

1: The Book of the Courtier - free PDF, DOC, EPUB, FB2

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In the books introduction Baldassare Castiglione introduces himself by describing his relationship with the Court of Urbino and various members of the Court. He praises their education and countenance and mentions their social status and connections. This is an illustration of Italian Renaissance society. Commiserating the fact that too many of his friends have died too young, he describes the loss of Elisabetta Gonzaga, the Duchess of Urbino, with candor and emotion. Closer to her than to anyone else at the Court, he singles out her virtues and deplors his inability to put them into words. He points to the facts that language is alive and that its words change with the times. All over Italy, he suggests, one should look for men, who are talented, wise and eloquent and who are concerned with important political subjects as well as literature, warfare, and business affairs. And he justifies his ambition, when he refers to the Renaissance ideas of a perfect republic, a perfect king, and a perfect orator, thus defending the wish to write about a perfect courtier. Aware of his linguistic shortcomings, he reasons that he will nevertheless strive for perfection in his description of a perfect courtier. Knowing that criticism will be ample and inevitable, he confines himself to the judgment of a few respected critics. In the last chapter of his introduction, he elaborates on his choice of language and beliefs. If what he writes is genuine and holds valid, the response by the public will be general acceptance and his book will survive. Closing the circle of language and truth he states that time, the father of truth will pronounce a verdict. Castiglione is in particular concerned about the variety of customs and courts all over Italy. This variety, he argues, makes it so much more difficult to find one overall ideal. Believing that usage, much more than reason, is the key to introducing new things and eliminating old ones, he questions the viability of his endeavor. At the slopes of the Apennines, almost in the center of Italy towards the Adriatic, is situated, as everyone knows, the little city of Urbino. Although it is surrounded by hills which are perhaps not as agreeable as those found in many other places, none the less it has been favoured by Nature with a very rich and fertile countryside, so that as well as a salubrious atmosphere it enjoys an abundance of all the necessities of life. Duke Federico built on the rugged site of Urbino a palace which many believe to be the most beautiful in Italy; and he furnished it so well that it seemed more like a city than a mere palace. For he adorned it not only with the usual objects, such as silver vases, wall-hangings of the richest cloth of gold, silk, and other similar material, but also with countless antique statues of marble and bronze, with rare pictures, and with every kind of musical instrument; Then, at great cost, he collected a large number of the finest and rarest books, in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and silver, believing that they were the crowning glory of his great palace. Both mens undertakings are characterized by their perseverance and persistence but their lives had taken almost opposite courses. Then, Castiglione presents a typical example of Renaissance thought on the volatility of fate on the one hand, Federico is the successful, astute military leader and cultural mentor of Urbino, and on the other hand, Guidobaldos is a man whose life is characterized by 12 illness at a young age. It is destined by misfortune since Fortuna envious of his great qualities set herself with all her might to frustrate what had begun so nobly Castiglione continues to describe the atmosphere at the Court of Urbino. So all day and every day at the Court of Urbino was spent on honorable and pleasing activities both of the body and the mind. But since the Duke always retired to his bedroom soon after super, because of his infirmity, as a rule at that hour everyone went to join the Duchess, Elisabetta Gonzaga, with whom was always to be found signora Emilia Pia, a lady gifted with such a lively wit and judgment, as you know, that she seemed to be in command of all and to endow everyone else with her own discernment and goodness. In then- company polite conversations and innocent pleasantries were heard, and everyones face was full of laughter and gaiety that the house could truly be called the very inn of happiness. They all enjoy each others company freely and innocently. Though Castiglione does not stress the fact, the respect for the Duchess leads to the most careful behavior by all guests. He lists those staying at the Court in the year of and

concludes his presentation by stating that these men and women are the finest talents found anywhere in Italy. Following this description of the atmosphere and customs at Urbino, the reader is introduced to the first evenings dialogue. Pope Julius II and his Court have just left the Palace and as usual, after supper, everyone gathers in the rooms of 13 the Duchess. The group is arranged, men sitting next to women, with men outnumbering women. Signora Emilia Pia has been asked to begin the games. Upon her command everyone has to think of a game the group has not played before. Many games are suggested until a discussion on the characteristics of a perfect courtier is proposed, which is then accepted by the Duchess as the game for the evening. The first to speak on the topic is Count Ludovico da Canossa. A friend and relative of Castiglione, bom into a Veronese family, who is a highly cultured diplomat and a friend of Erasmus of Rotterdam and of Raphael. He begins his representation by pointing to the apparent oddity that man can hold opposing thoughts on one issue at the same time; therefore it is difficult to develop just one perfect courtier. In his description he wishes the perfect courtier to be of noble birth, as it inspires and incites to high performance as much as fear of dishonour or hope of praise He also observes that Nature does not make the distinction of birth. Gaspare concludes that, if Count Ludovico is right, for anyone bom of low birth all his good qualities are spoilt and the person will never reach the height of perfection, He stresses that the perfect courtier needs to pursue this profession vigorously and that his attitude should be enterprising, bold, and loyal to whomever he serves. A military training educates his approach and endurance and it also prepares him to deal successfully with difficult situations of all kind. The courtier should be ready to display his vigor in front of the enemy at any time, but presents himself with kindness, modesty and reticence at social occasions. Now the conversation moves to the aspect of self-presentation and self-praise and its limitation by discretion. Count Ludovico observes that self-praise and self- 15 presentation with a purpose in mind and not for their own sake are well accepted. Then the focus shifts from approach and attitude to the appearance of the courtier. In contrast to the fashion of the time, Count Ludovico wants the courtier to be "manly and graceful For good measure and balance, Ludovico also sees the courtier enjoying less strenuous past times like dancing and jesting though they need always be performed with certain grace and fine judgement. However, although it is most proverbial that grace cannot be learned I say if anyone is to acquire grace as a sportsman or athlete And when he feels he has made some progress it is very profitable for him to observe different kinds of courtiers and, ruled by the good judgment that must always be his guide, take various qualities now from one man and now from another. I have discovered a universal rule which seems to apply more than any other in all human actions or words: The significance of the written word over the spoken one is established, and contemporary examples are given as to clarity, lucidity and precision. However, purity should be the guiding factor with reference to language. Virgil and Cicero are cited as authors worth emulating. Once more the question is raised as to how to achieve these ideals. Imitating these writers, a well accepted in classical literature is suggested. Then citing more classical examples of outstanding writers, musicians and painters, the variety of styles are illustrated. It is demonstrated that there are various ways of how perfection can be obtained. As the conversation reaches a technical level, Signora Emilia suddenly intervenes. She asks for a return to the subject of the courtier and suggests postponing the discussion on the aspects of language, rhythm, and style. Obliginglly, Count Ludovico recaptures the guests interests reminding them that the highest degree of grace is conferred by simplicity and nonchalance, in praise of which, and in condemnation of affection, much more could be said. Then body and soul are compared in their importance. Quite naturally the conversation turns to virtue, as it is the beauty of the soul. Prudence, goodness, fortitude, and temperance of the soul are named as all worth striving for. What spurs bold deeds is the desire for glory and true glory is entrusted to the sacred treasury of letters. And in consistence with the aforementioned, Count Ludovico adds that the courtier should be an above-average scholar in the humanities. Not only does knowledge itself create personal satisfaction but also entertaining qualities connected to these studies for the benefit of the courtiers company. Then Ludovicos representation turns to a substantial element of a courtiers possible misconception. Consciously, the courtier needs to guard himself against assuming to know what he does not know. He also needs to guard himself against the seduction of flattery and its effects. Instead the courtier should continually remind himself and others, that arms are his profession and that a knowledge of liberal arts are his attributes. Opposing opinions are voiced by

the group when the Count compares the significance of arms to that of letters. In the guests minds the profession of arms is to the body what letters are to the soul. His response is that the profession of arms involves both body and soul. Therefore, in a contest, the man who applies arms will win over the one who fights with words. His courtier must be able to read music and play several instruments. Music is most relaxing for body, soul, and spirit, and has an entertaining quality regardless of rank and position. Upon this statement many differing opinions are exchanged; the guests clearly disagree regarding the importance of music. But they believe that music needs to be part of a courtiers education. Now the Count draws everyones attention to the art of painting as a necessary skill of the courtier. He points out that in ancient Greece painting was taught in schools and at the time it was regarded as one of the foremost of the liberal arts. Then the art of painting and the art of sculpture are compared. In conclusion, painting is favored over sculpture because this nobler art, with its use of color and shade, is able to depict life and more of its varieties. It is a story about Alexander the Great giving away his mistress in appreciation of his very profound pleasure he draws from this work of art to the painter who painted her. The conversation is then interrupted by the arrival of the Prefect, who had accompanied the Pope on part of his journey. The Prefect, who is very interested in the conversations topic, accepts the invitation to join the group the following 19 evening. The remaining time of this first dialogue is spent with dance and music until the Duchess rises to retire and everyone leaves. The second book represents the second evening. The conversation begins with a discussion on how the courtier is to employ his abilities. Various aspects of social life and a courtiers professional life are looked at under the heading of a required gentlemanly behavior. Federico Fregoso, a distinguished courtier and diplomat, takes up the task he had assumed the evening before and opens the conversation. Thus in everything he does our courtier must be cautious, and he must always act and speak with prudence; and he should not only strive to perfect his various attributes and qualities, but also make sure that the tenor of his life is such that it corresponds with those qualities, is always and everywhere consistent in itself, and is perfectly of a piece with all his fine attributes. In consequence, in everything he does, he should And first and most important, he should above all avoid affectation. Next let him consider well whatever he does or says, the place where he does it, in whose presence, its timing, why he is doing it, his own age, his profession, the end he is aiming at, and the means that are suitable; and so, bearing all these points in mind, let him prepare himself discreetly for all he wishes to do or say.

2: The book of the courtier | Open Library

The Courtier's Library. 12 February Discovered in a trunk in Westminster Abbey in , scholars have recently produced a new transcription of John Donne's Catalogus librorum satyricus also known as The Courtier's Library.

For while it seemed to me very hard to deny anything and especially a thing in the highest degree laudable to one whom I love most dearly and by whom I feel myself to be most dearly loved, yet to set about an enterprise that I was not sure of being able to finish, seemed to me ill befitting a man who esteems just censure as it ought to be esteemed. At last, after much thought, I am resolved to try in this matter how much aid my assiduity may gain from that affection and intense desire to please, which in other things are so wont to stimulate the industry of man. You ask me then to write what is to my thinking the form of Courtiership 21 most befitting a gentleman who lives at the court of princes, by which he may have the ability and knowledge perfectly to serve them in every reasonable thing, winning from them favour, and praise from other men; in short, what manner of man he ought to be who may deserve to be called a perfect Courtier without flaw. Wherefore, considering your request, I say that had it not seemed to me more blameworthy to be reputed somewhat unamiable by you than too conceited by everyone else, I should have avoided this task, for fear of being held over bold by all who know how hard a thing it is, from among such a variety of customs as are in use at the courts of Christendom, to choose the perfect form and as it were the flower of Courtiership. For custom often makes the same thing pleasing and displeasing to us; whence it sometimes follows that customs, habits, ceremonies and fashions that once were prized, become vulgar, and contrariwise the vulgar become prized. Thus it is clearly seen that use rather than reason has power to introduce new things among us, and to do away with the old; and he will often err who seeks to determine which are perfect. Therefore being conscious of this and many other difficulties in the subject set before me to write of, I am constrained to offer some apology, and to testify that this error if error it may indeed be called is common to us both, to the end that if I be blamed for it, the blame may be shared by you also; for your offence in setting me a task beyond my powers should not be deemed less than mine in having accepted it. So now let us make a beginning of our subject, and if possible let us form such a Courtier that any prince worthy to be served by him, although of but small estate, 22 might still be called a very great lord. In these books we shall follow no fixed order or rule of distinct precepts, such as are usually employed in teaching anything whatever; but after the fashion of many ancient writers, we shall revive a pleasant memory and rehearse certain discussions that were held between men singularly competent in such matters; and although I had no part in them personally, being in England at the time they took place, 23 yet having received them soon after my return, from one who faithfully reported them to me, I will try to recall them as accurately as my memory will permit, so that you may know what was thought and believed on this subject by men who are worthy of highest praise, and to whose judgment implicit faith may be given in all things. Nor will it be amiss to tell the cause of these discussions, so that we may reach in orderly manner the end to which our discourse tends. Although amid mountains, and less pleasing ones than perhaps some others that we see in many places, it has yet enjoyed such favour of heaven that the country round about is very fertile and rich in crops; so that besides the wholesomeness of the air, there is great abundance of everything needful for human life. But among the greatest blessings that can be attributed to it, this I believe to be the chief, that for a long time it has ever been ruled by the best of lords; 24 although in the calamities of the universal wars of Italy, it was for a season deprived of them. Among his other praiseworthy deeds, he built on the rugged site of Urbino a palace regarded by many as the most beautiful to be found in all Italy; and he so well furnished it with everything suitable that it seemed not a palace but a city in the form of a palace; and not merely with what is ordinarily used,â€” such as silver vases, hangings of richest cloth-of-gold and silk, and other similar things,â€” but for ornament he added countless antique statues in marble and bronze, pictures most choice, and musical instruments of every sort, nor would he admit anything there that was not very rare and excellent. Then at very great cost he collected a goodly number of most excellent and rare books in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and with silver, esteeming this to be the chiefest excellence of his great palace. But envious of so much virtue, fortune

thwarted this glorious beginning with all her power; so that before Duke Guido reached the age of twenty years, he fell ill of the gout, 30 which grew upon him with grievous pain, and in a short space of time so crippled all his members that he could neither stand upon his feet nor move; and thus one of the fairest and most promising forms in the world was distorted and spoiled in tender youth. And not content even with this, fortune was so contrary to him in all his purposes, that he could seldom carry into effect anything that he desired; and although he was very wise of counsel and unconquered in spirit, it seemed that what he undertook, both in war and in everything else whether small or great, always ended ill for him. And proof of this is found in his many and diverse calamities, which he ever bore with such strength of mind, that his spirit was never vanquished by fortune; nay, scorning her assaults with unbroken courage, he lived in illness as if in health and in adversity as if fortunate, with perfect dignity and universal esteem; so that although he was thus infirm of body, he fought with most honourable rank in the service of their Serene Highnesses the Kings of Naples, Alfonso 31 and Ferdinand the Younger; 32 later with Pope Alexander VI, 33 and with the Venetian and Florentine signories. Upon the accession of Julius II 34 to the pontificate, he was made Captain of the Church; at which time, following his accustomed habit, above all else he took care to fill his household with very noble and valiant gentlemen, with whom he lived most familiarly, delighting in their intercourse: And besides this, the greatness of his spirit so set him on, that although he could not practise in person the exercises of chivalry, as he once had done, yet he took the utmost pleasure in witnessing them in others; and by his words, now correcting now praising every man according to desert, he clearly showed his judgment in those matters; wherefore, in jousts and tournaments, in riding, in the handling of every sort of weapon, as well as in pastimes, games, music,â€” in short, in all the exercises proper to noble cavaliers,â€” everyone strove so to show himself, as to merit being deemed worthy of such noble fellowship. Here then, gentle discussions and innocent pleasantries were heard, and on the face of everyone a jocund gaiety was seen depicted, so that the house could truly be called the very abode of mirth: The same was it among the ladies, with whom there was intercourse most free and honourable; for everyone was permitted to talk, sit, jest and laugh with whom he pleased; but such was the reverence paid to the wish of my lady Duchess, that this same liberty was a very great check; 38 nor was there anyone who did not esteem it the utmost pleasure he could have in the world, to please her, and the utmost pain to displease her. And thus, most decorous manners were here joined with greatest liberty, and games and laughter in her presence were seasoned not only with witty jests, but with gracious and sober dignity; for that modesty and loftiness which governed all the acts, words and gestures of my lady Duchess, bantering and laughing, were such that she would have been known for a lady of noblest rank by anyone who saw her even but once. And impressing herself thus upon those about her, she seemed to attune us all to her own quality and tone; accordingly every man strove to follow this pattern, taking as it were a rule of beautiful behaviour from the presence of so great and virtuous a lady; whose highest qualities I do not now purpose to recount, they not being my theme and being well known to all the world, and far more because I could not express them with either tongue or pen; and those that perhaps might have been somewhat hid, fortune, as if wondering at such rare virtue, chose to reveal through many adversities and stings of calamity, so as to give proof that in the tender breast of woman, in company with singular beauty, there may abide prudence and strength of soul, and all those virtues that even among stern men are very rare. Sometimes other discussions arose about different matters, or biting retorts passed lightly back and forth. Moreover there were many, who, although usually they did not dwell there constantly, yet spent most of the time there: And some there were, attracted by the charm of this society, who tarried at Urbino many days after the departure of the pope and his court; during which time not only were the ordinary pastimes and diversions continued in the usual manner, but every man strove to contribute something new, and especially in the games, to which almost every evening was devoted. And the order of them was such that immediately after reaching the presence of my lady Duchess, everyone sat down in a circle as he pleased or as chance decided; and in sitting they were arranged alternately, a man and a woman, as long as there were women, for nearly always the number of men was by far the greater; then they were governed as seemed best to my lady Duchess, who for the most part left this charge to my lady Emilia. I would therefore that this evening our game might be that each of us should tell what virtue above others he would have the person whom he loves adorned with; and then, as all must have

some blemish, what fault he would have in her; in order that we may see who can find the most praiseworthy and useful virtues, and the most excusable faults and least harmful to lover and beloved. Thus we have seen it happen in this house that many, at first accounted very wise, were in course of time recognized as very foolish, which came about from nothing else but our own watchfulness. For, as they say that in Apulia musical instruments are used for those bitten by the tarantula, 58 and various tunes are tried until the humour that causes the malady through a certain affinity it has for some one of those tunes is suddenly stirred by the sound, and so excites the sick man that he is restored to health by virtue of that excitement: Thus one man has waxed foolish over poetry, another over music, another over love, another over dancing, another over inventing mimes," 59 another over riding, another over fencing, " each according to the native quality of his metal; whence, as you know, great amusement has been derived. I hold it then as certain that there is some grain of folly in each of us, which being quickened can multiply almost infinitely. Let the same be told of all the rest, keeping to the order of our games, and let each one try to found his opinion upon some actual sign and argument. Nor is there in sandy Libya to be found a serpent so venomous and eager for human blood as is this false one; who not only in the sweetness of her voice and honeyed words, but in her eyes, her smiles, her aspect and in all her ways, is a very siren. To you alone then be left this task, as to him who alone can perform it. But yet I have not refrained because I rate myself so high, or women so low, that I do not deem many of them worthy to be loved and served by me; but made timorous rather by the continual laments of some lovers, who " pallid, gloomy and taciturn " seem always to wear their unhappiness depicted in their eyes; and if they speak, they accompany every word with triple sighs, and discourse of nothing but tears, torments, despairings and longings for death; so that if an amorous spark has sometimes kindled in my heart, I have at once striven with all my might to quench it, not from any hate I bear to women as these ladies think, but for my own good. So I would that this evening our game might be, that each man tell, if she whom he loves must needs be angry with him, by what cause he would have her anger roused. Because if there be any here who have enjoyed this sweet anger, I am sure that out of courtesy they will choose one of those causes that make it so sweet; and perhaps I shall take courage to advance a little farther in love, hoping that I too may find this sweetness where some find bitterness; and then these ladies will be no longer able to cast shame upon me because I do not love. At other times I saw her angered by some error of mine, and knew her ire to proceed from my fault; and then I deemed that my former woe was very light compared with that which now I felt; and it seemed to me that to have displeased, and through my own guilt, the person whom alone I desired and so zealously strove to please, was the greatest torment and above all others. I would therefore that our game might be that each man tell, if she whom he loves must needs be angry with him, from which of the two he would have her anger spring, from her or from himself; so that we may know which is the greater suffering, to give displeasure to her who is loved, or to receive it from her who is loved. But not to break our rule, I say that anyone who wished to praise our court," laying aside the merit of our lady Duchess, which with her divine virtue would suffice to lift from earth to heaven the meanest souls that are in the world," might well say without suspicion of flattery, that in all Italy it would perhaps be hard to find so many cavaliers so singularly admirable and so excellent in divers other matters besides the chief concerns of chivalry, as are now to be found here: She turned to my lady Duchess and said: Yet, since it so happens that you are pleased to have me bear this burden, I neither can nor will refuse it, in order not to contravene our rule and your judgment, which I rate far higher than my own. Thus there are many that will like a man who speaks much, and will call him pleasing; some will prefer modesty; some others, an active and restless man; still others, one who shows calmness and deliberation in everything; and so every man praises or decries according to his mind, always clothing vice with the name of its kindred virtue, or virtue with the name of its kindred vice; for example, calling an impudent man frank, a modest man dull, an ignorant man good, a knave discreet; and so in all things else. Yet I believe that there exists in everything its own perfection, although concealed; and that this can be determined through rational discussion by any having knowledge of the thing in hand. And since, as I have said, the truth often lies concealed, and I do not profess to have this knowledge, I can only praise the kind of Courtier that I most esteem, and approve him who seems to me nearest right, according to my poor judgment; the which you will follow if you find it good, or you will hold to your own if it differs from mine.

Nor shall I at all insist that mine is better than yours; not only because you may think one thing and I another, but I myself may sometimes think one thing, and sometimes another. And since this splendour of nobility does not illumine the deeds of the humbly born, they lack that stimulus and fear of shame, nor do they feel any obligation to advance beyond what their predecessors have done; while to the nobly born it seems a reproach not to reach at least the goal set them by their ancestors. And thus it nearly always happens that both in the profession of arms and in other worthy pursuits the most famous men have been of noble birth, because nature has implanted in everything that hidden seed which gives a certain force and quality of its own essence to all things that are derived from it, and makes them like itself: And so it is with men, who if rightly trained are nearly always like those from whom they spring, and often better; but if there be no one to give them proper care, they become like savages and never reach perfection. So too there are many men so foolish and rude that one cannot but think that nature brought them into the world out of contempt or mockery. Just as these can usually accomplish little even with constant diligence and good training, so with slight pains those others reach the highest summit of excellence. And to give you an instance: I say that there is a middle state between perfect grace on the one hand and senseless folly on the other; and those who are not thus perfectly endowed by nature, with study and toil can in great part polish and amend their natural defects. Besides his noble birth, then, I would have the Courtier favoured in this regard also, and endowed by nature not only with talent and beauty of person and feature, but with a certain grace and as we say air that shall make him at first sight pleasing and agreeable to all who see him; and I would have this an ornament that should dispose and unite all his actions, and in his outward aspect give promise of whatever is worthy the society and favour of every great lord. And if what you just said be true, namely that there is in everything this occult influence of the original seed, then we should all be in the same case, because we had the same origin, nor would any man be more noble than another. But as to our differences and grades of eminence and obscurity, I believe there are many other causes: And how important these impressions are, everyone can easily understand: We have seen others, held at first in small esteem, then admirably successful at the last. And often too they are themselves deceived; but since they always have a host of imitators, their favour begets very great fame, which chiefly guides our judgments: You see then how important this first impression is, and how he ought to strive to make a good one at the outset, who thinks to hold the rank and name of good Courtier. And he will win a reputation for these good qualities by exercising them at all times and in all places, since one may never fail in this without severest censure. And just as among women, their fair fame once sullied never recovers its first lustre, so the reputation of a gentleman who bears arms, if once it be in the least tarnished with cowardice or other disgrace, remains forever infamous before the world and full of ignominy. Therefore the more our Courtier excels in this art, the more he will be worthy of praise; and yet I do not deem essential in him that perfect knowledge of things and those other qualities that befit a commander; since this would be too wide a sea, let us be content, as we have said, with perfect loyalty and unconquered courage, and that he be always seen to possess them. For the courageous are often recognized even more in small things than in great; and frequently in perils of importance and where there are many spectators, some men are to be found, who, although their hearts be dead within them, yet, moved by shame or by the presence of others, press forward almost with their eyes shut, and do their duty God knows how. While on occasions of little moment, when they think they can avoid putting themselves in danger without being detected, they are glad to keep safe. But those who, even when they do not expect to be observed or seen or recognized by anyone, show their ardour and neglect nothing, however paltry, that may be laid to their charge, they have that strength of mind which we seek in our Courtier. Thus among the ancient authors, whoever carries weight seldom fails to praise himself. They indeed are insufferable who do this without desert, but such we do not presume our Courtier to be. I say, however, that he, who in praising himself runs into no error and incurs no annoyance or envy at the hands of those that hear him, is a very discreet man indeed and merits praise from others in addition to that which he bestows upon himself; because it is a very difficult matter. Like one of our friends a few days ago, who, being quite run through the thigh with a spear at Pisa, said he thought it was a fly that had stung him; and another man said he kept no mirror in his room because, when angry, he became so terrible to look at, that the sight of himself would have frightened him too much. Does not this seem to you a greater boast than that about the fly-sting?

But extraordinary men are surely to be pardoned when they assume much; for he who has great things to do must needs have daring to do them, and confidence in himself, and must not be abject or mean in spirit, yet very modest in speech, showing less confidence in himself than he has, lest his self-confidence lead to rashness. Grace and beauty of countenance I think I certainly possess, and this is the reason why so many ladies are ardently in love with me, as you know; but I am rather doubtful as to the beauty of my person, especially as regards these legs of mine, which seem to me decidedly less well proportioned than I should wish: Pray, now, describe a little more in particular the sort of body that the Courtier is to have, so that I may dismiss this doubt and set my mind at rest. Still it is of a manly cast and at the same time full of grace; and this characteristic is to be found in many different types of countenance. Since nature has not made them women, as they seem to wish to appear and be, they should be treated not as good women but as public harlots, and driven not merely from the courts of great lords but from the society of honest men. Yet if we must offend in one of the two extremes, it is preferable to fall a little short of the just measure of height than to exceed it, for besides often being dull of intellect, men thus huge of body are also unfit for every exercise of agility, which thing I should much wish in the Courtier. And so I would have him well built and shapely of limb, and would have him show strength and lightness and suppleness, and know all bodily exercises that befit a man of war: Nor am I one of those who say that skill is forgotten in the hour of need; for he whose skill forsakes him at such a time, indeed gives token that he has already lost heart and head through fear. Then, both for his own sake and for that of his friends, he must understand the quarrels and differences that may arise, and must be quick to seize an advantage, always showing courage and prudence in all things. But when he finds himself so far engaged that he cannot withdraw without reproach, he ought to be most deliberate, both in the preliminaries to the duel and in the duel itself, and always show readiness and daring. Nor must he act like some, who fritter the affair away in disputes and controversies, and who, having the choice of weapons, select those that neither cut nor pierce, and arm themselves as if they were expecting a cannonade; and thinking it enough not to be defeated, stand ever on the defensive and retreat,â€” showing therein their utter cowardice. And thus they make themselves a laughing-stock for boys, like those two men of Ancona who fought at Perugia not long since, and made everyone laugh who saw them. Then the Count said: For this reason I would have our Courtier a perfect horseman in every kind of seat; and besides understanding horses and what pertains to riding, I would have him use all possible care and diligence to lift himself a little beyond the rest in everything, so that he may be ever recognized as eminent above all others. And as we read of Alcibiades that he surpassed all the nations with whom he lived, each in their particular province, so I would have this Courtier of ours excel all others, and each in that which is most their profession. And as it is the especial pride of the Italians to ride well with the rein, to govern wild horses with consummate skill, and to play at tilting and jousting,â€” in these things let him be among the best of the Italians. In tourneys and in the arts of defence and attack, let him shine among the best in France. But above everything he should temper all his movements with a certain good judgment and grace, if he wishes to merit that universal favour which is so greatly prized. It is fitting also to know how to swim, to leap, to run, to throw stones, for besides the use that may be made of this in war, a man often has occasion to show what he can do in such matters; whence good esteem is to be won, especially with the multitude, who must be taken into account withal. Another admirable exercise, and one very be-fitting a man at court, is the game of tennis, in which are well shown the disposition of the body, the quickness and suppleness of every member, and all those qualities that are seen in nearly every other exercise. Nor less highly do I esteem vaulting on horse, which although it be fatiguing and difficult, makes a man very light and dexterous more than any other thing; and besides its utility, if this lightness is accompanied by grace, it is to my thinking a finer show than any of the others. For this reason I would have our Courtier sometimes descend to quieter and more tranquil exercises, and in order to escape envy and to entertain himself agreeably with everyone, let him do whatever others do, yet never departing from praiseworthy deeds, and governing himself with that good judgment which will keep him from all folly; but let him laugh, jest, banter, frolic and dance, yet in such fashion that he shall always appear genial and discreet, and that everything he may do or say shall be stamped with grace. Yet I would not have my severity reproach your indulgence, and thus be the cause of our not hearing this question of messer Cesare. And indeed I think that in this everyone would allow

himself to be persuaded easily, since from the very force of the word, it may be said that he who has grace finds grace. Therefore I do not discuss this, it not being in our power to acquire it of ourselves. But they who have received from nature only so much, that they are capable of becoming graceful by pains, industry and care,â€” I long to know by what art, by what training, by what method, they can acquire this grace, as well in bodily exercises in which you esteem it to be so necessary as also in everything else that they may do or say. Therefore, since by much praise of this quality you have aroused in all of us, I think, an ardent thirst to pursue it, you are further bound, by the charge that my lady Emilia laid upon you, to satisfy that thirst by teaching us how to attain it.

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