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PENELOPE'S WEB

Wherein a crystal mirror of feminine perfection represents to the view of everyone those virtues and graces which more curiously beautifies the mind of women than either sumptuous apparel or jewels of inestimable value, the one buying fame with honour, the other breeding a kind of delight, but with repentance

In three several discourses also are three especial virtues necessary to be incident in every virtuous woman pithily discussed, namely obedience, chastity, and silence; interlaced with three several and comical histories

By Robert Greene, Master of Arts in Cambridge

*Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit vtile dulci*

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To the right honourable and virtuous, his very good lady and mistress the Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and to the no less honourable and virtuous, the Lady Anne, Countess of Warwick, Robert Greene wisheth increase of honour and virtue.

Socrates (right honourable) being forced by the Athenians to send presents to Apollo, offered not up, as others did, the superfluity of wealth, but the enigmas of Hermes Trismegistus, yielding this reason, that Apollo was not poor, but wise. Achilles beautified the temple of Pallas with spears and helmets in that the goddess was patroness of soldiers. Diana's present was a bow, and I by chance finding so precious a monument as the web of Penelope, the only trophy of her chastity, was persuaded to bestow it upon your Honours, as upon two ladies whose virtues deserves among the best the patronage of such a famous antiquity. For if truth be the daughter of time, and time the herald that best emblazeth affections, the report that the Grecians made of the princess of Ithaca may seem but a fiction compared with the fame of your Ladyships' virtuous resolutions, which are such and so rare as your very enemies (if you have any) are forced, maugre their teeth, to be true discoverers of your virtues. Homer penned his *Odyssea* comprehending the life of Ulysses because he was wise. And I (may it please your Ladyships) have attempted the discourse of *Penelope's Web* for that she was chaste, that as divers, reading the poet's work, did imitate his wisdom and spoke well of his policy, so some by glancing at this toy may take a precedent of her chastity, and give thanks to your Honours, whose chaste and virtuous life brought this work to light. But some may object that Homer's pen dewed forth such sugared eloquence as besemed the discourse of Ulysses' travels(?), whereas my harsh style and method makes the web, that of itself was as soft as the Seres' wool, be as rough as goats'-hair. I confess my fault, and therefore by custom claim pardon of course, yet thus far dare I answer for myself, that although Demosthenes had a plaudite for his oration because it was curious, yet Nemius got the sentence for the truth of his plain tale. Penelope herself was more chaste than eloquent. Virgil was seen to have Ennius in his hand. The Roman ladies spurned at the sweet verses of Ovid when they read over the satires of Juvenal. And I hope your Ladyships will vouchsafe of *Penelope's Web*, at least for the virtue of the woman that first wrought it, though the cloth-worker's art have given it so bad a gloss. Damidas [sic for 'Demades'?] caused his parrot to perk under a dragon of brass to defend it from the vultures' tyranny, and I shroud this simple work under your Honours' patronage, that the envious, whose tongues cut like swords, may like the serpent fear to offend that herb whereon the beams of the sun doth rest. Thus hoping your Ladyships will, for Penelope's sake, vouchsafe of such a homely present, though otherwise unworthy the patronage of such honourable personages, I commit your Honours to the Almighty.

Your Ladyships' in all dutiful service to command,  
Robert Greene.

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To the gentlemen readers, health.

So oft (gentlemen) have I relied upon your courtesy, and found you so favourable, that still I adventure to present what I write to your judgements, hoping as my intent is to please all, if it might be without offence, so I shall be pardoned of all, though presuming too far. It may be the forehead is not always a true herald of affections, neither the rules of physiognomy infallible principles, for they which smiled at the theatre in Rome might as soon scoff at the rudeness of the scene as give a plaudite at the perfection of the action, and they which pass over my toys with silence may perhaps shroud a mislike in such patience; if they do, yet soothing myself in the hope of their courtesies, I sleep content like Phidias in mine own follies, thinking all is well till proof tells me the contrary. I was determined at the first to have made no appeal to your favourable opinions, for that the matter is women's prattle about the untwisting of Penelope's web. But considering that Mars will sometime be prying into Venus' papers, and gentlemen desirous to hear the parley of ladies, I thought rather to write a line too much, and so be counted forward, than by leaving out one title incur your displeasures, and so be judged froward, but whatsoever I have done or written, I only desire for my pains your favourable acceptance, and so wish to you, as to myself, to live fortunate, and die happy.

Yours to use, Robert Greene.

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To the courteous and courtly ladies of England.

After that (gentlewomen) I had finished this work of *Penelope's Web* and was willed to commit it to the press, I fell to parley with myself whether I should stay it as Apelles did Venus' picture, half unfinished in the printer's forms, or thrust it out as Myson did a ragged table bescratched with a pencil. Apelles was froward, and Myson too forward, both faulty, and every man hath his folly. It may be some will think me of Antisthenes' faction, that laid platforms of every man's life, & yet the philosopher was more wise in his precepts than wary of his own government, and count me very economical that seek to set down the duty of a wife and to deliver principles to such a purpose. If I have intermeddled too far, it is (gentlewomen) in discovering the virtues of your sex, not in censuring severally of your actions, for I present but the view of those virtues that naturally are, or incidentally ought to be, as well in virgins that sacrifice to Vesta as in wives that make secret vows to Lucina. I reprehend not, as one thinking all generally to be virtuous, but persuade, as one wishing particularly everyone should live well and die better. If any that are envious grudge at my doing, I straight for refuge fly to your good words, which I count as a sufficient defensory against such as love to backbite. Committing therefore my book to your patronage, lest the gates being too big for the city the mountain should seem to swell and bring forth a mouse, I wish you all such happy success as you can desire and I imagine.

Robert Greene.

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Penelope's Web.

Whenas the stately city of Troy was sacked by the Grecians, and all the princely brood of Priamus either utterly extinguished by the sword or fatally exiled the place of their native residence, Ulysses, the prince of Ithaca, who had remained ten years at the siege, resolved to leave the confines of Asia, and to return to the government of his own monarchy, but especially to see the mistress of his thoughts, chaste Penelope, from whom these broils had so long frowardly detained him, thinking as it was the part of a friend to accompany Menelaus in revenge, so it was the duty of a husband by small delay to bewray his affection, that it was the office of a prince as well to study with Pallas as to cry alarum with Mars, that as great honour did depend in the sceptre as in the sword, that the green laurel in the senate-house was as pleasing an object to the eye as glittering armour in the field. Consideration, the preventer of had-I-wist, tied him so to the performing of these forenamed premises that causing his weather-beaten ships to be warped out of the haven as soon as they were made thight, rigged and trimmed, able to brook wind and weather, he hoised sail and thrust into the main, converting his course toward Ithaca, but fortune, the enemy to prosperous resolutions, willing to bewray herself, having commission from angry Neptune to show her inconstancy, kept him still from the end of his desires, I mean Penelope, who remaining still in the court of Ithaca, for that nature had made her beautiful by a superficial glory of well-proportioned lineaments, and virtue had made her wise by aiming after fame with well-ordered actions, these two perfections, the special friends to fancy, armed with the long absence of Ulysses and with many rumours of his death, brought all the peers of Ithaca to become suitors to Penelope. She, whom love had arrested for a subject but never brought to any servile obedience, whom the idea of Ulysses printed in her thoughts had resolved to die the wife of so good a prince, refused their proffers, & with the warrant of her chastity sought to appease their humorous persuasions. But the noblemen, whom delay and time had made impatient of denial, fell into flat terms and craved an answer. Penelope, seeing that fortune had conspired her mishap by breeding such a restless importunity in her wooers, was driven to seek a knot in a rush, and with policy to prevent that which the honest and honourable pretence of her chastity was not able to defend. She therefore, beguiling time with labour, having begun a web wherein she spent the day to keep herself from idleness, knowing that *Otia si tollas periere cupidinis arcus*, gave answer that when her work was finished she would make a choice of some one of them for her husband. The noblemen, who knew that as the work was not great the dated time could not be long, contented themselves with this reply, which somewhat eased the mind of Penelope, but when she fell into consideration with herself that the longest summer hath his autumn, the largest sentence his period, and the greatest labour his performance, she began to be melancholy till love had learned her a shift to make her work endless by untwisting as much in the night as she wove in the day; this policy put in practice (for that the night, the friend to sweet and golden sleeps, grudged that her benefits should be despised by the restless labour of such a politic housewife), she determined, accompanied with her nurse and two maids, to pass away the time in parle, thinking thus both to further her content and procure pain to be mitigated by such pleasing delights; seeing therefore that her nurse began to nod, and her maids to wink, she wakened them out of their dreams with this merry chat. I can but smile (nurse) to see how time maketh a distinction of ages by affections, and the disposition of the

senses follows truly the temperature and constitution of their bodies, as a particular instance makes manifest, for the time of the night (growing to rest) summons both you and my maids to sleep, yet though the affect is all one, the effects are divers, for age, whom nature hath stored with imperfection and disease, and therefore freed from the tax of disquieted thoughts, teacheth the senses by the desire of sleep how the number of your years are dated unto death, that with Antisthenes we may say how the bed resembleth the grave, and the closing of the senses the dissolving of life; my maids, whom youth persuades unto rest, and want of care proves that the black ox never trod on their feet, only cares how to serve time, for that no other care hath yet bitten them by the heel, and so resolving their minds in quiet by such content, seeks to pleasure the senses by sweet slumbers, but I, poor soul, whom fortune hath set as a subject whereon to work the variable points of her inconstancy, find my senses so countermanded with disquieted thoughts as desire of content draws me into a labyrinth of restless passions.

Eubola, one of her maids that was most familiar with her lady, made this pretty and pithy reply: I remember (madam) that Phidias, drawing the counterfeit of youth, figureth labour as the taskmaster of his actions, & ease as the paymaster of his deserts, meaning, as I can conjecture by the emblem, that as it behoveth youth to spend the day in work whereby to avoid the sugared snares that idleness layeth to entrap the senses, so the guerdon for such forward endeavours is to consume the night in sweet and quiet slumbers lest the vital spirits, overcharged with too much labour, should either grudge at too sore an impost or else fall to inconvenience by overlong toil and watchings; extremity is ever a vice, too much in everything is hurtful, and the greatest prodigality is the expense of the eye, I mean not (madam) in gazing wantonly, but in watching over-niggardly, which when I consider how prodigal your Honour is in this point I cannot but (as ever I have done) marvel at your wisdom and virtue, so now to wonder at your love and constancy, for thinking with myself that your Grace is seated in a throne of majesty, adorned with a sceptre and a diadem, honoured with the possession of a kingdom and the title of a queen, rich, beautiful, and young, the very advocates of vanity, and seeing that the affection your Highness bearest to Ulysses, the love to your husband, the vow to your lord, though in long absence, still qualifies the forenamed pleasures with the sweet dew of a modest chastity, I must (madam) without flattery say that in requital of such constant affection the gods in justice must crown you with immortality, and the world reward you with fame and honour.

Indeed, quoth Vygenia (for so was her second maid called), when I see majesty a contented copartner with labour, and a resolute farewell to ease the chosen companion to a queen, I cannot think but love is a great lord, that in a woman's affections worketh such strange effects. Take heed, quoth Ismena (which was the last and youngest of the three) that in this word love you deceive not yourself, for there is an amphibological equivocation in it which drowneth the hearers oft in a labyrinth of perplexed conceits. As how? quoth Penelope; let us hear you make this distinction. Ismena, that was young and very quick-witted, willing to content her lady's humour in beguiling the night with prattle, applying as well her fingers to the web as her tongue to the tale, went forward thus in her description. Although (madam) experience hath not taught me to set down the divers effects of love, yet the physician by reading oft knoweth the nature of the simple

as well as the gardener that planteth it, and he which seeth fortune standing on a globe may judge she is fickle though he try not her inconstancy; many speak of the crocodile's tears that never felt her deceits, and divers condemn Diogenes for a Cynic that saw not his tub; the shoemaker corrected Apelles' picture, yet he knew not the use of the pencil, and I may by your Honour's patience talk of Venus' temple that never smelt the fume of her sacrifice, but to say what I have heard, thus to the matter. Anacreon, Menander, and Ovid, with others who were studious in this amorous philosophy have, as they set down principles, so penned down precepts whereby the fond and variable effects of love is manifestly deciphered, calling it by the name of a god, as under that title bewaying the forcible efficacy that by a predominant quality it doth infuse into human minds; otherwhiles a fury, as discovering the sorrows, griefs, and disquiets that proceeded from such a furious humour; painting Cupid blind, as noting the self-conceit in choice; like a little boy, as figuring small government, not levelled by the proportion of reason; winged, as absolutely portaying [sic] inconstant and fickle passions of lovers, whose thoughts are variable, whose joys are momentary, like to the shadows which Juno presented to the giants, bringing forth like the cedar trees fair leaves but no fruits, and as the date having soft rinds, but within stones as hard as steel; this love (madam) presented by Venus as an inveigle object, no sooner entereth the eye but he pierceth the heart, not accompanied with virtue to persuade but armed with the outward hue of beauty to constrain, which what effect soever ensueth, waxeth at last sorrow and repentance; such was the love of Dido to Aeneas, that seeing the curious form of the dissembling stranger, through too over-hasty affection did both ruinate herself and her kingdom. Ariadna [sic?], by crediting the sweet tales of Theseus, Medea of Jason, Phyllis of Demophoon, and infinite other, which entering into this passion runs headlong after endless repentance.

This love is like the baaran leaf which seen, pleaseth, but touched, pierceth the skin; this love is that which, overruling young heads, sotteth the senses, dulleth the wits, hindereth quiet, and maketh a passionate confusion in the mind of man called by the title of love, which indeed is mere lust and vanity, whereas true and perfect love hath his foundation upon virtue only, aiming at the inward perfection of the mind, not at the outward complexion of the body, which decreaseth not, but increaseth with time, uniting the hearts with such strict leagues of amity that it accounteth all labour a pleasure, to show endless desire by effects, as, madam to infer yourself for an instance, who not possessed with this fond fury which men feign to come from Venus, but that settled fancy which we are sure proceeds from virtue, although the prince Ulysses hath ten years been absent at the siege of Troy, and report in this space hath made sundry and uncertain tales of his death, although the stately palace of Penelope hath swarmed with the lords of Ithaca thinking by sundry assaults to make shipwreck of love, yet hath affection, armed with virtue, so grounded the mind from wavering so much as in thought that neither respecting their youth, beauty, nor riches, your Highness spareth no pains, as proof makes manifest, still to remain the constant wife of Ulysses. Such was the love of Lucrece that Tarquin, in the absence of her husband, found herself not idle, thereby to entertain pleasure, but sitting amongst her maids breaking of wool, by such housewifery to avoid the allurements of vanity; such was the love of the Roman Macrina that in the space her husband Lentulus remained at the wars she never was found from the wheel; both these fame hath chronicled with honour, & I am sure, madam, the report of your chastity being

once spread abroad, the Grecians are as prodigal in praises as the Romans, and blind Homer shall be as ready by his pen to make your chastity immortal as ever was any of their babbling poets. The old nurse, who for all her nodding had given ear to this pretty prattle of the maid, waking herself at the praises of Penelope, began to mumble out these words: Daughter, whether report or experience hath taught thee these principles of love, I will not be inquisitive, but this I dare say, thy censure is as true as an oracle, for indeed that is not love which pierceth the eye, but which pleaseth the mind, not that is founded upon the superficial sight of beauty but upon the touchstone of delight, which is virtue; such was the love of Portia to Brutus, who chose him not because he was fair but for that he was wise, not levelling content by the outward shape but by the inward substance, not setting down the properties of affection as our gentlewomen do now-a-days, that must have their husbands as beautiful as Adonis, as proud as Narcissus, as fine as Claeto, as neat as may be, or else his penny gets no paternoster, whereas true love inquireth if the man be virtuous, as Sulpicia did of Lentulus; if he be valiant, as Andromache did of Hector; if he be wise, as Hipparchia did of Crates the philosopher, not if he be beautiful, as Helena did of Paris; if he be well-proportioned, as Phaedra did of Hippolytus, if he be rich, as Iphicla did of Cinnatus, for the one is immortal, builded upon virtue, the other momentary, stayed upon the goods of nature and fortune. Therefore Pittacus, one of the seven sages, considering that in perfect love there ought to be a sympathy of affections, setteth down three kinds of marriages, the first of love, the second of labour, the third of grief. As touching the first, Themistocles terms it a charitable conjunction, unity, and society of them that are good, when the parties seek not by a voluptuous desire to aim at pleasure but by a virtuous intent to enjoy the benefit of mutual amity; the marriage of labour is that which the comical poet Plautus avoucheth to come from the fingers, not from the ears, by this allegory, as I suppose, meaning that women like not by the report they hear of his virtue, but by the delight they take in feeling his treasures, rather desirous to have goods without a man than a man without goods, which Olympias, the mother of Alexander, greatly hated, for when she heard that a noblewomen of Macedonia had married a rich fool, she banished her from the court with this sharp sentence: I like not her that preferreth wealth before virtue. The second species of this genus is where bodily beauty and outward graces is only regarded, where the linaments [sic] of the face, not the literature of the mind beareth palm; this momentary affection tieth the banns of marriage with the blades of a leek, and being plumed with time's feather's, falleth with every dew, for the least wrinkle, the smallest mole, the littlest scar, yea, the winter's frost or summer's sun doth utterly subvert and ruin the deepest impression that beauty can insert upon fancy, so that the term of such love, if it scape these forenamed hazards, is yet dated but till age doth approach, whereunto well assenteth the poet:

*Forma bonum fragile est, quantumque accedit ad annos,  
Fit minor & spacio carpitur ipsa suo.*

The third degree, of the marriage of labour, is when the parties are hetherogenei, dissonant in manners, nature, and age, where disparity of years hath set such a difference as neither time nor pretence of love can ever be able to reconcile, where *decrepita senectus*, old age, whom diseases hath tied to the crutch, will not with the babe return to the cradle, that stooping to the grave by burden of over-many years, will yet offer a



toothless sacrifice to Venus for a young husband; this well may be called a marriage of labour where the married couples, so unequal in match, are continually troubled with a spirit of dissension, for as the four elements are different in their properties, so are these disagreeing in their manners; the earth and air are not placed well in one balance, the fire and water brooks not the selfsame limits; age and youth may conjoin in law but not in love, sith the sanguine complexion of the one and the melancholy & saturnine constitution of the other are always in thoughts, affects, and desires opposite *ex diametro*, so that by the opinion of Aristotle they be, as it were, immediate contraries, which Dionysius the elder noted very well when seeing his mother passing old and overgrown with age desirous to marry a young stripling, told her that it was in her power to violate the laws of Syracuse but not the laws of nature; this affirmeth Plato in his *Androgyna*, & agreeth to the censure of Dionysius affirming that marriage in old women is with the giants *bellum gerere cum dijs*, which the Roman lady Valeria well noted, who always had this saying in her mouth, that her husband died to others but lived to her forever. And herein can I commend my good daughter Penelope, that hating such marriages of labour, doth intend both to live and die to Ulysses. Nay, good nurse, quoth Penelope, let's hear your last distinction, I mean the marriage of grief; 'tis, madam, quoth she, where the old proverb is fulfilled, *Better one house troubled than two*, I mean where a bad husband is coupled with a bad wife, where the one striveth to overcome the other, not in virtuous actions, but in disquiet and murmurings. I cannot think (quoth Penelope) that there is any husband so bad which the honest government of his wife may not in time reform, especially if she keep those three special points that are requisite in every woman, obedience, chastity, and silence, three such graces, nurse, as may reclaim the most graceless husband in the world, and because my maids are young and may in time try the fortune of marriage, we will this night discourse of this point to discover the effects and efficacy of obedience, which (for that I will be first in this new-devised disputation) I will take in hand to discourse of, that both we may beguile the night with prattle, and profit our minds by some good and virtuous precepts.

The maids hearing their lady in so good a vein were glad, and therefore setting their hands to the web and their ears to her talk, Penelope began in this manner. Zenobia, the wife of Radamisius, king of Armenia, being demanded of a lady in her court how she procured her husband so deeply to love her as he feared in any wise to offer her occasion of displeasure, answered, by fearing to displease him, meaning that the chiefest point of wisdom in a good wife is to make a conquest of her husband by obedience. Aristides, the true and perfect justiciary of his time, caused the portraiture of a woman figured on her knees to be carried before the brides at their espousals to signify that they meant now to obey & submit, not to rule or command, for, quoth he, such fond and fantastic women as make choice of effeminate husbands thereby to challenge a sovereign superiority over them may rightly be compared to those presumptuous fools that had rather be masters of blind men than servants to the discreet and learned, which caused Plato in his *Androgyna* to say that a wise woman ought to think her husband's manners the laws of her life, which if they be good, she must take as a form of her actions, if they be bad, she must brook with patience; his reason is thus. As a looking-glass or crystal, though most curiously set in ebony, serveth to small purpose if it doth not lively represent the proportion and lineaments of the face inspicient, so a woman, though rich and beautiful,

deserveth small praise or favour if the course of her life be not directed after her husband's compass. And as the mathematical lines which geometricians do figure in their characters have no motion of themselves, but in the bodies wherein they are placed, so ought a wife to have no proper nor peculiar passion or affection unless framed after the special disposition of her husband, for to cross him with contraries, as to frown when he setteth himself to mirth, or amidst his melancholy to show herself passing merry, discovereth either a fond or froward will opposite to that honourable virtue of obedience. But, saith Antisthenes, some wives resemble the nature of the moon, which the further she is removed from the sphere of the sun is the more radiant, and the nearer she approacheth to his beams, the more eclipsed and obscured, for the longer the distance is between them & their husbands the better cheer, when in place they are ever sorrowful and pensive, which crabbed constitution is the well of endless disquiet whereof springeth a peculiar and pestilent enormity, for the troublesome conversation of a wife that spendeth the day in discord and the night in brawls, were she as chaste as Hipsicratea, as wise as Sulpicia, as rich as Panthea, yet it darkeneth these forenamed virtues and makes her odious, whereas there is no greater persuasion to allay the choleric humour and froward disposition of men than obedience, for, saith Theocritus, a good wife should use the custom in her house that the Persians did in the wars, for when their enemies made any invasion either by skirmish, camisado, or main battle, if they rushed upon the pikes with any clamours the Persians received them with silence, but if they assaulted with fury they joined forces with loud alarums; so should a wise woman when she sees her husband in choler appease him with patience, and when he is quiet then seek to persuade him with reasons. Whereof Ariosto in a sonnet hath this censure, Englished thus:

*The sweet content that quiets angry thought,  
 The pleasing sound of household harmony,  
 The physic that allays what fury wrought,  
 The housewife's means to make true melody,  
 Is not with simple, harp, or worldly pelf,  
 But smoothly by submitting of herself;  
 Juno, the queen and mistress of the sky,  
 When angry Jove did threat her with a frown,  
 Caused Gamynede [sic] for nectar fast to hie,  
 With pleasing face to wash such choler down,  
 For angry husbands finds the soonest ease  
 When sweet submission choler doth appease;  
 The laurel that impales the head with praise,  
 The gem that decks the breast of ivory,  
 The pearl that's orient in her silver rays,  
 The crown that honours dames with dignity,  
 No sapphire, gold, green bays, nor margarite,  
 But due obedience worketh this delight.*

With these verses I conclude that there is no better thing praiseworthy in a woman than obedience, which a catalogue of infinite examples is able to make manifest. Cornelia, the wife of Gracchus, falling at first in disgrace with her husband, not for that she wanted

virtue, but that the course of his unbridled youth led him to a furious superiority of the young lady, which she countermanded with such submission and dutiful obedience as she reclaimed that by her own government which the senators by threats could not perform. Aemilia, the wife of Scipio the African, although she was of more honourable parentage than her husband, being descended from the ancient and princely line of the Aemillii, seeing how he had her in contempt, and violating the nuptial bed fell in love with her handmaid, yet concealed the matter in most secret manner & fulfilled in everything his command with such obedience that Scipio, repenting his former follies, reconciled himself to her until his death, insomuch that Aemilia, after her husband's funeral, to show the true platform of love and obedience married the maid to one of her freemen with a great dowry. But especially let the obedience of Octavia, sister to Augustus and wife to Anthony, be a sufficient precedent for our purpose, who notwithstanding the injury her husband offered by preferring a queen before her neither so young, fair, nor virtuous, yet bare such entire affection to Anthony that neither the entreaty of her brother, the persuasions of her kindred, nor the remembrance of the injury could extinguish the least spark of her love. This virtuous princess, hearing that her husband was to make war against the Parthians, providing soldiers, money, and munition took her journey as far as Athens where she received letters from Anthony to return back to Rome, which she with great obedience performed, sending him all the forenamed necessities although she perfectly knew that Cleopatra was with him in the field. But when the wars betwixt him and Augustus were ended, he sent straight to command Octavia that she should depart from his house, which she did so obediently that Rome after her death would have erected an image in her praise but that Augustus would not suffer it, keeping Anthony's children that he had by his first wife with such care and diligence as it did well note to the world her love and obedience. To confirm which more at large, I will rehearse a pleasant history.

#### Penelope's Tale.

Saladin, the soldan of Egypt, who by his prowess had made a general conquest of the south-east part of the world, took to wife Barmenissa, the only daughter and heir of the great Khan, who amongst sundry suitors not inferior to him in parentage and progeny, yet made such a careful choice of this young Egyptian prince, not for his beauty (for that nature had denied him that favour), but for his virtue (sith he was wise and valiant), that imprinting the perfection of his mind with a deep insight into the deepest place of her heart, and sealing the knot of fancy with the signet of marriage, she never so much as in thought crossed him with any discourtesy, yet for that men are the subjects of fortune and therefore variable, and the true disciples of time and therefore momentary, he began to loathe that in the fruit which he loved in the bud and to spurn at that in the saddle(?) which he secretly used in the cradle, repaying the faith of Barmenissa not with flattery to inveigle her but with foul language, the better to manifest his hate, which although nature forbade her to brook, yet obedience, the herald that best emblazeth love, taught her that against such sorrow there was no better salve than patience, that revenge in a woman was not to be executed by the hand but by the heart, and yet not with rigour but with clemency; persisting in this opinion, Olinda, the concubine which Saladin so greatly loved, sent a letter to this effect.

*Olinda to Saladin, health.*

*If the inward affects of the mind be manifested by outward effects, or the brow, the bashful bewrayer of secrets and yet the true discoverer of thoughts, may be credited, the emperor of Egypt in his loves resembleth the pine-tree, whose leaves remain in one colour but one day. Well might the censures of wise clerks have been caveats of my likely misfortune, for they say princes' affections, as they are glorious, so they are brittle; that the favour of kings hangs in their eyelids, ready with every wink to be wiped out; that as they are full of majesty and above law, so they are full of inconstancy because without law; this which other spoke by proof, now I allege by experience, for your Highness abridgeth me of my wonted allowance, not only in expense but in looks, so that I account that day happy when Saladin but glanceth at Olinda. The mistress of my mishap is thy injurious wife, Barmenissa, to whom I wish thy ill fortunes and my miseries; she with a feigned obedience seeketh to inveigle thee with a conceit of her love, who if she did love, could not content, for she wants the eye-pleasure, beauty; thou, tickled with an inconstant humour, dost listen to the melody of the old siren whose neck, shadowed with wrinkles, affords but bad harmony; keep not (Saladin) fire and water in one hand; in running with the hare hold not with the hound; bear not both a sword and an olive. Paris gave sentence but on Venus' part; affection brooketh no division; therefore if thou love Olinda, hate Barmenissa; follow the example of Anthony, who after his choice of thy countrywoman never favoured Octavia; 'tis beauty that merits a crown, and as well would the diadem of Egypt beseem thy leman's head as thy wife's; the wills of princes are laws, their looks death, their censures are peremptory; Egypt affordeth confections and poisons; why then should Barmenissa live to disquiet thee, to envy me, and to slander us both, if not with her tongue, yet with the painted show of her virtues? This perform without delay or excuse if thou wilt be counted the friend of Olinda. I want money; send me six thousand aspers; though my counsel be great, my expenses are small. And so farewell, Olinda.*

The king having received this letter and throughly viewed the contents, put it up in his pocket, and through other urgent affairs committed to oblivion the request of Olinda. A few days passing, as Saladin pulled out his handkerchief, by fortune he lost his letter, which Barmenissa finding, after that by the contents she perceived how the king not only had alienated his mind but through persuasions intended her death, yet with constancy and patience thinking to show herself honourably and obediently minded in most extreme perils, she thought not by revenge to make requital of such treachery, but by a bountiful courtesy to show her enemies how little she esteemed of their practices. She therefore presently providing so many aspers as Olinda sent for, conveyed them to her by a speedy messenger, charging him upon his life not only to deliver them but to say that they came from the soldan, lest (as women oft-times, especially of her function, are perverse) frowardness should more prevail than necessity. The messenger, obeying the princess' command, went in great haste and performed his charge, but as he returned, the soldan, who was going thither, encountered him, and demanding the cause of his journey, the poor fellow, fearful to be tripped in a lie, told the king from point to point the effect of his message, first how the queen had found & read the letter, then how she sent him with the

money, & gave in charge he should say the aspers were sent from the soldan. Saladin, hearing this, let the messenger go, and went forward on his way, where discoursing the manner of the queen's revenge to Olinda, it made her not only ashamed of her intent, but also desperate to go forward in her persuasions, so that before his departure the soldan was fully resolved to depose the queen from all regal and princely dignity, and to invest her with the crown and diadem, which resolution in short time took effect, for summoning all his nobility at the promontory of Japhet to a parliament upon certain articles preferred against his wife and confirmed by false witnesses, she was by general consent deposed, and the ceremony of her deposition being finished, and Olinda sent for into the parliament-house, he pronounced these words.

It is no marvel if you stand amazed (right mighty princes of Egypt) to see your king, who was wont to crave your consent in small affairs, without your counsel now to begin a thing of such importance, I mean a parliament, but he that seeketh to have his purpose unprevented must be secret and speedy lest either fortune or counsel hinder his enterprise. Many things falls out between the cup and the lip, and danger is always a companion to delay. To take away, therefore, all occasions of hindrance, I have upon the sudden assembled you, not only to hear what I can say, but without either doubt or denial to confirm what I will say. Being divorced from my quondam wife and your queen by law, although I am old, yet not so stricken in age but that I can and must yield to affection, I intend, nay I will, in despite of all men, take Olinda here present to my wife, and before we depart from this session she shall be crowned queen. Conjecture doth assure me you will all greatly mislike of the match, and grudge that your king should marry so low. But I charge you all in general, and wish everyone that loveth his own life, neither with counsel nor reason to persuade me from that I have purposed, lest he incur further danger and my perpetual displeasure.

The nobility, but especially his son Garinter, of the age of twenty years, grudging at his mother's mishap and that such a common strumpet should possess her place, made furious by the force of nature, burst out into this choleric reply.

May it please your Highness, I fear to offend if I say what I should, and yet were loath to flatter in saying what I would not, but if I may have free liberty to speak what I think, my verdict shall be soon given. I confess that what pleaseth the father ought to content the son, and therefore I count the will of Saladin a law to Garinter, yet as obedience wisheth a consent, so nature willeth with a friendly denial to dissuade from things that offend not only men but that are even hateful to the gods. I say therefore that Saladin should get more honour by exiling Olinda, not only from Babylon, but out of all the confines of Egypt, than if he had obtained more triumphs than that invincible Caesar. No doubt your Grace shall soon, nay, I fear too soon, find my words to be true, that in hoping to get a sweet content you gain a sour mislike, like to them which, pleased with the colour of the tree lotos, are poisoned as soon as they taste of the apples.

Barmenissa, hearing how sharply her son shook up the emperor, with a modest countenance, as nothing grudging at the injury of fortune, at her last farewell gave him this charge. Although, son, the law of nature wills thee to be partner of thy mother's

misfortunes, yet the gods, whose laws are above nature, commands that thou gainsay not the edict of thy father, for as Proclus the academic affirms, there is nothing which we ought more to regard than duty and obedience; the command of the father is not to be limited by the conceit of the child, for as their superiority is without proportion, so their wills ought to be without denials, first [sic?] the frown of a father (saith Epictetus) is like the elevation of a comet, which foreshows ever some fatal and final ruin. Then, Garinter, offend not thy father in thought, lest the gods, grudging at thy secret disobedience, plague thee with an open revenge; further, son, thou art his subject and he thy sovereign; what duty is due to such a mighty potentate thou must by law and conscience offer unto him, and seeing by the consent of the Egyptian laws I am deposed, and Olinda invested with the regal crown, if a mother's command may be a constraint to the son, I charge thee that thou show her the same obedience that belongs to a princess, and thy father's wife. Philarkes, the son of Psamnetichus, obeyed Rhodope, whom his father raised from a common courtesan to a princess. Antiochus, the son of Demetrius, build stately sepulchres for his father's concubines; revenge (son) ought not to go in purple, but in white, and the salve for injuries is not choler but patience; for mine own part, Garinter, I set thee down no precept but that which myself mean to hold for a principle, and thou by imitating thy mother's actions show thyself to be dutiful, which if thou perform, I will continually pray to the gods for thy good; otherwise, if for my cause thou intend revenge, I wish thy ill, & so wishing to thy father as to my sovereign, & to the princess as to one honoured with a diadem, I take my leave at the court, as well content with my adversity, for that it is the king's command, as ever I was with my prosperity. And with this the princess departed, leaving both her son and the nobles passing pensive for her present disgrace. The soldan, not satisfied with this injury, caused presently proclamation to be made that the princess should have no relief but what she earned with her hands, that her ladies should be labour [sic], and her maintenance no other than her own endeavour could provide. This edict commanded to be published, the king solemnized his marriage with sumptuous shows and triumphs, and Garinter, that he might show how careful he was to obey his mother's last command, brought in masques and comical delights to finish up the solemnity of the nuptials. The festival time being past, Olinda, puffed up with a sweet conceit of her prosperity, so ruled and overruled in her government, using such tyranny in words and persuading her husband to such disordered actions, that she generally fell in hate of all the people, insomuch that the soldan himself grudged at her ambitious presumption. Well, leaving her to her follies, again to the Lady Barmenissa, who fallen from a crown to a cottage, and from a sceptre almost to a scrip, still salved her want with labour and her poverty with patience, bearing as princely a mind in adversity as she did in prosperity, neither grudging at injury nor gaping after revenge; stayed thus upon this virtuous foundation, taking her work in her hand (for the use of her needle was her yearly revenues), she walked out of her poor house towards the court, that she might by some one or other learn how her son behaved himself to the emperor; passing on poorly attired (for she changed her habit with her fortune), at last she came within sight of the palace, whenas consideration of her former estate presented unto her mind a confused chaos of sorrowful and disquieted passions, so that sitting down behind a bush in a little thicket she fell into these terms.

Unhappy Barmenissa, why are the destinies so unequal allotters of mishap as to appoint thy youth, which to others is a pleasant spring of good fortune, to thee a frosty winter of mishap? Are the stars so unequal in their constellation, or so incertain in their influence, that majesty hath no privilege against misery, nor the title of a queen no assurance of good hap? Is the seat of dignity like the chariot of Phoebus, whose wheels challenge not one minute of rest? Then (Barmenissa) say with Solon, Cressus is not happy before his death. Confess with Amazias, king of Egypt, that the prosperous success of Polycrates prognosticated some dire event, that fortune standeth on the weathercock of time, constant in nothing but in inconstancy, that no man is happy before his end, and that true felicity consisteth in a contented life and quiet death, for I see well that to assign happiness to him which lives (considering the alteration that time and fortune presents with sundry stratagems) is to allot the reward of victory before the battle be fought. The greatest misery of all, saith Bias, is not to bear misery, and that man is most happy (quoth Dionysius) that from his youth hath learned to be unhappy. Demetrius, surnamed the besieger, judged none more unhappy than he which never tasted of adversity, for that fortune accounts of them as abjects and vassals of dishonour whom she presents not as well with bitter pills as sweet potions, alluding to that saying of Plutarch that nothing is evil that is necessary, understanding by this word *necessary* whatsoever cometh to a wise man by fatal destiny, because using patience in necessity he giveth a greater glory unto virtue. Sith then (Barmenissa) the fall from a crown ought to be no foil to content, grieve not at fortune lest thy sorrow make her triumph the greater, but bear adversity with an honourable mind, that the world may judge thou art as well a princess in poverty as in prosperity, for kings are not called gods for that they wear crowns, but that they are lords over fame and fortune. Although these secret meditations were persuasions unto quiet, yet she no sooner cast her eye to the palace but she was overcharged with melancholy, to avoid the which, taking her needle in her hand, she fell to work, and hearing the pretty birds recording their sweet and pleasant note, she warbled out this madrigal.

*Barmenissa's Song.*

*The stately state that wise men count their good,  
The chiefest bliss that lulls asleep desire,  
Is not descent from kings and princely blood,  
Ne stately crown ambition doth require,  
For birth by fortune is abased down,  
And perils are comprised within a crown.*

*The sceptre and the glittering pomp of mace,  
The head impaled with honour and renown,  
The kingly throne, the seat and regal place,  
Are toys that fade when angry fortune frown;  
Content is far from such delights as those  
Whom woe and danger do envy as foes.*

*The cottage seated in the hollow dale,  
That fortune never fears because so low,*

*The quiet mind that want doth set to sale  
 Sleeps safe when princes' seats do overthrow;  
 Want smiles secure when princely thoughts do feel  
 That fear and danger treads upon their heel.*

*Bless fortune thou whose frown hath wrought thy good,  
 Bid farewell to the crown that ends thy care,  
 The happy fates thy sorrows have withstood  
 By signing want and poverty thy share,  
 For now content (fond fortune to despite)  
 With patience lows thee quiet and delight.*

Barmenissa had no sooner ended her madrigal but that she heard a great noise which at the first amazed her, but at the last she perceived it to be the voice of men; desirous therefore to be a partner of their secrecy, she kept herself silent within the thicket, when she perceived certain of the nobles of Egypt that were retired to that solitary place to confer of the ambitious supremacy that Olinda used since her coronation, and amongst the rest one of the lords, whose name was Egistus, burst forth into these terms.

Egistus' Oration to the Lords of Egypt.

It is not unknown (right honourable lords of Egypt), not only to us but to the whole empire, how the king, seduced by the flattering allurements of a strumpet, hath not only violated the law of our gods in profaning the nuptial bed made sacred by the holy law of matrimony, but also the law of Egypt, which forbiddeth divorce without cause, but sith in a monarchy the wills of princes may abide no check, but their reasons (howsoever unreasonable) are the principles that may not be infringed, it resteth only for us to complain but not to redress, lest aiming more at the weal of our country than our own lives, we set our rest on the hazard, and so desperately throw at all. First let us consider that Saladin, the mighty soldan of Egypt, puffed up with the highness of his majesty and number of his territories subject to his government, hath been so tyrannous to his commons from his first coronation that unless his immoderate pride and presumption had been mitigated by the virtuous clemency of his wife, the burden of his cruelty long time since had been intolerable, but now having deposed that peerless princess whose virtues made her famous and us happy, and married a concubine whose vanities breeds her envy and our mishap, we are to look for no other event but our particular ill fortune and the general ruin of the weal public. Then, my lords, lest we should be spotted with the stain of ingratitude in suffering the princess' injury unrevenged, and lest we should seem to be born more for ourselves than for our country, let us attempt the restitution of the queen and the fatal overthrow of the insolent concubine, although death and danger were the end of our enterprise. The plot, my lords, I have laid by empoisoning her cup at the next supper, but with this proviso, that no intent of treachery shall so much as in thought be pretended to the person of our sovereign, whom next under the gods we are bound to love and reverence. This, my lords, is my purpose, whereto if you consent, I mean this night to put it in practice, otherwise to crave that my speeches may be buried in silence.



Egistus having ended his oration, the lords not only gave their free consent, but also sware to be secret, and to be aiders in his defence if any injury should be offered for his enterprise, and upon this resolution they departed. Barmenissa (who all this while held herself close in the covert) having heard their determination, was surprised with such sudden joy that at last she burst forth into these speeches.

Now, Barmenissa, thou seest that delay in revenge is the best physic, that the gods are just and have taken thy quarrel as advocates of thine injury; now shalt thou see wrong overruled with patience, and the ruin of thine enemy with the safety of thine own honour; time is the discoverer of mishap, and fortune never ceaseth to stretch her strings till they crack; shame is the end of treachery, and dishonour ever fore-runs repentance. Olinda hath soared with Icarus, & is like to fall with Phaeton; sooner are bruises caught by reaching too high than by stooping too low; fortune grudgeth not at them which fall, but envy bites them which climbs; now shall the lords of Egypt, by revenging thine enemy, work thy content. And why thy content, Barmenissa? Doth content hang in revenge, or doth the quiet of the mind proceed by the fall of an enemy? Seest thou not (fond woman) that the prosperity of Olinda is the preserving of thy glory, that it is princely as well to be faithful as patient, that it is thine honour to put up causeless injury, and her shame to hear of thy unhappiness; nay, what would Egypt, yea, the whole world say (if by treachery her bane be procured) but that it was thy trothless endeavour; so shalt thou lose more fame in a minute than thou shalt recover in many years. Then here lies the doubt, either must I have mine honour by her mishap, or else seek the ruin of my friends by discovering their pretence. Treachery, thou knowest, Barmenissa, is not to be concealed; friends have no privilege to be false; amity stretcheth no further than the altar; Saladin is thy sovereign, she his wife, and therefore thy superior; rather reveal their falsehood than rinate thine own honour. The wife of Manlius Torquatus caused her son's head to be smit off for killing his enemy cowardly. Sempronia slew her son for uttering speeches against the senate. Kings are gods against whom unreverent thoughts are treachery. The head that is impaled with a crown must be prayed for, not revenged. Then Barmenissa, be rather ingrateful to thy friends than treacherous to thy prince; rather see them die than Olinda fall into such fatal danger. And with this she stood in a dump, and being ready to go forward in her former mediation, she espied where the soldan and the empress, only accompanied with her son and another nobleman, came walking. Barmenissa, willing to see how the world went, met the soldan, and with a reverent modesty both saluted him and the empress. Olinda (who saw the quondam queen in this poor estate) smiling at her folly, asked her where she dwelt and how she did live. I dwell, madam, (quoth she) in a little cottage adjoining to the suburbs of the city, where accompanied with three friendly companions I pass the day in labour with quiet, and the night in security with sweet slumbers; content sits at my door, and armed at all points forbids either envy or fortune entrance; frugality is my purse-bearer, and hunger the cook that assigns my diet; poverty presents me homely cheer, yet like a good physician, to make a perfect digestion he savoureth all my dishes with quiet. And madam, although I want an imperial crown, and other crowns also, this lack I find frees me from care, that I sleep more in the cottage than ever I slumbered in the court. Then (quoth the soldan) you work for your living. Your Majesty knows (quoth she) that by parentage I am daughter to the great Khan of Tartaria, where my want was wealth and my labour pleasure and delight, yet he, knowing that

principality is no privilege against fortune, and that the highest estate is no warrant against mishap, learned me to use the needle and the wheel, that both I might eschew idleness in my youth and (if the destinies had so decreed) the better brook poverty in my age. Perhaps (quoth Olinda) your nativity was calculated, and so the constellation foreshowing this fall, your father was a wise man, and prevented the planets with policy. But you told me of three companions that are fellow friends with you in your cottage; what be they? Three, madam (quoth Barmenissa), that while I lived in the court I heard of, but never could be acquainted with: content without plenty, quiet without envy, and poverty without impatience; three such companions that if in extremity I should miss them, indeed I might count myself rightly to be miserable. The soldan, taking no pleasure in this prattle (for that his old wife was an interlocutor in this dialogue), hasted away, and Olinda, as willing to be gone, told the old princess that if she stood in need (whatsoever Egypt reported) she was not so much her enemy but she would supply her want. Barmenissa made answer that when her friends failed her she would come to her for her last refuge. Alas, your friends (quoth Olinda), I think they be few. Truth, madam (quoth Barmenissa), misery allots not multitude of friends. *Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes*. Yet have I two, my hands and mine eyes, which swears not to fail me till age drives them away perforce, but please it your Grace to stay, I will reveal such a matter as shall greatly redound to both your contentments, and then she made manifest the pretence of those noblemen.

Olinda, amazed at this sudden news (as base minds are ever fearful), desired the soldan that they might hie home lest some treason in that place were intended, for (quoth she) I know, whatsoever she says, that Barmenissa was the author of this treachery, whose life, how long soever it be, is the continuance of my sorrows. The soldan, whom conscience began now to sting at the very heart, turned his back without farewell, and no sooner came at the court but caused the lords that were favourers of this treason to be apprehended, who willingly confessed their intended determination, with full resolution either to die or to perform it. The king, perceiving their obstinacy, committed them to ward, and now to make proof of Olinda's patience he counterfeited a more deeper affection than ever he did, and for confirmation thereof, he gave her free liberty to make choice of three things without denial, whatsoever she would crave, which Olinda taking kindly, desired this grant to be solemnly given before the peers of Egypt. Upon this request the soldan made proclamation throughout all his empire that the nobility should within fifteen days appear at Memphis, where then he kept his court, with notice also that upon that day the queen should freely ask three things of the soldan without denial. The commons greatly grudged at this grant and began to mutiny that a graceless concubine should reap such favours without desert. The old empress, partaker also of this news, willing to forewarn the princess of ambition, determined with herself to send her certain verses as a caveat for so wary a choice. Well, leaving her to her poems, the nobility and many of the commons at the dated time came, where in the parliament-house the soldan revealed the cause of their coming, namely to be witnesses of his grant and her demand. Olinda, fearing the worst, caused the king solemnly to swear that he should not revoke whatsoever he had promised. The soldan, taking advice, made that solemn protestation, and sware by the god of the Egyptians that whatsoever he had promised to the right and lawful queen of Egypt, he would perform. Olinda, settling herself to utter her mind, was

interrupted by a messenger that came from Barmenissa with a scroll. The soldan, understanding to what effect it tended, caused it openly to be read, the contents whereof were the verses following, over which was written this Latin sentence.

*Tempora mutantur, & nos mutamur in illis.*

*Aspiring thoughts led Phaeton amiss,  
Proud Icarus did fall, he soared so high,  
Seek not to climb with fond Semiramis,  
Lest son revenge the father's injury;  
Take heed, ambition is a sugared ill  
That fortune lays, presumptuous minds to spill.*

*The bitter grief that frets the quiet mind,  
The sting that pricks the froward man to woe  
Is envy, which in honour seld we find,  
And yet to honour sworn a secret foe;  
Learn this of me, envy not others' state,  
The fruits of envy is envy and hate.*

*The misty cloud that so eclipseth fame,  
That gets reward a chaos of despite,  
Is black revenge, which ever winneth shame,  
A fury vild that's hatched in the night;  
Beware, seek not revenge against thy foe,  
Lest once revenge thy fortune overgo.*

*These blazing comets do foreshow mishap,  
Let not their flaming lights offend thine eye,  
Look ere thou leap, prevent an afterclap,  
These three forewarned, well may'st thou fly;  
If now by choice thou aimest at happy health,  
Eschew self-love; choose for the commonwealth.*

These verses did nothing prevail with Olinda, although they moved all the rest of the company to remorse, for esteeming them as shadows, this was her request: that first the nobles which conspired her death might be executed, the king's son disinherited by act of parliament, and the queen banished out of all the soldan's dominions; these were her three demands, which when the emperor had throughly weighed with himself, noting the injurious mind of an insolent concubine, he fell into such hate against her for her presumption that he burst forth into these terms. I see well, as the distressed estate of poverty is intolerable for want, so the presumption of an insolent person is not to be suffered for pride; thoughts above measure are either cut short by time or fortune; they which gaze at a star stumble at a stone; the Cimbrians look so long at the sum that they wax blind, and such as are born beggars make majesty a mark to gaze at, sith that in presuming with Phaeton, they fall with Icarus, and that in desiring with Tarquin to be

counted more than gods, they prove in the end with Polycrates to be worse than men. I speak this, Olinda, for that I see the glory of a crown hath made thee unworthy of a crown, and dignity that ought to metamorphize men into virtuous resolutions hath made thee a very mirror of vicious affections; could it not suffice thee to deprive the queen of her due, I mean of my love, of her husband, her dignity, her crown, her possessions, but now thou seekest to exile her her country, which is dearer to a good mind than her life? Hath she borne all with patience, & dost thou requite all with envy? Doth she salve her misery with content, and canst not thou brook majesty in quiet? Is ambition so furious a foe that it suffers no corrival? Shall I join unnatural actions to disloyalty? Have I forsaken the mother, and shall I now disinherit mine own son? Shall I bring that curse upon myself to die without one of mine own blood to sit on my seat? No, Olinda, the least of thy requests shall not be fulfilled; a hair shall not fall from the meanest of my subjects' head to satisfy thy revenge, yet will I keep mine oath, not to thee, but to the lawful queen of Egypt, which is Barmenissa, for anger is not a sufficient divorce; the will of a prince confirmed by false witness is no law; the dated time of marriage is not mislike, but death; therefore, proud and injurious concubine (for no better can I term thee), I here, where without law I invested thee with dignity, now in the same place, according to all law, depose thee from the state of a queen, and allot thee the same punishment which thou didst request for the empress, namely to be banished out of all my territories, and then to live in perpetual exile. Olinda, falling at the knees of the soldan, would have made reply, but he commanded her to be taken out of his presence, which the lords performed in all haste; then he sent for his wife, and after reconciliation made, to the great joy of all his subjects, in lieu of her patient obedience, set her in her former estate.

Penelope having finished her tale, Eubola (for that this pleasant history had brought the old nurse on sleep) made this answer: if Argus (madam) had been an auditor to your good philosophy, Mercury's pipe had never brought his hundred eyes in such a sudden slumber; I see well sleep hath no privilege over desire, neither hath time any warrant against content, for had this been but the preamble of your discourse, mine eyes had not grudged at so long an insinuation, especially discovering such a precedent of women's perfection. I perceive obedience is a present salve against choler, and that the wife hath no better defensive against an angry husband than submission with patience.

I can but smile (quoth Vygenia) to see that Eubola hath such care of the economical precepts, resembling Silenus, whose talk was ever of grapes because he loved wine well, and she harpeth upon the duty of a wife, as one desirous of a husband. And you (quoth Eubola) play like the lapwing, that crieth ever farthest from her nest; when Diana was present, Calisto never talked of Jupiter, & yet Juno was jealous over the pure virgin; the vestals in Rome offer sacrifice with their hands, not with their eyes; Lucrece had the picture of Venus in her bed-chamber, yet she was chaste. Many talk of Mercury that never heard his melody, & divers landed at Samos that sailed not to Corinth. Tush, Vygenia, the discourse of obedience is not the discovery of affection, neither is the talk of a husband the proof of marriage, but feeling where your own shoe wrings ye, you aim at the straightness of my last.

Ismena, hearing her fellows at such dry blows, told them that how dainty soever they made it, their silken throats would easily digest such packthread, for (quoth she) I dare swear the precisest of you both had rather have a husband than hear of him, seeing your years are enough, and your minds not vowed to Minerva.

Penelope could not but smile at the choleric prattle of her maids, and yet for that the night was far spent, and her nurse in a sound sleep, she took up their controversy, concluding with the opinion of her maid Ismena that they had rather follow Juno to the temple than Diana to the woods, and rather sing with Hymeneus than weep with Vesta. Well, the maids, whose conscience told them their mistress' prophecy was truth, agreed to her principles with silence, and Penelope, waking her nurse, mannerly folding up her web went quietly to her rest.

#### The Second Night's Discourse.

After that the day was come, & the suitors had filled the stately palace of Penelope with their several trains, the princess put on her mourning attire, which always she was accustomed to wear since the absence of Ulysses, showing herself (as Antisthenes commanded) a good wife, discontent in her husband's absence, that thereby she might both bewray the perfection of her love and qualify the passionate desires of her suitors, which seeing her daily busy about her web, and yet her labour (like Belides' daughters, to pour water into bottomless tubs) endless, could not comprehend within the compass of their imagination what the reason of this should be, seeing so carefully she endeavoured herself to bring her work to an end. Well, resting in hope that time should ease their longing, they spent the day in sundry pleasant pastimes and several discourses, till the sun declining to the west, they departed.

Penelope, glad of their absence, seeing that Phoebus had lodged himself with Titan, and Venus, the sweet messenger of the silent night appeared in the sky, accompanied as before with her nurse and her maids, she went to her old task, untwisting that in the night which before she had with great labour wrought in the day. Sitting thus busily at their work, the old nurse (who by the last night's prattle had found the length of Penelope's foot) began to waken them out of their dumps in this manner. I marvel when I consider with myself that the Romans, who covet to surpass the Grecians in all honourable & virtuous actions, did not see into their own follies when they erect temples unto Flora as a goddess worthy of divine sacrifice, appointing in honour of her funeral day certain lascivious sports and pastimes called after her name Floralia, she being a most vile and infamous courtesan, and discrediting the state of their commonwealth with her incontinency, and yet grudge to erect an image in the memory of Lucrece, that with her inviolable chastity not only honoured the Roman virtue but freed the city from the burden of a tyrant. The reason, as I guess, (quoth Penelope) is for that the nature of man is so corrupt and addicted to vice that what vanity presents, they still (be it never so bad) keep it as an object to their eyes, but what is virtuously performed they commit to oblivion's charge to reward. Indeed (quoth Ismena) now I perceive that my doubt is absolved which long hath holden me in suspense, for long have I mused why only in all the whole world Diana hath a temple in Ephesus, and Venus is as commonly honoured as the household

god Lar, that had a corner in every man's kitchen, for in Paphos, Cyprus, Athens, Samos, Rome, and infinite other cities her temples stand in the streets, discovering the erectors' devotions by the costly and sumptuous buildings. And yet (quoth Eubola) the vestals in Rome who were dedicated to virginity bare palm above the rest, for the senators apparelled in their robes of majesty never met any of them in the street but they gave them the wall and saluted them bare-headed, acknowledging for all their temples of Venus that the altar of Vesta yielded perfumes more pleasing to the gods. We read in the annuals of the Romans that Amulia, a vestal maid, carried water to the temple in a sieve, and when the bark wherein the mighty image of peace stuck upon the sands, that all the force of women could not remove, yet a vestal virgin drew it easily by the river Tiber with her girdle, proving by this miracle (let us account it no less) that amongst all other virtues, virginity is most favoured of the gods. So that when at the siege of Troy the mortality and pestilence reigned amongst the Grecians, the gods would be appeased with no sacrifice but with the prayers of Iphigenia, daughter to Agamemnon. We see that the gift of prophecy, which is holden for a certain divine essence infused into human minds, was particularly bestowed upon this sex, for the sibyls were virgins, and the maiden that gave answers at Delphus [sic?]. Well said, Eubola (quoth Penelope), you run decant upon this word virginity as though either you deserved to be a vestal or a sibyl. Yet it may be, madam (quoth Ismena), that were she a vestal (I had almost said a virgin, but God forbid I had made such a doubtful supposition), she might miss in carrying water with Amulia in a sieve, for amongst all the rest of the virgins we read of none but her that wrought such a miracle. Eubola, hearing how pleasantly Ismena played with her nose, thought to give her as great a bone to gnaw on, which she cast in her teeth thus briefly. I remember, Ismena, that Epicurus measured every man's diet by his own principles, and Abradas, the great Macedonian pirate, thought everyone had a letter of mart that bare sails in the ocean; none came to knock at Diogenes' tub but he thought him a Cynic, and fancy alate hath so tied you in devotion to Venus that shortly we shall have you in that vein to think there is no such goddess as Vesta, but take heed, Ismena, 'tis an heresy, the conceit whereof once caused as good a virgin (I will not infer comparisons, because they are odious) to bring forth Romulus and Remus at a burden.

Penelope, hearing her maids so far overshoot themselves in her presence, began to frown, which made them blush, as ashamed they had so far passed the limits of modesty, but she perceiving by their countenance that they acknowledged their faults, would not (sith they had so womanly taken the check) proceed any further in giving the mate, but with a smiling cheer broke out abruptly into these speeches. You put me in remembrance by your prattle of virginity of my promise how this night I would discuss the precious virtue of chastity, which seeing we are so close set at our work, shall serve this night to prevent imminent slumbers. The old nurse and the maids giving attentive ear, Penelope began in this manner. The wise and learned man Euboides, whose sayings have ever been counted as oracles, was of this opinion, that the greatest virtue in a woman was to be known of none but her husband, alleging to the saying of Argius that the praise of a woman in a strange mouth is nothing else but a secret blame, so that Socrates, whom Apollo termed the wisest man in Greece, affirmed that the greatest fortress and defence that nature had given to a woman for the preservation of her reputation and honour was chastity, which lost and violated, there remaineth nothing but shame and infamy. Plato, being demanded

what chastity was, made this description: it is (quoth he) the shield against luxuriousness, being such a defensory against voluptuous desires that as he which weareth the bay-leaf is privileged from the prejudice of thunder, so that woman which is adorned with chastity is safely armed against all inordinate affections whatsoever, insomuch that the eyes (which is a fickle and inconstant sense) delight in the variety of objects, yet are brought to be busied about one particular subject by the secret virtue of chastity. Further, Plato calleth it a preserver of goodwill, the razor of dull thoughts, the corrector of untamed desires, and an enemy to the disordered will of the soul, attributing unto it these qualities, that it suppresseth fury, hindereth dishonest actions, breedeth continency, mollifieth the hearts of tyrants, & useth reason for a rule in all things. And experience itself teacheth us that as nothing more doth ruinate fame and credit than voluptuousness, so nothing getteth more honour & glory than chastity. The consideration whereof moved Julius Caesar rather to suffer a divorce than an incontinent wife, wishing if Gracchus had lived in his days that he might have made an exchange of the empress for his chaste wife Cornelia, so highly did that monarch esteem of that virtue. Chastity, saith Epictetus, is the very fair and redolent blossoms that the tree of true and perfect love doth afford, yielding so sweet and fragrant a savour that the most vicious and unbridled husband is reclaimed by the smell of such a divine perfume. Euripedes, entering into the consideration of this virtue, crieth out, as wondering at the excellency thereof, O how is chastity to be esteemed, that is the cause of such great glory and honour amongst women, for it showeth the fear she oweth to the gods, the love she beareth to her husband, the care she hath of fame, the small desire to inordinate affections, and maketh her of a woman a very pattern of supernatural perfection. Hipsicratea, being demanded what was her richest jewel, answered, chastity, alluding to the opinion of Crates the philosopher, who was wont to say: that is an ornament that adorneth, and that thing adorneth a woman which maketh her more honourable, and this is not done by jewels of gold, emeralds, precious stones, or sumptuous attire, but by everything that causeth her to be accounted honest, wise, humble, and chaste. The emperor Aurelius made certain laws to inhibit superfluity of attire, affirming that such that curiously paint out themselves with frizzled locks, sweet perfumes, and strange ornaments of pomp (unless nobility of birth urge them to such bravery) make men most dissolute and subject to folly, especially if such sumptuous shows be aided with a rolling eye and unchaste look, whereas a wise woman through her honest behaviour and modest countenance lead as many as cast their eyes upon her to a continent reverence of chastity. Socrates was wont to say that when a married wife holdeth her looking-glass in her hand, she should speak thus to herself, if she be foul: what then should become of me if I were also wicked, and if she be fair: how shall my beauty be accounted of if I continue wise and honest, for a hard-favoured woman that is renowned for her chastity is more honourable than she which is famous for her beauty. The records that speak honourably of the Roman ladies tell us that the wife of a poor smith, meeting the empress Faustina, took the wall of her in the streets, whereat the empress grudging, complained to the senate, who sending for the poor woman & demanding of her if she committed the deed, she denied it not, and therefore her husband was condemned in a certain sum, upon which sentence the woman appealed from the senate to the emperor, who asked what she could say for herself; as much (quoth she) as if thou be just and wise may suffice. For although I am not so honourable as thy wife, yet I am more honest, and the citizens of Rome ought to esteem virtue before dignity; the

emperor upon this discharged the woman of the sentence. Alexander the Great, having at the conquest of Babylon taken a very well-favoured Egyptian lady, a widow whom for her beauty he did greatly affectionate, at night commanded one of his captains to bring her to his tent, which she boldly refused, willing him to say to the king that captivity was no privilege to infringe chastity, and if he went about to dishonour her she would pervert such violence by death; this answer returned to Alexander, he not only moderated his desire but sent her his signet as a warrant of her safety. Portia, the wife of Brutus, was told by one of her servants that certain ambassadors of Samos were come, which were passing beautiful and well-proportioned men; hold thy peace, fool, quoth she, wouldst thou have me to prepare a poison for mine honour by the means of mine eye? Cyrus, king of Persia, making wars against the Scythians, had for his prize of the triumph a very fair woman called Panther, who being the wife of Abradatas, his enemy, being desired of Cyrus for his concubine, she told him that she was chaste; the king, little respecting this short answer, demanded a further resolution. Why, quoth Panther, can there be any other answer that is not comprehended in this word chastity, hereby noting that the antidote against the envenomed thoughts of men's alluring enticements, and the surest corrosive to root out such unbridled devices as draw them to inordinate affection is this precious jewel of chastity, the which the more to confirm, I will rehearse unto you a pleasant history which happened not long since within our dominions of Ithaca.

#### Penelope's Second Tale.

In this country of Ithaca not long since there dwelled a nobleman called Calamus, of parentage honourable, as allied to the blood royal, of possessions rich, as one of the greatest revenues in all the country, but therewithal so wedded to the vain suppose of pleasure and delight that his friends sorrowed at the course of his unbridled follies, & his poor tenants groaned not under the burden of his covetous desires, but were taxed with the grief of his voluptuous appetite, for such was the incontinency of his life as satiety of wanton affections never glutted his mind with content, but as the serpent hidaspis, the more he drinketh, the more he is athirst, and as the salamander, the more he lieth in the fire, the more desirous he is of the flame, so Calamus, the more he offended in this intemperate concupiscence, the more his thoughts were addicted to that vice, so as all his neighbours did wish he might fall headlong into the centre of some deep misfortune. Wallowing thus in the self-conceit of his wickedness, on a day as he rode on hunting with certain of his gentlemen, he stumbled by chance on a farmer's house whither as he rode to taste a cup of their small wine, for that the weather was hot, where he espied a woman homely attired, of modest countenance, her face importing both love and gravity, who seeing the nobleman approach, dying her crystal cheeks with a vermillion hue, after humble salutations brought him in a country cruse such drink as their cottage did afford. Calamus, narrowly marking the proportion of this country housewife, courteously took his leave & departed, but the sparks of lust that had kindled a flame of desire in his fancy perplexed his mind with sundry passions, for calling to mind not only her exterior beauty adorned with sundry and several graces, but also her inward perfection bewraying that she was both wise and honest, he fell into this consideration with himself: for shame, (Calamus) let not thy thoughts wander in a labyrinth to be endless; seeing the flower of thy youth hath been spent in vice, let the fruit of thine age only savour of virtue; if the



gods had not the firstlings of thy years, yet let them have thy grey head in pawn of a sacrifice; time is a retrait from vanity and vice; thy foot is stepping to the grave, & opportunity bids thee take hold of repentance. Venus is printed without wrinkles, as signifying she is the goddess of youth; what of this, fond fool, suppose thou wert young; shalt thou therefore wallow in intemperancy? Do not the gods forbid thee to crave that that is another man's due? Are not voluptuous desires to be suppressed as well in the young scion as in the old tree? Is thy fancy so fickle as every face must be viewed with affection? Fond man, think this, that the poor man maketh as great account of his wife as the greatest monarch in the world doth of an empress, that honesty harbours as soon in a cottage as in the court, that their minds oppressed with want are freed from the vanities of love. Then, Calamus, cease from these frivolous suppositions, and seek not so much as in thought to offer wrong to so modest a woman, whose honest behaviour foreshows that as she is poor, so she is chaste, and holdeth as dear the price of her fame as the state of her life. No doubt, Calamus, thou art become a holy prelate, that hast so many precepts to refel that thou hast always followed; is not love a lord as well amongst beggars as kings? Cannot Cupid as soon hit a shepherd's hook as a sceptre? Doth not poverty by a natural insight yield to the desires of nobility? Are women's faces always calendars of truth, or are their looks (as Ovid affirmeth) ever mind-glasses? No, the thoughts of women hang not always in their eyes; dissimulation is sister to Janus, and wanton appetite oft jetteth under the mask of chastity; hast thou hitherto not been repulsed with any resolute denials, and shalt thou now be overthrown with a look? No, forward Calamus, in thy purpose; triumph, man, and say as Caesar did in his conquests: *Veni, vidi, vici*. The nobleman, resting upon this wicked resolution, met by chance the husband of the wife coming from plow, who seeing Calamus, did his duty in most humble manner, yet hating him for that he knew he was vicious, but he, thinking to take opportunity at the rebound, thought now he had a very good means to know the disposition of the woman, and her husband's name, that he might make repair thither to prosecute his wicked purpose. He began therefore to inquire of the man where he dwelt. The poor farmer that, calling to mind he had a fair wife, was not willing to tell the place of his abode, made answer, upon the forest-side. What is he (quoth Calamus) that dwells at yonder grange place (for they were yet in view of the house), of what wealth, whose tenant, and if thou canst (quoth he) go so far, tell me what your neighbours say of his fair wife? The man, who was amazed at this question, suspecting that which indeed proved true, though his apparel was simple, yet having a subtile wit, made him this answer. The man, my Lord, is poor, but honest; his name Lestio, a farmer by profession, and your tenant in copyhold; loved of his neighbours for that he neither envieth his superiors nor grudgeth at his equals; favoured of the gods, in that amidst his poverty he hath a contented mind and a wife that is beautiful, wise, and honest, whose life, my Lord, is so virtuous that our country wives take her actions as a precedent whereby to govern their fame & credit, insomuch that she is not so much praised for her beauty as she is revered for her chastity. Calamus, contented with this reply, road his way, and the poor man in a dump went home to his wife, to whom he revealed the effect of Calamus' demand; she, willing her husband to repose his wonted trust in her good behaviour, quieted his mind with the hope of her constancy, but the like rest happened not their landlord, for he, incensed by the praises of her virtue, fell into such a restless chaos of confused passions that he could take no rest till the night was passed in broken slumbers; the next morning, taking love

only for his guide, he went to the farmer's house, where finding her with one of her maids in the midst of her housewifery, he stood a pretty while taking a view of her exquisite perfection, till at the last the goodwife espied him, who nothing dismayed with his presence (for that being forewarned she was forearmed), gave him after her homely fashion a country welcome. The nobleman sat down, and finding some talk, for that now he knew she was his tenant, began to talk of her lease and other matters, that by a long insinuation he might the better fall to his purpose. The poor woman, whose name was Cratyna, was as busy as a bee to set before Calamus such country junkets as the plow affords, & made few answers, till at last her landlord, after he had tasted of her delicacies, taking her by the hand, framed his speech in this manner. Tenant (for so I think I may best term thee), I will not make a long harvest for a small crop, nor go about to pull a Hercules shoe on Achilles' foot; orations are needless where necessity forceth, and the shortest preamble is best where love puts in his plea; therefore omitting all frivolous prattle, know that as well at the sight of thy beauty as by the report of thine honesty, affection hath so fettered me in the snares of fancy that for my best refuge I am come to thy sweet self to crave a salve for those passions that no other can appease. I deny not but thou hast both love and law to withhold thee from this persuasion, and yet we know women have their several friends; Venus, though she loves with one eye, yet she can look with the other. Cupid is never so unprovided but he hath two arrows of one temper; offences are not measured by the proportion but by the secrecy; *Si non caste tamen caute*; if not chastely, yet charily; thou mayest both win a friend and preserve thy fame, yea, tenant, such a friend whose countenance shall shroud thee from envy and whose plenty shall free thee from penury. I will not stand longer upon this point; let it suffice that in loving me thou shalt reap preferment, & in denying my suit purchase to thy husband and thyself such a hateful enemy as to requite thy denial will seek to prejudice thee with all mishap, *Nunc vtrum horum mauis accipe*.

Cratyna, who knew the length of his arrow by the bent of his bow (resolved rather to taste of any misery than for lucre to make shipwreck of her chastity), returned him this sharp and short answer. Indeed, my Lord, a less harvest might have served for so bad corn, that how warely soever you glean it, will scarce prove worth the reaping; true it is that preambles are frivolous that persuade men to such follies, and therefore had your Honour spared this speech your credit had been the more and your labour less; if upon the sudden my beauty hath inveigled you (for as for my virtue, you hazard but a suppose, sith oft-times report hath a blister on her tongue), I must needs blame your eye that is bleared with every object, and accuse such a mind as suffereth honour to be suppressed with affection, and my Lord, soon ripe, soon rotten; hot love is soon cold; the fancies of men are like fire in straw, that flameth in a minute and ceaseth in a moment, but to return you a denial with your own objection, truth it is that I am tied to my husband both by love and law, which to violate both the gods and nature forbids me unless by death; Venus may love and look how she list, and at last prove herself but a wanton; her inordinate affections are no precedents whereby to direct mine actions, and whereas you say offences are measured by the secrecy, I answer that everything is transparent to the sight of the gods; their divine eyes pierce into the heart and the thoughts, and they measure not revenge by dignity, but by justice; for preferment, know my Lord, there is no greater riches than content, nor no greater honour than quiet; I esteem more of fame than of gold,

and rather choose to die chaste than live rich; threatenings are small persuasions, and little is her honesty that preferreth life before credit. Therefore, may it please your Honour, this is my determined resolution, which take from me as an oracle, that as preferment shall never persuade me to be unchaste, so death shall never dissuade me from being honest.

Calamus, hearing this rough reply of his tenant, was driven into a marvellous choler, so that scarce affording her a farewell, he flung out of the doors, and going to horse he hied home to the court. The goodwife, glad that he took the matter so in snuff, commanded her maid to say nothing to her master lest it should anything disquiet his mind. But Calamus, who was impatient of this denial, thought that the city which would not yield to the parley might be conquered by an assault, and that which entreaty could not command, force would constrain; therefore, seeing her husband had no lease of his house, but was a tenant at will, he commanded his steward, whom he made privy to his practice, to give him warning, but with this proviso, that if his wife were found tractable, then he should remain there still. The steward, fulfilling his lord's command, proved straight by experience that it was as possible to force the stream against his course or the earth to ascend from his centre as to draw her mind from virtue and honesty, and therefore, contrary to all law and conscience, deprived them of their living. The poor man, after his wife had made him privy to the cause of their sudden calamity, took it very patiently, and chose rather to live poorly content than richly discredited, so that the prefixed time of his departure being come, he quietly parted from the farm to a cottage, where his wife and he lived as perfect lovers in unfeigned affection.

Calamus, seeing this policy took small effect, impatient still in his restless passions, accompanied one day with five or six of his men, taking the advantage of the time, perforce brought Cratyna away to his palace, and privily left two of his men in ambush to kill Lestio. The neighbours, hearing of this mischief, secretly sent to Lestio where he was at plow, & forewarned him of all that Calamus had done and intended. The poor man, seeing that to strive with him was to shoot against the heavens, preferring life before wealth, even as he was apparelled went far from the place of his residence, and as a man in distress seeking service went to a collier who entertained and gave him such wages as he deserved, where quietly, although disquieted in mind for the absence of his wife, he passed a few days. Divers were poor Lestio's thoughts, for when he considered the chastity of his wife, suspicion hid her face for shame, but when he saw that women's thoughts are aspiring, and gape after preferment, and that the greatest assault to honesty is honour, he began to frown, so that thus between dread and hope he lived disquieted. But poor Cratyna, whose misery was redoubled by hearing of her husband's mishap, poured out such continual fountains of tears as not only Calamus but all men took pity of her complaints. But the unbridled fury of lust, that while it runs headlong into a labyrinth of mischiefs feeleth no remorse, had no consideration of her daily sorrows, but resolved, if not by entreaty, at least by force, to come to the end of his lascivious desire. Which resolution being known to Cratyna, from prayers she went to policy, and therefore on the sudden became more courteous, desiring Calamus that he would give her some space to forget her old love and entertain a new choice; he, whose fancy was somewhat appeased with this good speech, granted her the term of a month, with free liberty to walk in the

garden and elsewhere at her pleasure. Cratyna enjoying her wish so fortunately, taking time by the forehead, early in a morning stole secretly from the palace and fled into the country, where in the day-time hiding her amongst bushes, and in the night travelling as fast as she could, at last she came to the place where her husband was with the collier, & there changing her apparel into the attire of a man, and her head bravely shorn, she became a handsome stripling; the next day coming to the coal-pits she demanded service. The master collier, seeing the youth well-faced, had pity of his want and entertained him, and for that Lestio his man wanted one to drive his cart he appointed Cratyna to attend upon him; she, thanking the gods that blessed her with so favourable a service, was brought to the sight of Lestio and committed to his charge. Lestio, pitying the poor estate of such a young youth, noting narrowly the lineaments of her face, fell into sighs, and from sighs to tears, for the remembrance of his sweet Cratyna, who indeed, pitying her husband's complaints in that she was a true diviner of his thoughts, could not (as women's secrets oft hang at the tip of their tongues) but bewray to her husband what she was, who when he perfectly knew his wife so strangely metamorphosed, what for joy of her presence and sorrow that fortune had made them both thus unhappy, he fell into deeper complaints, till appeased by his wife, they went merrily to their work.

But Calamus missing Cratyna, and after diligent search perceiving she was stole [sic] away, fell into such a melancholic humour that his servants thought him half in a frenzy; he commanded horse to be made out into every highway, all passages to be stopped, every woman to be examined, but in vain, which so increased his fury that taking his horse he rode up and down the country as one half mad, but found not that which he sought for; at last, fortune, envying the happiness of Lestio and his wife, brought him where the colliers were at work, and a pretty space before he came at the pit he met Cratyna, who seeing Calamus, although he had disguised himself because he would ride unknown, yet perfectly perceived what he was, and therefore would willingly have been out of his company, but he called unto her, and she having her leather coat all dusty and her sweet face all besmeared with coals was the bolder to go, and demanded of him what he wanted; Calamus inquired if such a woman passed not that way; yes, marry (quoth Cratyna); there passed such a one indeed, who as she reported fled from Calamus for that the nobleman would have reft her of her chastity. Canst thou tell, my friend (quoth he), whither she is gone? And if I could (quoth Cratyna), think not so little courtesy in me as to bewray her, for by thy straight inquiry I perceive thou art servant to that dishonourable Calamus that spareth neither wife nor widow to satisfy his unbridled lust. Calamus, not brooking these hard speeches, alighted from his horse thinking to have well bumbasted the boy, who as fast as he could fled to the coal-pit. The colliers, seeing their boy (whom for his good behaviour they all generally loved) to be misused by a serving-man, took their whips in their hands and demanded of Calamus what he meant to offer violence to any of their company. For that (quoth he) the boy hath greatly abused me. Cratyna told them all the whole matter, which known, the colliers wished him, if he were well, to be packing. Calamus, seeing amongst such an unruly company he could not mend himself, went his way with a flea in his ear, and as he rode, perceived where Lestio lay asleep, who was not so disguised but he knew him perfectly, therefore thinking when he did wake to learn something out of him, & so turning his horse into a close hard by, rested himself behind a bush. Long he had not sitten before Cratyna came merrily whistling

with her cart, and told her husband all what had happened, who both smiled that the nobleman had such rough entertainment, as also that she was so clean out of favour. Calamus, who overheard them and perceived that the youth whom he took for a stripling was Cratyna, the poor man's wife, felt such a remorse in his conscience for offering violence to so virtuous and chaste a mind that as soon as they were gone he posted as fast as he could to the court, where Menon, the grandfather of my Lord Ulysses, then reigned as prince, and revealed unto him the whole matter, who greatly pleased with the discourse, desirous to see so honest a wife, presently dispatched a pursuivant to command the collier to bring his man Lestio and his boy before the king. The pursuivant, sparing no horseflesh, came so fast from the court that he found them all at dinner, who after they heard his message were amazed, especially poor Cratyna, who feared some new misfortune, yet cheering herself, the better to comfort her husband, they went with the pursuivant to the court, where being brought before Menon and Calamus, he there complained of the collier, how he had abused him in maintaining his boy to give him ill language. The collier (as a man amazed) confessed his fault, but unwittingly, for that he knew him not, and therefore desired Calamus to be his good lord and master. Menon, who all this while had his eye on Cratyna, asked her what he was. May it please your Grace (quoth she), I am servant to this man who is owner of the pit, but under this other who is overseer of my work. So then (quoth the king) you serve two masters, the one by day, the other by night; nay, my liege (quoth Cratyna), but one master, for we make small account of any service that is done in the night. How say you, sirrah (quoth the king to Lestio), is not this boy your man? No, my Lord (quoth he), only my bedfellow, and that is all the service I crave at his hands. At this answer the king and Calamus smiled, and Cratyna, fearing she was discovered, began to blush, which Menon perceiving, demanded of her what age she was. About eighteen, my liege (quoth she). Menon, willing to try then what the event would be, told the collier that he and his man, for that their faults were through ignorance, might get them home, but for your boy (quoth the king), seeing he is so young and well-faced, I mean to make him my page. The collier was glad he was so dispatched, but poor Lestio through abundance of grief was almost driven into an ecstasy, so that changing colour he could scarce stand on his legs, which Cratyna perceiving, seeing now fortune had done her worst, resolved to suffer all miseries whatsoever, fell down upon her knees and unfolded to the king what she was, and from point to point discoursed what had happened between her and Calamus, intermeddling her speeches with such a fountain of tears as the king, pitying her complaints, willed her to be of good cheer, for none in all his kingdom should offer her any violence. Calamus, in the behalf of Cratyna, thanked the king, with promise before his Highness that the virtuous and chaste disposition of her mind had made such a metamorphosis of his former thoughts that not only he was content to bridle his affections, but to endow her with such sufficient lands and possessions as might very well maintain her in the state of a gentlewoman. The king, praising Calamus for his good mind, willing to be an actor in this comedy, commanded his steward to furnish them with apparel, and afterward to convey them to Calamus' palace, where they lived long after in prosperous and happy estate.

The tale was long, and the night was too far spent to run any further descant on so good a plain-song, and therefore Penelope, having finished her talk, went to her lodging.

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The Third Night's Discourse.

The day no sooner appeared but according to their old custom the noblemen of Ithaca repaired to the palace of Penelope, who feigning herself not well, kept her chamber, which her son Telemachus espying, carried the lords with him on hunting, so that that day they passed away in the field in chase of such wild beasts as fortune by chance offered them as game; supping with Telemachus after their disport at a grange house three miles distant from Ithaca, they had no sooner taken their repast but every man hied home to his own house, and Telemachus posted as fast as he could to his mother, whom he found at supper with her nurse, where he discoursed unto her how they had spent the day in hunters' pastime, with every accident that happened in the chase. Penelope had no sooner supped but taking custom for a law, she left her son with one or two of his companions in the dining-chamber, and accompanied with her nurse and her maids went to her work, where falling to their wonted task, sith the last night they had a check for their overmuch prattle, they held themselves silent.

The old nurse, smiling at this new custom, began to break out of this dump in this manner. Your maids (madam) seem by their silence to make a challenge of your promise, I mean to hear your discourse of silence, resembling herein Philip's page, who in his master's tent being sore athirst durst not crave drink, but subtilly sat singing over the pot. You say well, nurse (quoth Penelope), I promised it and now I will perform it, but before I enter into the description of silence, tell me what is your opinion of my yesternight's tale? Marry, madam (quoth the nurse), that both the method and matter were of one temper, for both I liked the tale for the good speeches, and the poor man's wife for her great honesty, who by the constancy of her mind not only preserved her good fame but reclaimed the nobleman from his voluptuous appetite, so that the instance grew very well to your former principle, no virtue to be greater in a woman than chastity. Now nurse (quoth Penelope) that I have heard your opinion, to the discovery of silence. Demaratus, an ambassador of Corinth, being demanded of Olympias, Philip's wife, how the ladies of his country behaved themselves, answered they were silent, comprehending under this word all other virtues, as though that woman which were moderate in speech could also moderate her affections. Plato calleth women that are babblers thieves of time, and Plutarch compareth them to empty vessels which give a greater sound than they which are full, so that wanting inward virtues to beautify the mind, they seek to win praise by outward prattle.

It seemeth (saith Bias) that nature by fortifying the tongue would teach how precious and necessary a virtue silence is, for she hath placed before it the bulwark of the teeth, that if it will not obey reason, which being within ought to serve instead of a bridle to stay it from preventing the thoughts, we might restrain and chastise such impudent babbling by biting. And therefore, saith he, we have two eyes and two ears, that thereby we may learn to hear & see much more than is spoken. A woman, saith Choerilus, that seeketh to increase her honour and fame first ought to practise silence, then to endeavour how to talk, for the one is natural, the other a virtue got by virtuous education. Phocion, hearing an [sic] noblewoman of Athens use much talk at a banquet, which she set forth in many

eloquent phrases, and being demanded of one how he liked her speech: my friend (quoth he), her words may be compared to cypress-trees that are great and tall, but bear no fruit worth anything. Portia, the wife of Brutus, hearing a poor woman use much talk in her presence, called her aside and gave her money to hold her peace, being ashamed that any woman should be accused of babbling. The ambassadors of Carthage being sent to Scipio, who, being newly departed from Rome, were notwithstanding sumptuously entertained by his wife, who sitting a whole supper-time without uttering any word, being demanded of the Carthaginians what news they should carry to Hannibal: tell him (quoth she) that Scipio hath a wife that knoweth how to be silent. Caesar, the mighty monarch of the world, was wont to say that silence used in due time and place was a profound wisdom, a sober and modest thing, and full of deep secrets. Words (saith Menander) hath wings, and are presently dispersed everywhere, and many repent that they have spoken, but never that they hold their peace. The city of Athens was destroyed by Scilla [sic], the Roman dictator, who by his espials was admonished of the prattling of certain women washing of their clothes, where they talked of a certain place in the town that was weak and worst defended. Many inconveniences grow of the intemperancy of the tongue, as dissension and strife in a house, whereas contrariwise nothing more appeaseth choler nor showeth modesty than silence, to confirm the which I will rehearse a pleasant and delightful history.

#### Penelope's Third Tale.

The historiographers whose annual records makes mention of that ancient city of Delphos where Apollo delivered his oracles sets down as chronicled for truth that sometime there reigned as chief and governor of the city one Ariamenes, a prince wise, as seated in a place where the meanest inhabitant was able to discourse of wisdom; rich, as endued with such and so large possessions that all his bordering neighbours were inferior to him in wealth and revenues; and fortunate, for that he had three sons, honourable, as descended from such parentage, and virtuous, as savouring of their father's prudent education. Ariamenes, blessed thus every way with earthly favours, seeing his grey hairs were summons unto death, and that old age, the true limiter of time, presented unto him the figure of his mortality, that he was come from the cradle to the crutch, and from the crutch had one leg in the grave, knowing that the kingdom of Delphos was not a monarchy that fell by inheritance, but that he might as well appoint his youngest son successor as his eldest, being affected to them all alike, was perplexed with contrary passions to which of the three he should bequeath such a royal legacy sith by such an equal proportion fortune had enriched them with favours. Nature, who is little partial in such peculiar judgements, was by the several thoughts that troubled Ariamenes' head almost set at an [sic] nonplus, insomuch that the old king, driven into a dilemma, fell into this consideration.

That all his sons were married to women descended from honourable parents, and that sith his sons were so equal in their virtues, he was to measure his affection by the conditions of their wives, for he knew that kings in their government proved oft such justiciaries as the good or ill disposition of their wives did afford, for the greatest monarchs have been subject to the plausible persuasions of women, and princes' thoughts

are oft tied to the wings of beauty. The emperor Commodus had never been so hated in Rome for his tyrannies had he not been pricked forward to such wickedness by his wife. Marcus Aurelius, the true & perfect precedent of a prince, confessed that hardly he could withstand the allurements of Faustina. The envy of a woman hangs in the brow of her husband, and for the revenge of an enemy she passeth not for the loss of a friend. These things considered, Ariamenes was thus resolved for himself to bestow the kingdom on that son whose wife was found to be most virtuous. Therefore after this determined resolution he presently dispatched messengers to his sons in their several provinces, that they, particularly accompanied with their wives, should meet him at Delphos, with general command also that his nobility should make hasty repair to that city. The king's command being put in execution, his sons, to signify their dutiful obedience, sped them to the court, where being come before their father, Ariamenes, after he had sit awhile in a muse with himself, fell into these speeches.

Nature (sons), the perfect mistress of affections, tieth the father to his children with such a strict league that love admitteth no partiality, nor fancy brooketh any difference, but a just proportion of goodwill is ministered if the parties have equality in their virtues. Marcus Portius Cato, who was a father of many children, was wont to say that the love of a father, as it was royal, so it ought to be impartial, neither declining to the one nor to the other but as deeds do merit. Elius Tubero, who had sixteen children of his own body, at his death made equal distribution both of goods & lands alike to them all, and being demanded why he did not give his eldest son the greater portion, made this answer. And is not the youngest also the son of Tubero? This I speak for that age telling me that nature of force will claim her due, and that many years as harbingers provides me my long home, being father to you all, and equally affected, sith no difference of birth but of virtues makes exception, willing to leave one to sit in my seat that may govern the monarchy and kingdom of Delphos, and unwilling to displace any if lordship would brook any fellowship, perplexed thus with a combat between nature and necessity, I have thus resolved to please all, that seeing you are married, and a virtuous wife is a great stay to a prince, before the nobles & commons of Delphos here present I ordain that which of you can prove your wife to be most virtuous, the same shall succeed in my kingdom; therefore let me hear what everyone can say for himself.

Ariamenes struck a great maze into his sons' minds at this speech, yet for that obedience willed them to think their father's censure inviolable, with free consent they committed their haps to him that is the best bestower of virtues, and the eldest began to say for his wife in this manner.

Though, right mighty sovereign and father, your will hath abridged me of that which nature hath given me without exception, yet holding your command for a constraint and your word for a law, knowing that the thoughts of princes ought to be peremptory, I mean not to aim at the crown under the title of birthright, but by the precedent of my wife's virtues. Thus much therefore can I say for myself, that if the true felicity whereof Aristotle talketh in his *Ethics* might be bounded or limited within the compass of marriage, that (were the peripatetian alive) he would set me down as a particular instance of his happiness. For to begin with the gifts of nature, the eye, the perfect judge of



colours, is able to testify that she is most beautiful, so graced with exterior favours, as well in the porportion [sic] of her body as in the perfect lineaments of her face, that hard it were for envy to deny her the superiority. For the gifts of the mind, endued with sundry good parts and most excellent and rare virtues, so that it is in question whether nature or education hath showed the greater cunning; wise, obedient, dutiful, and chaste, as fame is able (blown in every man's ear) to manifest; for the gifts of fortune, descended of honourable parentage, rich, as the dowry given at the marriage-day can witness, and not barren, so that by allowing her the succession, your Highness is sure to be seen in your posterity as in a glass. But as the eldest was ready to go forward in his demonstrative kind of declaiming, his wife, feeling already in conceit what a sugared object the sight of a crown were, burst forth on the sudden into these speeches.

My husband (may it please your Highness) hath made a long insinuation intermeddled with a frivolous division of nature and fortune, whereas the plain-song being true needeth not such a musical descant, for sir, seeing the matter standeth upon virtue, the touchstone your Highness hath appointed to try our titles, I refer myself to those whom fame hath made to glory in my well-doings, and seeing the desire of a crown may prove my husband's plea partial, I myself have stepped in, referring my cause to the general report of the world both for obedience and chastity, the two special ornaments that guardeth and preserveth a woman's honour; I will not inveigh against the virtuous disposition of my sisters, sith envy in a woman is like a pebble-stone set in the purest gold. But thus much.

And as she was ready to go forward, grudging at this self-conceit her second sister taking the matter in snuff and staring too earnestly at the hope of a crown forgot herself and fell into these choleric passions.

Sister, what needeth so long a harvest to so small a crop? Dally how you list, Hercules' shoe will never serve a child's foot; self-love is no virtue; they which wore the garlands in Olympus were forbidden to be at the breaking down of the laurel, and the foolish conceit Niobe had in herself was her own overthrow. They which praise themselves are like to the peacock, that glorying in the beauty of her glistering plumes, no sooner looks at her feet but she lets down her feathers. Ill beseems it a Grecian dame, especially of Delphos, to be herald of her own actions, but his Majesty may think the plaintiff hath small friends when he himself is fain to play the advocate. To avoid which supposition, you refer his Highness to the general fame of the country, that above the rest you exceed in obedience and chastity. Take heed, sister; fame hath two faces, and in that resembleth time, ready as well to backbite as to flatter; therefore they which build their virtue upon report do allege but a bad proof. But leaving your reasons to his Highness' consideration, thus for myself. I set not my good name at so small a price as to hazard it upon the chance of the tongue, that of all other members is most uncertain, although I am sure my bordering neighbours so esteem of my doings as they take my virtues for a precedent of their actions, but I hope your Highness doth consider that such tree, such fruit; that the lively portraiture of the parents is as in a crystal manifested in the children, that nature is the best touchstone of life, that education and nurture are as good as the chrysocoll to discern minerals, so they of manners. Then, right mighty prince, I first for proof of my virtuous disposition lay down the honourable and happy life of my parents, so well

ordered that fame and envy blusheth to stain them with any spot of infamy; what care they had to bring me up in my youth, with what instructions they passed over my tender years, I refer to your Majesty, as by willing your second son to match in so mean a family; since the rites of marriage were celebrated, my husband's deposition shall manifest. The eldest sister, hearing how cunningly and yet crookedly this pretty oratress aimed at the matter, could not suffer to hear so long a tale without reply, and therefore went thus roundly to the purpose.

Sister, ill might Phyllis have blamed Dido for her folly, sith she herself entertained stragglng Demophoon for a friend; the Cynics that inveighed against other men's faults were seldom culpable in the same crime; they which will have their censures peremptory must not build their reasons on uncertain principles; therefore wipe your nose on your own sleeve, and if you spy where my shoe wrings me, look to the length of your own last, for in objecting self-love to me you fall asleep in the sweet conceit of your own praise, which indeed wisely you frame to hazard on the chance of fame, sith your deserts are so small as report is blind on that side which looks to your virtues; the force of your reasons drawn from the authority of propagation, alleging nature and nurture for proofs of your virtues, are too light to counterpoise with a crown, for we oft see that nature's only error is found in the dissimilitude of lineage, so that the tree bringing forth fair blossoms, yet the blooms may either be nipped in the bud with untimely weather, or hindered with caterpillars, that it never prove good and perfect fruit. The cedar tree is fair of itself, but the fruit either none or very bad; 'tis no opinion to say a good father, a good child, in that time oft maketh an alteration of nature. But your husband was commanded to have pleaded your interest; marry, I fear his conscience tells him the crown hangs too high for his reach sith he must be fain to attain to it by your virtues.

The youngest sister, hearing how unreverently they brabbled before the king, began to blush, which Ariamenes espying, noting in her face the very portraiture of virtue, demanded of her why, hearing her sisters so hard by the ears for a crown, she said nothing; her answer was thus brief and pithy. He that gaineth a crown getteth care; is it not folly then to hunt after loss? The king, looking for a longer discourse, and seeing, contrary to his expectation, that she was only short and sweet, prosecuted still in questioning, and demanded what virtues she had that might deserve so royal a benefit. This (quoth she), that when others talk, yet being I woman I can hold my peace. Ariamenes and all the nobility of Delphos wondered at the modesty of the young lady, that contrary to her natural disposition could so well bridle her affections; therefore debating the matter betwixt them which of the three were most virtuous, although they found by proof that the other ladies were both obedient and chaste, yet for that they wanted silence, which (said Ariamenes) comprehended in it all other virtues, they missed of the cushion, and the king created his youngest son heir apparent to the kingdom.

Penelope having ended her tale, the old nurse greatly commended the discourse, and because she would be pleasant at the parting blow, knowing that Ismena was a quick wench of her tongue, told her that this tale was a good precedent for her to direct her course, seeing silence was so profitable. Tush (quoth Ismena), fear not you, madam, for when I have such a proffer as a crown, I will gaze so fast at that that I will forget my

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prattle, but in faith, my lips are too coarse for such lettuce, and so high hangs the grapes that the fox will eat none. Well, madam, I know your meaning, but for all the crack my penny may be good silver, sith silence is a virtue amongst women, but yet I see no reason of necessity, seeing nature hath been so niggardly in that favour. It may seem (quoth the nurse) that she hath been rather too prodigal, for thy tongue wants no metal. As thus they were about to part with these merry quips, a messenger came hastily rushing in, who told Penelope that Ulysses was arrived that night within the port of Ithaca. This word so amazed them all with sudden joy that leaving the endless web Penelope called for her son, and that night sent him post to the sea, where what news he heard of his father I know not. But thus abruptly this night was the discourse broken off, but for that fell out after his home-coming I refer you to the paraphrase which shortly shall be set out upon Homer's *Odyssea*, till when let us leave Penelope attending the return either of her husband, her son, or of both.

FINIS.