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A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

Baldesar Castiglione
THE BOOK
OF THE COURTIER
THE SINGLETON TRANSLATION



AN AUTHORITYATIVE TEXT
CRITICISM

Edited by

DANIEL JAVITCH

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



*To the Reverend and Illustrious Signor Don Michel de Silva,¹
Bishop of Viseu*

[1] When signor Guidobaldo of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, departed this life, I, together with several other gentlemen who had served him, remained in the service of Duke Francesco Maria della Rovere, his heir and successor in the state. And, as the savor of Duke Guido's virtues was fresh in my mind, and the delight that in those years I had felt in the loving company of such excellent persons as then frequented the Court of Urbino, I was moved by the memory thereof to write these books of the Courtier: which I did in but a few days, meaning in time to correct those errors which had resulted from my desire to pay this debt quickly. But Fortune for many years now has kept me ever oppressed by such constant travail that I could never find the leisure to bring these books to a point where my weak judgment was satisfied with them.

Now being in Spain, and being informed from Italy that signora Vittoria della Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, to whom I had already given a copy of the book, had, contrary to her promise, caused a large part of it to be transcribed, I could not but feel a certain annoyance, fearing the considerable mischief that can arise in such cases. Nevertheless, I trusted that the wisdom and prudence of that lady (whose virtue I have always held in veneration as something divine) would avail to prevent any wrong from befalling me for having obeyed her commands. In the end I learned that that part of the book was in Naples, in the hands of many persons; and, as men are always avid of new things, it appeared that certain of these persons were trying to have it printed. Wherefore, alarmed at this danger, I decided to revise at once such small part of the book as time would permit, with the intention of publishing it, thinking it better to let it be seen even slightly corrected by my own hand than much mutilated by the hands of others.

And so, to carry out this thought, I started to reread it; and immediately, at the very outset, by reason of the dedication, I was seized by no little sadness (which greatly grew as I proceeded), when I remembered that the greater part of those persons who are introduced in the conversations were already dead; for, besides those who are mentioned in the proem of the last Book, even messer Alfonso Ariosto, to whom the book is dedicated, is dead: an affable youth, prudent, abounding in the gentlest manners, and apt in everything befitting a man who lives at court. Likewise Duke Giuliano de' Medici, whose goodness and noble courtesy deserved to be

1. Most of the people mentioned in the text are identified in Singleton's "Index of Persons and Items" on pp. 261-79. Except where otherwise identified, the notes to the *Book of the Courtier* are by Singleton [Editor].

enjoyed longer by the world. Messer Bernardo, Cardinal of Santa Maria in Portico, who for his keen and entertaining readiness of wit was the delight of all who knew him, he too is dead. Dead also is signor Ottaviano Fregoso, a most rare man in our times: magnanimous, devout, full of goodness, talent, prudence, and courtesy, and truly a lover of honor and worth, and so deserving of praise that his very enemies were always obliged to praise him; and those misfortunes which he so firmly endured were indeed enough to prove that fortune, as she ever was, is, even in these days, the enemy of virtue. Dead, too, are many others named in the book, to whom nature seemed to promise very long life.

But what should not be told without tears is that the Duchess, too, is dead. And if my mind is troubled at the loss of so many friends and lords, who have left me in this life as in a desert full of woes, it is understandable that I should feel sorrow far more bitter for the death of the Duchess than for any of the others, because she was worth more than the others, and I was much more bound to her than to all the rest. Therefore, in order not to delay paying what I owe to the memory of so excellent a lady, and to that of the others who are no more, and moved too by the threat to my book, I have had it printed and published in such form as the brevity of time permitted.

And since, while they lived, you did not know the Duchess or the others who are dead (except Duke Giuliano and the Cardinal of Santa Maria in Portico), in order to make you acquainted with them, in so far as I can, after their death, I send you this book as a portrait of the Court of Urbino, not by the hand of Raphael or Michelangelo, but by that of a lowly painter and one who only knows how to draw the main lines, without adorning the truth with pretty colors or making, by perspective art, that which is not seem to be. And, although I have endeavored to show in these conversations the qualities and conditions of those who are named therein, I confess that I have not even suggested, let alone expressed, the virtues of the Duchess, because not only is my style incapable of expressing them, but my mind cannot even conceive them; and if I be censured for this or for any other thing deserving of censure (and well do I know that such things are not wanting in the book), I shall not be gainsaying the truth.

[2] But as men sometimes take so much delight in censuring that they censure even what does not deserve it, to those who blame me because I have not imitated Boccaccio or bound myself to the usage of Tuscan speech in our own day, I shall not refrain from saying that, even though Boccaccio had a fine talent by the standards of his time, and wrote some things with discrimination and

care, still he wrote much better when he let himself be guided solely by his natural genius and instinct, without care or concern to polish his writings, than when he attempted with diligence and labor to be more refined and correct. For this reason his own partisans declare that he erred greatly in judging of his own works, esteeming those little that have done him honor, and those much that are without worth. If, then, I had imitated that style of writing for which he is censured by those who otherwise praise him, I should certainly not have escaped the same blame as is leveled at him in this regard; and I would have deserved it the more in that he made his mistake thinking that he did well, whereas I would now be making mine knowing that I did ill. Moreover, if I had imitated that manner which many think good, and which he esteemed least, it would have seemed to me, by such imitation, to show that my judgment was at variance with that of the author I was imitating: which thing I thought unseemly. And even if this concern had not moved me, I could not imitate him in subject matter, since he never wrote anything at all like these books of the Courtier; nor did it seem to me that I ought to imitate him in the matter of language, because the power and true rule of good speech consists more in usage than in anything else, and it is always bad to employ words that are not in use. Therefore it was not fitting that I should use many of those words of Boccaccio, which were used in his time and are not now used by the Tuscans themselves. Nor have I wished to bind myself to follow the Tuscan speech of today, because intercourse among different nations has always had the effect of transporting new words from one country to another, like articles of merchandise, which words endure or fall away according as usage accepts or rejects them. And this, besides being attested by the ancients, is clearly seen in Boccaccio, in whom there are so many French, Spanish, and Provençal words, as well as some perhaps not very intelligible to Tuscans today, that it would much reduce his book if these were all taken away. And because, to my mind, we should not wholly despise the idiom of the other noble cities of Italy where men gather who are wise, talented, and eloquent, and who discourse on great matters pertaining to the governing of states, as well as on letters, war, and business, I deem that among the words which are current in the speech of these places, I have been justified in using those which have grace in themselves, and elegance when pronounced, and which are commonly held to be good and expressive, even though they may not be Tuscan, and may even come from outside Italy. Moreover, in Tuscany they use many words which are evident corruptions of the Latin; which same words in Lombardy and in other parts of Italy have remained intact and

without change whatever, and are so universally used by everyone that they are admitted by the nobility to be good, and are understood by the people without difficulty.

Hence, I do not believe to have erred if I have employed certain of these words in writing, and if I have taken from my own country what is intact and genuine, rather than from another's what is corrupted and mutilated. Nor does that seem to me a good maxim which many repeat, that our common speech is the more beautiful the less it resembles Latin; neither do I understand why so much more authority should be granted to one manner of speech than to another, that Tuscan may nobilitate Latin words that are crippled and mutilated and give them so much grace that, maimed as they are, everyone can use them as good (which is not denied); and yet Lombard or any other speech may not be permitted to keep the Latin words themselves, pure, whole, proper, and unchanged in any part, and make them at least acceptable. And truly, just as to endeavor to coin new words or to preserve old words, regardless of usage, may be called rash presumption, so also, besides being difficult it seems almost impious to endeavor, despite this same force of custom, to destroy and, as it were, bury alive those which have already survived many centuries and have defended themselves with the shield of usage against the envy of time, and have kept their dignity and splendor, when, by way of the wars and ruins of Italy, changes have come about in the language, in the buildings, dress, and customs.

Thus, if in writing I have not chosen to use those of Boccaccio's words which are no longer used in Tuscany, or to subject myself to the rule of those persons who hold that it is not permissible to make use of those words which are not used by the Tuscans of today, it seems to me that I merit excuse. I think, therefore, that both in the subject matter of the book, and in respect to language (in so far as one language can help another), I have imitated authors who are as worthy of praise as Boccaccio. Nor do I believe that it should be imputed to me as an error that I have chosen to make myself known rather as a Lombard speaking Lombard than as a non-Tuscan speaking too much Tuscan—in order not to do as Theophrastus spoke, because he spoke too much Athenian, was recognized by a simple old woman as non-Athenian.²

But since this is sufficiently discussed in the first Book, I shall say no more, save that, to forestall all debate, I confess to my critics that I do not know this Tuscan speech of theirs, so difficult and recalcitrant; and I affirm that I have written in my own, just as I speak, and for those who speak as I do. And thus I do believe that I have not

2. The anecdote is told by Cicero, *Brutus* XLVI, 172.

wronged anyone: for, in my opinion, no one is forbidden to write and speak in his own language. Nor is anyone bound to read or listen to what does not please him. Therefore, if such persons do not choose to read my Courtier, I shall not consider myself to be offended by them in the least.

[3] Others say that since it is so difficult, and well-nigh impossible, to find a man as perfect as I wish the Courtier to be, it was wasted effort to write of him, because it is useless to try to teach what cannot be learned. To such as these I answer (without wishing to get into any dispute about the Intelligible World or the Ideas) that I am content to have erred with Plato, Xenophon, and Marcus Tullius,³ and just as, according to these authors, there is the Idea of the perfect Republic, the perfect King, and the perfect Orator, so likewise there is that of the perfect Courtier. And if I have been unable to approach the image of the latter, in my style, then courtiers will find it so much the easier to approach in their deeds the end and goal which my writing sets before them. And if, for all that, they are unable to attain to that perfection, such as it is, that I have tried to express, the one who comes the nearest to it will be the most perfect; as when many archers shoot at a target and none of them hits the bull's eye, the one who comes the closest is surely better than all the rest.

Still others say I have thought to take myself as a model, on the persuasion that the qualities which I attribute to the Courtier are all in me. To these persons I will not deny having tried to set down everything that I could wish the Courtier to know; and I think that anyone who did not have some knowledge of the things that are spoken of in the book, however erudite he might be, could not well have written of them; but I am not so wanting in judgment and self-knowledge as to presume to know all that I could wish to know.

Thus all defense against these charges, and perhaps many others, I leave for the present to the tribunal of public opinion; because more often than not the many, even without perfect knowledge, know by natural instinct the certain savor of good and bad, and, without being able to give any reason for it, enjoy and love one thing and reject and detest another. Hence, if my book pleases in a general way, I shall take it to be good, and I shall think that it is to survive. If, instead, it should not please, I shall take it to be bad and shall at once believe that the memory of it must needs be lost. And if my censors be not yet satisfied with this verdict of public opinion,

3. The works referred to are Plato's *Republic*, Xenophon's *Cyropædæia*, Cicero's *De oratore*.

then let them be content at least with that of time, which reveals the hidden defects of all things, and, being the father of truth and a judge without passion, is wont to pronounce always, on all writing, a just sentence of life or death.

BALDESAR CASTIGLIONE

The First Book

To Messer Alfonso Ariosto

[1] I have long wondered, dearest messer Alfonso, which of two things was the more difficult for me: to deny you what you have repeatedly and so insistently asked of me, or to do it. For, on the one hand, it seemed very hard for me to deny a thing—especially when it was something praiseworthy—to one whom I love most dearly and by whom I feel I am most dearly loved; yet, on the other hand, to undertake a thing which I was not sure I could finish seemed unbecoming to one who esteems just censure as much as it ought to be esteemed. Finally, after much thought, I have resolved that I would try in this to see how much aid to diligence might be had from affection and the intense desire that I have to please, which, in things generally, is so wont to increase men's industry.

Now, you have asked me to write my opinion as to what form of Courtiership most befits a gentleman living at the courts of princes, by which he can have both the knowledge and the ability to serve them in every reasonable thing, thereby winning favor from them and praise from others: in short, what manner of man he must be who deserves the name of perfect Courtier, without defect of any kind. Wherefore, considering this request, I say that, had it not seemed to me more blameworthy to be judged by you to be wanting in love than by others to be wanting in prudence, I should have eschewed this labor, out of fear of being thought rash by all who know what a difficult thing it is to choose, from among so great a variety of customs as are followed at the courts of Christendom, the most perfect form and, as it were, the flower of Courtiership. For custom often makes the same things pleasing and displeasing to us; whence it comes about sometimes that the customs, dress, ceremonies, and fashions that were once prized become despised; and, contrariwise, the despised become prized. Hence, it is clearly seen that usage is more powerful than reason in introducing new things among us and in blotting out old things; and anyone who tries to judge of perfection in such matters is often deceived. For which reason, since I am well aware of this and of many another difficulty in the matter whereof it is proposed that I should write, I am forced to excuse myself somewhat and

to submit evidence that this is an error (if indeed it can be called error) which I share with you, so that, if I am to be blamed for it, that blame will be shared by you, because your having put upon me a burden beyond my powers must not be deemed a lesser fault than my own acceptance of it.

So let us now make a beginning of our subject, and, if that be possible, let us form such a Courtier that any prince worthy of being served by him, even though he have but small dominion, may still be called a very great lord.

In these books we shall not follow any set order or rule of distinct precepts, as is most often the custom in teaching anything whatever, but, following the manner of many ancient writers, and to revive a pleasant memory, we shall rehearse some discussions which took place among men singularly qualified in such matters. And even though I was not present and did not take part in them, being in England at the time when they occurred, I learned of them shortly thereafter from a person who gave me a faithful report of them; and I shall attempt to recall them accurately, in so far as my memory permits, so that you may know what was judged and thought in this matter by men worthy of the highest praise, and in whose judgment on all things one may have unquestioned faith. Nor will it be beside the purpose to give some account of the occasion of the discussions that took place, so that in due order we may come to the end at which our discourse aims.

[2] On the slopes of the Apennines toward the Adriatic, at almost the center of Italy, is situated, as everyone knows, the little city of Urbino. And although it sits among hills that are perhaps not as pleasant as those we see in many other places, still it has been blessed by Heaven with a most fertile and bountiful countryside, so that, besides the wholesomeness of the air, it abounds in all the necessities of life. But among the greater blessings that can be claimed for it, this I believe to be the chief, that for a long time now it has been ruled by excellent lords (even though, in the universal calamity of the wars of Italy, it was deprived of them for a time). But, to look no further, we can cite good proof thereof in the glorious memory of Duke Federico, who in his day was the light of Italy. Nor are there wanting many true witnesses still living who can testify to his prudence, humanity, justice, generosity, undaunted spirit, to his military prowess, signally attested by his many victories, the capture of impregnable places, the sudden readiness of his expeditions, the many times when with but small forces he routed large and very powerful armies, and the fact that he never lost a single battle; so that not without reason may we compare him to many famous men among the ancients.

Among his other laudable deeds, he built on the rugged site of Urbino a palace thought by many the most beautiful to be found anywhere in all Italy and he furnished it so well with every suitable thing that it seemed not a palace but a city in the form of a palace; and furnished it not only with what is customary, such as silver vases, wall hangings of the richest cloth of gold, silk, and other like things, but for ornament he added countless ancient statues of marble and bronze, rare paintings, and musical instruments of every sort; nor did he wish to have anything there that was not most rare and excellent. Then, at great expense, he collected many very excellent and rare books in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and silver, deeming these to be the supreme excellence of his great palace.

[3] Following then the course of nature and being already sixty-five years old, he died as gloriously as he had lived, leaving as his successor his only son, a child ten years of age and motherless, named Guidobaldo. This boy, even as he was heir to the state, seemed to be heir to all his father's virtues as well, and in his remarkable nature began at once to promise more than it seemed right to expect of a mortal; so that men judged none of the notable deeds of Duke Federico to be greater than his begetting such a son. But Fortune, envious of so great a worth, set herself against this glorious beginning with all her might, so that, before Duke Guido had reached the age of twenty, he fell sick of the gout, which grew upon him with grievous pain, and in a short time so crippled all his members that he could not stand upon his feet or move. Thus, one of the fairest and ablest persons in the world was deformed and marred at a tender age.

And not even content with this, Fortune opposed him so in his every undertaking that he rarely brought to a successful issue anything he tried to do; and, although he was very wise in counsel and undaunted in spirit, it seemed that whatever he undertook always succeeded ill with him whether in arms or in anything, great or small; all of which is attested by his many and diverse calamities, which he always bore with such strength of spirit that his virtue was never overcome by Fortune; nay, despising her storms with stanch heart, he lived in sickness as if in health, and in adversity as if most fortunate, with the greatest dignity and esteemed by all. So that, although he was infirm of body in this way, he campaigned with a most honorable rank in the service of their Serene Highnesses Kings Alfonso and Ferdinand the Younger of Naples; and later with Pope Alexander VI, as well as the signories of Venice and Florence. Then when Julius II became Pope, the Duke was made Captain of the Church; during which time, and following his usual style, he

saw to it that his household was filled with very noble and worthy gentlemen, with whom he lived on the most familiar terms, delighting in their company; in which the pleasure he gave others was not less than that which he had from them, being well versed in both Latin and Greek and combining affability and wit with the knowledge of an infinitude of things. Besides this, so much did the greatness of his spirit spur him on that, even though he could not engage personally in chivalric activities as he had once done, he still took the greatest pleasure in seeing others so engaged; and by his words, now criticizing and now praising each man according to his deserts, he showed clearly how much judgment he had in such matters. Wherefore, in jousts and tournaments, in riding, in the handling of every sort of weapon, as well as in revelries, in games, in musical performances, in short, in all exercises befitting noble cavaliers, everyone strove to show himself such as to deserve to be thought worthy of his noble company.

[4] Thus, all the hours of the day were given over to honorable and pleasant exercises both of the body and of the mind; but because, owing to his infirmity, the Duke always retired to sleep very early after supper, everyone usually repaired to the rooms of the Duchess, Elisabetta Gonzaga, at that hour; where also signora Emilia Pia was always to be found, who being gifted with such a lively wit and judgment, as you know, seemed the mistress of all, and all appeared to take on wisdom and worth from her. Here, then, gentle discussions and innocent pleasantries were heard, and on everyone's face a jocund gaiety could be seen depicted, so much so that this house could be called the very abode of joyfulness. Nor do I believe that the sweetness that is had from a beloved company was ever savored in any other place as it once was there. For, not to speak of the great honor it was for each of us to serve such a lord as I have described above, we all felt a supreme happiness arise within us whenever we came into the presence of the Duchess. And it seemed that this was a chain that bound us all together in love, in such wise that never was there concord of will or cordial love between brothers greater than that which was there among us all.

The same was among the ladies, with whom one had very free and most honorable association, for to each it was permitted to speak, sit, jest, and laugh with whom he pleased; but the reverence that was paid to the wishes of the Duchess was such that this same liberty was a very great check; nor was there anyone who did not esteem it the greatest pleasure in the world to please her and the greatest grief to displease her. For which reason most decorous customs were there joined with the greatest liberty, and games and laughter in her presence were seasoned not only with witty jests but

with a gracious and sober dignity; for that modesty and grandeur which ruled over all the acts, words, and gestures of the Duchess, in jest and laughter, caused anyone seeing her for the first time to recognize her as a very great lady. And, in impressing herself thus upon those about her, it seemed that she tempered us all to her own quality and fashion, wherefore each one strove to imitate her style, deriving, as it were, a rule of fine manners from the presence of so great and virtuous a lady; whose high qualities I do not now intend to recount, this being not to my purpose, because they are well known to all the world, and much more than I could express either with tongue or pen; and those which might have remained somewhat hidden, Fortune, as if admiring such rare virtues, chose to reveal through many adversities and stings of calamity, in order to prove that in the tender breast of a woman, and accompanied by singular beauty, there may dwell prudence and strength of spirit, and all those virtues which are very rare even in austere men.

[5] But, passing over this, I say that the custom of all the gentlemen of the house was to betake themselves immediately after supper to the Duchess; where, amidst the pleasant pastimes, the music and dancing which were continually enjoyed, fine questions would sometimes be proposed, and sometimes ingenious games, now at the behest of one person and now of another, in which, under various concealments, those present revealed their thoughts allegorically to whomever they chose. Sometimes other discussions would turn on a variety of subjects, or there would be a sharp exchange of quick retorts; often "emblems," as we nowadays call them, were devised; in which discussions a marvelous pleasure was had, the house (as I have said) being full of very noble talents, among whom, as you know, the most famous were signor Ottaviano Fregoso, his brother messer Federico, the Magnifico Giuliano de' Medici, messer Pietro Bembo, messer Cesare Gonzaga, Count Ludovico da Canossa, signor Gaspar Pallavicino, signor Ludovico Pio, signor Morello da Ortona, Pietro da Napoli, messer Roberto da Bari, and countless other very noble gentlemen. And there were many besides who, although they did not usually remain there continuously, yet spent most of their time there: such as messer Bernardo Bibbiena, the Unico Arentino, Giancristoforo Romano, Pietro Monte, Terpanadro, messer Nicolò Frisio. So that poets, musicians, and all sorts of buffoons, and the most excellent of every kind of talent that could be found in Italy, were always gathered there.

[6] Now Pope Julius II, having, by his presence and with the help of the French, brought Bologna under the rule of the Apostolic See in the year 1506, and being on his way back to Rome, passed through

Urbino, where he was received with all possible honor and with as magnificent and splendid a welcome as could have been offered in any of the noble cities of Italy: so that, besides the Pope, all the cardinals and other courtiers were highly gratified. And there were some who were so captivated by the charm of the company they found here that when the Pope and his court had departed, they stayed on for many days in Urbino; during which time not only was the usual style of festivities and ordinary diversions kept up, but every man endeavored to contribute something more, and especially in the games that were played almost every evening. And the order of these was such that, as soon as anyone came into the presence of the Duchess, he would take a seat in a circle wherever he pleased or where chance would have it; and so seated, all were arranged alternately, a man, then a woman, as long as there were women (for almost always the number of men was much the larger); then, the company was governed as it pleased the Duchess, who most of the time left this charge to signora Emilia.

So, the day following the departure of the Pope, when the company had gathered at the usual hour and place, after many pleasant discussions, it was the Duchess's wish that signora Emilia should begin the games; and she, after having declined the task for a time, spoke thus: "Madam, since it is your pleasure that I should be the one to begin the games this evening, and since I cannot in reason fail to obey you, I will propose a game for which I think I can have little blame and even less labor: and this shall be that each propose some game after his own liking that we have never played; then we shall choose the one which seems the worthiest of being played in this company."

And, so saying, she turned to signor Gaspar Pallavicino, bidding him to tell his choice; and he replied at once: "It is for you, Madam, to tell yours first."

"But I have already told it," said signora Emilia; "now do you, Duchess, bid him obey."

To this the Duchess said, laughing: "So that all shall be bound to obey you, I make you my deputy, and give you all my authority."

[7] "It is indeed a remarkable thing," replied signor Gasparo, "that women are always permitted such exemption from labor, and it is only right to wish to understand why; but, in order not to be the first to disobey, I will leave that for another time, and will speak now as required"; and he began: "It seems to me that in love, as in everything else, our minds judge differently; and so it often happens that what is most pleasing to one is most odious to another; but, for all that, our minds do, however, agree in prizing highly what is loved; so that often the excessive affection of lovers beguiles their judg-

ment, causing them to think that the person whom they love is the only one in the world who is adorned with every excellent quality and is wholly without defect. But, since human nature does not admit of such complete perfection, nor is anyone to be found in whom something is not wanting, it cannot be said that these lovers are not deceived, or that the lover is not blinded suspecting the beloved. I would therefore have our game this evening be so: let each one say which virtue above all others he would wish the one he loves to be adorned with; and, since it is inevitable that everyone have some defect, let him say also which fault he would desire in the beloved: so that we may see who can think of the most praiseworthy and useful virtues and of the faults which are the most execrable and least harmful either to the lover or to the beloved."

When signor Gasparo had spoken thus, signora Emilia made a sign to madam Costanza Fregosa, as she sat next in order, that she should speak; and she was making ready to do so, when suddenly the Duchess said: "Since signora Emilia does not choose to go to the trouble of devising a game, it would be quite right for the other ladies to share in this case, and thus be exempt from such a burden this evening, especially since there are so many men here that we risk no lack of games."

"So be it," replied signora Emilia; and, imposing silence on madam Costanza, she turned to messer Cesare Gonzaga who sat next, and bade him speak; and he began thus:

[8] "Whoever considers carefully all our actions will always find various defects in them; the reason being that, in this, nature is variable, as in other things, bestowing the light of reason on one man in one respect and on another man in another: wherefore it happens that as one man knows what another does not know, and is ignorant of what the other knows, each easily perceives his neighbor's error and not his own; and we all think that we are very wise and perhaps the more so in that wherein we are most foolish. Thus, we have seen it happen in this house that many who were at first held to be very wise have been known, in the course of time, to be full of folly, and this came about through nothing save the attention we gave to it. For, even as they say that in Apulia many musical instruments are used for those who are bitten by the tarantula, and various tunes are tried until the humor which is causing the malady is (through a certain affinity which it has with some one of those tunes) suddenly stirred by the sound of it and so agitates the sick man that he is restored to health by that agitation: so we, whenever we have detected some hidden trace of folly, have stimulated it so artfully and with such a variety of inducements and in so many different ways that finally we have understood what its tendency was; then,

some, has violated the laws of our game by asking instead of gaining saying."

Then the Duchess said: "You see how from a single error a host of others can come. Therefore, he who transgresses and sets a bad example, as messer Bernardo has done, deserves to be punished not only for his own transgression but for that of the others as well."

To this messer Cesare replied: "And so, Madam, I shall be exempt from penalty, since messer Bernardo is to be punished both for his own error and for mine."

"Nay," said the Duchess, "you both must be doubly punished: he for his own transgression and for having brought you to yours, you for your transgression and for having imitated him."

"Madam," answered messer Cesare, "I have not transgressed as yet; however, in order to leave all this punishment to messer Bernardo alone, I will keep quiet."

And he was already silent, when signora Emilia laughed and said: "Say what you will, for, with the permission of the Duchess, I pardon both the one that has transgressed and the one that is about to do so ever so little."

"So be it," the Duchess went on, "but take care lest you make the mistake of thinking it more commendable to be clement than to be just; for the excessive pardon of a transgressor does wrong to those who do not transgress. Still, at the moment, I would not have my austerity in reproaching your indulgence cause us not to hear messer Cesare's question."

And so, at a sign from the Duchess and from signora Emilia, he began forthwith:

[24] "If I well remember, Count, it seems to me you have repeated several times this evening that the Courtier must accompany his actions, his gestures, his habits, in short, his every movement, with grace. And it strikes me that you require this in everything as that seasoning without which all the other properties and good qualities would be of little worth. And truly I believe that everyone would easily let himself be persuaded of this, because, by the very meaning of the word, it can be said that he who has grace finds grace. But since you have said that this is often a gift of nature and the heavens, and that, even if it is not quite perfect, it can be much increased by care and industry, those men who are born as fortunate and as rich in such treasure as some we know have little need, it seems to me, of any teacher in this, because such benign favor from heaven lifts them, almost in spite of themselves, higher than they themselves had desired, and makes them not only pleasing but admirable to everyone. Therefore I do not discuss this, it not being in our power to acquire it of ourselves. But as for those who are less endowed by

nature and are capable of acquiring grace only if they put forth labor, industry, and care, I would wish to know by what art, by what discipline, by what method, they can gain this grace, both in bodily exercises, in which you deem it to be so necessary, and in every other thing they do or say. Therefore, since by praising this quality so highly you have, as I believe, aroused in all of us an ardent desire, according to the task given you by signora Emilia, you are still bound to satisfy it."

[25] "I am not bound," said the Count, "to teach you how to acquire grace or anything else, but only to show you what a perfect Courtier ought to be. Nor would I undertake to teach you such a perfection; especially when I have just now said that the Courtier must know how to wrestle, vault, and so many other things which, since I never learned them myself, you all know well enough how I should be able to teach them. Let it suffice that just as a good soldier knows how to tell the smith what shape, style, and quality his armor must have, and yet is not able to teach him to make it, nor how to hammer or temper it; just so I, perhaps, shall be able to tell you what a perfect Courtier should be, but not to teach you what you must do to become one. Still, in order to answer your question in so far as I can (although it is almost proverbial that grace is not learned), I say that if anyone is to acquire grace in bodily exercises (granting first of all that he is not by nature incapable), he must begin early and learn the principles from the best of teachers. And how important this seemed to King Philip of Macedon can be seen by the fact that he wished Aristotle, the famous philosopher and perhaps the greatest the world has ever known, to be the one who should teach his son Alexander the first elements of letters. And among men whom we know today, consider how well and gracefully signor Galeazzo Sanseverino, Grand Equerry of France, performs all bodily exercises; and this because, besides the natural aptitude of person that he possesses, he has taken the greatest care to study with good masters and to have about him men who excel, taking from each the best of what they know. For just as in wrestling, vaulting, and in the handling of many kinds of weapons, he took our messer Pietro Monte as his guide, who is (as you know) the only true master of every kind of acquired strength and agility—so in riding, jousting, and the rest he has ever had before his eyes those men who are known to be most perfect in these matters.

[26] "Therefore, whoever would be a good pupil must not only do things well, but must always make every effort to resemble and, if that be possible, to transform himself into his master. And when he feels that he has made some progress, it is very profitable to observe

different men of that profession; and, conducting himself with that good judgment which must always be his guide, go about choosing now this thing from one and that from another. And even as in green meadows the bee flits about among the grasses robbing the flowers, so our Courtier must steal this grace from those who seem to him to have it, taking from each the part that seems most worthy of praise; not doing as a friend of ours whom you all know, who thought he greatly resembled King Ferdinand the Younger of Aragon, but had not tried to imitate him in anything save in the way he had of raising his head and twisting one side of his mouth, which manner the King had contracted through some malady. And there are many such, who think they are doing a great thing if only they can resemble some great man in something; and often they seize upon that which is his only bad point.

"But, having thought many times already about how this grace is acquired (leaving aside those who have it from the stars), I have found quite a universal rule which in this matter seems to me valid above all others, and in all human affairs whether in word or deed: and that is to avoid affectation in every way possible as though it were some very rough and dangerous reef; and (to pronounce a new word perhaps) to practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it. And I believe much grace comes of this: because everyone knows the difficulty of things that are rare and well done; wherefore facility in such things causes the greatest wonder; whereas, on the other hand, to labor and, as we say, drag forth by the hair of the head, shows an extreme want of grace, and causes everything, no matter how great it may be, to be held in little account.

"Therefore we may call that art true art which does not seem to be art; nor must one be more careful of anything than of concealing it, because if it is discovered, this robs a man of all credit and causes him to be held in slight esteem. And I remember having read of certain most excellent orators in ancient times who, among the other things they did, tried to make everyone believe that they had no knowledge whatever of letters; and, dissembling their knowledge, they made their orations appear to be composed in the simplest manner and according to the dictates of nature and truth rather than of effort and art; which fact, had it been known, would have inspired in the minds of the people the fear that they could be duped by it.

"So you see how art, or any intent effort, if it is disclosed, deprives everything of grace. Who among you fails to laugh when our messer Pierpaolo dances after his own fashion, with those capers of his, his legs stiff on tiptoe, never moving his head, as if he were a stick of

wood, and all this so studied that he really seems to be counting his steps? What eye is so blind as not to see in this the ungracefulness of affectation; and not to see the grace of that cool *disinvoltura* [ease] (for when it is a matter of bodily movements many call it that) in many of the men and women here present, who seem in words, in laughter, in posture not to care; or seem to be thinking more of everything than of that, so as to cause all who are watching them to believe that they are almost incapable of making a mistake?"

[27] Here messer Bernardo Bibbiena said, without waiting: "Now you see that our messer Roberto has at last found someone to praise his style of dancing, as it seems that none of the rest of you esteem it at all. For if this excellence consists in nonchalance, in showing no concern, and in seeming to have one's thoughts elsewhere rather than on what one is doing, then in dancing messer Roberto has no peer on earth, because to make it quite plain that he is giving no thought to what he is doing, he lets his clothes fall from his back and his slippers from his feet, and goes right on dancing without picking them up."

Then the Count replied: "Since you are determined that I shall go on talking, I will say something more of our faults. Do you not see that what you are calling nonchalance in messer Roberto is really affectation, because we clearly see him making every effort to show that he takes no thought of what he is about, which means taking too much thought; and because it exceeds certain limits of moderation, such nonchalance is affected, is unbecoming, and results in the opposite of the desired effect, which is to conceal the art. Hence, I do not believe that the vice of affectation is any less present in a nonchalance (in itself a praiseworthy thing) wherein one lets his clothes fall of than in a studied concern for one's personal appearance (also, in itself, a praise-worthy thing), bearing the head so stiff for fear of spoiling one's coiffure, or carrying a mirror in the fold of one's cap and a comb in one's sleeve, and having one's page follow about through the streets with a sponge and brush; because such care for personal appearance and such nonchalance both tend too much to extremes, which is always a fault, and is contrary to that pure and charming simplicity which is so appealing to all. Consider how ungraceful that rider is who tries to sit so very stiff in his saddle (in the Venetian style, as we are wont to say), compared with one who appears to give no thought to the matter and sits his horse as free and easy as if he were on foot. How much more pleasing and how much more praised is a gentleman whose profession is arms, and who is modest, speaking little and boasting little, than another who is forever praising himself, swearing and blustering about as if to defy the whole world—which is simply the affectation of wanting

to cut a bold figure. And the same holds true in every practice, indeed in everything that is said or done."

[28] Then the Magnifico Giuliano said: "It holds true as well in music, wherein it is a great mistake to place two perfect consonances one after the other, for our sense of hearing abhors this, whereas it often enjoys a second or a seventh which in itself is a harsh and unbearable discord. And this is due to the fact that to continue in perfect consonances generates satiety and gives evidence of a too affected harmony, which is avoided when imperfect consonances are mixed in, establishing a kind of comparison, by which our ears are held in greater suspense, and more avidly wait upon and enjoy the perfect consonances, delighting in that discord of the second or seventh as in something that shows nonchalance."

"So, you see," replied the Count, "that affectation is detrimental in this as in other things. Moreover, it is said to have been proverbial with certain most excellent painters of antiquity that excessive care is harmful, and Protegenes is said to have been censured by Apelles for not knowing when to take his hands from the board."⁸

Then messer Cesare said: "It seems to me that our fra Serafino has this same fault of not knowing when to take his hands from the board,"⁹ at least not before all of the food has been taken from it too."

The Count laughed and added: "Apelles meant that Protegenes did not know when to stop in painting, which was nothing if not a kind of reproach for his being affected in his work. Thus, this excellence (which is opposed to affectation, and which, at the moment, we are calling *nonchalance*), besides being the real source from which grace springs, brings with it another adornment which, when it accompanies any human action however small, not only reveals at once how much the person knows who does it, but often causes it to be judged much greater than it actually is, since it impresses upon the minds of the onlookers the opinion that he who performs well with so much facility must possess even greater skill than this, and that, if he were to devote care and effort to what he does, he could do it far better.

"And, to multiply such examples, take a man who is handling weapons and is about to throw a dart or is holding a sword or other weapon in his hand: if immediately he takes a position of readiness, with ease, and without thinking, with such facility that his body and all his members fall into that posture naturally and without any effort, then, even if he does nothing more, he shows himself to be

perfectly accomplished in that exercise. Likewise in dancing, a single step, a single movement of the body that is graceful and not forced, reveals at once the skill of the dancer. A singer who utters a single word ending in a group of four notes with a sweet cadence, and with such facility that he appears to do it quite by chance, shows with that touch alone that he can do much more than he is doing. Often too in painting, a single line which is not labored, a single brush stroke made with ease and in such a manner that the hand seems of itself to complete the line desired by the painter, without being directed by care or skill of any kind, clearly reveals that excellence of craftsmanship, which people will then proceed to judge, each by his own lights. And the same happens in almost every other thing.

"Therefore our Courtier will be judged excellent, and will show grace in all things and particularly in his speech, if he avoids affectation: which error is incurred by many and sometimes, more than others, by our Lombards who, if they have been away from home for a year, come back and start right off speaking Roman, or Spanish, or French, and God knows how! All of which stems from an excessive desire to appear very accomplished, and so they put effort and diligence into acquiring a most odious fault. Certainly it would require no little effort on my part if in these discussions I attempted to use those antique Tuscan words which the Tuscans of today have already dropped from use; moreover, I believe you would all laugh at me."

[29] Then messer Federico said: "It is true that in discussing among ourselves, as we are now doing, it would be bad perhaps to use those antique Tuscan words, because, as you say, they would be irksome both to the speaker and to the listener, and many would understand them only with difficulty. But if one is writing, then I do believe it would be wrong not to use them, because they give much grace and authority to writing, and result in a diction of more gravity and majesty than is had with modern words."

"I do not know," replied the Count, "what grace or authority can be given to writing by words that ought to be avoided, not only in such talk as we are presently engaged in (which you yourself admit) but also in any circumstance whatever that one can imagine. For if any man of good judgment had to deliver an oration on weighty matters before the very senate of Florence, which is the capital of Tuscany, or had to speak privately about important business with some person of rank in that city, or yet about amusing things with some close acquaintance, or about love with ladies or gentlemen, or in jokes or jests at feasts, games, or where you will, whatever the time, place, or matter, I am sure he would take care to avoid using those

8. Pliny *Nat. Hist.* XXXV, 80.

9. The play of words is on the word *tavola*, which can mean either the *panel* used by a painter or a *dining table*.

some time now—which, alas, is only too true. But it must be said that the fault of a few men has brought not only serious harm but eternal blame upon all the rest, and that they have been the true cause of our ruin and of the prostrate (if not dead) virtue of our spirits. Yet it would be a greater shame if we made this fact public than it is to the French to be ignorant of letters. Hence, it is better to pass over in silence what cannot be remembered without pain: and, leaving this subject, upon which I entered against my will, to return to our Courtier:

[44] "I would have him more than passably learned in letters, at least in those studies which we call the humanities. Let him be conversant not only with the Latin language, but with Greek as well, because of the abundance and variety of things that are so divinely written therein. Let him be versed in the poets, as well as in the orators and historians, and let him be practiced also in writing verse and prose, especially in our own vernacular; for, besides the personal satisfaction he will take in this, in this way he will never want for pleasant entertainment with the ladies, who are usually fond of such things. And if, because of other occupations or lack of study, he does not attain to such a perfection that his writings should merit great praise, let him take care to keep them under cover so that others will not laugh at him, and let him show them only to a friend who can be trusted; because at least they will be of profit to him in that, through such exercise, he will be capable of judging the writing of others. For it very rarely happens that a man who is unpracticed in writing, how ever learned he may be, can ever wholly understand the toils and industry of writers, or taste the sweetness and excellence of styles, and those intrinsic niceties that are often found in the ancients.

These studies, moreover, will make him fluent, and (as Aristippus said to the tyrant)² bold and self-confident in speaking with everyone. However, I would have our Courtier keep one precept firmly in mind, namely, in this as in everything else, to be cautious and reserved rather than forward, and take care not to get the mistaken notion that he knows something he does not know. For we are all by nature more avid of praise than we ought to be and, more than any other sweet song or sound, our ears love the melody of words that praise us; and thus, like Sirens' voices, they are the cause of shipwreck to him who does not stop his ears to such beguiling harmony. This danger was recognized by the ancients, and books were written to show how the true friend is to be distinguished from the flatterer.³ But to what avail is this, if many, indeed countless persons

know full well when they are being flattered, yet love the one who flatters them and hate the one who tells them the truth? And finding him who praises them to be too sparing in his words, they even help him and proceed to say such things of themselves that they make the impudent flatterer himself feel ashamed.

"Let us leave these blind ones to their error, and let us have our Courtier be of such good judgment that he will not let himself be persuaded that black is white, or presume of himself more than he clearly knows to be true; and especially in those points which (if your memory serves you) messer Cesare said we had often used as the means of bringing to light the folly of many persons. Indeed, even if he knows that the praises bestowed upon him are true, let him avoid error by not assenting too openly to them, nor concede them without some protest; but let him rather disclaim them modestly, always showing and really esteeming arms as his chief profession, and the other good accomplishments as ornaments thereto; and do this especially when among soldiers, in order not to act like those who in studies wish to appear as soldiers, and, when in the company of warriors, wish to appear as men of letters. In this way, for the reasons we have stated, he will avoid affectation and even the ordinary things he does will appear to be very great things."

[45] Messer Pietro Bembo replied: "Count, I do not see why you insist that this Courtier, who is lettered and who has so many other worthy qualities, should regard everything as an ornament of arms, and not regard arms and the rest as an ornament of letters; which, without any other accompaniment, are as superior to arms in worth as the soul is to the body, because the practice of them pertains properly to the soul, even as that of arms does to the body."

Then the Count replied: "Nay, the practice of arms pertains to both the soul and the body. But I would not have you be a judge in such a case, messer Pietro, because you would be too much suspected of bias by one of the parties. And as this is a debate that has long been waged by very wise men, there is no need to renew it; but I consider it decided in favor of arms; and since I may form our Courtier as I please, I would have him be of the same opinion. And if you are contrary-minded, wait until you can hear of a contest wherein the one who defends the cause of arms is permitted to use arms, just as those who defend letters make use of letters in defending their own cause; for if everyone avails himself of his own weapons, you will see that the men of letters will lose."

"Ah," said messer Pietro, "a while ago you damned the French for their slight appreciation of letters, and you spoke of what a light of glory letters shed on a man, how they make him immortal; and now it appears that you have changed your mind. Do you not remember that

2. Told by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Philosophers*.

3. The reference is to one of Plutarch's *Moralia* entitled "How to Tell Friend from Flatterer."

*Giunto Alessandro alla famosa tomba
del fiero Achille, sospirando disse:
"O fortunato, che sì chiara tromba
trovasti, e chi di te sì alto scrisse!"*⁴

When Alexander had come to the famous tomb of Achilles, sighing, he said: "O fortunate man, to find so clear a trumpet and someone to write of you so loftily!"

And if Alexander envied Achilles, not for his exploits, but for the fortune which had granted him the blessing of having his deeds celebrated by Homer, we see that the esteemed Homer's letters above Achilles' arms. What other judge would you have, or what other sentence on the worthiness of arms and of letters than what has been pronounced by one of the greatest commanders that have ever been?"

[46] Then the Count replied: "I blame the French for thinking that letters are detrimental to the profession of arms, and I hold that to no one is learning more suited than to a warrior; and I would have these two accomplishments conjoined in our Courtier, each an aid to the other, as is most fitting: nor do I think I have changed my opinion in this. But, as I said, I do not wish to argue as to which of the two is more deserving of praise. Let it suffice to say that men of letters almost never choose to praise any save great men and glorious deeds, which in themselves deserve praise because of the essential worthiness from which they derive; besides this, such men and deeds are very noble material for writers, and are in themselves a great ornament and partly the reason why such writing is perpetuated, which perhaps would not be so much read or prized if it lacked a noble subject, but would be empty and of little moment.

"And if Alexander envied Achilles for being praised by Homer, this does not prove that he esteemed letters more than arms; wherein if he had thought himself to be as far beneath Achilles as he deemed all those who were to write of him to be beneath Homer, I am certain that he would have much preferred fine deeds on his own part to fine talk on the part of others. Hence, I believe that what he said was tacit praise of himself, expressing a desire for what he thought he lacked, namely, the supreme excellence of some writer, and not for what he believed he had already attained, namely, prowess in arms, wherein he did not at all take Achilles to be his superior. Wherefore he called him fortunate, as though to suggest that if his own fame had hitherto not been so celebrated in the world as Achilles' had (which was made bright and illustrious by a poem so divine), this was not because his valor and merits were fewer or less

deserving of praise, but because Fortune had granted Achilles such a miracle of nature to be the glorious trumpet for his deeds. Perhaps he wished also to incite some noble talent to write about him, thereby showing that his pleasure in this would be as great as his love and veneration for the sacred monuments of letters: about which by now we have said quite enough."

"Nay, too much," replied signor Ludovico Pio, "for I believe it is not possible in all the world to find a vessel large enough to contain all the things you would have in our Courtier."

Then the Count said: "Wait a little, for there are yet many more to come."

"In that case," replied Pietro da Napoli, "Grasso de' Medici will have much the advantage over Pietro Bembo!"

[47] Here everyone laughed, and the Count began again: "Gentlemen, you must know that I am not satisfied with our Courtier unless he be also a musician, and unless, besides understanding and being able to read music, he can play various instruments. For, if we rightly consider, no rest from toil and no medicine for ailing spirits can be found more decorous or praiseworthy in time of leisure than this; and especially in courts where, besides the release from vexations which music gives to all, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and delicate spirits are readily penetrated with harmony and filled with sweetness. Hence, it is no wonder that in both ancient and modern times they have always been particularly fond of musicians, finding music a most welcome food for the spirit."

Then signor Gasparo said: "I think that music, along with many other vanities, is indeed well suited to women, and perhaps also to others who have the appearance of men, but not to real men; for the latter ought not to render their minds effeminate and afraid of death."

"Say not so," replied the Count, "or I shall launch upon a great sea of praise for music, reminding you how greatly music was always celebrated by the ancients and held to be a sacred thing; and how it was the opinion of very wise philosophers that the world is made up of music, that the heavens in their motion make harmony, and that even the human soul was formed on the same principle, and is therefore awakened and has its virtues brought to life, as it were, through music. Wherefore it is recorded that Alexander was sometimes so passionately excited by music that, almost in spite of himself, he was obliged to quit the banquet table and rush off to arms; whereupon the musician would change the kind of music, and he would then grow calm and return from arms to the banquet."⁵ And,

4. The first quatrain of a sonnet by Petrarch (*Canzoniere* 187), based on Cicero, *Pro Archia poeta* X, 24.

5. As related by Plutarch, *Moralia* II, 2.

I tell you, grave Socrates learned to play the cithara when he was very old.⁶ I remember also having heard once that both Plato and Aristotle wish a man who is well constituted to be a musician; and with innumerable reasons they show that music's power over us is very great; and (for many reasons which would be too long to tell now) that music must of necessity be learned from childhood, not so much for the sake of that outward melody which is heard, but because of the power it has to induce a good new habit of mind and an inclination to virtue, rendering the soul more capable of happiness, just as corporal exercise makes the body more robust; and that not only is music not harmful to the pursuits of peace and of war, but greatly to their advantage.

"Moreover, Lycurgus approved of music in his harsh laws. And we read that the bellicose Lacedaemonians and the Cretans used citharas and other delicate instruments in battle;⁷ that many very excellent commanders of antiquity, like Epanimondas, practiced music, and that those who were ignorant of it, like Themistocles, were far less esteemed. Have you not read that music was among the first⁸ disciplines that the worthy old Chiron taught the boy Achilles, whom he reared from the age of nurse and cradle; and that such a wise preceptor wished the hands that were to shed so much Trojan blood to busy themselves often at playing the cithara? Where, then, is the soldier who would be ashamed to imitate Achilles, not to speak of many another famous commander that I could cite? Therefore, do not wish to deprive our Courtier of music, which not only makes gentle the soul of man, but often tames wild beasts; and he who does not take pleasure in it can be sure that his spirit lacks harmony among its parts.

"Consider that its power is such that it once caused a fish to let itself be ridden by a man over the stormy sea.⁹ You find it used in sacred temples to give praise and thanks to God, and we must believe that it is pleasing to Him, and that He has given it to us as a sweet respite from our toils and vexations. Wherefrom rude laborers in the fields under the burning sun will often beguile their heavy time with crude and rustic song. With it the simple peasant lass, rising before dawn to spin or weave, wards off sleep and makes pleasant her toil. This is the happy pastime of poor sailors after the rains and the winds and the storms. This is the consolation of tired pilgrims in their long and weary journeys, and oftentimes of miserable prisoners in their chains and fetters.

6. Valerius Maximus, *Facti, et dicti, mem.* VIII. 7.

7. Plutarch, *On Music*, ch. XXVI.

8. *Iliad* X. 390; XVI. 199; Plutarch, *On Music*, ch. XI.

9. According to legend, Arion, a Greek poet of Lesbos, was saved by a dolphin which he had lured to him by the music of his lyre. Herodotus, *History* I, chs. 23-24.

"Thus, as stronger evidence that even rude melody provides the greatest relief from every human toil and care, nature seems to have taught it to the nurse as the chief remedy for the continual crying of tender babes who by the sound of her voice are lulled to restful and placid sleep, forgetting the tears which are so much their lot and at that age are given us by nature as a presage of our later life."

[48] As the Count now remained silent for a little, the Magnifico Giuliano said: "I am not at all of signor Gasparo's opinion. Indeed I think, for the reasons given by you and for many others, that music is not only an ornament but a necessity to the Courtier. Yet I would have you state how this and the other accomplishments which you assign to him are to be practiced, and at what times and in what manner. For many things which are praiseworthy in themselves often become most unseemly when practiced at the wrong times; and, on the contrary, others which appear to be quite trivial are much prized when done in a proper way."

[49] Then the Count said: "Before we enter upon that subject, I would discuss another matter which I consider to be of great importance and which I think must therefore in no way be neglected by our Courtier: and this is a knowledge of how to draw and an acquaintance with the art of painting itself.

"And do not marvel if I require this accomplishment, which perhaps nowadays may seem mechanical and ill-suited to a gentleman; for I recall reading that the ancients, especially throughout Greece, required boys of gentle birth to learn painting in school, as a decorous and necessary thing, and admitted it to first rank among the liberal arts; then by public edict they prohibited the teaching of it to slaves. Among the Romans, too, it was held in highest honor and from it the very noble house of the Fabii took its name; for the first Fabius was called *Pictor*; and was in fact a most excellent painter, and so devoted to painting that, when he painted the walls of the Temple of Salus, he inscribed his name thereon; for, even though he was born of a family illustrious and honored by so many consular titles, triumphs, and other dignities, and even though he was a man of letters and learned in law, and was numbered among the orators, still it seemed to him that he could add splendor and ornament to his fame by leaving a memorial that he had been a painter. Nor was there any lack of others too who were born of illustrious families and were celebrated in this art; which, besides being most noble and worthy in itself, proves useful in many ways, and especially in warfare, in drawing towns, sites, rivers, bridges, citadels, fortresses, and the like; for, however well they may be stored away in the memory (which is something that is very hard to do), we cannot show them to others so.

"And truly he who does not esteem this art strikes me as being quite lacking in reason; for this universal fabric which we behold, with its vast heaven so resplendent with bright stars, with the earth at the center girdled by the seas, varied with mountains, valleys, rivers, adorned with such a variety of trees, pretty flowers, and grasses—can be said to be a great and noble picture painted by nature's hand and God's; and whoever can imitate it deserves great praise, in my opinion: nor is such imitation achieved without the knowledge of many things, as anyone knows who attempts it. For this reason the ancients held art and artists in the greatest esteem, wherefore art attained to the pinnacle of the highest excellence, very sure proof of which is to be found in the antique statues of marble and bronze that can still be seen. And, although painting differs from sculpture, both spring from the same source, namely, good design. Therefore, since those statues are divine, we can believe that the paintings were divine too; and the more so in being susceptible of greater artistry."

[50] Then signora Emilia turned to Giancristoforo Romano who was sitting there with the others, and said: "What do you think of this opinion? Do you agree that painting is susceptible of greater artistry than sculpture?"

Giancristoforo replied: "I think, Madam, that sculpture requires more labor and more skill and is of greater dignity than painting."

The Count rejoined: "Because statues are more durable, one might perhaps say they have a greater dignity; for, since they are made as memorials, they serve better than painting the purpose for which they are made. But, apart from this service to memory, both painting and sculpture are made to adorn, and in this painting is much superior; for if it is not so diuturnal, so to say, as sculpture, still it lasts a long time: and the while it lasts, it is much more beautiful."

Then Giancristoforo replied: "I truly believe that you are speaking contrary to your own persuasion, and that you do this entirely for your Raphael's sake; and you may also be thinking that the excellence in painting which you find in him is so supreme that sculpture in marble cannot attain to such a mark. But, take care, this is to praise an artist and not an art."

Then he went on: "I do indeed think that both the one and the other are artful imitations of nature; but I do not know how you can say that that which is real and is nature's own work is any less imitated by a marble or bronze figure, in which all the members are round, fashioned and proportioned just as nature makes them, than on a panel where one sees only a surface and colors that deceive the eyes; nor will you tell me, surely, that being is not nearer truth than

seeming. Besides, I consider sculpture to be more difficult because, if you happen to make a mistake, you cannot correct it, since marble cannot be patched up again, but you have to execute another figure; which does not happen in painting wherein you can make a thousand changes, adding and taking away, improving it all the while."

[51] The Count said, laughing: "I am not speaking for Raphael's sake, nor must you think me so ignorant as not to know Michelangelo's excellence in sculpture, your own, and that of others. But I am speaking of the art and not of the artists."

"What you say is quite true, that both the one and the other are imitations of nature; but it is not a matter of painting seeming and of sculpture being. For, although statues are in the round as in life and painting is seen only on the surface, statues lack many things which paintings do not lack, and especially light and shade (for the color of flesh is one thing and that of marble another). And this the painter imitates in a natural manner, with light and dark, less or more, according to the need—which the sculptor in marble cannot do. And even though the painter does not fashion his figure in the round, he does make muscles and members rounded in such a manner as to join up with the parts which are not so seen, whereby we see clearly that the painter knows and understands those parts as well. And in this an even greater skill is needed to depict those members that are foreshortened and that diminish in proportion to the distance, on the principle of perspective; which, by means of proportioned lines, colors, light, and shade, gives you foreground and distance on the surface of an upright wall, and as bold or as faint as he chooses. And do you think it a trifle to imitate nature's colors in doing flesh, clothing, and all the other things that have color? This the sculptor cannot do; neither can he render the grace of black eyes or blue eyes, shining with amorous rays. He cannot render the color of blond hair or the gleam of weapons, or the dark of night, or a storm at sea, or lightnings and thunderbolts, or the burning of a city, or the birth of rosy dawn with its rays of gold and red. In short, he cannot do sky, sea, land, mountains, woods, meadows, gardens, rivers, cities, or houses—all of which the painter can do."

[52] "Therefore I deem painting more noble and more susceptible of artistry than sculpture, and I think that among the ancients it must have had that excellence which other things had; and this we can still see from certain slight remains, particularly in the grottoes of Rome; but we can know it much more clearly from the writings of the ancients in which there is such frequent and honored men-

tion both of the works and of the masters, from which we learn how much the latter were always honored by great lords and republics.

"So we read that Alexander loved Apelles of Ephesus dearly¹—so much so that once, when he had him paint one of his favorite women and heard that the worthy painter had conceived a most passionate love for her because of her great beauty, he made him an outright gift of her: a generosity truly worthy of Alexander and away not only treasures and states, but his own affections to give desires; and a sign of a very great love for Apelles to care nothing if, in pleasing the artist, he displeased that woman whom he so dearly loved—whereas we may believe that the woman was sorely grieved to exchange so great a king for a painter. Many other instances are cited of Alexander's kindness to Apelles; but he showed his esteem for him most clearly in giving order by public edict that no other painter should be so bold as to paint his portrait.²

"Here I could tell of the rivalry of many noble painters who were the praise and wonder of nearly the whole world; I could tell you with what majesty the ancient emperors adorned their triumphs with paintings, dedicated them in public places, bought them as cherished objects; how some painters have been known to make a gift of their works, deeming gold and silver insufficient to pay for them; and how a painting by Protogenes was so highly prized that when Demetrius was laying siege to Rhodes and could have entered the city and set fire to the quarter where he knew the painting was, he refrained from giving battle and so did not take the city;³ how Metrodorus, a philosopher and very excellent painter, was sent by the Athenians to Lucius Paulus to teach his children and to decorate the triumph which he had to make ready.⁴ And many noble authors have also written about this art, which is a great sign of the esteem it enjoyed: but I would not have us discuss it any further.

"So let it be enough simply to say that it is fitting for our Courtier to have knowledge of painting also, since it is decorous and useful and was prized in those times when men were of greater worth than now. And even if no other utility or pleasure were had from it, it helps in judging the excellence of statues both ancient and modern, vases, buildings, medallions, cameos, intaglios, and the like, and it also brings one to know the beauty of living bodies, not only in the delicacy of the face but in the proportions of the other parts, both in man and in all other creatures. And so you see how a knowledge of painting is the source of very great pleasure. And let those consider this who are so enraptured when they contemplate a woman's

beauty that they believe themselves to be in paradise, and yet cannot paint; but if they could, they would gain much greater pleasure because they would more perfectly discern the beauty that engenders so much satisfaction in their hearts."

[53] Here messer Cesare Gonzaga laughed and said: "I, of course, am no painter; still I am sure I take much greater pleasure in looking at a certain woman than would that most worthy Apelles whom you mentioned a moment ago, were he to return to life now."

The Count replied: "This pleasure of yours does not derive entirely from her beauty but from the affection that you perchance feel for her; and if you were to tell the truth, the first time you beheld that woman, you did not feel a thousandth part of the pleasure that you later felt, even though her beauty was the same. Thus, you can see how much greater a part affection had in your pleasure than did beauty."

"That I do not deny," said messer Cesare; "but just as my pleasure arises from affection, so my affection arises from beauty; hence, we can still say that beauty is the cause of my pleasure."

The Count replied: "Many other causes besides beauty inflame our souls: such as manners, knowledge, speech, gestures, and a thousand other things (which might, however, in some way be called beauties too); but, above all, the feeling that one is loved. Thus, it is possible to love most ardently even in the absence of that beauty of which you speak; but the love which arises solely from the outward beauty we see in bodies will surely give far greater pleasure to him who discerns that beauty more than to him who discerns it less. Therefore, to return to our subject, I think Apelles must have taken more pleasure in contemplating the beauty of Campaspe than did Alexander, because we can readily believe that both men's love sprang solely from her beauty, and that for this reason, perhaps, Alexander decided to give her to Apelles who appeared to have the ability to discern it more perfectly.

"Have you not read that those five girls of Crotona, whom the painter Zeuxis chose from among the others of that city for the purpose of forming from all five a single figure of surpassing beauty,⁵ were celebrated by many poets for having been judged beautiful by one who must have been a consummate judge of beauty?"

[54] Messer Cesare seemed not to be satisfied with this, and would not at all grant that anyone except himself could experience the

1. Pliny, *Natural History* XXXV, ch. 86.

2. Pliny, *Natural History* VII, ch. 125.

3. Pliny, *Natural History* XXXV, ch. 104.

4. Pliny, *History* XXXV, ch. 135.

5. The Greek painter Zeuxis, commissioned to paint a figure of Helen for a temple to the goddess Hera in Croton, in southern Italy, used as models five beautiful girls of the city, selecting the most beautiful features of each. Pliny, *Natural History* XXXV, ch. 64; also Cicero, *De inventione* 2, 1, 1–3 [Editor].

pleasure he felt in contemplating a certain woman's beauty, and was starting to speak again. But in that moment a great tramping of feet was heard and the noise of loud talking; whereupon everyone turned to see a great light from torches appear at the door of the room; and immediately following there arrived, with a numerous and noble company, the Prefect, who was just coming back from accompanying the Pope part of his way. On entering the palace he had at once asked what the Duchess was doing and had learned what kind of game was being played that evening and the charge given to Count Ludovico to speak of Courtiership. Hence, he was hurrying as fast as he could in order to arrive in time to hear something. Thus, when he had at once made his reverence to the Duchess and had urged the others to be seated (all had stood when he came in), he too sat down in the circle along with some of his gentlemen, among whom were the Marquess Febus da Ceva and his brother Ghirardino, messer Ettore Romano, Vincenzo Calmeta, Orazio Florido, and many others; and, as everyone remained silent, the Prefect said: "Gentlemen, my coming here would indeed do great harm if I were thus to put an obstacle in the way of such fine discussions as I believe those are that were taking place among you just now. But do not do me the wrong of depriving yourselves and me of such pleasure."

Then Count Ludovico said: "Nay, Sir, I think we all must find it far more pleasant to keep silent than to talk; for since this labor has fallen more to me this evening than to the others, I am weary now of speaking, as I think all the others must be of listening; for my talk was not worthy of this company nor equal to the great matter I was charged with; in which, having little satisfied myself, I think I have satisfied the others even less. Hence, you, Sir, were fortunate to come in at the end. And it is well now to give the charge of what remains to someone else who can take my place, because whoever he may be, I know he will do much better than I should if I tried to go on, tired as I now am."

[55] "Certainly I," replied the Magnifico Giuliano, "shall in no way allow myself to be cheated of the promise you made me; and I am sure that the Prefect will not be displeased to hear this part of it."

"And what was the promise?" asked the Count.

"To tell us how the Courtier should put into effect those good qualities which you have said befit him," replied the Magnifico. The Prefect, although a mere boy, was more wise and discreet than it seemed could be in such tender years, and in his every movement showed a greatness of spirit together with a certain vivacity of temper that gave true presage of the high mark of virtue to which he would attain. Wherefore he said quickly: "If all this is still to be

told, it seems to me that I have arrived in very good time; for in hearing how the Courtier must put into effect those good qualities, I shall also hear what they are, and in this way I shall come to know all that has been said up to now. Therefore, do not refuse, Count, to pay the debt, a part of which you have already settled."

"I should not have such a heavy debt to pay," replied the Count, "if labors were more equally distributed; but the mistake was in giving the authority of command to a lady who is too partial." And thus, laughing, he turned to signora Emilia, who quickly said: "It is not you who should complain of my partiality; but since you do so without reason, we will give someone else a portion of this honor which you call a labor," and, turning to messer Federico Fregoso, she said: "It was you who proposed this game of the Courtier; therefore it is only right that it should fall to you to carry on with part of it; and that part shall be to satisfy the request of the Magnifico Giuliano, declaring in what way, manner, and time, the Courtier is to put into effect his good qualities and practice those things which the Count said befitted him."

Then messer Federico said: "Madam, you are trying to separate what cannot be separated, for these are the very things that make his qualities good and his practice good. Therefore, since the Count has spoken so long and so well, and has also said something of such matters as these and has prepared in his mind the remainder of what he has to say, it was only right that he should continue up to the end."

"Consider yourself to be the Count," signora Emilia replied, "and say what you think he would say; and in this way all satisfaction will be done."

[56] Then Calmeta said: "Gentlemen, since the hour is late and in order that messer Federico may have no excuse for not telling what he knows, I think it would be well to put off the rest of this discussion until tomorrow, and let the brief time that remains be spent in some other more modest entertainment."

When everyone agreed, the Duchess desired that madonna Margherita and madonna Costanza Fregosa should dance. Whereupon Bartetta, a delightful musician and an excellent dancer, who always kept the court amused, began to play upon his instruments; and the two ladies, joining hands, danced first a *bassa*, and then a *rogarze*⁶ with extreme grace, much to the delight of those who watched. Then, the night being already far spent, the Duchess rose to her feet, whereupon everyone reverently took leave and retired to sleep.

6. *Bassa danza*: a dance of Spanish origin, much in vogue at the time, often danced by two or three persons; *rogarze*: a dance of French origin (cf. Old French *rouergasse*), sometimes danced by four or eight persons.