

The Most Pleasant and Delectable Questions of Love

Giovanni Boccaccio

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The Booke to the Reader

Loke ere thou leap, dome not by view of face,
Least hast make wast, in misdoming the case:
For I teach not to love, ne yet his lore,
Ne with what salve is cared such a sore,
But I the carke with cares that therby haps,
The blis with joyes the storms with thunderclaps,
The curtesies where most his force is shewede,
The choise of best, be it of good or lewde,
Compare them so, as doomed is the dout,
Thereof, and ay the truth well sifted out:
The which to reade such pleasure thou shalt finde,
As may content a well disposed minde.

Dedication

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL M. WILLIAM RICE ESQUIRE, H. G. WISHETH A HAPPY LONG LIFE,
WITH INCREASE OF MUCH WORSHIP

IN how much the thankfull sorte are desirous (as reason willeth and experience dailie teacheth) to gratifie such their dear frindes, as to whom sundrie good turnes and received benefits they are not a little beholding, the sundrie dealing of thousands dayly in use and apparent to the worlde, to the great prayse and commendation both of the one and the other, giveth a sufficient testimonie. So that, taking occasion thereby to shew the good will I have, to pay in parte the debt many yeares due, for that your bountie towards me (the least sparke whereof I am unable to satisfie:) I do give unto you this Italian Disport, the which I have turned out of his native attire into this our English habite to the ende the same may be no less familiar to you, and to such other (for your sake) as shall vouchsafe thereof, than it is either to the Italian or the Frenche, and desire that the same may marche abroad under your charge: to whom I recount the protection thereof. Not doubting but as the reading thereof shall bring plesure and delite: so the matter beeing there with all duely considered shal give sundry profitable lessons meet to be folowed. And bicause the name of the author (being of no small credit with the learned, for those his sundry well written workes) is of it selfe sufficient to cary greater commendation therewith, than my pen is able to write, I leave to labour therein, least my lacke may be an occasion to the leeing of his due praise. And untill fortune (the only hope of the unhappy) shall make me better able, I shall desire you thankfully to accept this as a token and pledge of the good will I have to performe that wherunto my abilitie is unable to stretch. Thus taking my leave, I betake you to the tuition of almightie God, who preserve you in health to his pleasure, and after this life make you possessor of those joyes whereof we all hope to be partakers.

6. Martij. 1566

THE ARGUMENT

FLORIO, surnamed Philocopo, accompanied with the duke Montorio, Ascaleon, Menedon and Massalina, in sailing to seek his friend Biancofiore, was through a very obscure and dark night by the fierce winds driven into great dangers. But the perils once passed, they were cast into the port of the ancient Parthenope, whereas the mariners (espying themselves in a haven) received comfort. Not knowing into what coast fortune had forced him they yielded thanks to the gods and so tarried the new day, the which after it once appeared the place was of the mariners descried, so that they all glad of suretie and of so acceptable arrival, came ashore, Philocopo with his companions. Who rather seemed to come forth new-risen again out of their sepulchres than disembarked from ship, looked back towards the wayward waters and repeating in themselves the passed perils of the spent night, could yet scarcely think themselves in suretie.

They all then with one voice praised their gods that had guided them safe out of so crooked a course, offered their pitiful sacrifices, and began to receive comfort. They were by a friend of Ascaleon's honourably received into the city, whereas they caused their ship to be all new repaired and decked of mast, sail and better stern than were the others which they had lost. And so tarrying time for their further voyage, the which was much longer lengthened than they looked for; by occasion whereof Philocopo would many times have taken his journey by land, but discouraged therein by Ascaleon, stayed, in tarrying a more prosperous hour in the aforesaid place, where he and his companions saw Phoebus five times round and as many times homed, before that Notus did abandon his violent forces.

And in so long a while they never almost saw time to be merry, whereupon Philocopo, who was very desirous to perform his deferred journey, one day called his companions unto him and said: "Let us go take the pleasant air and pass the time upon the salt sea shore, in reasoning and providing for our future voyage."

Thus he with the Duke Parmenion and the rest of his companions directed their walk with a mild pace (discoursing divers matters) towards that place where rested the reverend ashes of the most renowned poet Maro. They all thus talking a good space were not gone far from the city but that they came to the side of a garden, wherein they heard gracious and joyous feasting of young gentlemen, dames and damsels.

There the air did all resound with the noise of sundry instruments and as it were of angelical voices, entering with sweet delight into the hearts of them to whose ears it came. The which noise it pleased Philocopo to stay a while to hear, to the end his former melancholy through the sweetness thereof might by little and little depart away. Then Ascaleon restrained their talk.

And while fortune held thus Philocopo and his companions without the garden intently listening, a young gentleman coming forth thereof espied them and forthwith by sight, port and visage knew them to be noble gentlemen and worthy to be revered. Wherefor he without tarrying returned to his company and said "Come, let us go welcome certain young men, seeming to be gentlemen of great calling, the which perhaps bashful to enter herein, not being bidden, stay without, giving ear to our disport."

The companions then of this gentleman left the ladies at their pastime and went forth of the garden and came to Philocopo, whom by sight they knew to be chief of all the rest; to whom they spoke with that reverence their reason could devise and that was most convenient for the welcoming of such a guest, praying him that in honour and increase of this their feast it would please him and his companions to enter with them the garden, constraining him through many requests that he would in no wise deny them this courtesy.

These sweet prayers so pierced the gentle heart of Philocopo and no less the hearts of his companions, that he answered the entreaters in this sort:

"Friends, of truth such a feast was of us neither sought for nor fled from. But like weather-beaten mates cast into your port, we to the end to flee drowsy thoughts which spring of idleness, did in reciting our adversities, pass by these sea banks. But how fortune has allured us to give ear unto you I know not, unless as we think, desirous to remove from us all pensiveness, she has of you in whom I know to be infinite courtesy, made us this offer. And therefor we will satisfy your desire, though peradventure in part we become somewhat lavish of the courtesy which otherwise towards others ought to proceed from us."

And thus talking they entered together into the garden, whereas they found many fair gentlewomen, of whom

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they were very graciously received and by them welcomed to their feast. After Philocopo had a good while beheld this their feasting and likewise had feasted with them, he thought it good to depart, and willed to take his leave of the young gentlemen and to give them thanks for the honour he had received. But one lady more honourable than the rest, endowed with marvelous beauty and virtue, came forth where he stood and thus said unto him:

"Most noble sir, you have this morning through this your great courtesy shewed no small pleasure to these young gentlemen, for the which they shall be always beholden unto you; that is to wit in that you have vouchsafed to come to honour their our feast. May it please you then not to refuse to shew unto me, and to these other dames, that favour that I am secondarily to entreat you for."

To whom Philocopo with a sweet voice answered: "Most gentle lady, nothing may justly be denied you. Command therefor, for both I and these my companions are all pressed at your will."

To whom the lady said in this wise: "Forasmuch as this your coming has increased this our feasting with a most noble and goodly company, I shall desire you that you will not with departure lessen the same, but rather help us here to spend this day even to the last hour, to that end we have already begun the same."

Philocopo beheld her in the face as she thus spoke, and seeing her eyes replete with burning rays to twinkle like unto the morning star, and her face exceeding pleasant and fair, thought never to have seen (his Biancofiore excepted) so fair a creature. To whose demand he thus made answer: "Madame, I shall dispose myself to satisfy rather your desire than my own. Wherefor so long as it shall please you so long will I abide with you, and these my companions also."

The lady gave him great thanks, and returning to the others, began together with them all to be very merry. Philocopo, abiding with them in this sort, entered into great familiarity with a young gentleman named Galeon, adorned with good qualities and of a singular eloquence, to whom in talking he said thus: "Oh how much are you more than any other beholden to the immortal gods, the which preserve you quiet in one will in this your mirth-making."

"We acknowledge us to be greatly bounden unto them," answered Galeon. "But what occasion moves you to say this?"

Philocopo answered: "Truly none other occasion but that I see you all here assembled in one will."

"Oh," said Galeon, "marvel not at all thereat, for this lady (in whom all excellency does rest) both moves us hereunto and holds us herein."

Then demanded Philocopo: "And this lady, who is she?"

Galeon answered: "It is she that made request unto you, that you would tarry here, whenas a while since you would have departed."

"By sight she seems unto me," said Philocopo, "exceeding fair and of a surmounting worthiness. But yet, if my demand be not unlawful, manifest her name unto me, of whence she is and of what parents descended."

Unto whom Galeon answered: "No ways may your request be unjust; besides there is none publicly talking of her which does not vouchsafe to publish the renown of so worthy a lady, and therefor I shall fully satisfy your demand. Her name is of us here called Fiametta, howbeit the greatest part of the people call her by the name of Her through whom that wound is shut up that the prevarication of the first mother opened. She is the daughter of a most high prince, under whose scepter these countries are quietly governed. She is also lady unto us all. And briefly, there is no virtue that ought to be in a noble heart that is not in hers. And as I think, in tarrying this day with us, you shall have good experience thereof."

"That which you say," said Philocopo, "cannot be hidden in her semblance. The gods guide her to that end that her singular gifts do merit, for assuredly I believe both that and much more than you have affirmed. But these other dames, who are they?"

"These gentlewomen," said Galeon, "some of them are of Parthenope and othersome of places elsewhere, come as are you yourselves hither into her company."

And after they had thus held talk a good space, Galeon said: "Ah, my sweet friend, if it might not displease you, it should be very acceptable unto me to know further of your estate and condition than your outward appearance represents, to the end that by knowing you we may do you that honour you worthily merit. Because sometimes want of knowledge brings lack of duetie to them that honour others in not doing their due reverence."

To, whom Philocopo answered: "No lack in doing me reverence could any ways happen on your behalf, but rather you have therein so far exceeded as with excess you have passed the bound and limits thereof. But since

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you desire to know further of my condition, it should be unjust not to satisfy your desire therein. And therefor (in how much it is lawful for me to discover) I shall tell you. I am a poor pilgrim of love, and go seeking as you see a lady of mine, taken away from me by subtle means by my parents. And these gentlemen whom you see with me of their courtesy keep me company in this my pilgrimage. My name is Philocopo, of nation a Spaniard, driven through tempestuous weather (seeking for the island of Cicilia) into your ports."

But he knew not so covertly to talk as that the young gentleman understood not more of his condition than he willingly desired he should. And having compassion of those his hard fortunes, somewhat comforted him with these words, which promised him hereafter a more lucky life, and from that time forward to increase his honour, willed that he should be honoured of them all, not as a pilgrim or as a bidden guest, but rather as the chief and principal patron of the feast. The lady who understood his state and condition through the report of Galeon, esteeming dearly of such a hap, commanded specially that so it should be.

Apollo was now with his chariot of light mounted to the meridian circle and did scarcely behold with levelled eye the new-apparelled earth, whenas these dames, damsels and young gentlemen, being thus assembled together in that place (setting their feasting apart) seeking forth by sundry quarters of the garden the delightful shade, and fleeing the noisome heat that might offend their delicate bodies, took by divers companies divers delights.

And the lady accompanied with four others took Philocopo by the hand, saying: "Sir, the heat does constrain us to seek out the fresh air. Let us therefore go to yonder meadow you see here before us, and there with sundry discourses pass over the heat of the day."

Philocopo then greatly praised the lady's device and followed her motion, and with him his companions. Galeon also with two others went with them to the appointed meadow, which was exceeding fair of grass and flowers, and filled with a great suavity of smells, about the which grew store of young trees very fair and thick of green leaves, wherewith the place was defended from the parching beams of the great planet.

There was in the midst of that meadow a proper fountain very fair and clear like crystal, about the which they all sat them down, where some gazing in the water and othersome gathering flowers, they began to talk of sundry matters. But because sometimes that unawares the one did interrupt the other's tale, the fair lady said unto them thus:

"To the end that this our discourse may proceed in a more better order and so continue until the fresh cool hours, the which we attend for our further feasting, let us ordain one of us in place of our king, to whom each one shall propound a question of love, and shall receive from him an apt resolution thereof. And truly (as I think) we shall no sooner have made an end of our questions, but that the heat (we not knowing how) shall be passed, and the time spent to our profit and delight."

This device pleased them all and among them it was said, Let there be a king. And with one voice they chose Ascaleon to their king, for that he was somewhat more grown in years than was any of the rest.

To whom he made answer, to be altogether insufficient for so great an office, because he had spent more years in the service of Mars than of Venus. But yet he prayed them all to leave unto him the election of such a king.

They that thought him to be such a one (knowing so well beforehand the qualities of them all) as would constitute one such as should yield true answers to all their demands, did then wholly consent that the election should freely be remitted unto him since he would not take such a dignity upon himself.

Ascaleon then rose him up and gathered certain twigs of a green laurel the shade whereof did overspread the fresh fountain, and thereof made a rich coronet, the which he brought in presence of them all and said in this wise:

"From the time that I in my most youthful years began to have understanding, I swear by those gods whom I worship that I do not remember to have seen or heard named a woman of like worthiness to Fiametta, of whom love holds us all here in her presence inflamed, and by whom we have this day been honoured in such sort as we ought never forget the same. And because she (as without doubt I know) is plentifully endowed with every good grace, adorned both with beauty and good qualities and endowed with a flowing eloquence, I therefor make choice of her to be our queen. For assuredly it is convenient that the imperial crown be bestowed upon her magnificence, being descended from a royal house and to whom the secret ways of love being (as they are all) open, it shall be an easy matter for her to content us in these our questions."

And this said, he humbly kneeled before this noble lady, saying: "Most courteous lady, vouchsafe to deck your head with this crown, the which is no less dearly to be esteemed of them that are worthy through their virtues to cover their heads with the like, than if it were of gold."

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The lady with a new red bepainted her white visage and said: "Truly you have not in due sort provided a queen for this amorous people (that have more need of a most able king) for that of all you that are present I am the most simple and of least virtue; neither is there any one of you that is not more meet to be invested of such a crown than I am.

"But since it thus pleases you, I cannot withstand this your election. And to the end I be not found contrary to our made promise, I will receive it and, as I hope, shall also receive from the gods with it the stomach due to such an office. And through the help of him to whom these leaves were always acceptable, I shall answer you all according to my small knowledge. Nevertheless I devoutly pray him that he will enter into my breast, and renew my voice with that sound wherewith he caused the valiant, vanquished Marsyas to deserve to be drawn forth of the sheath of his members. I, by way of mirth, shall give you light answers without sifting unto the depth of your propounded questions, the going about to search for the which should rather bring tediousness than delight to your minds."

And having thus said, she took with her delicate hand the offered garland, and therewithal crowned her head. She then commanded that each one, upon pain to be deprived of the amorous joys, should prepare to forth some question, the which might be apt and convenient to the purpose whereof they did intend to treat, and such a one as it should rather be an increaser of mirth than through too great subtlety or otherwise, a destroyer of the same.

THE FIRST QUESTION, PROPOSED BY PHILOCOPO

ON the right hand of the queen sat Philocopo, to whom she said: "Noble sir, you shall begin to propound your question to the end that the rest, orderly as we are here placed, may after you with more suretie propound theirs also."

To whom Philocopo thus made answer: "Most noble lady, without any delay I shall obey your commandment." And thus he said:

I do remember that in the city wherein I was born, there was one day made a bountiful great feast, whereat to honour the same were many gentlemen and gentlewomen. And I that was there likewise, roaming about and beholding them that were in the place, espied among the rest two young gentlemen very gracious to behold, that earnestly eyed an exceedingly fair woman. Neither was I any ways able to discern which of them her beauty had most inflamed. And as she in like sort had a good space beheld them, not making greater semblance to the one than to the other, they between themselves began to reason of her. And among the other words that I understood of their talk, was that each one said that he was her best beloved; and for proof thereof either of them alleged in the furtherance of himself divers gestures then before done by the young woman.

And they thus remaining in this contention a long time, being now through many words at daggers drawing, they acknowledged that herein they did very evil, because in thus doing they wrought hurt and shame to themselves and displeasure to the woman. Wherefore (moved of an equal agreement) both two went unto the mother of the maid, who was also at the same feast, and thus said unto her: That forasmuch as above all other women of the world either of them best liked her daughter, and that they were at contention which of them was best liked of her, it would therefor please her to grant them this favour, to the end no greater inconvenience might spring thereof, as to will her daughter that she either by word or deed would show which of them she best loved.

The entreated gentlewoman smiling thus answered: Willingly. And so calling her daughter to her, said: "My fair daughter, each one of these prefers the love of you above the love of himself. And in this contention they are, which of them is best beloved of you. And they seek of me this favour, that you either by signs or word resolve them herein. And therefor to the end that love, from whom all peace and goodness ought always to spring, breed not now the contrary, content them in this and with gentle courtesy shew towards which of them you mind is most bent."

The young damsel said: "It liketh me right well." And so beholding them both a while she saw the one of them to have upon his head a fair garland of fresh flowers, and the other to stand without any garland at all. Then she, that had likewise upon her head a garland of green leaves, first took the same from her head and set it upon his that stood before her without a garland. And after she took that which the other young man had upon his head and set the same upon hers; and so leaving them she returned to the feast, saying that she had both performed the commandment of her mother and also their desire.

The young men being thus left, returned also to their former contention, each one affirming that she loved him best. He whose garland she took and set upon her head said: "Assuredly she loves me best because she has taken my garland to none other end but for that what mine is pleases her, and to give occasion to be beholden unto me. But to you she has given hers, as it were in place of her last farewell, unwilling that like a country girl the love which you bear her be without requittal; and therefore lastly she gives you that garland you had merited."

The other replying with the contrary thus answered: "Truly she loves that yours is better than you, and that may be seen in her taking thereof. And me she loves better than what mine is inasmuch as she has given me of hers; and therefor it is no token of her last deserved gift, as you affirm, but rather a beginning of amity and love. A gift makes the receiver a subject to the giver; and because she peradventure uncertain of me, to the end she might be more certain to have me her subject, will bind me (if perhaps I were not bound unto her before) to be hers by gift. But how may you think, if she at the first takes away from you, that ever she may vouchsafe to give?"

And thus they abode a long time contending, and in the end departed without any definition at all. Now say I, most puissant queen, if you should be demanded of the last sentence of such a contention, what would you judge?

The fair lady somewhat smiling turned towards Philocopo her eyes sparkling with an amorous light, and after a soft sigh thus made answer.

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"Most noble youth, proper is your question; and truly, as very wisely the young woman behaved herself so each one of the young men right well defended his cause. But because you require what we lastly will judge thereof, thus we make you answer: It seems unto us and so it ought to seem to each one that takes good heed, that the woman had in hate neither the one nor the other, but to keep her intent covert did two contrary acts, as appears, and not without occasion. And to the end she might get more assured the love of him whom she loved, as not to lose the love of the other whom she hated not, it was but wisely done. But to come to our question, which is, to which of the two greatest love was shewed.

"We say that she loved him best and he chiefest in her favour to whom she gave her garland. And this seems to be the reason: Whatsoever man or woman that loves any person, each one through force of the love they bear is so strongly bound to the person loved that above all other things they desire to please the same. Neither to bind him or her more strongly that thus loves needs either gifts or services; and this is manifest.

"And yet we see, that whoso loves, though he endeavour himself sundry ways, is not able to make the person loved in any sort benign and subject unto him, whereby he may bring it to his pleasure and so with a more bold face demand his desire. And that this is in such sort as we say, the inflamed Dido with her doings does very well manifest the same unto us. Burning in the love of Aeneas, so long as it seemed her neither with honours nor with gifts able to win him, had not the courage to attempt the doubtful way of asking the question. So that then the young woman sought to make him most beholden unto her whom she best loved. And thus we say that he that received the gift of the garland was her best beloved."

As the queen became silent Philocopo answered: "Discreet lady, greatly is your answer to be commended. But for all that you do bring me into a great admiration of that you have defined touching the propounded question, because I would have judged rather the contrary. For so much as generally among lovers this was the wonted custom, that is, to desire to bear upon them some jewel or some other thing of the person's loved, to the end that most times they might glory themselves more therein than in all the remnant they had; and perceiving the same about them therewith to gladden their minds as you have heard.

"Paris seldom times or never entered into the bloody battles against the Greeks without bearing some token upon him that had been given him by his Helen, believing better to prevail therewith than if he had gone without the same. And truly, in mine opinion, his thought was not vain. Therefor I should thus say (that as you said) the young woman did very wisely, not defining it for all that as you have done, but in this manner: She, knowing that she was very well loved of two young men and that she could not love more than one, for that love is an indivisible thing, she would reward the one for the love he bore her to the end that such good will should not be unrewarded, and so give him her garland in requittal thereof. To the other, whom she loved, she thought she would give courage and assured hope of her love, taking his garland and decking herself therewith, in token whereof she plainly shewed to be beholden unto him for the same. And therefor in my judgment, she loved him better from whom she took than him to whom she gave."

To whom the queen thus made answer: "Your argument should have pleased us right well if yourself in your tale had not condemned the same. See how pillage and perfect love can agree together. How can you shew me that we love him whom we despoil better than him to whom we give? According to the question propounded, to the one she gave a garland and from the other she took a garland; neither had he unto whom she gave ought to give her. And that which we see every day, for example may here suffice. As is commonly said: They are of gentlemen far better loved on whom they bestow favour and gifts than those that are by them deprived of them. And for that cause we lastly hold opinion, concluding that he is better loved to whom is given than he from whom is taken.

"We know very well that in these our reasonings much might be objected against this our definition, and much also answered to the contrary reasons, but lastly such determination shall remain true. And because time now serves not to stay with this our talk upon matter only without more, we will give ear to the rest if it please you."

To whom Philocopo said that it pleased him right well, and that very well sufficed such a resolution to his demanded question; and so held his peace.

THE SECOND QUESTION, PROPOSED BY PARMENIO

PARMENIO sat next, and without attending further, as the queen had left, thus began:

Most mighty queen, I was of long time companion with a young gentleman to whom that happened which I intend to shew.

He as much as any man could love a woman, loved a fair young gentlewoman of our city, gracious, gentle and very rich, both of wealth and parents, and she also loved him for aught that I (to whom his love was discovered) could understand.

This gentleman then loved her in most secret sort, fearing that if it should be betrayed that he should no ways be able to speak unto her. To the end therefore that he might discover his intent and be certified likewise of hers, he trusted no one that should attempt to speak of this matter. Yet his desire enforcing him, he purposed since he could not betray himself unto her, to make her understand by some other that which he suffered for her sake.

And bethinking him many days by whom he might most closely signify unto her that his intent, he saw one day a poor old woman, wrinkled out of an orange tawny colour, so despiteful to behold as none the like, the which being entered the house of the young woman to ask her alms, followed forth of the door, and many times after in like sort, and for like occasion he saw her return thither. In this woman his heart gave him to repose his whole trust imagining that he should never be had in suspicion and that she might fully bring his desire to effect. Therefore calling her to him, he promised her great gifts if she would help him in that which he should demand of her. She swore to do her endeavour, to whom this gentleman then discovered his mind.

The old woman departed and after a while, having certified the young woman of the love that my companion bare her, and him likewise that she above all other things of the world did love him, she devised how this young man should be secretly one evening with the desired woman.

And so he going before her, as she had appointed, she guided him to this young gentlewoman's house, wherein he was no sooner entered than through his misfortune the young woman, the old and he, were all three found and taken together by the brethren of the woman and compelled to tell the truth of that they made there, who confessed the whole matter as it was.

These brethren, for that they were the friends of this gentleman, and knowing that he as yet had attained nothing that might redound to their shame, would not do him any harm as they might have done. But laughing, said to him in this sort: "You are now in our hands and have sought to dishonour us, and for that we may punish you if we will. Of these two ways see that you take the one: either that you will we take your life from you, or else that you stay with this old woman and this our sister, either of them one year, swearing faithfully that if you shall take upon you to be with either of them a year, and the first year with the young woman, that as many times as you shall kiss or have to do with her, as many times shall you kiss and have to do with the old woman the second year. And if you shall take the first year the old woman look how many times you shall kiss and touch her so many times likewise and neither more nor less shall you do the like to the young woman the second year."

The young man listening to the sentence and desiring to live, said that he would be with these two two years. It was granted him. But he remained in doubt with which of them he should first begin, either with the young or with the old. Whether of them would you give counsel he should first for his most consolation withal?

The queen and likewise the whole company somewhat smiled at this tale, and after she thus made answer:

"According to our judgment the young gentleman ought rather to take the fair young woman than the foul old. Because no present good turn ought to be left for the future, neither the evil to be taken for the future good, because we know that we are uncertain of things to come. And in doing the contrary hereof many have already sorrowed too late, and if any have praised himself herein, not duty but fortune has therein helped him. Let the fair therefore to be the first taken."

"You make me greatly to marvel," said Parmenio, "seeing that the present good ought not to be left for the future. To what end then is it convenient for us with a valiant mind to follow and bear worldly troubles, whereas we may flee them if it were not through the future eternal kingdoms promised to us through hope? It is a marvelous thing that such a shock of people as are in the world, all moiling to the end that one time to taste of rest, and being able to rest before trouble, should remain so long while in such an error as trouble after rest were

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better than before.

"It is a thing very just (as it seems unto me) after troubles to seek rest; but to desire to rest without trouble in my judgment ought not to be, neither can it bring delight. Who then will give counsel to any that he lie first with a fair gentlewoman one year, the which is the only rest and joy of him that must stay with her, in shewing him after that there must follow so great annoy and unpleasant life as he must in every act, wherein he abode with the young woman, have to do as long with a loathesome old woman?

"Nothing is so noisome to a delightful life as to remember that after death we shall be found spotted. This death return to our memory as enemy contrary to our being, does disturb us of all goodness and pleasure. And while this is remembered there can never be joy tasted in worldly things. Likewise no delight can be had with the young woman that is not troubled or destroyed in thinking and remembering that it behoove him to do as much with a most vile old woman, who shall always be remaining before the eyes of his mind. The time that flies with an inestimable wing shall seem unto him to overfly, lessening each day a great quantity of the due hours. And this mirth is not tasted whereas infallible future sorrow is tarried for.

"Wherefor I would judge that the contrary were better counsel, that is, that all trouble whereof gracious rest is hoped for, is more delightful than the delight whereof annoy is tarried for. The cold waters seemed warm and the dreadful time of the dark night seemed clear and sound day and turmoils rest, to Leander, at what time he went to Hero, swimming with the force of his arms through the salt surges between Sestus and Abydos, for the delight that he conceived to have of her tarrying his coming.

"God forbid then that a man should covet rest before travel, or reward before the doing his service or delight before he has tasted tribulation. For as much as if that way (as we have already said) should be taken, the future annoy should so much hinder the present joy that not joy, but rather annoy it might be said. What delight could the delicate meats and instruments sounded with cunning hand and the other marvelous joys made to Dionysus the tyrant bring when as he saw a sharp-pointed sword hang by a fine thread over his head? Let then sorrowful occasions be first fled, that afterward with pleasure and that without suspicion gracious delights may be followed."

The queen made him answer saying: "You answer in part as though we did reason of eternal joys, for the purchasing whereof there is no doubt but that all troubles ought to be taken in hand, and all worldly wealth and delight to be left apart. But at this instance we do not speak of them but do move a question of worldly delights and of worldly annoys. Whereunto we answer as we said before, that every worldly delight that is followed with worldly annoy ought rather to be taken than the worldly annoy that carries worldly delight. Because who that has time, and carries time, loves time. Fortune grants her goodness with sundry mutations, the which is rather to be taken whenas she gives than to moil to the end after turmoils to get the same. If her wheel stood firm and stable until that a man had toiled so much as he should need to toil no more, we would then say that it were to be granted to take pains first. But who is certain that after the evil may not follow the worst, as well as the better that is tarried for?

"The times, together with worldly things, are all transitory, and therefor in taking the old woman before the year complete, the which shall never seem to wax less, the young woman may die, and her brethren repent them of this they have done; or else she may be given to some other, or peradventure stolen away; so that after one evil there shall follow a worse to the taker.

"But contrary-wise, if the young woman be taken, the taker shall thereby have his desire so long time of him desired, neither shall thereafter follow the annoy of thought that you say must follow thereby, because that we must die infallible. But to stay with an old woman is a thing able enough with many remedies to be of a wise man avoided, and worldly things are to be taken of the discreet with this condition, that each one while he holds and enjoys them he dispose himself with a liberal mind when he shall be required to restore or leave them.

"Who that busys himself to the end to rest brings a manifest example, that without that he cannot have rest. And since he therefor takes troubles to the end to have rest, how much more is it to be presumed that if rest were as ready as trouble but that he would sooner take that than this? Neither is to be thought that Leander, if he had been able to have had Hero without passing the tempestuous arm of the sea, whereinafter he perished, would not rather have taken her than have swum the same. It is convenient to take fortune's chances what times she gives them.

"For no gift is so small that is not better than a promised greater. And as for future things, let remedies be

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taken and the present governed according to their qualities. It is a natural thing to desire rather the good than the evil, whenas equally they concur, and who that does the contrary follows not natural reason but his own folly. We confess that after troubles quietness is more gracious and better known than before, but yet not that it is rather to be taken than the other. It is possible for wise men and fools to use the counsels both of fools and wise men according to their liking. But for all that the infallible verity is not altered, the which does give us leave to see that rather the fair young woman than the loathesome old is to be taken of him, to whom was made such a choice."

THE THIRD QUESTION, PROPOSED BY A YOUNG GENTLEWOMAN

ON the right side of Longano sat an excellent fair gentlewoman, and very pleasant, who as she perceived the question by the queen determined, thus began with a sweet voice to say:

Most renowned queen, your ears grant hearing to my words, and first by those gods whom you worship, and next by the power of our pastime, I pray you that you will give to my demands profitable counsel.

I as you know, being descended of noble parents, was born in this city and was named with a very gracious name, although my surname (being Cara) presents me grateful to the ears and as by my face it may appear, I have received from the gods and nature, a singular gift of beauty, the which I now have (in following my proper name more than my surname) I have adorned with an infinite pleasantness showing myself benign to whom that is delighted to behold the same. By occasion whereof many have endeavored themselves for their pleasure to occupy my eyes, against all whom I have withstood with strong resistance, holding a stable heart against their assaults. But because it seems to me unlawful that I only should ignore the laws kept and observed of all others, that is, not to love being loved of many, I have determined to become enamoured; and setting apart many seekers of such love, whereof some do excell Midas in riches, some others pass Absalom in beauty, and others some in courtesy (according to the common report of all) are more splendid than any other, I have of all these chosen three, of whom each one pleases me alike.

Of the which three the one of bodily force (as I believe) would excell the good Hector, he is at every proof so vigorous and strong. The courtesy and liberality of the second is such that (as I think) his frame does sound to each pole. That the third is all full of wisdom so that he surmounts all other wise men above measure.

But for that (as ye have heard) their qualities are divers, I doubt which of them to take, finding in the antique age each one of these to have diversely the courages of women and of yielding men; as of Dianira, Hercules, of our Clytemnestra, Egistus and of Lucretius Sextus.

Counsel me therefore to which of the soonest would least blame and greater surety I ought to give myself.

The pleasant queen having heard the purpose of this gentlewoman, thus made answer: "There is never a one of the three that does not worthily merit the love of a fair and gracious lady. But because in this case I am not to fight against castles or to give away the kingdoms of great Alexander or the treasures of Ptolomey, but that only that love and honour are with discretion a long time to be kept, the which are maintained neither by force nor courtesy, but only by wisdom, we say that both you and every other woman ought rather to give her love to a wise man than any of the rest."

"Oh how different is my judgment from yours," answered the gentlewoman, "to me it seems that each one of the others were sooner to be taken than the wise. And this seems to be the reason: Love (as we see) is of that nature as multiplying his force in one heart every other thing he vanishes out thence, retaining that for his seat and moving it according to his pleasure; whereunto no foresight is able to resist but that it is convenient for them to follow him, by whom it is (as I have said) governed. And who doubts that Byblis knew it not to be evil to love her brother? Who will gainsay that it was not manifest to Leander that he might drown in Hellespont in his fortunate time if he cast himself therein? And none will deny that Pasiphae knew not a man to be more fair than a bull? And yet they and each one overcome with an amorous pleasure, rejecting all knowledge, followed the same. Then if it has power to take knowledge from the learned, taking away the wit from the wise, they shall have nothing left. But if from the strong and courteous it shall take away the little wit they have, it shall yet increase them in their virtues, and so they shall become more than the wise enamoured. Further, love has this property: it is a thing that cannot long be hid, and in revealing himself he is wont oftentimes to bring grievous perils, whereto what remedy shall the wise give that has now lost his wit? He shall give none at all. But the strong that useth his force can help in a peril both himself and others. The courteous through his courtesy shall with grateful benevolence win the minds of many, whereby he may be both helped and considered, and others also for his sake. See now what it is to be of your judgment."

She was by the queen answered thus: "If, there was such a one as you speak of, who should then be wise? Not one. But if he whom you propound wise and enamoured of you should be made a fool, he is not to be taken. The gods forbid that that whereof you speak should come to pass. And yet we will not deny but that the wise know the

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evil and doit. But for all that we will say that they thereby lose not their wit, forasmuch as what time it pleases them with the reason they have to bridle their wills, they will reduce themselves to their accustomed wit, guiding their motions in a due and straight order. And in this manner their love shall be altogether or at the least a long time kept secret; and that without any doubtful diligence the which shall not happen to one of little wit, be he never so strong or courteous. And yet if perhaps it does happen, that such love be discovered, a wise man will with a hundred foresights shut up the eyes and understanding of the tatlers thereof, and shall provide a safety both for his own honour and the honour of his loved lady. And if need of safety be, the help of the wise cannot fail. That of the strong comes less. And the friends that are gotten by liberality are accustomed in adversity to shrink away. What is she of so little discretion that is brought to such a pass as has need of manifest help? or that if her love be disclosed seeks same in having loved a strong or liberal man? I believe there is none such. Let the wise then be soonest loved, hoping that he must be in each case more worthy than any of the rest."

THE FOURTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY MENEDON

THE gentlewoman by her countenance, seemed content, when Menedon, sitting next to her side, said:

"Most high and noble queen, now it is come unto my turn to propound my question here in your presence. Wherefore by your license if in my talk I shall be very long, yet during the same I shall first of all of you, and next of the standers—about, pray pardon. Because ye cannot be made fully to understand that which I intend to propound unless a tale that peradventure shall not be short, do precede the same." And after these words thus he began to say:

In the country where I was born I remember there was a noble knight, surpassing rich, the which loved in most loyal love, a noble gentlewoman, born likewise there, whom he took to wife. Of whom being as she was exceeding fair, another knight, called Tarolfo, was after enamoured and with so great good will loved her as he saw nothing he more desired than her. And in sundry sorts, now with passing before her house, now jousting, now at the barriers, now with the often sending her messages, peradventure promising her great gifts whereby she might know his intent, and now with other like feats, he endeavoured himself to purchase her love.

All which things the lady closely supported without givingsign or good answer unto the knight, saying to herself: "Whenas this knight shall discover that he can have neither answer nor yet good countenance of me, perhaps he will forbear any further either to love me or to give me these allurements."

Now for all this Tarolfo ceased not, following the precepts of Ovid, who says that a man must not through the hardness of a woman leave to persevere because with continuance the soft water pierces the hard stone. The lady, doubting lest these things should come to the ears of her husband, and that he should believe that the same happened through her good will, purposed to let him understand the same.

But yet after being persuaded through better advicement, she said: "I might, if I tell him, make such a brawl between them as I should never after live a merry life, and therefore he must be shaken off by some other means."

And so she imagined a trim guile. She sent to Tarolfo, saying that if he loved her so well as he made show of, she would require one thing at his hands; the which if she received she swore by her gods and by that loyalty that ought to be in a gentlewoman, that she would accomplish all his desire. And if he would not give her what she required, he should then content himself, no further to allure her hereafter but in what he would be willing she should reveal to her husband.

The gift she required was this: She said that she would have in that country in the month of January, a very fair garden and large, replenished with herbs, flowers and blossoming trees and fruits, as if it were in the month of May. She sent him this message, saying to herself that this is an impossible thing so that in this way I shall rid him from me.

Tarolfo, hearing this demand, although it seemed to him impossible to be done, and that he knew very well to what end she required the same, answered: that he would never rest, neither yet return into her presence, until such time as he might give her the demanded gift. And so forthwith departed his country with such a company as pleased him to take with him.

He sought all the west parts for counsel how to attain his desire, but not finding there what he looked for, sought the most hot regions, and so came into Thessaly, as he had been sent by a discreet man for that purpose. And having made his abode there many days, not yet finding what he sought for, it happened that now being almost desperate of his desire and rising one morning before the sun, prepared to enter the dawning day, he all alone began to wander the miserable plains that were now all imbued with Roman blood. And having travelled a long while upon the same, he suddenly espied before him at the foot of a mountain, a man not young nor of too many years, bearded, small and very spare of person, whose attire showed him to be but poor, who roamed hither and thither gathering herbs and with a little knife digged up sundry roots whereof he had filled one of the skirts of his coat. Whom as Tarolfo saw, he marvelled not a little, and doubted greatly lest it had been some other thing; but after his look did certainly show him to be a man, he drew near unto him, saluted him and asked him who he was and of whence and what he did there at so timely an hour.

To whom the old man answered: "I am of Thebes and Theban is my name, and I go up and down this place gathering of these herbs to the end that with the juice thereof I make divers necessary and profitable things for

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divers infirmities, whereby I may wherewithal to live. And to come at this hour it is need and not delight that constraineth me. But who are you, that in countenance resembles noble and walk here all alone solitary?

To whom Tarolfo answered: "I am of the extremes of the west, very rich and vanquished of conceits, pricked forwards to an enterprise, not being able hitherto to achieve the same and therefor to be the better able without impediment to bewail my lot, I go thus all alone wandering."

To whom Theban said: "Do you not know the quality of the place and what it is? Wherefore have you rather taken your way on the one side? You might easily here be rebuked with furious spirits."

Tarolfo answered: "God can do here as elsewhere. It is He that has my life and honour in His hands. Let Him do with me according to His pleasure, for assuredly death would be to me a rich pleasure."

Then said Theban: "What is that your enterprise, for the which (not being able to perform it) you abide thus sorrowful?"

To whom Tarolfo answered: "It is such as seems to me impossible to be able ever to attain, since hitherto I have here found no counsel."

Then said Theban: "Dare you utter it?"

Tarolfo answered: "Yea, but what profits it?"

"Peradventure nothing," said Theban, "but what does it hurt?"

Then said Tarolfo: "I seek counsel how may be had in the coldest month, a garden full of flowers, fruits and herbs, as fair as if it were in the month of May. Neither do I find who can therein either help me or give me encouragement that it is possible to be had."

Theban stayed a while in a muse without answer, and after said: "You and many others do judge the skill and virtue of men according to their garments. If my goods were such as are yours, you would not have lingered so long in discovering your lack. Or if peradventure you had found me near unto some rich prince, as you have in gathering of herbs. But many times under the vilest vesture are hidden the greatest treasures of science, and therefor no one conceals his lack to whom is proffered counsel or help; and if therefor he opens the same it cannot prejudice him at all. But what would you give him that should bring to effect that which you go about thus seeking for?"

Tarolfo beheld him in the face as he uttered these words, and doubted lest he went about to deride him for that it seemed to him incredible that he should be able to bring the same to pass unless he were a god. Notwithstanding he answered him thus:

"I have under my rule in my country many castles and therewithal great treasures, all the which I would divide with him evenly that would give me so great a pleasure."

"Truly," said Theban, "if you would do so much for me, I should no more need to go thus about in gathering of herbs."

"Assuredly," said Tarolfo, "if you be able to give true effect to what you promise and give it to me indeed, you shall never need to care nor yet to trouble yourself to become rich. But how and when can you bring me this to pass?"

Then said Theban: "The time when shall be at your choice, but for the manner how trouble not yourself. And I will go with you, trusting unto the word and promise you have made me, and when we shall be there where it pleases you to be, command what you would have done and I shall without fail perform the same."

Of this good fortune Tarolfo was so well contented in himself as little more gladness could he have received if he had then held his lady embraced in his arms, and said: "Friend, unto me it seems long until you have performed what you have promised; wherefor let us depart without further tarrying and go thither where this is to be done."

Theban cast away his herbs and took his books and other things necessary unto his science, and with Tarolfo took his journey, and in short time they both came unto the desired city, very near unto the month in which the garden had been required to be made. Whereas all secret and close they did repose themselves until the wished time.

And now the month being entered, Tarolfo commanded the garden to be made to the end that he might give the same to his loved lady.

So soon as Theban had received this command he tarried the night ensuing, the which being once come he saw the horns of the moon gathered into a perfect roundness and to shine upon the frequented earth. Then he went him all alone forth of the city, leaving his apparel apart, bare-legged, and his dishevelled locks hanging upon his

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naked shoulders. The restless degrees of the night did pass. Birds, wild beasts and men without any noise did take their rest. The unfallen leaves without moving did hang upon the trees, and the moist air abode in mild peace. Only the stars did shine when as he oftentimes went about the grounds and came unto a place on a riverside, which it pleased him to choose for his garden.

There he stretched forth his arm three times towards the stars, and turning himself unto them he as often bathed his white locks in the running stream, crying as many times with a most high voice their help. And after setting his knees to the hard earth, began thus to say:

"O night, most faithful secreter of high things, and you, O ye stars, which together with the moon do succeed the splendid day, and thou, O singular Hecates, become a helper to this my begun enterprise. And thou, O holy Ceres, the renewer of the ample face of the earth, also. And you whatsoever verses either arts or herbs, and thou whatsoever are bringing forth virtuous plants, and thou, O air, winds, mountains, rivers and lakes, and each god of the woods, and of the secret night, by whose help I have heretofore made the running streams to recoil, forcing them to return to their springs, and things running to become firm, and things firm to become running, and that has also given power to my verses to dry up the seas, that I at my pleasure might search the bottom thereof, and to make the cloudy times clear and (at my will) to fill the clear heavens with obscure clouds, to make the winds to cease and to turn as it seemed me best breaking therewith the hard jaws of the fearful dragon, making also the standing woods to move and the high mountains to tremble, and to return to their bodies out of the lake Styx those their shadows, and alive to come forth of their sepulchers, and sometimes thee, O moon, to draw to thy perfect roundness the attaining whereunto a ring of basons was wont to be a help, making also the clear face of the sun many times to become pale, be ye all present and aid me with your help. I have at this instant need of the sap and juice of herb, through which I may make in part the dry earth fastened through autumn and after through the withering cold winter, spoil of his flowers, fruits and herbs, to become flowering and to spring before the due time."

And having thus said, he said after many other things softly which he added unto his prayers. And these being ended and he a while silent, the stars gave not their light in vain. For more swifter than the flight of swiftest bird Questions Of Love there appeared before him a chariot drawn by two dragons, whereupon he mounted, and taking the reins of the bridles of the two bridled dragons in his hand, was carried into the air.

He then leaving Spain and all Africa took his journey by other regions and first sought for the Isle of Crete. And from thence after with a short course he sought Pelion, Othrys and Ossa, Mount Nerium, Pachinus, Pelorus, and Appenine. Upon them all, plucking up and with a sharp sickle cutting such roots and herbs as best liked him, neither forgot he those which he had before gathered when he was found by Tarolfo in Thessaly. He took stones also upon the mount Caucasus and on the sands of Ganges; and out of Lybia he brought lungs of venemous serpents.

He searched the watery banks of Rodanus, of Seine at Paris and the great Po, of Arnus, of the imperial Tiber, of Niscus, of Tana and Danube; on those eke gathering such herbs as seemed to him most necessary for his purpose, putting these together with the others gathered on the tops of the savage mountains.

He also sought the islands of Lesbos and Patmos and every other wherein he perceived any profitable thing to be had for his attempt.

With all which things he came (the third day being not yet passed) to that place from whence he departed and the dragons that only had felt the odor of the gathered herbs did cast off their old hides of many years and were with new renewed and became young. There he dismounted from his chariot and on the green earth he made two altars, on his right hand that of Hecates and on the left that of the running goddess. That being done and devout fires kindled thereupon, with locks dispersed upon his old shoulders, he began with a murmuring noise to go about the same and with let blood oftentimes he bespread the blazing brands.

After he placed the same blood upon the altars sometimes softening therewithal appointed for his garden, and after that he softened again the selfsame three times, with fire, water and sulphur, setting after a great vessel full of blood, milk and water upon the burning brands, which he caused to boil a good space, and put thereto the herbs and roots gathered in strange places, mingling therewith also divers seeds and flowers of unknown herbs, he added thereto stones, sought in the extreme parts of the east, and dew gathered the nights past, together with the flesh of infamous witches, the stones of a wolf, the hinder part of a fat Cyniphis and the skin of a Chilinder. And lastly a liver, with the lungs of an exceeding old hart and herewithal a thousand other things, both without name

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and so strange as my memory cannot again tell them.

After he took a dry bough of an olive tree and therewith began to mingle all these things together, in doing whereof the dry bough began to wax green and within a while after to bear leaves; and not long after the new apparelling thereof, it was laden with black olives. As Theban saw this he took the boiling liquors and began therewithal to sprinkle and water in every place the chosen soil, whereon he had set slips of so many woods as he would have trees, and of as many sorts as could be found.

The which liquor the earth had no sooner tasted but that it began to spring, yielding flowers and new herbs, and the dry slips began to become all green and fruitful plants.

All this being done, Theban entering the city returned to Tarolfo, whom he found all in a muse, fearing to be scorned through his long abode. To whom he said: "Tarolfo, the thing you required is done to your liking."

This news pleased Tarolfo not a little, and happening the day following to be a great solemnity in the city, he went into the presence of his loved lady, who had not now seen him for a long time past. And thus he said to her:

"Madame, after a long and tedious travail I have performed that which you have commanded, and whenas it shall please you to see it or to take it, it is ready at your pleasure."

She in seeing him marvelled much, and the more hearing what he said and not believing the same to be true, made him this answer: "It pleaseth me right well. You shall let me see it tomorrow."

The second day was come and Tarolfo went again to his lady and said: "Madame, may it please you to walk to the garden, the which you required to have this cold month."

She then, accompanied by many others, was moved to see the same; and they all being come to the garden entered therein by a fair portal, whereas they felt not the cold as abroad but the same to have a sweet temperate air. The lady went about the same and into every corner thereof, gathering both herbs and flowers, whereof she saw it very plentiful. And thus much more also had the virtue of the magical liquors wrought; the fruits which August was accustomed to bring forth, the trees there in this savage time did yield them very fair, whereof sundry did eat that accompanied the lady thither.

This garden seemed to the lady exceeding fair and admirable, neither did she think to have ever seen the like, and since she sundry ways knew it to be a true garden and the knight to have performed her request, she came toward him and said: "Without doubt, Sir Knight, you have deserved my love, and I am ready to stand to my promise. But I would pray of you this favour: that it would please you totarry the time or ever you require me to your desire, that my knight be gone a-hunting or into some other place out of the city, to the end you may the more safely and without any suspicion take your delight of me."

This contented Tarolfo, who left her the garden and so departed. This garden was manifest to the whole country although never a one knew of a long time how it came to pass. And the lady that had now received it all sorrowful departed from the same. Returning to her chamber full of noisome care and grief, bethinking her in what way she might return back according to her promise; and as not finding any lawful excuse, so much the more increased her care. The which thing her husband espying began many times and often to marvel thereat, and to ask the cause of that her grief, to whom she answered: that she ailed nothing, being bashful to discover to him her given promise for her craved gift, doubting lest in so doing he should account her for lewd. Lastly she being unable to withstand the continual instigations of her husband that now still importunately desired to know the cause of her annoy, discoursed the same unto him from the beginning to the end, and that therefor she abode thus pensive.

The husband hearing this of long time suspected no less and thereby knowing in his conceit the purity of the lady, thus said unto her: "Go and covertly keep your oath and liberally perform to Tarolfo what you have promised. For he has with his great toil, of rights deserved the same."

And having thus said the lady began to weep and to say unto him: "The gods keep me far from such a fault, in no wise will I so do. I will rather rid myself of life than do anything displeasing to you or dishonour to your person."

To whom the knight replied saying: "Wife for this matter that I will that you do no injury to yourself neither yetconceive any grief therefor. For in no wise shall it displease me. Go therefor and perform what you have promised. For you shall never be never a whit less dear to me but as you have performed this your promise to take you better heed hereafter of such like although a demanded gift may seem unto you impossible to be had."

As the lady perceived the will of her husband she decked and trimmed her and made herself very fair; took

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company with her and so went to Tarolfo's lodging and bepainted with bashfulness presented herself unto him. Tarolfo as soon as he saw her all marvelling rose from Theban and encountered her with great gladness and very honourable received her demanding the cause of her coming.

To whom she answered: "I am come to be wholly at your will. Do with me as it pleases you."

Then said Tarolfo: "You make me to muse above measure considering the time and the company wherewith you are come. This cannot be without some great alteration between you and your husband. Tell me therefor, I pray you, how the matter goes."

The lady then showed Tarolfo fully in order the whole matter and how it went, the which Tarolfo hearing he began then to enter into a far greater admiration than he had ever done before. And greatly to bethink him thereof and so in the end to conceive the great liberality of the husband that had sent his wife unto him. Whereupon he said to himself: whatsoever he be that should so much as but think villainy toward such a knight were surely worthy of great blame.

And so taking and talking with the lady he thus said unto her: "Madame, like a worthy lady you have performed what to me due is, for the which cause I account that received of your hands that I have of you desired. And therefore when it shall please you you may return unto your husband, and thank him, I pray you, on my behalf. For this is so great a pleasure done unto me and excuse me of the folly I have heretofor committed towards him, assuring him that hereafter I shall never put the like in practice."

The lady, giving great thanks to Tarolfo for that his so great courtesy, merrily departed thence and returned to her husband, to whom she recited in order all that had been happened.

But Theban now coming to Tarolfo demanded how the case stood. Tarolfo declared unto him the whole discourse. To whom Theban then said: "And I, shall I then lose that which you have promised me?"

Tarolfo answered: "No, but when it pleases you take you half of all the castles and treasures I have in sort heretofor promised you. For I acknowledge that you have fully served my turn."

To whom Theban answered: "It may never please the gods since the knight was so liberal to you of his wife, and you again was not a villain to him and that his offer, that I become less than courteous. For above all things in the world that content me in that I have served your turn, and therefore I will that all that I ought to receive in payment of my travail remain all yours, in such sort as it has ever been heretofor."

Neither would he take of what was Tarolfo's anything at all.

It is now doubted, in which of these was the greatest liberality, either in the knight that had given liberty to his wife to go to Tarolfo, either in Tarolfo who sent the lady (whom he had always desired and for whose sake he had done so much to come to that pass, whereunto he was come, whenas she came unto him) back unto her husband free, or in Theban, who having abandoned his country, being now old for to gain the promised rewards, and being come thither, toiled himself to bring that to an end which he had promised, whereby he justly deserved the same, did now remit the whole to Tarolfo, and remained poor as he was at the first.

"Very excellent is both the tale and the demand," said the queen. "Of truth each one was very liberal, considering the first of his honour, the second of his lascivious desire and the third that of his rewarded riches, was very courteous. Now if we will know which of them used the greatest liberality or courtesy, it is meet we consider which of these three deeds is most acceptable. The which being well weighed we shall manifestly know the most liberal, because who most gives is to be held most liberal.

"Of the which three the one is dear, that is Honour, the which Paulus Aemilius vanquishing Perseus, King of Macedonia, rather desired than to gain treasures. The second is to be fled, that is, the wanton delights of Venus, according to the sentence of Sophocles and of Xenocrates, saying that lust is to be fled as a furious government. The third is not to be desired, that is, riches, for so much as the most times they are noisome to a virtuous life; and to such a one as can virtuously live with moderate poverty as lived Marcus Curtius, Attilius Regulus and Valerius Publicola, as by their works is manifest.

"If then of these three only honour is to be held dear, and the others not, he used the greatest liberality that gave his wife to another, although he did less than wisely therein. He was also the chiefest in liberality wherein the others followed him. Therefor, according to our judgment, he that gave his wife, in whom consisted his honour, was above the rest the most liberal."

"I," said Menedon, "agree that inasmuch as you have thus said it be as you say. But yet each one of the others seems to me to be more liberal, and you shall hear now. It is very true that the first granted his wife but he used

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therein not so great a liberality as you speak of because if he would have denied her he might not justly have done it, by reason of the oath she made, the which was convenient for her to keep. And therefor that he may not deny does but well in making himself liberal thereof. And it was but a trifle he gave, and therefor (as I have said) each one of the others was more courteous.

"And for that (as it is already said) Tarolfo had now a long time desired this lady and loved her far above all others. He, for to attain her, had of long time abode great troubles, offering himself to satisfy her request, to seek for things almost impossible to be had, the which now obtained he deserved (through her promised faith) to obtain her also, whom (as we say) being obtained there is no doubt but that the honour of the husband the release of that she had promised (the which he released) was in his hands. Then was he, to conclude, liberal both of the honour of the husband of the oath of his lady and of his own long desire.

"It is a great matter to have endured long thirst and to come to a pleasant fountain and not to drink, but to suffer others to drink.

"The third was also very liberal considering that poverty is one of the most loathesome things of the world to bear, for so much as it is the chaser-away both of mirth and of rest, a stealer of honour, a frequenter of virtue and the inducer of crabbed care, so that everyone naturally endeavour themselves with a fiery desire to flee the same, the which desire is so kindled in many to the end to live splendidly in rest, as they give themselves no less to dishonest gain than to disordinate expenses, peradventure not knowing or not otherwise being able to feed that their desire which is cause many times either of death or of exile.

"How much then ought to riches to please and to be acceptable unto them that in due sort do both gain and possess them? And who will doubt that Theban was not most poor, if he behold how he, abandoning his night's rest, went gathering of herbs and digging up of roots in doubtful places, for the better sustenance of his poor life? And that this poverty did occupy his virtue may be also believed in hearing how Tarolfo deemed to be by him deceived when he beheld him apparelled in vile vesture and seeing him desirous to shake off that misery to become rich, knowing he came as far as from Thessaly to Spain, hazarding himself to perilous chances, through doubtful journeys and uncertain air, to the end to perform the promise he had made, and to receive the like from another.

"Also it may be evidently seen that without doubt who gives himself to such and so many mysteries to the end to flee poverty knows the same to be full of all grief and troubles. And how much the more he has shaken off the greatest poverty and is entered a rich life so much the more is the same life acceptable unto him.

"Then who that is become of poor, rich, if therewith his life delights him, how great and what manner of liberality does he use if he gives the same away and consents to return to that state the which he has with so many troubles fled? Assuredly he does a thing exceeding great and liberal. And this seems far greater than the rest, considering also the age of the giver that was now old, forasmuch as avarice was wont to be continually of greater force in old men than of young. Whereupon I gather that each one of the two following have used the greater liberality than had the first, so much commended by you; and the third far more than either of the others."

"In how much your reason might be well by anyone defended, so well is the same defended by you," said the queen, "but we mind to show unto you briefly how our judgment rather than yours ought to take place.

"You will say that he showed no liberality at all, granting the use of his wife to another, because of reason it was convenient to the oath made by the lady that he should do so. The which ought to be indeed if the oath might hold. But the wife, forasmuch as she is a member of her husband, or rather one body with him, could not justly make such an oath without the will of her husband. And yet if she did make such an oath it was nothing, because the first oath lawfully made could not with reason be denied by any following, chiefly not by those that are not duly made for a necessary cause.

"And the manner is in matrimonial unitings the man to swear to be content with the woman and the woman with the man, and never to change the one the other for another. Now then the woman cannot swear and if she do swear (as we have said) she swears for a thing unlawful, and so contrary to the former oath it ought not to prevail, and not prevailing otherwise then for his pleasure he ought not to commit his wife to Tarolfo. And if he do commit her to him then is he liberal of his honour, and not Tarolfo as you hold opinion. Neither could he be liberal of his oath in releasing it forasmuch as the oath was nothing.

"Then only remain Tarolfo liberal of his wanton desire, the which thing of proper duty is convenient for every man to do, because we all through reason are bound to banish vice, and to follow virtue. And who that does that,

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whereunto he is of reason bound, is (as you have said) nothing at all liberal but that which is done more than duty requires may well and justly be termed liberality.

"But because you peradventure in silence argue in your mind what honour may that be of a chaste woman to her husband which ought to be so dear, we will prolong somewhat our talk, in showing you to the end that you may the more clearly see that. Tarolfo and Theban, of whom we intend next to speak, used no liberality in respect of the knight.

"You shall know that chastity, together with the other virtues, yield no other reward to the possessors thereof than honour, the which honour among virtuous men makes the least virtuous the most excellent. This honour, if men with humility seek to support it, it makes them friends to God and so by consequence to live and after death to possess the goods eternal. The which if the woman conserves for her husband he may live merrily and certain of his offspring, and frequent in open sight among the people content to see her for such her virtues honoured among the most high and chiefest dames. And in his mind is manifest token that she is good, fears God and loves him, which is no small pleasure, seeing she is given him for an everlasting companion, indivisible saving by death. He, through this obtained favour, is seen continually to increase both in spiritual and worldly wealth.

"And so on the contrary he whose wife has default of such virtues can never pass one hour with true consolation. Nothing is acceptable unto him and continually the one desires the death of the other. He perceives himself through this disordered voice to be carried in the mouths of the veriest misers, neither seems it unto him that such default should not be believed of whomsoever it is heard. And if she were largely endowed with all other virtues yet this vice seems to have such a force as to bring her in contempt and to utter ruin.

"Then is this honour that makes the woman both chaste and good to her husband a most great gift and so is to be held most dearly. Blessed may he be called to whom through grace is granted such a gift, although we believe they are but few towards whom is born envy for so great a benefit.

"But to return unto our purpose it to be seen how much the knight did give. It is not fled our memory whenas you said that Theban was of the rest most liberal, who being with trouble enriched had not doubted to return into the misery of poor estate in giving away that which he had gotten. It appears that you are evil acquainted with poverty, who if she come unto us merry surmounts all riches.

"Theban now peradventure through the attained wealth felt himself replete of sundry sour cares. He did now imagine that it seemed Tarolfo to have done very evil and therefor would practice by murdering him to recover again his castles. He abode in fear to be peradventure betrayed of his tenants. He was entered into care touching the government of his lands. He now knew all the prepared guiles to be done unto his co-partner. He saw himself greatly envied for his riches and doubted lest these should secretly spoil him thereof. He was stuffed with so many such and sundry thoughts and cares as all quietness was fled from him. Through the which occasion calling to mind his former life and that without so many cares he passed the same merrily, he said to himself: I desire to grow rich to the end to attain great rest, but I see it is the increaser of troubles and cogitations, so it is the flier of quietness. And therefor desirous to be in his former estate he rendered them all to him by whom they were given.

"Poverty is the refused riches, a goodness unknown, a fire of provocation, the which was of Diogenes fully understood. As much suffices poverty as nature requires. He lives safe from every deceit that patiently approaches therewith, neither is he disabled to attain to great honours that (as we have said) virtuously lives therewith. And therefor as Theban rejected this allurements he was not liberal but wise. So gracious he was to Tarolfo in that it pleased him to give the same rather to him than another, whereas he might have bestowed the same upon many others.

"Then to conclude, the knight was more liberal that granted his honour than any of the others. And think this one thing, that the honour he gave was not to be again recovered, the which happens not in many other things, as of battles, prowess and others like, for if they are at one time lost they are recovered at another, and the same is possible. Therefor this may suffice for answer unto your demand."

THE FIFTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY CLONICO

AFTER the queen became silent and Menedon satisfied, a worthy young gentleman called Clonico, that sat next to Menedon, thus began to say:

Most mighty queen, this gentlewoman's tale has been so excellent and therewithal so long, as I in what I may shall briefly shew unto you this my concept, to the end the rest may the better at their more leisure say theirs. Then forasmuch as I, though very young, know the life of the subjects of our lord Love to be replete with many cares and sundry pining provocations, yet with small delight I have long time as I was able fled the like, rather eschewing than commending them which follow him. And although I was sundry times tempted, yet with a valiant mind (leaving the pitched snares) I always resisted; but because I being not strong enough, could no way resist that force whereunto Phoebus was unable to gainstand Cupid, having taken heart to bring me into the number of his thralls, was taken before I knew how.

For, one day being allured abroad through the fresh renewed time, walking all merry, and for my delight gathering of shell-fish upon the salt sea banks, it happened as I turned my eyes towards the glittering waves I suddenly saw a little bark coming towards me, as wherein with one onlymariner, were four young gentlewomen, so fair as it was a marvelous thing to behold the beauty they seemed to have.

They now being approached somewhat near unto me and I not having yet turned my eye from them, saw in the midst of them an exceeding great light, wherein as my estimation gave me, methought I saw the figure of an angel, very young and so fair as I never beheld thing more fairer. Whom as I thus eyed methought he said unto me with a voice far different from ours:

"O young fool, persecuter of our power (and being therewith arrived) I am come hither with four young damsels. Let your eye make choice of her for your mistress that best likes you."

I when I heard this voice abode all appalled, and devised both with eye and heart to avoid that which heretofore I had many times fled. But all was bootless for the strength of my legs failed me and beside he had bow and wings to overtake me quickly. Whereupon I in gazing among them espied one so fair, so benign of cheer and so piteous of semblance as I imagined to make choice of her, as of a singular mistress, saying to myself: this damsel presents herself to humble to my eyes as assuredly she will never become enemy to my desires, as many others have been to them, whom I have in beholding full of troubles always scorned, but she shall rather be a chaser-away of my annoys.

And having thus thought I forthwith answered: "The gracious beauty of that young damsel that (O my lord) sits on your right hand, makes me desire to be both to you and to her a most faithful servant. I am therefor ready to obey your will; do with me as shall best like you."

I had not ended my tale but that I felt my left side wounded with a shining shaft, shot from the bow which he bare, as methought the same was of gold. And assuredly I saw him as he turned towards her to strike her with another, of lead. And thus I being in this sort taken abode in the snares I had of long time fled.

This young damsel has and does so much content my eye as all other pleasure is very scarce in comparison of this; which the espying of long time shewed herself content. But after that she knew me to be so taken with this delight as not to love her was a thing impossible, incontinent she discovered her guile towards me, with an undeserved disdain, shewing herself in appearance a most cruel enemy, always turning her eye the contrary way as she happened to espy me, and with words on my part undeserved always dispraising me, by occasion whereof I have in sundry sorts endeavoured myself both with prayers and humility to appease her, But being unable I oftentimes bewep and lament this my hard fortune, neither can I anyways withdraw me from loving her, but rather how much the more I find her cruel so much the more methink the flame of her pleasure does set my sorrowful heart on fire.

As I through these occasions one day being all solitary in a garden, bewailed my fortune with infinite sighs accompanied with many tears, there came upon me a singular friend of mine, to whom part of my griefs were discovered, who with pitiful words began to comfort me the best he could. But I, giving thereunto no ear at all, answered him that my misery exceeded all others. Whereunto he made me this answer: "A man is so much the more miserable," said he "as he either makes or reputes himself a miser; but be assured I have greater cause to

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lament than have you."

I then all angry turned toward him with a disdainful look, saying: "And how? Who can have greater cause than I? Do I not for good receive evil recompense? Is not my faithful love rewarded with hatred? So that any may be as sorrowful as I, but more he cannot be."

"Truly," said my friend, "I have greater cause of grief than have you, and hear now. It is not unknown unto you but that I have of long time and yet do love a gentlewoman, as you know. Neither was there ever anything that I thought might pleasure her which I gave not myself with all my wit and power to being to effect. And truly when she understood the sum of that I desired, she made me a gracious gift, the which as I had received and receiving it at what time it pleased me, methought none by a great way to have a life comparable to mine in gladness.

"Only one thing pricked me, that I could not make her believe how perfectly I loved her. Further than this, she perceiving me to love her (as I said) passed lightly for me. But the gods that will grant no wordly good turn without some bitterness, to the end that the heavenly may be the better known and by consequence the more desired, it happened one day as I abode with her all alone in a secret place, seeing without being again seen by them that passed by, espied a proper young man and of pleasant countenance to come along by us, whom she beheld (as I perceived) with a fired eye, and being past, she fetched a pitiful sigh. The which I espying, said: 'Alas, do you so soon repent as that you now sigh for the love of another?'

"She, whose face was through this occasion painted a new red, swearing by the power of the high gods, began with many excuses to endeavour herself to make me believe the contrary of that which I had received through the sigh. But all was to no purpose because she kindled my heart with an anger so exceeding fierce as she made me then almost ready to chide with her, but yet I withheld me therefrom.

"And certainly it will never out of my mind but that she loves him or some other better than me; and all those persuasions, the which at other times heretofore she used for my help, that was, that she loved me better than she did any other, I now esteem them all in contrary, imagining that she has fainedly said and done all that she has heretofore wrought. Whereby I endure intolerable grief, neither does any comfort at all prevail therein, but because shame often—times does bridle the will I have rather to sorrow me than glad me, I do not continue my bitter grief, so as I make any appearance thereof. But briefly, I am never without cares and cogitations, the which bring me far greater annoy than I willingly would. Learn then to bear the less griefs since you see the greatest with a valiant mind borne of me."

To whom I answered: That as it seemed to me, his grief, though it were great was no ways to be compared to mine. He answered me the contrary, and thus we abode in a long contention, and in the end parted without any definition. Wherefor I pray you that you will say your judgment hereof.

"Young gentleman," said the queen, "great is that pain of yours and great wrong does the damsel commit in not loving you. But yet all times your grief may by hope be eased, the which happens not to your companion, because that since he is once entered in suspect nothing is able to draw it away. Therefor continually while love lasts he sorrows without comfort. So that in our judgment greater seems the grief of the jealous than that of the unloved lover."

Then said Clonico: "O noble queen, since you say so, it plainly appears that you have always been loved again of him whom you have loved. By occasion whereof you hardly know what my pain is. How may it appear that jealousy brings greater grief than is that I feel? For so much as the jealous possess that he desires, and may in holding the same take more delight thereof in one hour than in a long time after to feel any pain through want thereof. And nevertheless he may (through experience) abandon such jealousy if it happen that this judgment be found false. But I being kindled with a fiery desire, how much the more I see myself far off from attaining the same so much the more I burn and consume myself assaulted of a thousand instigations. Neither is any experience able to help me therein because through the often reproving her and finding her every hour the more sharp, I live desperate. Wherefor your answer seems contrary to the truth, because I doubt not but that it is much better to hold with suspicion than to desire with tears."

"That amorous flame that does shine in our eyes and that every hour does adorn our sight with the greater beauty, does never consent," replied the queen, "that we love in vain, as you affirm. But for all that it is not unknown to us how great and what manner of pain that is both of the one and of the other and therefor as our answer has been confirmable to the truth, one thing we will shew to you. It is manifest that those things which

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most do hinder the quiet of the mind are cares, the which are some of them come to a merry end, so some we see to end with great sorrow, whereof how much more the mind is replete so much the more has it of grief, and chiefest whenas the same are noisome. And that the jealous have more store thereof than have you is manifest because you heed nothing else but only to get the good-will of the damsel whom you love. The which not being able to attain is to you grief most grievous.

"But yet it is certain that it may easily come to pass to attain the same at one instant, not thinking thereof (for so much as womens hearts are inconstant) besides peradventureshe loves you notwithstanding (to prove if you also love her) she shows the contrary, and so perhaps will show until such time as she shall be well assured of your love. So that with these thoughts hope can mitigate unfeigned grief.

"But the jealous has his mind full fraught of infinite cares, against the which neither hope nor other delight can bring comfort or ease the pain. For he stands intente to give a law to the wandering eyes, the which his possessor cannot give. He will and does endeavour himself to give a law to the feet, to the hands and to every other act of his mistress. He will be a circumspect knower both of her thoughts and of her mirth interpreting everything in evil part towards himself, believing that each one desires and loves her whom he loves. Likewise he imagines every word that she speaks to be twain and full of deceit. And if he ever committed any detraction towards her it is death to him to remember it, imagining to be by the like means deceived.

"He will with conjectures shut up the ways of the air and of the earth. And briefly the heavens, the earth, the birds, beasts and every other creature that he thinks does hinder his devices. And to remove him from this hope has no place, because in this doing if he find a woman faithful he thinks that she spies that which he does, and is therefor heedful therein. If he finds that he seeks for, and that he would not find, who is more dolorous than he? If peradventure you think that the embracing her in his arms be so great a delight to him as should mitigate these pangs, your judgment is then false, because such brings him in choler in thinking that others as well as he have embraced her in the like sort. And if the woman peradventure do lovingly entertain him, he deems that she does it to the end to remove him from such his imaginations, and not for the true love she bears him. Ifhe finds her maliciously disposed he thinks that she then loves another and is not content with him.

"And thus we can shew you an infinite number of other suspicions and cares that are harbored in a jealous person. What shall we then say of his life but that it is far more grievous than that of any other living creature? He lives believing and not believing, and still alluring the woman. And most times it happens that these jealous persons do end their lives through the selfsame malice, whereof they live fearful, and not without cause, for that with their reprehensions they show the way unto their own harm.

"Considering then the aforesaid reasons more cause has your friend that is jealous to sorrow than have you, because you may hope to get and he lives in fear to lose that which he scarcely holds for his own. And therefor if he have more cause of grief than you, and yet comforts himself the best he can, much more ought you to comfort yourself and to set aside bewailings that are meet for faint hearts; and hope that the assured love which you bear toward your lady shall not lose his due desert. For though she shew herself sharp toward you at this present, it cannot be but that she loves you, because that love never pardoned any loved to love; and you shall know that with the fierce vehement winds are sooner broken the stubborn oaks than the consenting reeds."

THE SIXTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY A YOUNG GENTLEWOMAN

NEXT to Clonico sat a fair gentlewoman apparelled in a black vesture, under an honest veil, who as she perceived the queen to have made an end of her words thus began to say:

Most gracious queen, I remember that being a little girl, how one day I with my brother, who was a proper young man and of ripe years, abode all alone in a garden without other company. And in tarrying there together, it happened that two young damsels of noble blood, abounding in riches, and born in this our city, who loved this my brother very well, and perceiving him to be in the said garden, came thither and began afar off to behold him that was altogether ignorant of their purpose.

And after a while, seeing him all alone saving for me of whom they reckoned naught because I was but a little one, thus the one began to say to the other:

"We love this young gentleman above all others, neither do know whether he loves us or no. Yet is it meet that he loves us both. So that now it is lawful for us to satisfy our desire and to know whether he love either of us or which of us he best loves, to the end that she to whom he shall best like may after remain his without being hindered of the other. Wherefor since he is all alone and that we have amee time offered, let us run into him and each one embrace and kiss him. That done he shall take which of us best pleases him."

These two young gentlewomen being thus determined upon this resolution, began to run their race towards my said brother. Whereat he marvelled greatly, espying them, and seeing in what sort they came. But the one of them or ever she came at us by a good way stayed all bashful, and almost weeping ripe. The other ran through and came to him, whom she embraced and kissed, and so sat her down by him, recommending herself unto him.

And he, after the admiration conceived of her boldness, was somewhat crassed, prayed her as ever she loved him to tell him truly what moved them thus to do. She concealed nothing from him, the which he hearing, and examining well in his mind that which the one and other had done, knew not how to persuade himself which of them best loved him, neither yet which of them he might best love.

And so happening at that time to depart from them he after prayed counsel of many of his friends touching this matter. Neither has anyone ever satisfied his desire touching that demand. For the which cause (I pray you) from whom I assuredly believe to have a true definition of this my question, that you will tell me which of these two damsels ought soonest to be loved of the young man.

To this gentlewoman the queen thus made answer:

"Truly of the two young women, she as it seems loved your brother best and soonest ought to be loved of him again that (doubting) bashfully abode without embracing him. And why I thus think, this is the reason: Love (as we know) makes those always fearful in whom he does abide. And where he is of greatest force there is likewise the greatest fear. And this happens because the intent or consent of the person loved cannot be fully known. And if it could be known many things should be done that in fearing to offend are left undone, because the one knows that in displeasing is taken away every occasion to be loved; and with this fear and love shamefulness is always accompanied, and not without reason.

"Returning then to our question. We say that it was an act of one unfeignedly enamoured, that of the gentlewoman, whereby she showed herself both fearful and bashful. And that of the other was rather the part of one both lewd and licentious. And therefor he being of her best beloved, ought the rather (according to our judgment) to love her best."

Then answered the gentlewoman: "Most courtous queen, it is true that where love abides with moderation there fear and bashfulness does altogether frequent; but where he does abound in such quantity as he takes away the sight from the most wise (as is already said) I say that fear has there no place, but that the motions of him that feels the same are according to him that urges them forwards. And therefor that gentlewoman, seeing her desire before her eyes, was so hotly kindled as all shamefulness abandoned she ran straight to him by whom she was so vehemently pricked forwards as till then unable to abide. The other, not so much inflamed, observed the amorous terms, being bashful and remaining behind, as you say. So that then she that ran loved most, and most ought to be loved again."

"Discreet gentlewoman," said the queen, "true it is that excessive love takes away the sight and every other

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due perseverance in things that are aught of this nature, but not in these that belong unto him, the which as he increases so grow they. Then how great a quantity of love is found in anyone, so much the more fear (as we said at the first) is there also found. And that this is true, the cruel heart of Bibylis does manifest the same unto us, who how much she loved was seen by the sequel thereof. For she seeing herself abandoned and refused, had not the audacity to discover herself with her proper words but writing, she disclosed her unfitting desire. Likewise Phaedra many times gave the attempt to go to Hippolytus, to whom she thought boldly to speak and to tell how much she loved him; but the words she had to utter no sooner came into her mouth but they stayed upon her tongue and there died.

"Oh how fearful is the person that loves! Who has been more mighty than Alcides, to whom satisfied not the victory of human things, but also he gave himself to bear up the heavens; and notwithstanding, was lastly so enamoured not of a woman but of a young wench, a slave, which he had gained, as fearing her commandments did like an humble subject or servant even the very basest things. Also Paris in what he durst not attempt, neither with eye nor tongue, in the presence of his love, with his finger writing first her name with wine that had been spilt wrote after: I love you.

"How far passing all these does Pasiphae bring us a due example of fear, the which without any reasonable intention, yea, and without understanding, durst not so much as express her desire to a beast; but with her proper hands gathering the soft grass endeavoured herself to make him benign unto her, oftentimes decking herself at the glass for to please him and to kindle him in the like desire that she was in, to the end he might attempt to seek that which she durst not demand.

"It is not meet for a woman enamoured, neither for any other, to be prompt and ready, forasmuch as the great shamefastness only which ought to be in us does remain as the guarder of our honour. We have the voice among men (and the truth is so) to know better how to hide the amorous flame than they do, and nothing else engendereth this in us but the great fear which does rather occupy our forces than those of men. How many has there been of them (and peradventure we have known some) which many times have caused themselves to have been bidden, to the end thereby they might have achieved to the amorous effects, the which willingly would rather have bidden the bidder, before he them, if due bashfulness and fear had not detained them. And not only that but every time that No is escaped their mouth, they have had in their minds a thousand repentings, saying from their hearts a thousand times, Yea.

"Their remains then the like scellerate fire on the behalf of Semiramis and Cleopatra, the which loved not but sought to quiet the rage of their wanton wiles, and the same being quieted they after remembered not themselves the one or the other. Wise merchants unwillingly do adventure at one time all their treasures to the hazard of fortune, and yet notwithstanding they care not to grant her some small portion, the which if they happen to lose yet do they feel no grief of mind at all for the same.

"The young woman therefor that embraced your brother loved him but a little, and that little she committed to fortune, saying: This gentleman if I may hereby get him, it is well. But if he refuse me there shall be no more but let him take another. The other, that abode all bashful, forasmuch as she loved him above all others, she doubted to put so great love in adventure, imagining lest this peradventure should displease him and he so refuse her that her grief should be then such and so much that she should die thereof. Let therefor the second be loved before the first."

THE SEVENTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY GALEON

A CLEAR sun beam piercing through amongst the green leaves did strike upon the aforesaid fountain and did rebound the light thereof upon the fair face of the adorned queen, who was thereby apparelled with that color whereof the heavens make show whenas both the children of Latona (from us hidden) with their stars only give us light. And besides the splendour it brought to her face it did so lighten the place as among the fresh shade it yielded a marvelous lustre to the whole company. Further, what time the reflected rays did extend even to that place where the laurel crown on her head on the one side and the golden tresses on the other did determine it so intermingled there among with twinings not artificial as at the first sight one would have said that there had issued forth among the green leaves a clear flame of burning fire, which did spread in such sort as the auburn hairs were easily seen to the standers—about.

Galeon that was peradventure sooner or better awares of this marvelous sight than any of the rest, (being set in circle over against the queen, divided only with the water) did very intently behold the same almost as though he cared for nothing else. So that he moved not his mouth to the question that was now come to his turn.

To whom the queen therefor (having now both kept silence a good space, as eke contented the witty gentlewoman) thus said: "The only desire peradventure of the thing which you behold stays you, tell what is the occasion that holds you thus appalled, as in following the order of the rest you speak not? It is only (as we believe) the gazing at our head as if you had never seen the same before. Tell us first, and after as the others have propounded, even so propound you."

At this sudden voice Galeon lifted up his mind replete with sweet thoughts, somewhat coming to himself, at what time he is wont to do, that through a sudden fear does break his golden sleep, and thus said:

"Most noble and renowned queen, whose worthiness it should be impossible for me to declare, my mind was so wrapt in gracious thoughts (whenas I did so firmly look at your head) as in beholding the bright ray streaming into the fresh fountain and rebounding upon your face, methought there issued forth of the water a little sprite so gentle and gracious to see unto as he plucked my mind back to behold that which he did and perceiving peradventure my eyes altogether insufficient to behold so great a joy, he mounted by the clear ray into your eyes and there for a good space made marvelous mirth, adorning the same with a new clearness.

"And after mounting more high I saw how he ascended by this light (leaving his footsteps in your eyes) upon your crown, whereas he together with the ray kindled (as it seemed unto me) a new flame, such a one as was of yore seen by Tanaquil, to appear to Servius Tullius a little boy while he slept, and so went about your crown, leaping from sprig to sprig like a little amorous bird that singing does visit many leaves, moving your heart with sundry gestures, sometimes wrapping and hiding himself therein, being more merry every time he came forth thereof, and therewith (as it seemed unto me) so jocund in himself as nothing more, and that singing or with a sweet voice, he uttered these words:

"Of the third rolling sky, the benign babe divine
I am enamoured so, to nest in these two eyne,
That doubtless die I should, were I of mortal rout:
From twig to twig I twine, to feed this my delight,
These golden Tresses whirling in and out:
My self, inflaming my self, right
So as with flame I shew th' effect, the potent might,
Of my darts divine, piercing where I go,
Each one wounding, that with sweet sight,
Doth gaze her in the eyes, whereas each hour low,
If such her pleasure be, I there descend adown,
For of my kingdoms the queen is of great renown."

"And herewith he said much more, going about as at what time you called me, and you had no sooner spoken but that he suddenly retired into your eyes, the which sparkling like unto the morning star, gave a new light that made all the place to shine. You have now heard with what joy new thoughts have stayed me for a time."

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Philocopo and the rest marvelled not a little hereat and turned their eyes towards their queen saw that which to hear tell would have seemed to them impossible. And she that was attired with humility listened to the words that were truly reported of her and abode with a stable countenance, making no answer at all. And therefor Galeon speaking in this wise, followed with his question.

"Most gracious queen, I desire to know whether a manought to be enamoured for his delight or no? And to demand this many things move me, both seen, heard and held through the sundry opinions of many."

The queen beheld Galeon a good while in the face and afterwards, after a certain sigh, thus made answer: "It is convenient we speak against that which with desire we seek to follow. And truly that which you in asking do propound in doubt, ought to be manifest to you. In answering you therefor, there shall be kept the begun order. And he whose subjects we are pardon us the words that we, as constrained through force of judgment shall (more sooner than willing) say against his divine majesty, lest thereby his indignation do fall upon us. And you that likewise as well as we are his subject, with a bold mind give ear unto them, neither do you for all that change your purpose at all.

"And to the end that so much the better, and with a more apparent intendment our words may be received, we will somewhat digress from our matter, turning again thereunto as briefly as possible we may, and thus we say:

"Love is of three sorts, through which three all other things are loved, some through the virtue of one and some through the power of another, according as is the thing loved and likewise the lover. The first of the which three is called honest love. This is the good, upright and loyal love the which of all persons ought to be received. This the high and first creator holds linked to his creatures, and them he ties therewith unto him. Through this the heavens, the world, realms, provinces and cities do remain in their state. Through this we do merit to be eternal possessors of the celestial kingdom, and without this is lost all that we have in power of well-doing.

"The second is called love for delight. And this is he, whose subjects we are. This is our god; him we do worship, him we do pray unto, in him do we trust, that he may be our contentment and that he may fully bring our desire to pass. Of this is put the question, whereunto we shall duly answer.

"The third is love for utility. Of this love the world is replenished more than of any of the other things. This is coupled with fortune; while she carries he likewise abides but if they part he is then the waster of many goods. And to speak unreasonably, he ought to be deemed rather hate than love.

"Now as touching the propounded question, we need to speak neither of the first nor of the last. We will speak of the second, that is, of love for delight, to whom truly no person that desires to lead a virtuous life ought to submit himself, because he is the depriver of honours, the bringer of troubles, the revealer of vices, the copious giver of vain cares and the worthy occupier of the liberty of others; a thing above all things to be held most dear. What is he then regarding his own wealth (being wise) that will not flee such a government? Let him that may live free, following those things that do every way increase his liberty, and let vicious governors govern vicious vassals."

"I did not think," said Galeon then, "to give occasion to these my words to the lessening of this our disport, nor to disquiet the regiment of our lord love, neither yet to trouble the minds of any others; but did rather imagine (you defining it according to the intent of me and many others) that you might thereby confirm those that are his subjects with a valiant mind, and invite those which are not, with a greedy appetite. But I see that your intent is all contrary unto mine, because you with your words do show to be three sorts of love, of the which three the first and the last I consent they be as you say. But the second, which answers to my demand, you say it is much to be fled, as I hold opinion, it is (as the increaser of virtue) to be followed of him that desires a glorious end, as I believe to make apparent unto you by this that follows.

"This love, of whom we reason (as it may be manifest to all the world, because we prove it) does work this property in human hearts: that after that it has disposed the mind to a thing which pleases, it spoils the same of all pride and of all fierceness, making them humble in each doing, as it is manifest unto us by Mars, whom we find that in loving Venus became of a fierce and sharp duke in battle a most humble lover. It makes the greedy and covetous liberal and courteous. Medea, the most careful hider of her art, after she felt his claims, liberally yielded herself, her honour and her arts to Jason. Who makes men more diligent to high attempts than he? And what he can do behold by Paris and Menelaus. Who furthers forward the angry fires more than does he? He shows us how oftentimes the anger of Achilles was quieted through the sweet prayer of Polyxena. He above all others makes men courageous and strong. Neither know I what greater example may be given us than that of Perseus, who for

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Andromache did make a marvelous proof of his virtuous force. He decks all them that are by him apparelled with excellent qualities, with ornate talk, with magnificence and with pleasantness.

"He I say bestows upon all his subjects fineness and gentleness. Oh how many are the good things which proceed from him? Who moved Virgil? Who Ovid? Who the other poets to leave of themselves eternal fame and those their holy verses, the which (if he had not been) should never have come to our ears, but he? What shall we say further of his virtues? But that he was able to give such a sweetness to Orpheus' harp, as after that he had called to that sound all the woods, standers—about, and made the running streamsto stay, and to come into his presence in mild peace the fierce lions together with the faint—hearted harts, and all other beasts. He made likewise the infernal furies quiet and gave rest and sweetness to the troubled souls, and after all this the sound was of such Virtue as he attained to have again his lost wife.

"Then is he not the chaser away of honour as you say, neither the giver of unfitting troubles, nor the provoker of vices, nor the disposer of vain cares, nor the unworthy user of the liberty of others. So that everyone of whom he makes no account and is not as yet his servant ought with all their wit and diligence to endeavour and to occupy themselves in the attaining the favour of such a lord, and to become his subject, since through him he becomes virtuous. That which pleases the gods and men of greatest strength ought likewise to please us. Let such a lord therefor be loved, served and live always in our minds."

"Greatly deceived you your opinion," said the queen, "and it is no marvel, because as far as we understand you are so far enamoured as none the like, and without doubt the judgment of the enamoured is merely false, because as they have lost the sight of the eyes of their mind, so have they banished reason as their utter enemy. And for this cause it shall be convenient that we against our will speak of love, the which grieves us, since we be his subjects. But yet to pluck you from your error, we shall turn our silence to a true report, and will, therefor, that you know this: that this love is nothing else than unreasonable will sprung of a passion entered the heart through a wanton pleasure that is opened unto the eyes, nourished with idleness, by the memory and thoughts of foolish minds. And many times in how much it multiplies, so much it takes away the intent of him in whom it abides from thingsnecessary, and disposes the same unto things unprofitable.

"But because that you through good example giving do endeavour yourself to show, that all goodness and all virtue do proceed from him, we shall proceed to the disproofs of your proofs. It is no part of humility unjustly to bring unto a man's self that which belongs to another, but rather an arrogancy and an unfitting presumption. The which thing Mars (whom you make through love to become humble) assuredly used in taking away from Vulcan, Venus, his most lawful wife. And without doubt this humility that appears in the face of lovers does not proceed of a benign heart but takes root from guile and deceit, neither makes this love the courteous liberal but when as such abundance as you say to have been in Medea, does abound in the heart and does deprive the same of the sight of the mind, and most foolishly is become prodigal of things heretofore duly esteemed dear; and not giving the same with measure but unprofitably casting them away, believing to please, and displeases. Medea, nothing wise of her prodigality, in short time repented very much without utility and knew that if she had modestly used those her dear gifts she should not have come to so vile an end.

"And, that soliciting that purchases or works hurt to the solicitors, as it seemed to us, ought not any ways to be sought for, for much better is it to stand idle than work harm, although that neither the one nor the other is to be praised. Paris was a solicitor to his own destruction, if he beheld the end of his soliciting. Menelaus was become diligent, not for love but to recover his honour lost, as each discreet person ought to do.

"Neither yet is this love a mean to mitigate anger, but the benignity of mind, the brunt being past that induces it makes it to become nothing and remits the offence against whom it was angry. And yet lovers and discreet persons were wont at the prayers of the person loved, or of some friend, to forgive offences, to shew themselves courteous of that which cost them nothing, and to make the cravers thereof beholden unto them. And in this sort Achilles many times shewed himself to expell from him this congealed anger.

"Likewise it seems that this makes men courageous and worthy, but thereof I can shew you the contrary. Who was a man of greater valour than Hercules? And yet being enamoured he became vile and forgetful of his force, so that he did spin thread with the women of Iole. Assuredly in things wherein occurs no danger a most hardy people are the enamoured, and wherein danger happens they shew themselves in appearance hardy and put themselves forward; neither does love, but little wit, allure them so to do, to the end they may after have glory in the sight of their loves. Although it happens seldom because they doubt so much the losing the person loved that

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they are rather contented to be held vile and of little courage than to give themselves to peril.

"And yet we doubt not but this love reposed all sweetness in Orpheus' harp. We agree that it is true that you have shewed, that truly in general love loads the tongues of his subjects with such a sweetness and with so many enticements as they many times would thereby make the stones turn upside down, so that to entice is not only the property of wavering and inconstant men but of vile men. How shall we say, that such a lord ought to be followed, through the good property of the follower? Assuredly he (in whom he abides) makes wise and profitable counsels to be despised. For it was evil with the Trojans that those of Cassandra were not heard of Paris. He makes likewise his subjects to forget and despise their good fame, the which ought to remain to us all on earth as an eternal heir of our memory. And how much these aforesaid did condemn the same Aegisthus may serve for an example, although Scylla wrought no less hurt than Pasiphae.

"Is not he the occasion that does break the sacred bonds of the promised pure faith? Yea truly, what had Ariadne done to Duke Theseus whereby contaminating the matrimonial bands and giving himself and his promised faith to the winds, he should abandon his poor one among the desert rocks? A little pleasure in gazing in the eyes of Phaedra was occasion to bring about so much evil and such requittall for the received honour. In him also is found no law, and that it is true may be seen by the doings of Tereus, who having received Philomena from her pitiful father and carnally known her, made no stay to contaminate the most holy laws matrimonially contracted between him and Procne the sister of Philomena. This also calling and causing himself to be called a god, occupys the reasons of the gods. Who could ever fully with words shew the iniquity of him?

"He (to speak briefly) leads them that follow him to all evils; and if by chance his followers do any virtuous act (which happens very seldom) with a vicious beginning they begin it, desiring thereby to come very quickly into the desired end of their loathesome wills. The which may be rather said vices, than virtues, forsomuch as that is not to be heeded only which man does but with what mind it is done, and so according to the will of the worker to repute the same vicious or virtuous, because that never of an evil root sprang a good tree nor from an evil tree good fruit.

"This love then is lewd and naught, and if he be naught he is to be fled. And who that flees things evil of consequence follows the good, and so is both good and virtuous. The beginning of this love is none other thing than fear, the sequel is sin and the end is grief and misery. It ought then to be fled and to be reprov'd and to fear to have him in you because he is violent, neither knows he is any of his doings to keep measure and is altogether devoid of reason. He is without all doubt the destroyer of the mind; the shame, anguish, passion, grief and plaint of the same; never contents that the heart of whom that lodges him without bitterness. Who will then pray that he is to be followed, but fools?

"Truly if it were lawful we would willingly live without him. But of such a harm we are too late awares, and therefor it is convenient for us, since we are caught in his nets, to follow his life until what time as that light which guided Aeneas out of the dark ways, fleeing the perilous fires may appear to us and guide us to his pleasures."

THE EIGHTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY A YOUNG GENTLEWOMAN NAMED PAOLA

ON the right hand of Galeon sat a fair gentlewoman named Paola, pleasant and yet under an honest coverture, who after the queen had done thus began to say:

"O noble queen, you have decreed at this present that no person ought to follow this our lord love, and I for my part consent thereunto. But yet it seems to me impossible that the youthful race both of men and women should be run over without this benign love. I gather at this present, setting apart (by your leave) your sentence that to be enamoured is lawful, taking the evil doing for good working. And in following the same, I desire to know of you which of these two women ought rather to be loved of a young man, both two pleasing him alike, either she that is of noble blood and of able kinsfolk and copious of having much more than the young man, or the other, that is neither noble nor rich nor of kinsfolk so abounding as is the young man?"

To whom the queen thus made answer: "Fair gentlewoman, admitting the case that both man and woman ought to follow love as we have before affirmed, we give judgment: that in how much the woman is richer, greater and more noble than the young man, of whatsoever degree ordignity he be, even so she ought to be rather preferred to the love of a young man than ought she that has anything less than he, because man's mind was created to follow high things. And therefor he must seek rather to advance than anyways to debase himself. Further, there is a common proverb which says:

The good to covet better 'tis,

Than to possess that which bad is.

"Wherefor in our judgment you are better to love the most noble and with good reason to refuse the less noble."

Then said pleasant Paola: "Noble queen, I would have given another judgment (if it had been to me) of this question, as you shall hear. We all naturally do rather desire short and brief than long and tedious troubles, and that it is a less and more brief trouble to get the love of the less noble than of the more noble is manifest. Then the less ought to be followed, for as much as the love of the less may be said to be already won, the which of the more is yet to get. Further, many perils may follow to a man loving a woman of a greater condition than himself is of, neither has he lastly thereby any greater delight than of the lesser.

"For we see a great woman to have many kinsfolks and a great family, and them all as diligent heeders of her honour to have an eye unto her, so that if any one of them happen to espy this love, thereof may follow (as we have already said) great peril to the lover, the which of the less noble can not so lightly come to pass. And these perils each one (as he is able) ought to flee, for as much as who that receives harm is sure thereof and who that has done it laughs him after to scorn, saying he speeds well, where he likes there let him love; yet dies he more than once? Buthow that once happens, where, and for what occasion besides, each one ought to take good heed. It is very credible that a gentlewoman will lightly esteem of him, for that she will desire to love one more noble or greater than herself and not one inferior to herself; whereby seldom or never he shall attain his desire. But of the lesser shall happen the contrary, because that she will glory to be loved of such a lover, and will endeavour herself to please him, to the end to nourish love. And yet if this were not the power of the lover only might be able without fear to bring to pass to fulfill his desire. Wherefor I gather that the less noble ought to be preferred in love before the more noble."

"Your judgment deceives you," said the queen to the fair gentlewoman, "because love is of this nature, that how much the more one loves so much the more he desires to love. And this may be seen by them that through love feel the greater grief, the which although it troubles them not a little yet love they continually the more. Neither does anyone from his heart, although he make great appearance in words, desire thereof a speedy end. Then as small troubles are sought for of the slothful, and the wise, things that are attained with most trouble are held most dear and delightful. And therefor in loving the less woman, to get her should be (as you say) little trouble, and the love both little and short, and should be followed as though one in loving would desire to love less and less. Which is contrary to the nature of love as we have said. But in loving the greater, that is gotten with trouble, happens the contrary; because that as a thing dearly gotten with travail is reposed all diligence to the well

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heeding of the gained love, even so is she every hour the more loved and the longer does continue the delight and pleasure thereof.

"And yet if you will say that all the doubt is of their kinsmen we will not deny it, for this is one of the occasions. Wherefor it is a trouble to have the love of one of these great women. But notwithstanding the desert in such cases proceed by a secret way. And we doubt not but that the honour both of the greatest and meanest women is by some of their kinsfolks according to their power looked to, in such sort as a fool may come to an evil adventure, loving as well in a base as in a noble stock.

"But what shall he be that will pass Pesistrato in cruelty, having offended them which loved him without forethinking that which he should afterwards have done to those that had had the same in heart? In saying also that loving a greater woman than himself he shall never be able to come to the end of his desire, because the woman covets to love one greater than herself and therefor will make of him no estimation at all. You show yourself to be ignorant that the meanest man (in what belongs to natural virtues) is of greater and better condition than the noblest woman of the world. Whatsoever man she then desires she desires him that is of greater and better condition than herself, because the virtuous or vicious life makes many times the mean great, and the great mean. Inasmuch therefor as any woman shall be solicited by any man in due sort, even so without doubt she shall yield to his desire, though the great with more trouble than the mean.

"For we see the soft water with a continual fall to break and pierce the hard stone. And therefor let none despair to love. For so much goodness shall follow him that loves a greater woman than himself as he shall endeavour himself to please her, to have decent qualities, the company of noble personages, to be ornate of sweet talk, bold in enterprises and splendid in apparel; and if she attain to greater glory the greater delight shall he have of mind, likewise he shall be exalted with the good report of the people and reputed of a noble mind. Let him therefor follow the most noble, as we have already said."

THE NINTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY FERAMONT DUKE OF MONTORIO

NEXT unto Paola sat Feramont, Duke of Montorio, who after the queen had said, thus began:

"I consent that if it be convenient to love that you have already fully answered this gentlewoman to her question. And that a man also love rather a more noble woman than a less noble than himself, may very well be yielded to, through the sundry reasons by you shewed touching the same. But forasmuch as there are sundry gentlewomen of sundry sorts attired with diversities of habits (as it is thought) do diversely love, some more, some less; some more hotly and some others more lukewarm. I desire to understand of you which of these three a young man should bring his desire to a most happy end, ought soonest to be enamoured of either of her that is married, or of the maid or of the widow?"

To whom the queen made this answer: "Of the three the one, that is, the married woman, ought in no wise to be desired, because she is not her own, neither has liberty to give herself to any. And therefor either to desire or to take her is both to commit an offence against the divine laws as also against the laws natural and positive, the offending whereof is to heap upon ourselves the divine anger, and by consequence heavy judgement. Howbeit who that gropes not his conscience so far inwardly, does oftentimes speed better in loving her than of any other of the two, either maid or widow, inasmuch as he (although such love be with great peril) is to have the effect of his desire. And why this love may divers times bring the lover to his desire sooner than the love of the others, this is the reason. It is manifest that in how much more the fire is blown so much the more it flames, and without blowing it becomes dead. And as all other things through much use do decay, so contrarywise lust the more it is used the more it increases.

"The widow in that she has been a long time without the like effect, does feel the same almost as though it had never been and so is rather kindled with the memory thereof than with any concupiscence at all.

"The maid, that has yet no skill thereof, neither knows the same but by imagination, desires as it were one lukewarm. And therefore the married woman kindled in such passions does more than any of the others desire such effects. What time the married are wont to receive from their husbands outrageous words or deeds, whereof willingly they would take revenge if they might, there is no way left more readier unto them than in despite of their husbands to give their love to him by whom they are allured to receive the like. And although it be expedient that such manner of revenge be very secret, that no shame grow thereby, nevertheless are they yet content in their minds. Further the always using of one kind of meat is tedious. And we have oftentimes the delicate meats left for the gross, turning afterwards unto the same again, what time the appetite has been satisfied of the others.

"But because (as we have said) it is not lawful through any unjust occasion to desire that which is another man's, we will leave the married to their husbands and take the others, whereof a copious number our city does set before our eyes. And we would in bestowing our love rather seek the widows than the rude maids unlearned for such a mystery and that are not without great trouble (the which is widows needs not) made able to a man's desire. Further, if maids love, they know not what they desire, and therefor they do not follow with an intente mind the steps of the lover as do the widows, in whom now the antique fire takes force and makes them to desire that which through long depriving they had forgotten. So that to come to such effect they (too late) bewep the lost times and the solitary long nights the which they have passed in their widows' beds. These are therefor (as it seems unto us) rather to be loved of them in whom is the liberty to submit themselves unto others than any of the rest."

Then answered Feramont: "Most excellent queen, what you have said of the married I had determined in my mind that so it ought to be; and now hearing the same from you I am the rather assured thereof. But touching the maids and widows I am of the contrary opinion because (setting the married apart for the reasons by you alleged) it seems unto me very good that the maid rather than the widow ought to be desired. Forasmuch as the love of the maid seems more firm and assured than that of the widow. For the widow without doubt has already loved one other time before and has seen and felt many things of love, and knows what shame may follow thereof. And therefor knowing these things better than the maid, loves fair and softly; and doubting and not loving firmly desires now this and now that, and knows not to whether (for her most delight and greatest honour) to link herself, for sometimes she will neither the one nor the other. So that deliberation does waver in her mind, neither is the amorous passion able to take there stability.

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"But to the maid these things are altogether unknown. And therefor as she persuades herself with good advisement, that of many young men she greatly pleases one, so without further examination she makes choice of him as her lover and to him only disposes her love, not knowing how for her pleasure to show any contrary act. Neither is there for the more sure tying of the lover any new deliberation by her sought forth touching her love, so that she is then pure at the will and pleasure of him that simply pleases her and quickly disposes her wounded heart, him only to serve as lord. The which thing (as I have already said) happens not oft with widow and therefor is the other the rather to be followed.

"Further, with more efficacy the maid tarries those things that never anyone of her sort has seen, heard or proved. And yet she desires more to see, hear and prove them than who that has many times both seen, heard and proved them, and this is manifest. Among the other occasions for the which our life does greatly delight us and is desired to be long, is for to see new things such as we have never yet seen before. And also for to see things most new we have a great delight to run with a diligent pace to that which we above all other things do endeavour ourselves to flee, that is, death, the last end of our bodies. "The maid knows not that delightful conjunction through the which we come into the world, and yet it is natural to every creature through a desire to be drawn thereunto. Further, she many times has heard from them that know what manner of thing it is, how much sweetness does consist therein, the which words have given fire to the desire and therefor, drawn of nature and of a desire to prove the thing of her not as yet proved, does through the words which she has heard desire boldly with a kindled heart this concourse. And with whom is it presumed to be had but only with him whom she has already made lord of her mind? This heat shall not be in the widow because having once proved and felt what manner of thing it was she is thereby provoked thereunto. So that the maid shall then love more and be more diligent (through the reasons aforesaid) to the pleasure of her lover than the widow. To what end shall we then wade any further in seeking that the maid ought not rather to be loved than the widow?"

"You," said the queen, "reason well, and very well you defend your judgement. But yet we will show you with apparent reason how you likewise ought to hold the same opinion that we do hold of this contention, if with a straight eye you look unto the nature of love.

"Thus in the maid as in the widow, and so in the widow as in the maid, we do see him to be firm, strong and constant. And that this is true Dido and Ariadne with their doings have left us an example. And whereas this love is neither in the one nor in the other, none of the aforesaid operations will thereof follow. Then is it convenient that each one of them do love, if we will have that to follow whereof both you and I have already talked. And therefor in loving either maid or widow without going about to seek which of them is most discreetly enamoured (as we are certain of the widow) we shall show you how the widow is more diligent to the pleasure of the lover than is the maid.

"For doubtless among those things that a woman esteems dear above the rest, is her virginity, and this is the reason: because therein consists all the honour of her following life. And without doubt she shall never be so much urged forwards to love as she shall not willingly be courteous thereof but yet to him only to whom she believes to be coupled as wife through the matrimonial law. And therefor we go not about seeking for this; for there is no doubt but that who will love to marry ought rather to love the maid than the widow because she shall be slow and negligent in giving herself to him that loves her not (if she know it) to that effect.

"Further, maids are generally fearful, neither are they subtle enough to find the ways and means whereby they may take the stolen delights. But the widow of these things makes no doubt at all because that she already has honourably given that which the other tarries to give, and being without the same doubts not in giving herself to another that token which may accuse. Whereby afterwards she becomes more adventurous because (as it is said) the chiefest occasion that brings doubt is not in her. Besides, she knows better the secret ways and so puts them in effect.

"In that which you say, that the maid as desirous of a thing which she never proved may be made more diligent to this than the widow, that knows what manner of thing it is, thereof the contrary. Maids do not at the first time for their delight run to such effect (although the thing that delights the oftener it is seen, heard or felt the more it pleases, and the more careful is everyone to follow the same) because it is then more noisome than pleasant to them. This thing whereof we reason does not follow the order of many other things, that once or twice being seen, are afterward no more desired, but rather the oftener it is put in effect with so much the more affection it covets to return and more desires he the thing whom it pleases than does he whom it ought to please and has not

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as yet tasted thereof.

"Wherefor the widow forasmuch as she gives least, and is best able to give, she shall be the most liberal and the more sooner than the maid, that must give the dearest thing she has. Also the widow shall be sooner drawn (as we have shewed) than the maid to such effects. For which occasion let the widow be rather loved than the maid."

THE TENTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY ASCALEON

IT was convenient that Ascaleon, who in circle sat next to the duke Feramont, should now propound. And therefor thus he said:

Most excellent queen, I remember that there was heretofore in this our city, a fair and noble gentlewoman left a widow of a worthy husband, the which for that her marvelous beauty was of many and noble young gentlemen beloved. And of those many there were two gentle and courageous knights, each one in what he could did endeavour himself to attain her love. And while this continued, by chance it happened that unjust accusation was brought against her by certain of her kinsfolks, before the magistrate, and after by false evidence proved, through which untrue process she was condemned to the fire. But because the conscience of the judge was perplexed, for that it seemed him as it were to know the unjust proof, he was willing to commit her life unto the gods and to fortune's chance, and so tied such a condition to his given sentence: As after the gentlewoman should be led unto the pyre, if any knight could be found the which would combat in the defence of her honour against him that would maintain the contrary, and should happen to overcome, she should then be free; and if the contrary, to be burned according to the deemed sentence.

As the condition was understood of her two lovers, and by chance sooner known to the one than to the other, he which knew the same soonest forewith took him to his armour, mounted on horseback and came into the field, gainsaying him that would come and maintain the death of the gentlewoman.

The other, that somewhat later than the first understood of this sentence, and hearing how that the knight was already in field in her defence, neither that there was then place for any other to go thither in that enterprise. And therefor not knowing herein what to do, became very sorrowful, imagining that through his slackness he had lost the love of the loved gentlewoman and that the other had justly deserved the same.

And while he thus sorrowed his mishap he bethought him that if he before any other should go armed into the field, saying that the gentlewoman ought to die, and to suffer himself to be overcome, he might thereby cause her to escape, and so according to his device he put the same in effect.

The gentlewoman hereby escaped and was delivered from peril. So that then after certain days, the first knight went unto her and recommended himself to her, putting her in remembrance how that he, to preserve her from death, had a few days past offered himself to the peril of death, and thanks be to the gods and to his force, he had delivered both her and himself from so hard a happening. Whereupon it would please her according to his desert to give her love, the which above all things he had always desired.

Afterward with the like prayers came the second knight, saying: "For your sake I have hazarded my life and because you should not die suffered myself to be overcome, whereupon I have purchased to myself eternal infamy. Whereas I contrary-wise with encountering your surety and willing to use my force, might have been able to have gotten the honour of the victory."

The gentlewoman thanked each of them very benignedly, promising them both due recompense for the received service. And now they being departed, she abode in great doubt to which of them she should the rather give her love, to the first or to the second; and therefor prays counsel of you on which of them you would say that she ought soonest to bestow the same.

"We deem," said the queen, "that the first is to be loved and the last to be left. Because the first used force and showed his assured love in diligent sort, giving himself to every peril that might happen through the future battle even unto the death; whereby it might very well have followed, forasmuch as if such a battle to be done against him had been as lawful to any of the enemies of the gentlewoman as it was to the lover, he had been in peril of death for his defence. Neither was it manifest to him that one should come against him that would suffer himself to be overcome, as it happened. The last truly went well-advised not to die, neither to suffer the gentlewoman to die. Then, forasmuch as he put least in adventure he merits to gain the less. Let the first then have the love of the fair gentlewoman, as the just deserver thereof."

Ascaleon said: "O most prudent queen, what is that you say? Does not one time suffice to be rewarded for well-doing without craving further desert? Truly yes. The first is well requited with being of everyone honoured for the received victory. And what greater reward needs he than honour, the reward of virtue? The received

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honour did suffice for a greater matter than he did. And he that with all his wit came well–advised, ought he to be unrecompensed?

"And further, he to be of everyone evil–spoken of, having nothing less than the first helped the gentlewoman to escape? Is not the wit to foresee every bodily force? How so? If this man with all his wit came for the safety of the gentlewoman, ought he for his desert to be rejected? God forbid it should be so. If he knew not the same so soon as the other, this was not through negligence, for if perhaps he had known it before the other he would have run to that which he took discreetly for the last remedy. Whereof reward justly ought to follow, the which reward ought to be the love of the gentlewoman if rightly she see unto him. And yet you say the contrary."

"God defend from your mind," answered the queen, "that vice come to a good end merit the same reward that virtue done to the like end, merits. But rather inasmuch as vice deserves correction, so no worldly desert can justly satisfy virtue. Who shall deny us to believe (although we cannot manifest the same with apparent reason) but the last knight as envious of the good turn he saw prepared for another, was moved to such an enterprise, to the end to disturb the same and not for the love he bare the gentlewoman; and yet his device failed him. He is a fool that under the colour of an enemy does endeavour himself to the end to receive recompense to help another."

"Infinite are the ways whereby it is possible enough for us to shew at the first with open friendship the love that one of us bears toward the other, without shewing ourselves as enemies and after with coloured words to make shew to have profited. The which we have said may now suffice you for answer, whom old age more than anything else ought to make discreet. And we believe that when your mind shall have duly digested these things you shall not find our judgement guileful, but true, and to be followed." And so she held her peace.

THE ELEVENTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY A GENTLEWOMAN NAMED GRACE

THERE followed after him a gentlewoman of cheer very mild, that was named Grace (and assuredly the name was consonant to her nature) who with an humble and modest voice began these words: "It is come unto my turn, O most virtuous queen, to propound this, my question, the which to the end the time (that now approaches unto our last feasting may be sweetened with the new beginning thereof) be only spent in talk, I shall briefly propound that which willingly (and if it were lawful for me) I would pass over, yet not to infringe upon the limits of your obedience neither the order of the rest, I shall propound this: Whether is it great delight to the lover to see his love present, or not seeing her to think amorously on her?"

"My gracious Grace," said the queen, "we believe that much more delight is taken in thinking than in beholding, because in thinking on the thing loved all the sensitive spirits do then graciously feel a marvelous joy and as it were do content their inflamed desires with the delight only of the thought. But this happens not in the beholding because that only the visible spirit feels joy and the others are kindled with such a desire that they are not able to endure, and so remain vanquished. And that visible spirit sometimes takes so great pleasure that of force he is constrained to withdraw himself back, remaining vile and altogether vanquished. Then do we gather hereof that greater delight is to think than to behold."

"That thing which is loved," answered the gentlewoman, "how much the more it is seen so much the more it delights. And therefor I believe that greater delight brings the beholding than does the thinking, because every beauty at the first pleases through the sight thereof. And so after through the continual sight such pleasure is confirmed in the mind as thereof is engendered love, and those pleasures that spring from him. No beauty is so much loved, neither for any other occasion, than to please the eyes and to content the same. Then in seeing they are contented and in thinking to see the desire increases. So that more delight feels he that is contented, than does he that desires to content himself.

"We may see and know by Laodamia how much more the present sight than the absent thought does delight, because we are to think that her Protesilaus never departed from her thought, neither yet was she ever seen disposed to other than to melancholy, refusing to deck and apparel herself with her costly garments. The which thing in seeing him never happened. For what time she abode in his presence she was merry, gracious and always joyful and trimly attired. What more manifest testimony will we have than this, that the gladness is greater of the sight than of the thought? Because that through the exterior doings that may be comprehended, which in the heart is hidden."

The queen then thus made answer: "Those things both delightful and noisome that approach most near unto mind, bring more annoy and more joy than do those far off from the same. And who doubts but that the thought abides in the mind and that the mind is not from the eye? Although through the particular virtue of the mind they have their sight, and that it is convenient for them by sundry means to render their proportions to the animate understanding.

"Having then in the mind a sweet thought of the loved, in that act which the thought brings, in that together with the thing loved, it seems the lover to be. Then he sees the same with those eyes to whom nothing, no not of a long distance, may be hidden. Then he speaks with her whom he loves and peradventure with piteous style tells the annoys sustained for her sake. Then is it lawful for him without fear to embrace her. Then does he according to his desire marvelous pleasure himself with her. Then does he hold her wholly at his pleasure, the which in beholding happens not, because that sight only at first takes pleasure without passing further.

"And as we say love is timorous and fearful, and in beholding does make the heart tremble in such sort as it leaves neither thought nor spirit in his place. For many with the long beholding of their ladies lose those their natural forces and remain vanquished. And many, not being able to move, stand like posts; othersome in tangling and traversing their legs fall to the ground. Others thereby lose their speech. And by sight we know many other like things to have happened, the which all should have been very acceptable to them, to whom (as we have said) they have happened, if they had not happened at all. How then brings that same delight that shall willingly be fled? We confess that were it possible to behold without fear, it should be a great delight. But yet little or nothing

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without the thought, the which without the bodily sight pleases very much.

"And that whereof we may have spoken come to pass through the thought, it is manifest; yea, that and muchmore. For we do find that men with thought have passed the heavens and tasted of the eternal peace. Then more delights the thought than the sight. And if you say that Laodamia was melancholy with thinking, we do not deny it, but yet it was rather a dolorous than an amorous thought that did trouble her. She (as it were) a diviner to her own harm, always doubted the death of Protesilaus, and still was thinking thereon, contrary to those thoughts whereof we reason, which through that doubt could not enter into her, but rather sorrowing through this occasion as reason was, she shewed a troublesome and heavy look."

THE TWELFTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY LONGANO

NEXT to Philocopo was placed a courteous young man and gracious to behold, whose name was Longano, who thus began:

Most excellent queen, so trim has been the previous question that in my conceit mine shall bring no delight at all. Yet to the end not to be severed from so noble a company, forth it shall; and thus he followed saying:

It is not many days past that I, abiding all solitary in my chamber, wrapt in a heap of troublesome thoughts sprung from an amorous desire, the which with a fierce battle had assaulted my heart, by chance heard a piteous plaint whereunto (because I judged it by estimation near unto me) intently I laid my ear, and thereby knew that they were women. By occasion whereof I suddenly rose to see who and where they were; and looking forth at my chamber window, I heard over against the same in one other chamber, two young women, the same being sisters, adorned with an inestimable beauty, there abiding without any other company. Whom as I saw making this sorrowful plaint I withdrew myself into a secret place without being of them espied, and so beheld them a long while. Neither was I able for all that to understand all the words that they through grief uttered in tears, but that the effect of such plaint (according to that I could comprehend) seemed to me to be for love. Wherefor I through pity and to sweet an occasion offered (being thus close as I was) began to shed my trickling tears.

And after that I had in their grief persevered in the same a good space (forsomuch as I was their very familiar and also their kinsman) I purposed to understand more certain the occasion of their sorrow, and so went to them; who had no sooner espied me but all bashful they withheld them from tears, endeavouring themselves to do me reverence.

To whom I said: "Gentlewomen, trouble not yourselves, neither let this my coming move you to restrain your inward grief, for your tears have been now a good space apparent unto me. It shall be therefor needless to hide you, either yet through bashfulness to hide from me the cause of this your plaint. For I am come hither to understand the same. And be you assured that you shall not receive by me, either in word or deed, any evil requittal, but rather help and comfort in what I may."

The women greatly excused themselves, saying that they sorrowed for nothing. But yet after I had conjured them and they seeing me desirous to understand the same, the elder thus began to say:

"It is the pleasure of the gods that to you our secrets be discovered. You therefor shall understand that we, above all other women, have always resisted the sharp darts of Cupid, who of a long season in casting the same was never yet able to fasten any one of them in our hearts. But now lastly being further inflamed, and having determined to overcome that his childish enterprise, took anew with his young arm of his best and dearest shafts, and with so great force wounded the hearts so sore enfeebled through the sundry blows before received that they made a far greater wound than if resistance had not been made (unto the other former) had like to have been. And thus for the pleasure of two most noble young gentlemen we are become subjects to his deity, following his pleasure with more perfect faith and fervent will than ever any other women have done.

"Now has fortune and the love of them (as I shall declare unto you) left us both comfortless. First I, before my sister here, was in love, and through my endeavour, believing wisely to end my desire, so wrought as I got the loved young gentleman at my pleasure, whom I found as greatly enamoured of me as I of him. But truly now has not the amorous flame through such effort ceased, neither has the desire lessened, but each one more vehemently increases; and more than ever do I now burn in his fire. And what time seeing how I might best mitigate and assuage the kindled flame thereof, holding it inwardly secret, it after happened that the horned moon was no sooner come to her perfect roundness but that he at unawares committed a fault, for the which was adjudged him perpetual exile from this city. Whereupon he, dreading death, is departed hence without hope ever to return. I, sorrowful woman above all others more now inflamed than ever am without him left both doleful and desperate. By occasion whereof I sorrow me, and that thing that most increases my sorrow is that on every side I see the way hard from being able to follow him. Think therefor now whether I have cause to make plaint or no."

Then said I: "And this other, who sorrows she?"

And she answered: "This my sister likewise (as I) is enamoured of another, and of him again loved above measure. And to the end her desires should not pass the amorous paths without tasting some part of delight, many

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times she has endeavoured herself to bring them to effect; but contrary to her device, jealousy has always occupied and broken the way. And because she could never attain thereunto, neither saw how to be able so to do, she thus distressed is through fervent love consumed; as you may well think if ever you were in love. Being we were here then all alone, we began to reason of our misfortunes, and knowing the same far greater than those of other women, we could not withhold from tears, but with weeping sorrowed our luckless lots, as you might well perceive."

To hear this of them it grieved me greatly, so that I encouraged them with such words as seemed me most profitable for their comfort; and so departed from them. Many times after, revolving in mind their griefs and sometimes bethinking me which of the same should be the greater, at one time I agreed to that of the one and at another time I yielded that of the other. And the sundry reasons wherewith, as it seemed me, each one has to lament her, will not suffer me to stay upon any one; whereupon I remain here in doubt. May it therefor please you that by you may be opened this error, in telling me which of these two unfortunate lovers seemed to sustain the greatest grief.

Answered the queen: "Great was the sorrow of either of them, but considering adversity to be most grievous to her that has tasted prosperity, we esteem that she that has lost her love feels the greatest grief, and if of fortune greatliest offended. Fabritius never bewept the chances of fortune; but that Pompey did is a thing very manifest. If sweet things were not tasted the sour should be yet unknown. Medea never knew (according to her own saying) what manner of thing prosperity was while she was in love, but being forsaken of Jason bewailed her adversity. Who will ever lament for that he has not had? Not one but will rather desire. It is deemed, therefor, that of the two women the one wept for grief, the other for desire."

"It is very hard for me, gracious lady, to think that which you affirm," said the young gentleman, "forsomuch as who that has his desire of any desired thing ought much more to content his mind than who that desires and cannot fulfill his desire. Further, nothing is more light to lose than what hope promises not hereafter to yield. There ought to be unmeasurable grief, whereas the not being able to bring equal wills to effect does hinder. From thence lamentations take place, from these thoughts and troubles do spring, because if the wills were not equal, of force the desire should want. But whenas lovers see themselves in presence of that they desire and cannot attain thereunto, then do they kindle and sorrow them much more than if that they would have were far from them. And who, I pray you, torments Tantalus in hell but only the apples and the water, for that how much more near they bend and swell unto his mouth, so much the more (afterwards, in seeing the same) they increase his hunger. Truly I believe that who hopes for a thing possible to be had, and cannot attain thereunto through contrary resisting impediments, feels more grief than who that bewails a thing lost and irrecoverable."

Then said the queen: "Your answer would have followed very well where your demand should have been of an old grief, although unto that also might be said thus: to be possible, through forgetting the grief, to shorten the desire in the desired things, whereas continual impediment is seen not to be able to attain them, as in those lost, wherein hope does not shew us that we should ever have them again.

"But we do reason which of them sorrowed most, when you saw them sorrowing. Wherefor following the propounded case, we will give judgment: that she felt greater grief that had lost her lover without hope to have him again (putting the case that it be an easy matter to lose a thing impossible to have again, nevertheless it was to be said: who loves well forgets never) than to the other, who if we look well might hope to fulfill that hereafter that heretofore she was unable to perform. For a great lessener of grief is hope. It had force to keep chaste and to diminish the sorrows of the lingering life of Penelope."

THE THIRTEENTH QUESTION, PROPOSED BY MASSALINE

MASSALINE, the which sat on the right hand of the queen, and next to Longano, performing the circle, said in this wise:

It is meet that I lastly do propound my question. And therefor to the end that I may make the pleasant told tales and the before propounded questions to seem more sweet, I shall tell you a short tale worth the hearing, wherein there falls a question very proper to make an end withal.

I have heretofore heard say that there was in this our city a gentleman who was very rich, that had to wife an exceedingly fair young gentlewoman whom he loved above all worldly things. This gentlewoman was entirely beloved of a knight of the same city, but she loved him not at all, neither cared for him; by occasion whereof the knight was never able to get from her either good words or courteous countenance.

And while he thus lived comfortless of such love, it happened that he was called to the regiment of a city not far distant from this of ours. And accordingly he went thither, having honourably governed the same all the time of his abode there. During which it happened that there came a messenger unto him, who after news thus said:

"Sir, you shall understand that the gentlewoman of our city whom you so entirely loved above all others, this morning labouring with great grief to be delivered of child, died, not being delivered, and was in my presence of her parents honourably buried."

The knight, not without great sorrow, gave ear to this tale and with a strong heart endured the telling thereof without shewing any alteration of countenance at all, and to himself thus said: "Ha, wretched death, curst be your power! You have deprived me of her whom I loved above all others and whom I desired more to serve, although I knew her crueler to me than any other worldly wight. But since it is thus come to pass, that which love in her lifetime would not vouchsafe to grant me, now that she is dead he cannot deny me. That assuredly if I should die therefor I will now kiss the face of her being dead, that living I loved so well."

And so staying upon this determination, he tarried until it was night, and then took one of his servants whom he best trusted with him, and travelled the dreadful dark ways till at last he came to the city. And being entered the same he went straight to the sepulchre wherein the gentlewoman was buried.

And after he had comforted his servant that he without any fear should attend him there, he opened the same and went thereinto. Lamenting with a piteous plaint, he kissed the gentlewoman and took her in his arms; and not satisfied therewith he began to feel her here and there, and to put his hand into her frozen breast. But afterwards (being much more bold than was meet) to seek out under the rich attire which she had on, going and feeling with a fearful hand hither and thither, till at the last with a feeble motion he felt the weak pulses somewhat to move.

He then became very fearful but yet love made him bold, and therefor trying further with a more assured heed, he knew that she was not dead. And first of all with a sweet mutation he drew her out of that place, and after wrapping her in a great mantle (leaving the sepulchre open) he and his servant carried her secretly to his mother's house, whereas he conjured his said mother through the power of the god that she neither this nor anything else should manifest to any person living.

He caused great fires to be made to the end to comfort the cold members, whereunto the lost forces did not thereby return in due sort. By occasion whereof, as one peradventure discreet in such a case, willed a solemn hothouse to be prepared, wherein he caused first to be strewed many virtuous herbs and after placed the gentlewoman therein, causing her as it was meet for one in that plight, to be tenderly looked unto. In the which hothouse, after she had for a time made her abode there, the blood coagulated about the heart began through the received heat to disperse by the cold veins and the spirits half dead to return to their places.

Whereupon the gentlewoman (no sooner feeling the same) began to call to her mother, and after to ask where she was. To whom the knight, instead of her mother, made answer that she was in a very good place, and that she should comfort herself. She abiding in this sort, calling upon the woman Lucina for help, was as it pleased the gods (above all expectation) delivered of a fair son, and therewith of great trouble and peril. Whereof remaining disburdened and being joyful of her newborn child, there were out of hand provided nurses, both for the charge of her as also of her son.

The gentlewoman now after all these heavy troubles returned to her perfect understanding, and the new son

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was also born to the world before she saw either the knight that thus loved her or his mother, who was pressed to do her service, neither did she see any one of her parents or kinsfolks about her for to look unto her. Whereupon being come into a cogitable admiration as it were all amazed, said: "Where am I? What a wonder is this? Who has brought me hither whereas I was never before?"

To whom the knight answered: "Gentlewoman, marvel not. Comfort yourself, for that which you see has been the pleasure of the gods and I shall tell you how." And so declaring from the beginning to the end all that which was happened her, concluded that through him she and her son were alive. By occasion whereof they were always bounden to be at his pleasure.

The gentlewoman perceiving this to be true, knowing assuredly that she could not by any other means but only by this which he shewed her be come to the hands of the knight, first of all with a devout voice rendered thanks to the immortal gods, and after to him, offering herself to be always at his pleasure and service.

Then said the knight: "Gentlewoman, since you know yourself to be beholden unto me, I will that in guerdon of my well-doing you comfort yourself here in this place until I return from my office, whereunto it is now so long since that I was chosen as the date hereof is almost at an end. Besides you shall promise me faithfully never to betray yourself without my license, either to your husband or any other person."

To whom the gentlewoman answered, that she was unable to deny him either this or any other request, and that assuredly she would comfort herself; and so by oath made unto him she affirmed never to cause herself to be known without his pleasure.

The knight, seeing the gentlewoman out of all peril to receive comfort, after he had abode two days in her service, recommended her and her child to his mother's charge, and so departed, returning to the government of his said office; the which after little while he honourably ended and returned home to his own house and possessions; whereas of the gentlewoman he was graciously received.

Certain days after his return he caused to be prepared a great banquet, whereunto he invited the husband of this gentlewoman whom he loved, her brethren, and many others of her friends and his. And the bidden guests being set down at the table, the gentlewoman according to the pleasure of the knight came apparelled in those garments and decked with that crown, ring and other precious ornaments (as the use was then) wherewith she was buried. And by the commandment of the knight, placed herself on the one side by her husband and on the other side by himself, whereas she fed that morning without speaking any word at all.

This gentlewoman was oftentimes beheld of her husband and her attire and ornaments also. And as it seemed unto him he knew her to be his wife and those to be the garments wherein she was buried; he yet for that he thought he had buried her dead into her sepulchre, and not believing that she was risen again, durst not once give her a word, doubting lest she had been some other that did resemble his wife, imagining that it were more easy to find one woman in attire and ornaments like to another, than to raise up a dead body.

But yet for all this he turned many times towards the knight and asked him who she was. To whom the knight answered: "Ask of her whom she is, for I cannot tell, out of so unpleasant a place I have brought her."

Then the husband asked the wife who she was, to whom she answered: "I was brought by this knight by unknown ways unto this place, to that gracious life that is of everyone desired."

At these words there wanted no admiration in the husband but rather the same increased, and so they remained until the banquet was ended. Then the knight led the husband of this gentlewoman into a chamber and with him the gentlewoman, and the others that likewise that banqueted with them whereas they found the gentlewoman's fair and gracious son in the nurse's arms, whom the knight delivered into the father's hands, saying: "This is your son;" and giving him the right hand of his wife, said: "This is your wife and mother of this child." Shewing to him and to the rest how it happened that she was brought thither.

They all after great wonder made great joy and chiefly the husband of his wife, and the wife with her husband of their son. And so both two thanking the knight, returned merrily home to their house, many days after making marvelous joy.

This knight entreated this gentlewoman with that tenderness and that pure faith, as if she had been his sister, and therefor it is doubted which of these two was the greater; either the loyalty of the knight or the joy of the husband that had now gotten again his lost wife, whom he reputed as dead. I pray you to say your opinion and what you would judge hereof.

"Most great (as we believe)," answered the queen, "was the joy of the again gotten wife and of her child. And

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likewise noble and very great was the loyalty of the knight. But for that it is a natural thing to be glad of the getting again of things lost (neither could it otherwise be because it would any other) and especially in the getting again of a thing before so greatly loved, with a child, whereof there could not be made so great joy as was convenient. We do not repute it to be so great a matter as to do that whereunto a man of his proper virtue is constrained to do, the which in being loyal comes to pass, because the being and not being loyal is a thing possible. We say then, that from whom proceeds the being loyal in a thing so greatly loved that he does a most great and noble thing in keeping loyalty, and that in a far greater quantity loyalty does increase in him than does joy in the other, and thus we judge."

"Truly," said Massaline, "most renowned queen, I believe it be as you say. But yet it seems unto me a great matter to think that with so great joy as was in him that had gotten again his wife, there could be made comparison of greatness in another thing, for as much as greater grief is not supported than whenas through death a thing loved is lost. Further, if the knight were faithful, as is already said, he did therein but his duty, because we are all bounden unto the working of virtue. And he that does that whereunto he is of duty bounden, does but well; but yet it is not to be reputed for so great a matter. Therefor, I imagine that there may be judged greater joy than loyalty."

"You with your words do contrary yourself," said the queen, "because man ought as well to rejoice in the goodness of God in taking him away as through the working of virtue. But if the one could be in the one case as sorrowful as the other could be in the other case disloyal, it might be consented to your judgement. To follow the laws of nature which cannot be fled is no great matter, but to obey the positive laws is a virtue of the mind; and the virtues of the mind both for greatness as for every other respect are to be preferred before bodily works. And if virtuous works (making due recompense) do surmount in greatness every other working, it may be said that the having been loyal endures always in being. Joy may be turned into sudden sorrow, either else in a short space of time become little or nothing, losing that thing through the which it is become merry. And therefor let it be said of him that uprightly will judge, the knight to have been more loyal than the other merry."

CONCLUSION

NOT one was there that followed Massaline that had anything more to say, for that they had all now propounded their questions. The sun now in setting left the place replete with a temperate air. By reason whereof Fiammetta most reverend queen of this amorous people, raised her one foot and thus said:

"Gentlemen and gentlewomen, your questions are finished whereunto (the gods be thanked) we have according to our small knowledge made answer, following rather pleasant reasoning than matter of contention. And we know that much more might have been answered unto the same, yea, and in far better sort than we have done. But yet that which we have said may suffice to our pastime, and for the rest let it remain to the philosophers of Athens. We see Phoebus now not to behold us with a straight aspect; we feel the air refreshed and know this feast which we at our coming hither left through the excessive heat, to be again begone by our companions. And therefor it seems us good that we return to the same."

And this being said she took with her delicate hand the laurel crown from her head, and in the place where she sat she laid it down, saying: "I leave here the crown of my honour and yours until that we shall return hither to the like reasoning."

And having thus said she took Philocopo by the hand, that now with the rest was risen, and so returned with them all to their feast.

Thence was heard of all sides the pleasant instruments and the air resounding of amorous sounds; no part of the garden was without banqueting, wherein they all abode merrily all that day even to the last hour. But night being come upon them and the stars shewing forth their light, it seemed good to the lady and to them all to depart and to return to the city, wherein being entered, Philocopo taking his leave, thus said unto her:

"Most noble Fiammetta, if the gods should ever grant me that I were mine own, as I am another's, without doubt I should be presently yours. But because mine own I am not, I cannot give myself to another. Howbeit forsomuch as the miserable heart could receive strange fire, so much the more it feels through your inestimable worthiness to be kindled, and shall feel always and incessantly with more effect shall desire never to be forgetful of your worthiness."

She thanked Philocopo greatly of his courtesy at his departure, adding that it would please the gods quickly to bring a gracious peace to his desire.