Lycurgus made the strict law against adultery, yet mitigated before some part of the punishment.*

I think, madam, answered Bernardino, *the priest hath a penny for your banns, your sophistry is so good for marriage.*

Only sir, quoth she, *I speak it against such severe censurers of matrimony as you are, which for what cause I know not, living stale bachelors, are of Apollonius Tyanaeus' opinion, and therefore frame principles according to your precepts, as no doubt one of your sect did who made these two verses:*

L' amor del donna il vin del flaso,
Nul sera bon nel matutina guasco.

Such stoical gentlemen as run into such inconstant and heathenish conclusions, I had as lief have their room as their company.

Bernardino, perceiving the Lady Frances was half angry, thought rather to recant than make her choleric, and therefore told her his meaning was not to condemn marriage, but merely to jest for conference' sake.

Then sir, quoth she, *all is in jest, and so let us to the rest of the company,* whom they found talking with a cook that was come to his master to know if he would have any extraordinary dish pro[vi]ded for dinner.

No, sir, quoth Farnese, *I will answer with Socrates: If they be virtuous, there is enough; if they be not, there is too much*.

The old county took occasion hereof to speak of temperance in diet, and thus he began:

I remember, gentlemen, that Timotheus, a Grecian captain, having supped with Plato in his Academy at a sober and simple repast, for their festival fare was olives, cheese,

apples, coleworts, bread and wine, told the next day certain noblemen, his companions, that they which supped with Plato digest not his viands in a long time, meaning that wise banquet void of excess, not to content the body with epicurism, but to deck the mind with philosophical precepts. Such were the feasts of Socrates, Zenocrates and other the sages which compared the pleasures conceived in delicates to the savour of perfumes, which for all their sweet smell pass away like smoke. The Egyptians used in the midst of their banquets to bring in the anatomy of a dead man, that the horror of the corps might mitigate immoderate delights.

Indeed, sir, quoth Bernardino, *I remember that Alexander, before he fell into the Persian delicacy, refused those cooks and pasterers that Ada, Queen of Caria, sent unto him, saying to the messenger: For my dinner I use early rising; for my supper, a slender dinner, for he did use to eat but once a day, so that Plato, seeing Dionysius making two meals, reported in Athens he saw nothing in Sicilia but a monster that did feed twice before the sun set. Cyrus, monarch of the Persians, in his childhood being demanded of his grandfather Astiage[s] why he would drink no wine, answered: For fear they give me poison. For, quoth he, at the celebration of your nativity, I noted that some have made mixture of the wine with some enchanted potion, sith at the end of the feast there was not one departed in his right mind.*

So did, quoth Peratio, *Epaminondas, the greatest captain and philosopher in his time, for being invited by a friend of his to supper, the tables overcharged with superfluity & sumptuousness of fare, he told his host in great choler that he thought he had been requested as a friend to dine competently, not to suffer injury by being entertained like a glutton. Caius Fabritius, a notable Roman knight, was found by the Samnite ambassadors that came unto him eating of radish roasted in the ashes, and that in a very poor house, and, by the way, to induce a strange miracle that Saint Jerome reporteth of one Paul, an hermit, who lived from sixteen to sixty of dates only, and from sixty to six score and five (at what time he died), he was fed by a little bread brought to him by a crow.*

Truth, quoth Farnese. *Infinite are the examples which might persuade us to temperance, but so fond are we now-a-days as we leave the study of philosophy to learn out kitchen commentaries, but if we persevere still in this dissolute kind of superfluity, being Christians in name and Epicures in life, we are to fear that in the end need and necessity will force us to forsake it, and as it happened unto King Darius, who when he had lived a long time in delights, drowning himself in the superfluity of the Persians, not once looking so low as hunger and thirst, as he fled from Alexander, and waxed very thirsty, drinking puddle water taken from a river tainted with dead carcasses, he burst forth into this speech, that in all his life he never drank sweeter, so will it befall to us by our inordinate excess. And seeing we may best see this virtue of frugality by discovering his contrary, we will spend this forenoon in discoursing the folly of superfluity or gluttony, which, Bernardino, I appoint unto your charge, as one which we all know to have been an enemy to such disordered banquets.*

Bernardino, not greatly discontent at this command, began after the gentlemen were seated in the arbour to frame his speech in this manner:

Plato, the prince of the Academics, who for his sacred sentences with his master Socrates amongst all the philosophers challenged the name of divine, had always this saying in his mouth, that whatsoever exceedeth this word 'necessary' is superfluity, which genus he divide into two especial parts, of apparel and fare, for the last whereof I am appointed to entreat, thus to the purpose. Those gentlemen which build upon the doctrine of the Epicures, and place their chief felicity or summum bonum in the delicacy of fare, consider not that gluttony is like to the lemons in Arabia, which being passing sweet to the mouth, are infectious in the stomach; like to the flower of amyta, which glorious to the eye, greatly molesteth the smell. The sweet content, or rather the bitter pleasures, that proceed from these follies, feeding our lust with a tickling humour of delight, for every dram of pretended bliss presents us a pound of assured enormity, for we are so blinded with the veil of this vain folly that, forgetting ourselves, we run headlong with Ulysses into Circe's lap, and so by tasting her enchanted potion suffer ourselves to be like beasts transformed into sundry shapes, for that was the meaning Homer aimed at by the metamorphosis, saying some were changed into lions, as by drunkenness made furious; some into apes, whom wine had made pleasant; some into swine, whose brutish manner bewrayed their imperfection by sleeping in their pots, comparing the alteration of men by over-much drink to no other but a bestial change of their natures.

Besides this discovery, Galen, Hippocrates and other learned physicians approve it at [sic for 'as'?] the source from whence all diseases and evil dispositions of the body do flow, for, saith Plutarch, we are sick of those things whereof we do live, and by our natural disposition are wholly given to health if the disorder of our diet did not infringe the perfect temperature of our complexions. Homer, going about to prove the immortality of the gods and that they die not, groundeth his argument upon this, because they eat not, as if he would argue that as eating and drinking maintains life, so they are the efficient causes of death, and that more die of gluttony than of hunger, having oft more care to digest meat than care to get it. Seneca said that the physicians in his time cried out that life was short and art long, that complaint was made of nature that she had granted unto beasts to live five or six ages, and to limit man's days but the length of a span, which notwithstanding being so short and momentary, was oft consumed in excess, drawing on death by our own desires, and offering up our gorged stomachs unto Atropos as sacrifice to entreat that the date of our years be untimely prevented, so that (as the wise man saith) more perish by surfeit than by the sword, unto whom, saith Solomon, falleth woe, affliction, sorrow, strife, tears, redness of the eyes and diseases, even to them that sit long at the wine, which at the first pleaseth both the eye and the taste, but at the last stingeth as deadly as a scorpion. Heraclitus was of this opinion, that the insatiate appetite of gluttony doth obscure the interior virtues of the mind, oppressing the divine part of man with a confused chaos of sundry delicates, that as the sun eclipsed with dark and undigested vapours hath not the perfection of his brightness, so the body, overcharged with superfluity of meats, hath the senses so sotted as they are not able to pierce by contemplation into the metaphysical secrets of any honourable science.

Innumerable also be dissolute fashions and wicked enormities that spring from gluttony and drunkenness, for where this folly is predominant, there is the mind subject unto lust, anger, sloth, adultery, love and all other vices that are subjects of the sensual part, for as the old poet saith: Cine [sic for 'Sine'] Cerere & Baccho friget Venus [=Venus stays frigid without Bacchus and Ceres]. And by the way I remember certain verses written by our countryman Dante to this effect: Il vitio chi conduce, Englished thus:

A monster seated in the midst of men,
Which daily fed, is never satiate;
A hollow gulf of vild ingratitude,
Which for his food vouchsafes not pay of thanks,
But still doth claim a debt of due expense;
From hence doth Venus draw the shape of lust,
From hence Mars raiseth blood and stratagems;
The wrack of wealth, the secret foe to life,
The sword that hast'neth on the date of death,
The surest friend to physic by disease,
The pumice that defaceth memory,
The misty vapour that obscures the light
And brightest beams of science' glitt'ring sun
And doth eclipse the mind with sluggish thoughts;
The monster that affords this cursed brood,
And makes commixture of these dire mishaps,
Is but a stomach overcharged with meats,
That takes delight in endless gluttony.

Well did Dante note in these verses the sundry mischiefs that proceed from this folly, seeing what expenses to the purse, what diseases to the person, what ruin to the commonwealth, what subversion of estates, what misery to princes have ensued by this insatiate sin of gluttony. We read of the emperor Vitellius Spynter that he was so much given to superfluity and excess that at one supper he was served with two thousand several kind of fishes, and with seven thousand flying fowls, but the heavens storming at such an insatiable monster that so highly abused the benefits of God, conspired his overthrow, for Vespasian did not only dispossess him of the imperial diadem, but caused him to be publicly executed in Rome. Dionysius the Younger from gluttony fell to tyranny, until he was exiled for his wickedness out of Sicilia. Mulcasses [sic?], King of Thunis, was so drowned in pleasure & delight of superfluous banqueting that in the midst of his miseries, when the Emperor Charles had forsaken him and left him of a king almost the outcast of the world, yet as Paulus Jovius rehearseth, he spent a hundred crowns upon the dressing of a peacock, whereat his musicians playing, he covered his eyes to reap the greater content, but the judgment of God speedily followed this vain delicacy, for within two days after his own sons put out his eyes with bars of hot iron.

Infinite also were the examples might be brought of drunkenness and of his discommodity, of Alexander, how he prepared crowns for them that exceeded in that filthy vice, and made a great cup which he called Alexander, after his own name, wherein

he did carouse to his nobles, but Callisthenes, his dear friend refusing & saying: For drinking in Alexander I will not stand in need of Aesculapius, he fell into such a fury that he commanded him to be put in an iron cage with dogs, which Callisthenes not brooking, poisoned himself. At another drunken feast he slew his faithful friend Cleitus, a worthy captain and a counsellor, to whom he had so many times been beholding for his life, but afterward, when he came to himself, he was so grieved for this fact that he sought to shorten his days with his own sword, and spent many days in continual tears for his friend, whereby we evidently see how the best that ensueth of this folly is shame and repentance. This meant Heraclitus to teach his countrymen when, after a mutinous sedition was appeased, and the commons demanded of him what antidote were best to prevent the like misfortune, presently gat him up to a place where the magistrate used to deliver orations to the people, and there instead of pronouncing some eloquent and learned discourse, only began to feed on a morsel of brown bread & to drink a glass of clear water, thus setting down a golden precept by silence, for by this he signified unto them that as long as daintiness and riot and needless expenses flourished in the city, so long should they stand in danger of civil sedition, but this vain excess abolished, a peaceable and perpetual quiet was like to ensue. If this counsel of Heraclitus were requisite in a monarchy, what need have we of such necessary principles, in whose commonwealth nothing is glorious but superfluity of food and apparel?

Let me borrow a word with you, quoth Peratio, *in this, for indeed if men thoroughly consider the vain delight divers of our Florentines took in trimming decking out the body, which Epaminondas called the prison of the soul, we shall be at length forced to confess with Erasmus that they rather serve to whet the eyes of the beholders to wicked desires than unto any honest opinion or conceit. Epictetus gave this only precept unto his countrymen at his death: Friends, quoth he, deck not your body with curious superfluity of apparel, but paint them with temperance, for the one is but a shadow that bleareth the eyes, the other an ornament that enricheth the mind, which counsel the ancient monarchs and chieftains of the world foretaught us, for Augustus, famous though the whole world for his fortunes, and honoured for his majesty, never ware other garments than such as his wife and daughters made, and those very moderate. Agesilaus, King of Lacedaemonia, had but one coat for winter and summer. Epaminondas, general captain of the Thebans, was contented with one only gown all the year long. This simplicity and moderate use of apparel in such worthy personages might well serve us for precedents but that vanity hath so long lulled our senses asleep with pleasure as the custom of the fault hath taken away the feeling of the fact.*

Well, sir, quoth Bernardino, *this belongeth to your discourse of pride, and therefore again to our purpose, which seeing I have confirmed with sufficient reasons & examples to be an inordinate vice and more [sic for 'mere'?] folly, I will now also ratify it with a very brief and short history.*

Bernardino's tale

In the city of Augsburg in Germany there ruled not long since a duke whose name for reverence I conceal, & therefore will term him Don Antonio, a man of very honourable

parentage, but so given to the filthy vice of drunkenness as he almost subverted the state of the city with his gluttonies. For oft-times he fell into tyrannous and barbarous cruelties, as one that had martial law in his power, and otherwhiles gave wrong sentence against the innocent, as his humour fitted which excess had led him, but above all the rest, a poor man having a matter to plead before him which he was ascertained by law should go on his side, Don Antonio coming drunk to the place of judgment, sleeping in his surfeits, never considered the equity of the cause, but gave sentence against the poor man, and condemned him in so great a sum as scarce all his moveables were able to discharge. Well, the verdict given, he had no other remedy but to abide the censure of the just judge, & to make sale of all that he had to answer his condemnation, which done, so little remained that he had nothing left to maintain his wife and children, whereupon poverty, being the heaviest burden a man can bear, presented unto him a glass of many miseries which were apparent to ensue by distressed want, wherein after the poor wretch had a long while gazed, he fell to despair, that flinging into his backside, he took the halter out of his stable, and running into the field, went to hang himself in a thicket hard adjoining to his house, where yet a little entering into consideration with himself, he began thus to debate:

Infortunate Rustico (for so we will term him), *how art thou oppressed with sundry passions, distress haling thee on to despair, and the care of thy soul wiling thee rather to choose poverty than hell. Well did Timon of Athens see the misery of man's life when he bought a piece of ground wherein he placed gibbets and spent his time in such desperate philosophy as to persuade his friends to hang themselves, so to avoid the imminent perils of innumerable misfortunes. So, Rustico, seem thou an Athenian; be one of Timon's friends; listen to his doctrine; follow his counsel; prevent misery with death.*

But alas, this is not sufficient, for in freeing thyself from calamity thou leavest thy wife and children in a thousand sorrows, and further thou cuttest off all hope of revenges. Revenge, yea, revenge, Rustico, for assure thyself, if thou livest not, yet God will revenge. Have two sins escaped unpunished? Hath not the accursed duke to his drunkenness added injustice? Yea, and therefore deserves to be revenged with thine own hand. Let examples arm thee to the like attempt. Philip, King of Macedonia, was slain by a mean gentleman, Pausanias, because he would not let him have justice against Antipater, who had offered him wrong. Demetrius, having received many requests of his poor subjects, as he passed over a bridge threw all their supplications into the water, for which cause he became so odious to his subjects that they suffered Pyrrhus, his enemy, to drive him out of his kingdom without battle. Ferdinando the Fourth, putting to death a knight more for anger than any just cause, the gentleman at the sentence cried out: Injurious Emperor, I cite thee to appear before the tribunal seat of God to answer this wrong within thirty days, on the last of which expired term the Emperor died. Then comfort thyself, Rustico. Let not despair arm thee to such an heathenish resolution; rather live to revenge than die to double thy misery, and seeing the duke hath dealt thus hardly, use him as Alexander Severus handled his secretary, who being a caterpillar in the court, and selling the very favourable looks of his master for coin, promising poor men to prosecute their suits when he never moved their cause, at last in requital of this treacherous dealing

was tied to a post and choked with smoke, having a proclamation made before him by sound of trumpet that they which sell smoke should so perish with smoke.

The poor man from these plaints fell into tears, that overcome with the [sic for 'these'?] passions he fell asleep, where in a dream was by God revealed unto him the means of revenge. As soon as he awoke and called unto mind the vision, thinking it to be no fantastic illusion of the brain but a strict command from the heavenly powers, presently went home and waxed, contrary unto his wonted custom, very merry, frequenting daily the duke's palace, where giving himself unto drinking, he became in time to be in some favour with the duke, who never remembered that he sat in judgment against the poor man. On a time seeing that opportunity favoured him, he requested the duke that as he went on hunting he would take the pains to visit his poor house, where he should find no dainty fare but only that he durst promise a cup of good wine. This word was enough to persuade the duke to a greater matter, so that he granted to come.

The poor man, glad that his purpose was like to take effect, went home and made a sale of all that he had, even to his very shirt, to the great sorrow of his wife and wonder of his neighbours, which knew not his pretence. As soon as he had prettily furnished himself with money, he bought great store of excellent and delicate viands, of strong and pleasant wine, and conveyed them home to his house, whither within two days after the duke fore-sent his cook, certifying the poor man that he would dine with him, who providing most sumptuous fare, set all his wealth upon the table at one dinner, and entertained the duke with such a hearty welcome that he not only wondered where Rustico got such store of victuals, but gave great thanks for his good cheer. Rustico served in wine in such abundance that Don Antonio fell to his old vice of drunkenness, and in such sort as he never took so much in his life.

The poor man, seeing him take his drink so freely, went to one of his trumpeters and told him that the duke commanded he should by sound of trumpet presently summon all the citizens to appear at his house either without delay or excuse, which command he forthwith executed, and the burgomasters & chief men of the city, marvelling what this should mean, yet hasting to the house of Rustico, they found a scaffold erected at the door, where after they had stayed awhile, Rustico came forth and began to speak in this manner:

Worthy citizens and burgomasters of Augsburg, I know you marvel what the cause of your coming is, especially seeing me, that am poor and unlettered, prepare to offer an oration to such politic governors, but it is the care of my country, & especially of this city, which is like to ruinate through the want of the possession of a perfect magistrate, that drives me to this resolute and desperate attempt. The duty of a magistrate, as I have heard a certain philosopher should set down, consisteth in three especial points: in ruling, teaching and judging, that he be wise to govern, virtuous to give ensample, and impartial to judge, for as Cicero saith, sooner shall the course of nature fail than the subjects will leave to follow the steps of their prince. If then that commonwealth be happy that is governed by such a king, in what distress is that city that wanteth such a magistrate, and hath one that neither ruleth, teacheth or doth justice, but censures all

things by the palate? Philip of Macedonia, being desired by an old woman to hear her complaint, answered he had no leisure. Then, quoth she, be not king, meaning that a prince ought to have more care over the affairs of the commonwealth than over his own private business. Then, worthy citizens, what may that city say whose governor is addicted to his own pleasure; that delights not in justice, but in superfluity; that honours not the seat of judgment with philosophy, but polluteth the place with drunkenness; that studieth not in the law, but his library is in the kitchen; that seeketh not to learn wisdom, but to gorge his stomach with delicates? Such a one, worthy citizens, have we for our duke, our governor, our magistrate.

And as he uttered that word, his poor wife and children dragged the duke upon the scaffold, who was all besmeared in his own vomit, & resembling rather a brute beast than a man, bred loathsomeness to all the people, which the poor man taking for his advantage, cried out:

See, burgomasters and citizens of Augsburg, your duke, your magistrate, your governor, who is come upon the scaffold to hear the complaints of the widow and fatherless, and to minister judgment. This is the man that condemned me in the half of my goods by injustice, and the other half I have sold to present you this spectacle; the one half he gave away, being drunken, and the other this day he hath consumed in gluttony. Now, citizens, shame you not at such a sight? What shall Germany, France, Italy and all the bordering cities report of our town? What stranger will desire to traffic where there is such a glutton? What city can joy where there is such a governor? If you suffer this, the commonwealth is like to ruinate, and you and your children like to bear the burden of a superfluous tyrant. See what Rustico hath done for his country; now use him as you please.

The burgomasters by a general assent gave commandment that he should be uncovered upon the scaffold till he came to himself, and in the meantime they assembled themselves and determined his exile. The duke, after he had taken two or three hours' sleep, finding himself upon an open scaffold, was ashamed, but hearing what had happened to him by the means of Rustico, and how the burgomasters had resolved on his banishment, as one feeling the horror of the fact, desperately went into the poor man's backside and hanged himself, which news being brought to the burgomasters, with a general voice they created Rustico governor of the city.

This short and sweet tale of Bernardino greatly pleased the county and the rest of the company, all praising the policy of the poor man that had made so speedy and sharp a revenge.

Well, quoth the old Countess, *we have so long discoursed of gluttony that our simple cheer, having so good a sauce as hunger, will prove very good delicates. Therefore, gentlemen, seeing we must either make our cook choleric or else leave our present parle, let us at this time not disturb his patience, but hie us in to dinner, and repast being taken, willingly we will continue our discourse.*

Then Signior Farnese and the rest, having their stomachs armed to such a combat, willingly obeyed, and so for this time we will leave them.

FINIS