

# Plutarch

## Of Love

Taken from *Plutarch's Morals. Translated from the Greek by Several Hands. Corrected and Revised by William W. Goodwin, with an Introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1878).  
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[Characters:] *Flavianus And Autobulus, sons Of Plutarch.*

1. *Flavianus.*

Was it not in Helicon, dear Autobulus, that those discourses were held concerning Love, which – whether thou hast already set them down in writing, or still carriest them in thy memory, as having often desired them from thy father – we are now in expectation that thou wilt recite to us, at our importunate request?

*Autobulus.*

I was in Helicon, dear Flavianus, among the Muses, at what time the Thespians performed the Erotic solemnities. For they celebrate every four years certain games and festivals very magnificent and splendid in honor of Cupid, as well as of the Muses.

*Flav.*

Know'st thou then what it is we all desire at thy hands, as many as are gathered here together to be thy auditors?

*Autob.*

No; but I shall know, when I am once by you informed.

*Flav.*

Curtail, we beseech ye, your discourse at present, forbearing the descriptions of meadows and shades, together with the crawling ivy, and whatever else poets are so studious to add to their descriptions, imitating with more curiosity than grace Plato's Ilissus,\* with the chaste tree and the gentle rising hillock covered with green grass.

*Autob.*

What needed my relation, dearest Flavianus, such a proem as this? The occasion that gave birth to these discourses of itself (as it were) asks for a chorus, and it requires a theatre; otherwise there is nothing wanting of a complete drama. Therefore let us only beseech Memory, the mother of the Muses, to be propitious and assist us in the discovery of the fable.

2. For a long time before we were born, when our father had newly espoused our mother, an unlucky variance that fell out between their parents caused him to take a journey to Thespieae, with an intention to sacrifice to the God of Love; and he carried my mother also to the feast (for that it properly belonged

to her as well to make the feast as to perform the sacrifice), besides several of his familiar acquaintance that accompanied him from his house. Now being arrived at Thespieae, he met with Daphnaeus, the son of Archidamus, who was in love with Lysandra, the daughter of Simon, and who was, above all her suitors, chiefly the most welcome and acceptable to her. There he also found Soclarus, the son of Aristion, who was come from Tithorea; together with Protogenes of Tarsus and Zeuxippus the Lacedaemonian, by whom he had been several times kindly entertained; and he said that most of the chief men among the Boeotians were there also. Thus they stayed for two or three days in the city, entertaining each other with learned discourses, one while in the common wrestling-places, sometimes in the theatres, still keeping company together. After that, avoiding the troublesome contest of the harpers and musicians, — it being found out that all had been settled beforehand by favor and intrigue, — the greatest part brake company, as if they had been discamping out of an enemy's country, retired to Helicon, and took up their lodgings among the Muses. Thither the next morning came to them Anthemion and Piasias, persons of eminent nobility, and both allied to Baccho, surnamed the Fair, and in some way at difference one with another, by reason of the affection which they severally bore to him. For there was at Thespieae, Ismenodora, of an illustrious family, and wealthy withal; and indeed in all other respects discreet and modest; and moreover she had continued a widow no little time, without spot or stain to her reputation, though both young and beautiful.

Now it happened that while this brisk widow was endeavoring to make up a match between Baccho, who was the son of her intimate friend, and a certain just blooming virgin nearly allied to herself, by often talking with the young gentleman and much frequenting his company, she began to feel some sparks of kindness kindled for him in her own breast. Afterwards hearing him highly commended by others, and speaking many things in his praise herself, and finding him beloved by a great number of persons of the best rank, by degrees she fell desperately in love with the youth; nevertheless with a resolution to do nothing unbecoming her birth and quality, but after public wedlock to acknowledge him as her husband. But as the match seemed impracticable by reason of the distance of their years, so the mother of the young man suspected the nobility and grandeur of her house not to be correspondent to her son's condition, which rendered him incapable of such a preferment. Moreover, his companions that were wont to go a hunting with him, weighing the difference between his and the age of Ismenodora, filled his head with several scruples, and scaring him with continual frumps and scoffs, more effectually hindered the match than they who labored industriously and seriously to prevent it. And the young man himself felt ashamed at his age to be married to a widow. At last, however, shaking off all others, he applies himself to Piasias and Anthemion for their advice in a matter of so great concernment. The elder of these two, Anthemion, was his cousin, and Piasias the most earnest of his lovers. The latter therefore withstood the match with all his might, and upbraided Anthemion, as one that went about to betray the young man to Ismenodora. On the other side, Anthemion told Piasias, that he did not well to do as he did, having the reputation of a worthy honest man, to imitate those lewd lovers, and endeavor to deprive his friend of a noble house, a rich wife, and other great conveniences, that he might have the pleasure to see him frequently naked in the wrestling-places, fresh and smooth, and a stranger to female sports.

3. However, to prevent the growing of any quarrel between them, through long and passionate disputes, they chose for umpires of the controversy my father and those friends that were with him. And beside them, as if they had been chosen on purpose, Daphnaeus pleaded for Piasias, and for Anthemion, Protogenes; who bitterly inveighing against Ismenodora, O Hercules, cried Daphnaeus, what may we not expect, when Protogenes bids defiance to love? he that all along has spent as well the serious as sportive hours of his life both in love and for love, without regard either to learning or his country; nor like to Laius, who was but five days' journey distant from home, — for his was a slow sort of love upon the dry land, — whereas your Cupid, Protogenes,

With nimble wings displayed,  
crossed the seas from Cilicia to Athens, merely to visit and straggle up and down with lovely boys. And indeed, such at first was the true cause of Protogenes's peregrination.

4. At which the company falling into a loud laughter; How! said Protogenes, can you believe that I at this time wage war against love, and that I do not rather fight for love against intemperate desire and lascivious wantonness, which, under the shelter of the most honest and fairest names that are, let themselves loose into the most shameful acts of inordinate lust and concupiscence? Then Daphnaeus: Do ye number wedlock and the conjunction of man and wife (than which there is no tie more sacred in this life) among the vile and dishonest actions of the world? Why truly, replied Protogenes, this same bond of wedlock, as being necessary for generation, is not undeservedly perhaps extolled by our grave politicians and lawgivers, and by them recommended to the multitude. But I must tell ye, if you mean true love, there is not a farthing's worth of it to be found among women. Nor do I believe that either you yourselves, or any other that dote so much as you pretend to do upon women and virgins, love them any otherwise than as flies love milk, or bees love honey-combs; or as cooks and butchers fat up calves and poultry in the dark, not out of any extraordinary affection which they bear to these creatures, but for the gain which they make of them. But as Nature prompts all men to the use of bread and meat with moderation and so far as may suffice the appetite, the excess of which becomes a vice, under the name of gluttony or gormandizing; thus it is natural for men and women to desire the pleasures of mutual enjoyment, but as for that impetuous concupiscence that hurries the greatest part of mankind with so much strength and violence, it is not properly called love. For love that is bred in a young and truly generous heart, by means of friendship, terminates in virtue; whereas all our desires towards women, let them be taken in the best sense he can, serve us only to reap the fruit of pleasure, and to assist us in the fruition of youth and beauty. As Aristippus testified to one that would have put him out of conceit with Lais, for that, as he said, she did not truly love him; no more, said he, am I beloved by pure wine or good fish, and yet I willingly make use of both. For the end of desire is pleasure and enjoyment. But love, having once lost the hopes of friendship, will neither tarry, nor cherish for beauty's sake that which is irksome, though never so gaudy in the flower of youth, if it bring not forth the fruit of a disposition propense to friendship and virtue. And therefore it is that you hear a certain husband in a tragedy thus talking to his wife:

Thou hat'st me? True; — and I thy proud disdain  
Will brook with patience, careless of the pain,  
So long as my dishonor gives me gain.

Now I take him to be not at all a more amorous man than this, that can endure, for the sake of his carnal pleasure, and not for gain, the plague of a curst ill-natured shrew, that is always scolding. The first of which love-martyrs Philippides the comedian thus derided in the person of Stratocles the rhetorician:

She lowers and growls and turns her tail  
With, fury so unkind,  
The wittol blest would think himself,  
To kiss her coif behind.

Now if this be the passion you talk of which is to be called Love, it is a spurious and effeminate love that sends us to the women's chambers, as it were to the Cynosarges at Athens. Or rather, as they say there is a sort of generous and true bred mountain eagle, which Homer calls the black eagle and eagle of prey, and then again there is another sort of bastard eagle, that takes fish and birds that are lazy and slow of flight, and wanting food makes a shrill and mournful noise for hunger; thus the true genuine love is that of boys, not flaming with concupiscence, as according to Anacreon the love of maids and virgins does,

neither besmeared with odoriferous ointments, nor alluring with smiles and rolling glances; but you shall find him plain and simple and undebauched with pleasures in the schools of the philosophers, or in the wrestling-lists and places of public exercise, smart and generous in the chase of youth, and exhorting to virtue all that he finds to be fit objects of his diligence; whereas that other love, nice and effeminate, and always nestling in the bosoms and beds of women, pursuing soft pleasures, and wasted with unmanly delights, that have no gust of friendship or heavenly ravishment of mind, is to be despised and rejected of all mankind. This indeed Solon did, when he forbade slaves and servants the use of male familiarity and of dry ointment, but granted them the liberty to accompany with women; as looking upon friendship to be laudable and civil, but pleasure to be a vulgar thing and unbecoming a man born free. Whence it appears that to make love to a slave boy is ignoble and unworthy of a freeman; for this is mere mischievous love of copulation, like the affection toward women.

5. Now while Protogenes was desirous to say more, Daphnaeus interrupting him said: Truly you have done well to put us in mind of Solon, and we may make use of him as the judge of a person addicted to love. Hear what he says:

Then dote upon the flowery youth of boys,  
Their fragrant breath admiring and soft thighs.

Add to this of Solon that other of Aeschylus:

Ungrateful, for the kisses of my lips,  
Not to revere the glory of my hips.

These are proper judges of love; but others there are who deride all those that would have lovers inspect thighs and haunches, like so many sacrificers and diviners. And for my part I draw from hence a very strong argument on the behalf of the women. For if male converse, which is altogether against nature, neither extinguishes nor is any ways noxious to amorous affection, much more probable is it that the love of women, which is according to nature, should reach to the consummation of friendship, by virtue of that obsequious beauty which attends it. For I must tell you, Protogenes, the submission of the female to the male was by the ancients expressed by the word χάρις (grace or favor). For which reason Pindar observes that Vulcan was by Juno brought forth without the graces; and Sappho tells a young virgin, not yet ripe for matrimony,

A little child thou seem'st, and without grace.

And a certain person puts the question to Hercules,

By force or by persuasion did the maid  
Her favors yield?

But the submission of males to males, whether it be by compulsion and strength, like a violent and forcible rape, or whether it be voluntary, — men suffering themselves weakly and effeminately to be covered by each other, like four-footed beasts, and counterfeiting the act of generation in defiance of nature (as Plato says), — is void of all grace, brutish, and contrary to the end of venereal pleasure. Wherefore I am apt to believe that Solon wrote those lines when he was young, brisk, and full of seed (as Plato phrases it), but when he was grown into years, he sang another note:

The sports of Venus, now, are my delight,  
Or else with Bacchus to carouse;  
At other times the Muses' charms invite;  
These are the chiefest pleasures mankind knows; —

as if he had altered his course of life, and retired from the storms and tempests of pederastic fury into the calms of wedlock and philosophy. Now then, Protogenes, let us but consider the truth of the matter, we

shall find the passion of lovers to be the same, whether it be for boys or for women; or if, out of a contentious humor, you will distinguish them, you shall find that this affection for boys does not keep itself within bounds, but like a late-born issue, clandestinely brought forth in the dark and out of season, it strives to expel the truly genuine and legitimate love, which is much the more ancient. For give me leave to tell ye, my dear friend, it is but (as it were) of yesterday's standing or of the day before — since young boys began to strip and show themselves naked in the public places of exercise — that this frenzy, getting in by degrees and crowding in there, afterwards by little and little became better fledged and gathered strength of wings in the wrestling-rings, so that now the insolence of it can no longer be so restrained but that still it will be affronting and adulterating conjugal love, which is the coadjutrix of Nature and helps to immortalize mortal mankind, raising up and immediately restoring again by generation our human nature when it has been extinguished by death. But this same Protogenes denies there is any pleasure in male concupiscence, for he is ashamed and afraid to acknowledge it. Therefore there must be some decent pretence for the feeling and handling these adult and lovely youths. And truly he has found out a very clever excuse, alleging it to be for the sake of friendship and virtue. Therefore he rolls himself in the dust, washes with cold water, erects his brows, and outwardly pretends to philosophy and chastity, for fear of the law; but when darkness covers the earth, and all people have betaken themselves to their rest,

Sweet the ripe fruit he finds, its keeper gone.

Now if it be as Protogenes says, that no carnal conjunction attends these masculine familiarities, how can it be love, when Venus is absent; seeing that of all the Goddesses, she it is that Cupid is bound to obey and attend, and that he has no honor or power but what she confers upon him? But if there be a sort of love without Venus, as a man may be drunk without wine by drinking the decoctions of figs or barley, the disturbance of such a love must prove fruitless and to no end, and consequently loathsome and offensive.

6. These things thus said, it was apparent that Pias found himself touched to the quick, and much concerned for what Daphnaeus had spoken. But after he had been silent awhile, O Hercules, said he, what a strange impudence and levity is this in men, to acknowledge themselves tied to women by their generating parts, like dogs to bitches; by this means expelling and banishing love from the places of exercise, from the public porticos, and from conversing under the open sky and sunshine, to the stews, poniards, philters, and sorceries of lascivious women; for it is not convenient for the chaste either to love or to be beloved. At which words, as my father told me, he took Protogenes by the hand, and repeated to him these verses:

Words such as these the Argive courage warm;  
And the affronted youth provoke to arm.

For surely (he added) the exorbitant language of Pias gives us good reason to take Daphnaeus's part, while he introduces over the head of wedlock a society void of love, and utterly a stranger to that same friendship which descends and is inspired from above; which, if real affection and submission be wanting, can hardly be restrained by all the curbs and yokes of shame and fear. Then Pias: For my part, said he, I give little heed to this argument; for as for Daphnaeus, I find him in the same condition with brass. For as brass is not so easily melted by the fire as by the force of the same melted and liquid metal being poured upon it, which mollifies both alike, and causes them to run and mix together; so it is not the beauty of Lysandra that inflames him, but the conversing along with one that is already inflamed and full of fire, that sets him all in a flame himself; and it is apparent that, unless he makes haste to us, he will suddenly be melted with his own heat. But I perceive, said he, the same thing will befall me which Anthemion has most reason to desire, that I too shall offend the judges; and therefore I shall say no

more. Then Anthemion: 'Tis very true indeed, your fear is just; for you ought at the first to have spoken to the purpose, and what was proper to the argument in hand.

7. To this Piasias replied: I am willing enough that every woman should have her lover; but withal, it very much concerns Baccho to have a care how he entangles himself in Ismenodora's wealth; lest, while we match him with so much grandeur and magnificence, we consume him to nothing, like tin among brass. For I must tell you, it would be a hard matter for so young a stripling as he is, though he should marry a plain and ordinary woman, to keep the upper hand, like wine mixed with water. But we see her already design superiority and command; else why should she refuse so many suitors of great wealth and noble extraction that court her daily, to woo herself a mere boy, that has but newly assumed the robes of manhood and is more fit to go to school than to marry. And therefore those husbands that are wise, without any admonition, out of their own foresight, clip their wives' wings themselves; that is, they prune away their riches, that prompt them to luxury and vanity, and render them inconstant and foolish. For many times, by the help of these wings, they soar out of their husbands' reach and fly quite away; or if they stay at home, better it were for a man to be chained with fetters of gold, as they chain their prisoners in Ethiopia, than to be tied to the riches of a wife.

8. However, said Protogenes, he has not hinted to us in the least the hazard we run of inverting absurdly and ridiculously the counsel of Hesiod, whose words are these:

Take to thy home a woman for thy bride  
When in the ripeness of thy manhood's pride:  
Thrice ten thy sum of years, the nuptial prime;  
Nor far fall short, nor far exceed the time.  
Four years the ripening virgin should consume,  
And wed the fifth of her expanded bloom.

Quite contrary to this precept, we are going about to couple a young lad, scarce ripe for marriage, to a lady much older than himself; like those that graft the tender scions of dates and fig-trees upon old stocks, to make them bear fruit before their season. But you will say, The woman is in love up to the ears, and burns with desire. Who is he that will hinder her from masquerading before his doors, from singing her amorous lamentations at his windows, from adorning his statues with chaplets and garlands of flowers, from duelling her rivals, and winning him from them all by feats of arms? For these are acts that demonstrate the height of a passionate affection. Let her knit her brows, refrain all manner of pomp of luxury; let her put on a garb and countenance suitable to such a violent passion. But if bashful and modest, let her sit at home, expecting her suitors and gallants to come and court her there. But who would not fly and abominate a woman that professes love, and loathe the idea of taking one to wife who makes such an impudent incontinence the first step to future nuptials?

9. When Protogenes had thus concluded; Do you not see, Anthemion, saith my father, how they again make common cause against us, enforcing us still to continue our discourse of nuptial love, who deny not ourselves to be the upholders of it, nor ever avoided the being one of that celebrated chorus? Most certainly I do, replied Anthemion; therefore proceed in the defence of conjugal affection; and let us have also your assistance in maintaining the argument about riches, with which Piasias chiefly seems to scare us. 'Tis the least we can do, said my father; for what in the world will not be made a reproach to womankind, should we reject Ismenodora because she is in love and wealthy to boot? Grant that she is imperious as well as rich. What then if she is beautiful and young? What if she is somewhat stately and haughty, by reason of her illustrious birth? There is nothing of crabbedness, nothing scornful, nothing sour, nothing troublesome, in women truly chaste and modest. And yet their very chastity gains them the name of shrews and furies. But you will say, since it may be a man's misfortune to be so hampered, would it not be better to marry some Thracian Abrotonon or some Milesian Bacchis, whom he can get in the

market for money and a handful of nuts? And yet we have known some men that have been miserably henpecked by this sort of underlings. The Samian minstrels and morrisdancers, such as were Aristonica, Oenanthe with her tabor and pipe, and Agathoclia, insulted over the diadems of sovereigns. The Syrian Semiramis was a poor wench, kept by one of Ninus's slaves, partly as his servant, partly as his harlot, till Ninus, meeting her and taking a fancy to her, at length doted upon her to that degree, that she not only governed him as she pleased herself, but contemned him; so that, finding she had got the absolute mastery over him, she became so bold as to desire him to do her the favor to see her sit but one day upon his throne, with the royal diadem upon her head, dispatching the public business. To which the king consenting, and giving order to all his officers to yield her the same obedience as to himself, at first she was very moderate in her commands, only to make trial of the guards about her; but when she saw that they obeyed her without the least hesitation or murmuring, she commanded them first to lay hold of Ninus himself, then to bind him, at length to kill him. Which being done, she took the government upon herself, and reigned victoriously over all Asia with great splendor and renown.

And was not Belestiche a barbarian courtesan bought in the market, in whose honor the Alexandrians erected temples and altars, with inscriptions to Venus Belestiche as marks of the king's affection to her? And as for her who is in this very city enshrined in the same temple and honored with the same solemnities as Cupid, and whose gilded statue stands among kings and queens at Delphi, — I would fain know what dowry of hers it was that brought so many lovers into such subjection to her. But as those great men, through their softness and effeminacy, became a prey to those women; so on the other side, men of low and mean condition, having married women both wealthy and of splendid extraction, neither lowered sail nor abated any thing of their courage and greatness of mind, but lived together with their wives, always honoring them, and keeping that superiority over them which was their right and due. But he that contracts and reduces his wife within a narrow compass, and makes her less, like a ring that is too big for the finger, to prevent her from dropping off, is like to those that dock off their mares' tails and clip their manes, and then lead them to a river or pond; for it is reported, that when those mares perceive themselves so ill favoredly shorn and disfigured, they lose their natural courage, and will afterwards suffer themselves to be covered by asses.

Now, as it is a base thing to prefer the riches of a woman above her virtue or nobility, so is it as great folly to reject wealth, when accompanied with virtue and illustrious parentage. Antigonus writing to a captain of his, whom he had ordered to fortify the hill Munychia, bade him not only make the collar strong but keep the dog lean; intimating thereby that he should take care to impoverish the Athenians. But there is no necessity for the husband of a rich and beautiful wife to make her poor or to disfigure her; but by self-control and prudence, and by seeming not to admire any thing extravagantly in her, to carry himself so that she may perceive that, as he designs not to be a tyrant, so she must not expect him to be her subject; giving his own character that weight in the balance, that the scale may be turned without offence and for the good of both. Now, as for Ismenodora, her years are fit for marriage, and she is a woman most likely to bear children; nay, I am informed that she is now in her prime. For, continued he, smiling upon Piasias, she is not elder than any of her rivals; neither has she any gray hairs, as some that keep company with Baccho. Now if those people think their converse with the young gentleman no way misbecoming their gravity, what hinders but that she may affect and cherish him better than any young virgin whatever? For I must needs say, it is a difficult matter many times rightly to mix and blend the tempers of young people; in regard it will require some time to make them sensible of several extravagancies which they may commit, until they have laid aside the pride and wantonness which is incident to youth. For many a blustering tempest will happen between the new-married couple before they can be brought to endure the yoke, and draw quietly together, more especially if the God of Love appear among them; and youthful wantonness — like the wind in the absence of the pilot — will disturb and confuse the happiness of the match, while the one has not skill to govern and the other refuses to be

governed. Now then, if it be so that nurses are sought for to look after sucking infants, and schoolmasters to teach children; if masters of exercise direct young striplings, and the lover his youth; if the law and the captain-general govern those that are of age, so that no man can be said to be at his own liberty to do what he list; where is the absurdity for a wife, that has wit and discretion and the advantage of years, to govern and direct the life and conversation of a youthful husband, profitable to him as exceeding him in wisdom, and augmenting the pleasure of her society by the sweetness of her disposition and reality of affection? To conclude, said he, we that are Boeotians ourselves ought to reverence Hercules, and not to be offended with those that marry women elder than themselves; knowing, as we do, that even Hercules himself gave his own wife Megara, being then three and thirty years old, to Iolaus his son, being no more than sixteen years of age.

10. While they were in the midst of these discourses, one of Pisas's companions and friends, as my father reported, came galloping towards them out of the city, whip and spur, to bring the news of a strange and wonderful accident. For Ismenodora, believing that Baccho no way disliked being married to her, but only was deterred by the importunities of his friends that dissuaded him from the match, resolved not to let the young man escape her. To this purpose she sent for certain sparks of her acquaintance, whom she knew to be stout and resolute young gentlemen, and some women that were well-wishers to her amours, and observing the hour that Baccho was wont to pass by her house to the wrestling-place, well attended and decently garbed, one day when he came near the outermost door, anointed as he was for the exercise, with two or three more in the same posture, she met him in the street, and gently twitched his upper coat. This signal being given, her friends rushed forth, and fairly and softly catching him up in his mandilion and doublet, in a huddle together they carried him into the house, and locked the door fast after them. Then came the women also, and pulling off his mandilion, threw about him a costly nuptial garment. The servants likewise, running up and down from one place to another, adorned the posts not only of Ismenodora's but of Baccho's house with olive and laurel boughs; and a minstrel likewise was ordered to pipe along the street. The story thus related, the Thespians and strangers some of them laughed, some others were heinously offended, and did what they could to exasperate the presidents of the public exercises. For they have a great command over the young gentlemen, and keep a severe and vigilant eye upon all their actions. And now there was not a word said of the sports that were intended; but all the people, forsaking the theatre, flocked to Ismenodora's house, discoursing and debating the matter one among another.

11. But when Pisas's friend, with his horse all foaming and in a sweat, as if he had brought intelligence from the army in time of war, had delivered his news, being hardly able to speak for want of breath, and concluding his story with saying that Ismenodora had ravished Baccho; my father told me, that Zeuxippus fell a laughing, and as he was a great admirer of that poet, repeated the verses of Euripides:

Wanton with wealth, fair lady, thou hast done  
No more than nature teaches every one.

But Pisas, starting up out of his seat, made a great exclamation, crying out: O ye Gods! when will ye put an end to this licentiousness, that will in the end subvert our city? For now all things are running into disorder through violation of the laws; but perhaps it is now looked upon as a slight matter to transgress the law and violate justice, for even the law of nature is transgressed and broken by the insolent anarchy of the female sex. Was ever there any such thing committed in the island of Lemnos? Let us go, said he, let us go and deliver up the wrestling-place and the council house to the women, if the city be so effeminate as to put up with these indignities. Thus Pisas brake from the company in a fury; nor would Protogenes leave him, partly offended at what had happened, and partly to assuage and mollify his friend. But Anthemion: 'Twas a juvenile bold attempt, said he, and a truly Lemnian one – I venture to



say so since we are now by ourselves — of a lady warmly in love. To whom Soclarus smiling: Do you then believe, said he, that this was a real ravishment and force, and not rather a stratagem of the young man's own contrivance (for he has wit at will), to the end he might escape out of the hands of his ruder male lovers into the embraces of a fair and rich widow? Never say so, said Anthemion, nor have such a suspicion of Baccho. For were he not naturally, as he is, of a plain and open temper, he would still never have concealed this thing from me, to whom he has always imparted his secrets, and whom he knew to be always a favorer of Ismenodora's design. But, according to the saying of Heraclitus, it is a hard matter to withstand love, not anger; for whatever love has a desire to, it will purchase with the hazard of life, fortune, and reputation. Now where is there a more modest and orderly woman in all our city than Ismenodora? When did you ever hear an ill word spoken of her? Or when did ever any thing done in her house give the least suspicion of an ill act? Rather we may say that she seems to be inspired beyond other women with something above human reason.

12. Then Pemptides smiling: Truly, said he, there is a certain disease of the body, which they call sacred; so that it is no wonder if some men give the appellation of sacred and divine to the most raging and vehement passion of the mind. But as in Egypt once I saw two neighbors hotly contending about a serpent which crept before them in the road, while both concluded it to be good luck, and each assumed the happy omen to himself; so seeing some of you at this time haling love into the chambers of men, others into the cabinets of the women, as a divinely transcendent good, I do not wonder, since it is a passion so powerful and greatly esteemed, that it is magnified and held in greatest veneration by those that have most reason to clip its wings and expel and drive it from them. Hitherto therefore I have been silent, perceiving the debate to be rather about a particular concern, than any thing for the public good. But now that Piasis is gone, I would willingly understand from one of you, upon what account it was that they who first discoursed of love were so fond to deify it.

13. So soon as Pemptides had done, and my father was about to say something in answer to his question, another messenger came from the city in Ismenodora's name, requesting Anthemion to come to her; for that the tumult increased, and the presidents of the games could not agree, while one was of opinion that Baccho was to be demanded and delivered into their hands, and the other thought it an impertinence to meddle with that which nothing concerned them.

Thus Anthemion being gone, my father addressed himself to Pemptides by name, and so entered into the following discourse: You seem to me, sir, to have hit upon a very strange and nice point, or rather, as I may so say, to have endeavored to stir things which are not to be moved, in reference to the opinion which we have of the Gods, while you demand a reason and demonstration of every thing in particular. For it is sufficient to believe according to the faith of our forefathers and the instructions of the country where we have been bred and born, than which we cannot utter or invent a more certain argument;

For surely all the wit of human brain  
This part of knowledge never could attain.

For this is a foundation and basis common to all piety and religion; of which if the steady rule and decreed maxims be once disordered and shaken, all the rest must totter and become suspected. And no question but you have heard what a clamor was raised against Euripides when he made this beginning of his Melanippe:

Jupiter, if his name be so;  
'Tis only by hearsay that I know.

But when he exhibited the tragedy a second time, he seems to have had such a confidence in the lofty style and elaborate eloquence of his work, that he thus altered the verse:

Jove, for we own he has received that name

From truth alone, and not from common fame.

What difference then is there between calling in question the name of Jupiter and Minerva, and doubting of the name of Cupid or Love? For it is not of late that Love has challenged altars and sacrifices, neither is he a foreigner started up out of any barbarian superstition, as were the Attae and the Adonii, introduced by I know not what sort of hermaphrodites and idle women. Nor has he clandestinely crept into honors no way becoming him, to avoid the accusation of bastardy and being unduly enrolled in the catalogue of the Gods. But when you hear Empedocles thus saying,

And friendship too (observe my song)  
Is like to these, both broad and long;  
But this thou must not think to find  
With eyes of body, but of mind,

you ought to believe all this to be said of Love. For Love is no more visible than any of the rest of the ancient Deities, but apprehended only by opinion and belief; for every one of which if you require a reason and demonstrative argument, by enquiring after every temple and making a sophistical doubt upon every altar, you shall find nothing free from inquisition and malicious slander. For, that I may go no farther, observe but these:

I do not Venus see with mortal eyes,  
The Goddess unto whom we sacrifice;  
Yet this is she that mighty Cupid bare,  
Whose offspring all terrestrial beings are.

Therefore Empedocles gives her the epithet of the Giver of Life, and Sophocles calls her Fruitful; both very aptly and pertinently. For indeed the great and wonderful work of generation is properly the work of Venus, where Love is only an assistant when present with Venus; but his absence renders the act itself altogether irksome, dishonorable, harsh, and ungrateful. For the conjunction of man and woman without true affection, like hunger and thirst, terminates in satiety, and produces nothing truly noble or commendable; but when the Goddess by means of Love puts away all loathsome glut of pleasure, she perpetuates delight by a continual supply of friendship and harmony of temper. Therefore Parmenides asserts Love to be the most ancient of all the works of Venus, writing thus in his Cosmogony:

Of all the Gods that rule above,  
She first brought forth the mighty Love.

But Hesiod, in my opinion, seems more philosophically to make Love the eldest of all the Gods, as from whom all the other Deities derive their beginning. Therefore, should we deprive Love of the honors which are decreed him, the ceremonies we ascribe to Venus will be no longer in request. For it is not sufficient to say, that some men reproach Love and load him with contumelies, but abstain from giving her an ill word; for upon the same theatre we hear these scandals fixed upon both:

Love, idle of himself, takes up his rest  
And harbors only in the slothful breast.

And in another place thus upon Venus:

She does not the name of Cypris only own,  
But by a hundred other names is known:  
She's hell on earth, continued violence,  
And rage subduing all the force of sense.

As indeed we may say of the rest of the Gods, that there is not one that has escaped the scandalous jibes

of illiterate scurrility. Look upon Mars, as in a brazen sculpture, possessing the place just opposite to Love, how highly has he been honored, how lowly degraded by men?

Swine-snouted Mars, and as a beetle blind, –  
'Tis he, fair dames, disorders all mankind.

Homer also gives him the epithets of murderous and Jack-a-both-sides. Moreover, Chrysippus, explaining the name of this Deity, fixes a villanous accusation upon him. For, says he, Ares is derived from ἀναίρειν, which signifies to destroy; thereby affording an occasion for some to give the name of Ares or Mars to that some proneness and perverse inclination of men to wrath and passion, and to quarrel and fight one with another. Others affirm Venus to be nothing but our concupiscence; that Mercury is no more than the faculty of speech; that the Muses are only the names for the arts and sciences; and that Minerva is only a fine word for prudence. And thus you see into what an abyss of atheism we are like to plunge ourselves, while we go about to range and distribute the Gods among the various passions, faculties, and virtues of men.

14. I plainly perceive it, replied Pemptides; for I neither believe it lawful to make the Gods to be passions, nor on the other side, to make the passions to be Deities. To whom my father: Well then, said he, do you believe Mars to be a God, or a passion of ours? To which when Pemptides replied, that he thought Mars to be the Deity that rectified the angry and courageous part of man; my father presently retorted upon him: Why then? said he, shall our passionate part, and those wrathful inclinations within us that provoke us to mischief and bloodshed, have a Deity to overrule and govern them; and will you not allow the same guardianship over our better propensities to love, friendship, society, and peace? Is there a Deity called Enyalios and Stratios that presides and has the superintendence over those that kill and are slain, a Deity that bears rule in matters of arms, all warlike preparations, assaults of cities, and depredations of countries, and distributes rewards as he sees occasion; and shall there be no Deity to be a witness and overseer, a supreme governor and director, of conjugal affection, which terminates in concord and happy society? Nay, do we find that they who make it their sport to hunt wild goats, hares, and deer, are not without their forest Deity to encourage them; and they that make it their business to trepan wolves and bears into snares and pitfalls, pray for good luck to Aristaeus,

Who first of all for the wild beasts of prey  
With gins and snares in secret ambush lay;

and that Hercules, having bent his bow, before he let fly at the bird which he intended to hit, invoked another Deity, as we find in Aeschylus,

Hunter Apollo, and to hunters kind,  
Direct this arrow to the mark designed;

but for men that hunt the most noble game of love and friendship, is there no God nor so much as one Daemon to assist and prosper so laudable an enterprise? Truly, Daphnaeus, for my part, I cannot believe a man to be a more inconsiderable plant than an oak or mulberry tree or the vine which Homer reverently calls by the name of Hemeris, considering that man in his due season also is endued with a powerful faculty to bud and pleasantly put forth the beauties both of his body and mind.

15. To whom Daphnaeus: In the name of all the Gods, who ever thought otherwise? All those must certainly, replied my father, who believe the care of ploughing, sowing, and planting is an employment becoming the Gods (and have they not for this purpose certain Nymphs attending them, called Dryads,

Who with the trees they cherish live and die? –

and does not

The joyous Bacchus send increase of fruit,

The chaste autumnal light, to every tree? —

as Pindar sings, and who yet will not allow that the nourishment and growth of children and young people, who in the flower of their age are to be formed and shaped into several varieties of beauty, is under the care and tuition of any Deity; or that there is any Divinity to take care that man, being once born, may be guided and conducted in the true paths of virtue, and to prevent the tender plant from being bowed and bent the wrong way for want of a good instructor, or by the depraved conversation of those with whom he lives. For my part, I look upon it as a heinous piece of indignity and ingratitude thus to say, while we are all the time enjoying the bounty and benignity of God, which he is ready to disperse and diffuse over all, and which never abandons the distresses and needs of mortals. And yet in many of these needs the duty to be performed is rather necessary than pleasant. Thus our being delivered from the mother's womb is no such delightful thing, as being attended with pain and issues of blood; and yet there is a celestial midwife and overseer that takes particular care of that necessity, which is Lucina. And indeed a man had better never be born, than to be made bad and wicked for want of a good tutor and guardian. Nay, we find that the divine power does not desert us in our sickness, nor after we are dead; there being still some Deity or other who claims some certain peculiar employment or function, even upon those occasions. Among the rest, there is one that helps to convey the souls of such as have ended this life into the other world, and lays them asleep, according to this of the poet:

For shady night ne'er brought me forth to play  
With artful touch upon the tuneful lyre,  
Nor to be mistress of prophetic fire,  
Nor pains of rude distempers to allay;  
But to convey the souls of the deceased  
Each one to their appointed place of rest.

Nevertheless these ministerial functions have many difficulties and troubles which attend them; whereas we cannot imagine any employment more holy, any exercise more sacred, or any contention for prize and glory more becoming a Deity, than to direct and assist the lawful endeavors and pursuits of lovers in their prime of years and beauty. There is nothing dishonorable, nothing of forced necessity in this; but gentle persuasion and alluring grace, rendering labor delightful, leads to virtue and friendship, which never attains the true accomplishment of the end it aims at without some divine assistance, nor can have any other conductor and master than Cupid himself, who is the friend and companion of the Muses, the Graces, and Venus his own mother. For, according to Melanippides,

Great Love it is, that in the heart of man  
Sows the sweet harvest of unstained desire;

and he always mingles those things that are sweetest with those that are fairest. What do you say, Zeuxippus? Can we believe it to be otherwise?

16. In truth, I judge it so, replied Zeuxippus; and I think it would be absurd to affirm the contrary. And would it not be absurd indeed, said my father, since there are four sorts of friendships, according to the determination of the ancients, — the first, say they, is natural, the next is that of kindred and relations, the third is that of friends and acquaintance, and last is that of lovers, — if three of these have their several tutelary Deities, under the names of the patron of friendship, the patron of hospitality, and he who knits affection between those of the same race and family; while only amorous affection, as if it were unhallowed and under interdiction, is left without any guardian or protector, which indeed requires the greatest care and government above all the rest? All that you say, replied Zeuxippus, is undeniable.

By the way, replied my father, we may here take notice of what Plato says upon this subject, as pertinent to our discourse. For he says, that there is a certain madness transmitted from the body to the

soul, proceeding from a malignant mixture of ill-humors, or a noxious vapor or rather pernicious spirit that possesses the heart; which madness is a rugged and terrible disease. The other is a kind of fury, partaking something of divine inspiration; neither is it engendered within, but is an insufflation from without, and a disturbance of the rational and considerative faculty, deriving its beginning and motion from some stronger power; the common affection of which is called the enthusiastic passion. For as ἔμπνοος signifies filled with breath, and ἐμφροῦν denotes replete with prudence; so this commotion of the soul is called enthusiasm (from ἐνθεός) by reason it participates of a more divine power. Now the prophetic part of enthusiasm derives itself from the inspiration of Apollo possessing the intellect of the soothsayer; but Bacchanal fury proceeds from Father Bacchus.

And with the Corybantes ye shall dance,

says Sophocles. For as for the extravagancies of the priests of Cybele, the mother of the Gods, and those which are called panic terrors and ejaculations, they are all of the same nature with the Bacchanal orgies. There is also a third sort of enthusiasm, proper to the Muses, which, possessing an even tempered and placid soul, excites and rouses up the gifts of poetry and music. But as for that same warlike fury which is called Arimanian, it is well known to descend from the God of War; a sort of fury, wherein there is no grace nor musical sweetness, calling forth tearful Mars, and rousing up the people to discord and tumult.

There remains yet one sort more of alienation of the understanding in man, the same neither obscure, nor yet altogether calm and quiet; concerning which I would fain ask Pemptides,

Which of the Gods it is who shakes the spear  
That beareth fruit so lovely and so fair.

But without expecting a resolution of this question, I mean that erotic fury that possesses lovely youths and chaste women, yet a hot and vehement transport. For do we not see how the warrior lays down his arms, and submits to this more prevalent rage?

His grooms, o'erjoyed he had the war forsook,  
His ponderous arms from off his shoulders took;

and thus having renounced the hazards of battle, he sits down a quiet spectator of other men's dangers. As for these Bacchanalian motions and frisking of the Corybantes, there is a way to allay those extravagant transports, by changing the measure from the Trochaic and the tone from the Phrygian. And the Pythian prophetess, descending from her tripods and quitting the prophetic exhalation, becomes sedate and calm again. Whereas the fury of love, wherever it seizes either man or woman, sets them in a flame; no music, no appeasing incantations, no changes of place are able to quench or put a stop to it; but being in presence, they love; being absent, they desire; by day they prosecute their importunate visits; by night they serenade at the windows; sober, they are continually calling upon their loves; and when they are fuddled, are always teasing the company with their love songs and madrigals. Neither, as one was pleased to say, are poetical fancies, by reason of their lively expressions, rightly called waking dreams; but the dialogues of persons enamored, discoursing with their absent loves, and dallying, embracing, and expostulating with them as if they were present, much rather deserve this name. For the sight seems to delineate other fancies in the water, that quickly glide away and slip out of the mind; whereas the imaginations of lovers, being as it were enamelled by fire, leave the images of things imprinted in the memory, moving, living, speaking, and remaining for a long time. So that Cato the Roman was wont to say, that the soul of a lover dwelt in the soul of the person beloved, for that there is settled and fixed in the one the form, shape, manners, conversation and actions of the other; by which being led, the lover quickly dispatches a long journey, — as the Cynics say they have found a compendious and direct road to virtue, — and he is carried from love to friendship, as it were with wind and tide, the God of Love assisting his passion. In short then I say, that the enthusiasm of lovers is neither void of divine

inspiration, neither is it under the guardianship and conduct of any other Deity but him whose festivals we solemnize, and to whom we offer our oblations. Nevertheless, in regard we measure the excellency of a Deity by his puissance and by the benefit which we receive at his hands, and esteem power and virtue to be the two chiefest and most divine of all human blessings, it may not be unseasonable to consider whether Love be inferior in power to any other of the Gods. For, according to Sophocles,

Great is the puissance of the Cyprian Queen,  
And great the honor which her triumphs win.

Great is also the dominion of Mars; and indeed we see the power of all the rest of the Gods divided in some measure between these two, — the one being most naturally allied to the beautiful, the other most mighty in the resistance of evil, and both being originally bred in the soul, as Plato says of his ideas.

Now then let us consider, the venereal delight is a thing that may be purchased for a drachm, and there is no man that ever underwent any pain or danger for the sake of venereal enjoyments, unless he were inflamed with the fires of love. Insomuch, that not to mention such courtesans as either Phryne or Lais, we find that the harlot Gnathaenion,

By lanthorn-light, at evening late,  
Waiting and calling for some mate,

is often passed by and neglected;

But if some spirit blow the fire,  
Kindled by love's extreme desire,

this makes the pleasure equally esteemed and valued with the treasures of Tantalus and all his vast dominions. So faint and so soon cloyed is venereal desire, unless rendered grateful by the charms and inspiration of love. Which is more evidently confirmed by this; for that many men admit others to partake of their venereal pleasures, prostituting not only their mistresses and concubines, but also their own wives, to the embraces of their friends; as it is reported of the Roman Gabba, who inviting Maecenas to his house, and perceiving him winking and nodding upon his wife, turned away his head upon his pillow, as if he had been asleep, while they dallied together; yet at the same time, when one of the servants came creeping out of the next room, to steal a bottle of wine from the cupboard, presently turning about with his eyes open, Varlet, said he, 'tis only to pleasure Maecenas that I sleep. But this perhaps is not so strange, considering that Gabba was a low buffoon.

At Argos there was a great animosity between Nicostratus and Phayllus, so that they always opposed each other and quarrelled at the council-board. Now when King Philip made a visit to that city, Phayllus bethought himself, that he could not miss the highest preferment the government could afford, if he could but oblige the king with the company of his wife, who was both beautiful and young. Nicostratus, smelling this design, walked to and fro before Phayllus's house with some of his servants, to observe who went in and out. They had not stayed long, but out came Phayllus's wife, whom he had dressed up in high shoes, with a mantle and cap after the Macedonian fashion, like one of the king's pages, in which disguise she secretly passed in to the king's lodgings. Since then there ever were and still are so many lovers, did you ever know of any one that ever prostituted his particular male friend, though it were to gain the honors ascribed to Jupiter himself? Truly, I believe there never was any such. For why? There never was any one that would pretend to oppose and contend with a tyrant; but there are many rivals and competitors, that will quarrel and fight for boys that are beautiful and in the prime of their years. It is reported of Aristogiton the Athenian, Antileon of Metapontum, and Melanippus of Agrigentum, that they never contested with tyrants, though they wasted and ruined the commonwealth and indulged the impetuosity of their lust, until they found them attempting their own male concubines: then they withstood them with the utmost peril of their lives, as if they had been to defend their temples and their

most sacred sanctuaries. Alexander also is said to have sent to Theodorus, the brother of Proteas, in these words: Send me that musical girl that plays and sings so well, and take ten talents for her, unless thou lovest her thyself. Another time, when one of his minions, Antipatridas, came to be jovial with him, and brought a minstrel in his company to complete the mirth, being greatly affected with the girl's playing and singing, he asked Antipatridas whether he had any extraordinary kindness for her? He answered, that he loved her as his eyes. Then all the plagues of mankind light upon thee, quoth the prince. However, he would not so much as touch the girl.

17. Consider also what vast power love has over martial men and warriors, not slothful, as Euripides\* will have it to be, nor unwarlike, nor

Slumbering on a girl's soft cheek.

For a man that is once inflamed with love wants not Mars himself to be his second, when he is to engage with his enemies; but confiding in the Deity that is within him,

Ventures through fire and seas, and blustering storms,  
While love of friend his daring courage warms;

and breaks through all opposition, if his mistress require any proof of his valor. Therefore we read in Sophocles, that the daughters of Niobe being wounded with arrows to death, one of them, as she lay wallowing in blood, calls out for no other help or succor to assist her in her revenge, but her lover.

Where is my love? she cried;  
Were I but armed with that,  
I yet would be revenged  
For my untimely fate.

You know the reason why Cleomachus the Pharsalian fell in battle. I am a stranger to the story, replied Pemptides, and would willingly therefore hear it. Certainly it is very well worth your knowledge, said my father.

In the heat of the war between the Chalcidians and the Eretrians, Cleomachus went with the Thessalian force to aid the Chalcidians; at what time it was evident that the Chalcidians were the stronger in foot, but they found it a difficult thing to withstand the force of the enemies' horse. Thereupon they requested Cleomachus, being their confederate and a man signalized for his courage, to give the first onset upon the enemies' cavalry. Presently the youth whom he most entirely loved being present, he asked him whether he would stay and be a spectator of the combat. To which when the lad gave his consent, and after many tender kisses and embraces had put on his helmet, Cleomachus's love redoubling his courage, being surrounded with some few of the flower of the Thessalian horse, he charged into the thickest of the enemy and put them to the rout; which the heavy-armed infantry seeing, they betook themselves also to flight, so that the Chalcidians obtained a noble victory. However, Cleomachus was there slain, and the Chalcidians show his monument erected in the market-place, with a fair pillar standing upon it to this day; and whereas they abominated pederasty before, after that they admired and affected it above all other pleasures. Nevertheless, Aristotle tells us that Cleomachus indeed lost his life after the victorious battle which he gained from the Eretrians, but as for that Cleomachus who was thus kissed by his male concubine, that he was of Chalcis in Thrace, and sent to aid the Chalcidians in Euboea. Which is the reason of that same ballad generally sung among them:

Fair youths, whose mothers brought you forth  
Lovely in form, and noble for your birth;  
Envy not men of courage, prompt in arms,  
The kind fruition of your tempting charms.  
For softest love with daring valor reigns

In equal honor through Chalcidian plains.

Dionysius the poet, in his poem entitled Causes, informs us that the name of the lover was Anton, and that the youth beloved was called Philistus.

And is it not a custom among you Thebans, Pemptides, for the lover to present the beloved with a complete suit of armor when he is come of age? And Pammenes, a very great soldier but very amorously given, quite altered the method of embattling the heavy-armed infantry, and blames Homer, as one that knew not what belonged to love, for marshalling the several divisions of the Achaeans according to their tribes and clans, and not placing the lover by his beloved, so that the close order which he afterwards describes might have been the consequence, in which

Spears lean on spears, on targets targets throng,  
Helms stuck to helms, and man drove man along;

the only way to render a battalion invincible. For men will desert those of the same tribe or family, nay, their very children and parents; but never any enemy could pierce or penetrate between a lover and his darling minion, in whose sight many times when there is no necessity the lover delights to show his courage and contempt of danger; like Thero the Thessalian, who clapping his left hand to the wall, and then drawing his sword, struck off his thumb, thereby challenging his rival to do the same. Or like another, who falling in battle upon his face, as his enemy was about to follow his blow, desired him to stay till he could turn, lest his male concubine should see that he had been wounded in the back.

And therefore we find that the most warlike of nations are most addicted to love, as the Boeotians, Lacedaemonians, and Cretans. And among the most ancient heroes none were more amorous than Meleager, Achilles, Aristomenes, Cimon, and Epaminondas; the latter of which had for his male concubines Asopichus and Caphisodorus, who was slain with him at the battle of Mantinea and lies buried very near him. And when . . . had rendered himself most terrible to the enemy and most resolute, Eucnamus the Amphissean, that first made head against him and slew him, had heroic honors paid him by the Phocians. It would be a task too great to enumerate the amours of Hercules; but among the rest, Iolaus is honored and adored to this day by many, because he is thought to have been the darling of that hero; and upon his tomb it is that lovers plight their troths and make reciprocal vows of their affection. Moreover, Hercules, being skilled in physic, is said to have recovered Alcestis from death's door in kindness to Admetus, who, as he had a great love for his wife, so was greatly beloved by the hero. For it is said that even Apollo, doting upon Admetus,

Became his slave for a long weary year.

And here, methinks, we have very opportunely mentioned Alcestis; for although the temper of women has little to do with Mars, Love many times drives them to daring attempts beyond their own nature, even to death. And if there be any credit to be given to the fables of the poets, the stories of Alcestis, Protesilaus, and Eurydice the wife of Orpheus, plainly evince us that Pluto himself obeys no other God but Love. For, as Sophocles says,

To others — be their fame or birth whate'er —  
Nor equity nor favor will he show;  
But rigorous, and without remorse severe,  
His downright justice only makes them know;

but to lovers he pays a reverence: to them alone is he neither implacable nor inexorable. And therefore, although it is a very good thing to be initiated into the Eleusinian ceremonies, still I find the condition of those much better in hell who are admitted into the mysteries of love; which I speak as neither altogether confiding in fables, nor altogether misbelieving them. For they speak a great deal of sense, and many times, by a certain kind of divine good hap, hit upon the truth, when they say that lovers are permitted to



return from hell to sunlight again; but which way and how, they know not, as wandering from the right path, which Plato, first of all men, by the assistance of philosophy found out. For there are several slender and obscure emanations of truth dispersed among the mythologies of the Egyptians; only they want an acute and experienced huntsman, who is skilled in tracing out great mysteries by small tracks. And therefore let them go.

And now, since we find the power of love to be so great, let us take a little notice of that which we call the benevolence and favor of it towards men; not whether it confers many benefits upon those that are addicted to it, — for that is a thing apparent to all men, — but whether the blessings that men receive by it are more and greater than any other. And here Euripides, notwithstanding that he was a person so amorous as he was, admires the meanest gift it has; for, says he,

Love into men poetic fire infuses,  
Though ne'er before acquainted with the Muses.

And he might well have said, that love makes a man wise and prudent that was a fool and sottish before, and a coward bold and daring, as we have already shown; as when we heat wood in the fire to make it strong, when before it was weak. In like manner, he that was a sordid miser before, falling once in love, becomes liberal and lofty-minded, his covetous and pinching humor being mollified by love, like iron in the fire, so that he is more pleased with being liberal to the objects of his love, than before delighted to receive from others. For ye all know that Anytus, the son of Anthemion, fell in love with Alcibiades; who, understanding that Anytus had invited several of his friends to a noble and splendid banquet, came into the room in masquerade, and going to the table, after he had taken one half of the silver cups and other plate, went his way. Which when some of the guests took very ill, and told Anytus that the young lad had demeaned himself very rudely and saucily; Not so, said Anytus, but very civilly, since, when it was in his power to have taken all the rest, he was so civil as to leave me some.

18. Pleased with this story, O Hercules, quoth Zeuxippus, how have you almost raced out of mind that hereditary hatred which I had conceived against Anytus, for his ill opinion of Socrates and philosophy, since he was become so gentle and generous in his amours. Be it so, said my father; but let us proceed. Love is of that nature, that it renders those that were severe and morose before both affable and pleasant in their humor. For as

The burning tapers make the house more light,  
And all things look more glorious to the sight;

so the heat of love renders the soul of man more lively and cheerful. But most men go quite contrary to reason in this particular. For when they behold a glittering light in a house by night, they admire and look upon it as something celestial; but when they see a narrow, pitiful, abject soul of a sudden replenished with understanding, generosity, sense of honor, courtesy, and liberality, they do not believe themselves constrained to say, as Telemachus in Homer,

Surely some God within this house resides.

For the love of the Graces, tell me, said Daphnaeus, is it not a thing altogether as much savoring of divinity, that a man who contemns all other things, not only his friends and familiar acquaintance, but also the laws, the magistrates, even kings and princes themselves, who fears nothing, is astonished at nothing, cares for nothing, but thinks himself able to defy the “barbed lightning,” yet, so soon as he beholds the object of his burning love,

As dunghill cravens, by a sudden blow,  
Hang their loose wings with little list to crow,

should presently lose all his prowess, and that all his bravery should fail him, as if his heart were quite

sunk to the bottom of his body? And it were not impertinent to make mention of Sappho here among the Muses. For the Romans report in their stories that Cacus, the son of Vulcan, vomited fire and flames out of his mouth. And indeed Sappho speaks as if her words were mixed with fire, and in her verses plainly discovers the violent heat of her heart, according to that of Philoxenus,

Seeking for cure of love-inflicted wounds,  
From pleasing numbers and melodious sounds.

And here, Daphnaeus, if the love of Lysandra have not buried in oblivion your former sportive dalliances, I would desire you to call to mind and oblige us with the repetition of those elegant raptures of Sappho, wherein she tells us how that, when the person beloved by her appeared, her speech forsook her, her body was all over in a sweat; how she grew pale and wan, and was surprised with a sudden trembling and dizziness. To this Daphnaeus consented; and so soon as he had recited the verses, said my father: So Jupiter help me, is not this an apparent seizure of something more than human upon the soul? Can this be other than some celestial rapture of the mind? What do we find equal to it in the Pythian prophetess, when she sits upon the tripod? Where do we find the flutes which are used in the Bacchanalian orgies, or the tabors played upon in the ceremonies of the Mother of the Gods, rouse up such noble transports among that fanatic sort of enthusiasts? Many there are that behold the same body and the same beauty, but the lover only admires and is ravished with it. And what is the reason, do ye think? For we do not perceive or understand it from Menander, when he says:

'Tis the occasion that infects the heart,  
For only he that's wounded feels the smart.

But it is the God of Love that gives the occasion, seizing upon some, and letting others go free. What therefore had been more seasonable for me to have spoken before, since it is now chopped into my mouth (as Aeschylus says), I think I will not even now let go, as being a matter of great importance. For it may be, my dear friend, there is not any thing in the world which was not made perceptible by sense, but what gained credit and authority at the first either from fables, or from the law, or else from rational discourse. And therefore poets, lawgivers, and in the third place philosophers, were all along the first that instructed and confirmed us in our opinion of the Gods. For all agree that there are Gods; but concerning their number, their order, their essence and power, they vastly differ one among another. For the philosophers' Deities are subject neither to age nor diseases, neither do they undergo any labor or pain,

Exempted from the noise and hurry  
Of busy Acherontic ferry.

And therefore they will not admit poetical Deities, like Strife and Prayers;\* nor will they acknowledge Fear and Terror to be Gods or the sons of Mars. They also differ from the lawgivers in many things. Thus Xenophanes told the Egyptians not to worship Osiris as a God if they thought him to be mortal, and if they thought him to be a God not to bewail him. Then again, the poets and lawgivers vary from the philosophers, and will not so much as hear them, while they deify certain ideas, numbers, unities, and spirits; such is the wild variety and vast difference of opinions among this sort of people. Therefore, as there were at Athens the three factions of the Parali, Epacrii, and Pedieis, that could never agree but were always at variance one with another, yet when they were assembled, gave their suffrages unanimously for Solon, and chose him with one consent for their peacemaker, governor, and lawgiver, as to whom the highest reward of virtue was, without all doubt or question, due; so the three different sects or factions in reference to the Gods, in giving their opinions some for one and some for another, as being by no means willing to subscribe one to another, are all positive in their consent as to the God of Love. Him the most famous of the poets, and the numerous acclamations of the philosophers and lawgivers, have enrolled in

the catalogue of the Gods “with loud praises and harmonious acclaim,” as Alcaeus says of the Mitylenaeans when they chose Pittacus for their prince. So Hesiod, Plato, and Solon bring forth Cupid out of Helicon, and conduct him in pomp and state into the Academy, to be our king, governor, and director, drawn in by friendship and intercourse with all their pairs of horses, – not the friendship which, as Euripides says, is

With fetters bound, but not of brass,

as if the bonds of love were only the cold and ponderous chains of necessity, made use of as a colorable pretence to excuse and qualify shame, but such friendship as is carried upon winged chariots to the most lovely objects that exist, and to sights more divine than this earth affords. But on this point others have better discoursed.

19. After my father had thus delivered himself; Do you not perceive, said Soclarus, how, being fallen a second time into the same matter, you have as it were by force constrained yourself, and unjustly deprived us – if I may speak what I think – of that same sacred discourse which you were entering into? For as before you gave us a hint concerning Plato and the Egyptians, but passed them over as if it had been done against your will; so you do now again. Now as to what has been notably uttered by Plato, or rather by our Goddesses here (the Muses) through Plato’s mouth, do not trouble yourself to tell us this, even although we should request it. But whereas you have obscurely hinted that the fables of the Egyptians accord with Plato’s opinion concerning love, we know you have too great kindness for us to conceal your knowledge from us; and though it be but a little of those important matters, it shall suffice us. Thereupon the rest of the company declaring their readiness to give attention, my father thus began: The Egyptians, said he, and also the Grecians set up two Deities of love; the one vulgar, the other celestial; to which they add a third, which they believe to be the sun; and as for Venus, they pay her a very great veneration. We ourselves also do find that there is a great affinity and resemblance between the sun and the God of Love. For neither of them is material fire, as some conjecture. All that we acknowledge is only this, that there is a certain soft and generative heat and warmth proceeding from the sun, which affords to the body nourishment, light, and relaxation of cold; whereas that warmth which comes from love works the same effects in the soul. And as the sun breaking forth from the clouds and after a thick fog is much hotter; so love, after passionate anger and jealousies are over, and the beloved one is again reconciled, grows more delightful and fervent. Moreover, as some believe the sun to be kindled and extinguished, they also imagine the same things concerning love, as being mortal and unstable. For neither can a constitution not enured to exercise endure the sun, nor the disposition of an illiterate and ill-tutored soul brook love without trouble and pain; for both are alike distempered and diseased, for which they lay the blame upon the power of the God, and not their own weakness. Herein only there may seem to be some difference between them; for that the sun displays to the sight upon the earth both beauty and deformity at once, but love is a luminary that affords us the view of beautiful objects only, and persuades lovers to cast their eyes only upon what is pleasing and delightful, and with a careless eye to overlook all other things. On the other side, they that attribute the name of Venus to the moon, although they have no convincing proof, still have hit upon a certain similarity. For that the moon is celestial and divine, and the region of mixture between mortal and immortal; but it is weak of itself, obscure and dark without the presence of the sun; as Venus is where love is absent. Therefore more properly and with more probability the moon is likened to Venus, and the sun to Love, rather than to any other of the Gods.

Nevertheless, we must not therefore say they are all one. For neither are the soul and body the same, but distinct; as the sun is visible, but love is perceptible only by sense. And if it might not be thought too harsh a saying, a man might affirm that the sun and love act contrary to one another. For the sun diverts the understanding from things intelligible to sensible objects, alluring and fascinating the sight with the

grace and splendor of his rays, and persuading us to search for other things, and even for truth itself, within and about himself, and nowhere else. And we appear to be passionately in love with the sun, because, as Euripides says,

He always on the earth displays  
The glory of his burning rays,

for want of our knowledge of another life, or rather, through our forgetfulness of those things which love calls to our remembrance. For as, when we are newly awaked and come into a bright and dazzling light, we forget whatever appeared to the soul in our dreams; so the sun seems to stupefy our recollection and impoison our understanding, when we change from the former life and enter this world, so that in our pleasure and admiration we forget all other considerations besides that of the present life. Though there indeed are the real substances proper for the contemplation of the soul; here, as in sleep, it embraces only dreams, and gazes in admiration and astonishment at what appears to it most beautiful and divine, while

Fallacious charming dreams about it fly;—

it being persuaded that here every thing is goodly and highly to be prized, unless it happens upon some divine and chaste love to be its physician and preserver. This love, entering through the body, becomes a guide to lead the soul from the world below to truth and the fields of truth, where full, pure, deceitless beauty dwells; and leading forth and guiding upward those that now after a long time are eager to embrace and live with such beauty, it stands by them, like a friendly mystagogue at the sacred ceremonies of initiation. But no sooner is the soul sent from thence again, but love is no longer able to make her approaches of herself, but by the body. And therefore as geometricians, when children are not able of themselves to apprehend the intelligible ideas of incorporeal and impassible substance, form and set before their eyes the tangible and visible imitations of spheres, cubes, and dodecahedrons; in like manner celestial love, having framed lovely mirrors to represent lovely objects, — things mortal and passible to represent things divine, and sensible objects to represent those perceptible only to the eye of reason, — shows them to us glittering in the forms, colors, and shape of youth in its prime, and first insensibly moves the memory inflamed by the sight of these objects.

Whence it comes to pass that some, through the stupidity of their friends and acquaintance, endeavoring by force and against reason to extinguish that flame, have enjoyed nothing of true benefit thereby, but only either disquieted themselves with smoke and trouble, or else rushing headlong into obscure and irregular pleasures, obstinately cast themselves away. But as many as by sober and modest ratiocination have sincerely extinguished the raging heat of the fire, and left behind only a warm and glowing heat in the soul, — which causes no violent earthquake, as it was once called, rousing the seed and causing a gliding of atoms compressed by smoothness and titillation, but a wonderful and engendering diffusion, as in a blossoming and well-nourished plant, which opens the pores of obedience and affection, — these, I say, in a short time passing by the bodies of those whom they love, penetrate more inwardly and fall to admire their manners and dispositions; and calling off their eyes from the body, they converse together, and contemplate one another in their discourses and in their actions, provided there be but the least scrip or appearance of beauty in the understanding. If not, they let them go, and turn their affections upon others, like bees that will not fasten upon many plants and flowers, because they cannot gather honey from them. But where they find any footstep, any emanation, any resemblance of a divinity, ravished with delight and admiration as they recall it to memory, they attract it to themselves, and are revived by striving to attain to what is truly amiable, happy, and beloved by all mankind.

20. True it is, that the poets, according to their sportive humor, seem to write many things in

merriment concerning this Deity, and to make him the subject of their lascivious songs in the height of their revelling jollity, making but little serious mention of him; whether out of judgment and reason, or being assured of the truth by divine inspiration, is the question. Among the rest, there is one thing which they say very oddly concerning the birth and generation of this God:

Young Zephyr, doting on his golden hair,  
At last the silver-slippered Iris won;  
And thus embraced, at length she bore a son,  
Of all the Gods the shrewdest and most fair:

unless the grammarians have likewise persuaded you, by saying that this fable was invented to set forth the variety and gay diversity of passions that attend on love.

To whom Daphnaeus: To what other end or purpose could it be? Hear me then, said my father; for 'tis no more than what the celestial meteor constrains us to say. The affection of the sight in the case of the rainbow (or Iris) is caused by reflection. For when the sight lights upon a cloud somewhat of a dewy substance, but smooth, and moderately thick withal, and we behold the repercussion of the sunbeams upon it, together with the light and splendor about the sun, it begets an opinion in us that the apparition is in the cloud. In like manner, this same subtle invention of love-sophistry in generous and noble souls causes a repercussion of the memory from objects that here appear and are called beautiful, to the beauty really divine, truly amiable and happy, and by all admired. But most people pursuing and taking hold of the fancied image of this beauty in boys and women, as it were seen in a mirror, reap nothing more assured and certain than a little pleasure mixed with pain. But this seems to be no more than a delirium or dizziness of the vulgar sort, beholding their empty and unsatisfied desires in the clouds, as it were in so many shadows; like children who, thinking to catch the rainbow in their hands, snatch at the apparition that presents itself before their eyes. But a generous and modest lover observes another method; for his contemplations reflect only on that beauty which is divine and perceptible by the understanding; but lighting upon the beauty of a visible body, and making use of it as a kind of organ of the memory, he embraces and loves, and by conversation argumenting his joy and satisfaction still more and more inflames his understanding. But neither do these lovers conversing with bodies rest satisfied in this world with a desire and admiration of this same light; neither when they are arrived at another world after death, do they return hither again as fugitives, to hover about the doors and mansions of new-married people and disturb their dreams with ghosts and visions; which sort of visions really come only from men and women given to pleasure and corporeal delights, who by no means deserve the name and characters of true lovers. Whereas a lover truly chaste and amorous, being got to the true mansion of beauty, and there conversing with it as much as it is lawful for him to do, mounted upon the wings of chaste desire, becomes pure and hallowed; and being initiated into sacred orders, continues dancing and sporting about his Deity, till returning again to the meadows of the Moon and Venus, and there laid asleep, he becomes ready for a new nativity. But these are points too high for the discourse which we have proposed to ourselves.

To return therefore to our purpose; Love, according to Euripides, with all the rest of the Gods, delights

When mortals here his honored name invoke;

on the other side, he is no less offended when any affront or contempt is put upon him, as he is most kind and benign to those that entertain him with proper respect. For neither does Jupiter surnamed the Hospitable so severely prosecute injuries done to strangers and suppliants, nor is Jupiter Genitalis so rigorous in accomplishing the curses of parents disobeyed, as Love is to listen to the complaints of injured lovers; being the scourger and punisher of proud, ill-natured, and ill-bred people. For, not to

mention Euxynthetus and Leucomantis, at this day in Cyprus called the Peeper, 'tis a hundred to one but you have heard of the punishment inflicted upon Gorgo the Cretan, not much unlike to that of Leucomantis, only that Gorgo was turned into a stone as she looked out of a window to see her love going to his grave. With this Gorgo Asander fell in love, a young gentleman virtuous and nobly descended, but reduced from a flourishing estate to extremity of poverty. However, he did not think so meanly of himself but that, being her kinsman, he courted this Gorgo for a wife, though she had many suitors at the same time by reason of her great fortune; and he so carried this business that, notwithstanding his numerous and wealthy rivals, he had gained the good-will of all her guardians and nearest relations.

21. Now as for those things which they say are the causes that beget love, they are not peculiar to this or the other sex, but common to both. For it cannot be that those images that enter into amorous persons and whisk about from one part to another, by their various forms moving and tickling the mass of atoms that slide into the seed, can come from young boys, and that the same cannot come from young women. But as to these noble and sacred remembrances with which the soul is winged, recalling that same divine, real, and Olympic beauty, what should hinder but that these may pass from boys and young men, and also from virgins and young women, whenever a disposition chaste and good-natured appears united with bloom of youth and grace of body? For, as a handsome and well-made shoe shows the proportion of the foot (as Ariston says), so they that have judgment in these matters can discern the splendid, upright, and uncorrupted footsteps of a noble and generous soul in beautiful forms and features, and bodies undefiled. For, if a voluptuous person, who when the question was put to him,

To which are your hot passions most inclined,  
Or to the male, or to the female kind?

answered thus,

'Tis the same thing to me  
Where'er I beauty see,

was thought to have returned a proper and pertinent answer and one that accorded with his passions, is it possible that a noble and generous lover directs his amours not to loveliness and good-nature, but only to the parts that distinguish the sex? For certainly a man that delights in horses will no less value the mettle and swiftness of Podargus, than of Aetha that was Agamemnon's mare; and he that is a good huntsman does not only delight in dogs, but mixes with his cry the bitches of Crete and Laconia; and shall he that is a lover as well as of civil behavior carry himself with an inequality more to one than to another, and make a distinction, as of garments, between the love of men and women? But some say that beauty is the flower of virtue. Will they then affirm, that the female sex never blossoms nor makes any show of tendency to virtue? It were absurd to think so. Therefore was Aeschylus in the right when he said, that he could never mistake the fire in the eye of a young woman who had once known a man. Now then are those signs and marks of lasciviousness, wantonness, and impudence to be discovered in the visages of women, and shall there be no light shining in their faces for the discovery of modesty and chastity? Nay, shall there be many such signs, and those apparent, and shall they not be able to allure and provoke love? Both are contrary to reason, and dissonant from truth. But every one of these things is common to both sexes, as we have showed.

Now then, Daphnaeus, let us confute the reason that Zeuxippus has but now alleged, by making love to be all one with inordinate desire that hurries the soul to intemperance. Not that it is his opinion, but only what he has frequently heard from men morose and no way addicted to love. Of this class there are some who, marrying poor silly women for the sake of some petty portion, and having nothing to do with them and their money but to make them perpetual drudges in pitiful mechanic employments, are every

day brawling and quarrelling with them. Others, more desirous of children than of wives, like cicadae that spill their seed upon squills or some such like herb, discharge their lust in haste upon the next they meet with; and having reaped the fruit they sought for, bid marriage farewell or else regard it not at all, neither caring to love nor to be beloved. And in my opinion, the words *στέργειν* and *στέργεσθαι*, which signify dearly to love and dearly to be beloved again, differing but one letter from *στέγειν*, which signifies to contain or endure, seem to me to import and denote that mutual kindness called conjugal, which is intermixed by time and custom with necessity. But in that wedlock which love supports and inspires, in the first place, as in Plato's Commonwealth, there will be no such language as "thine" and "mine." For properly to speak, there is not community of goods among all friends; but only where two friends, though severed in body, yet have their souls joined and as it were melted together, and neither desire to be two nor believe themselves to be separate persons. And, in the second place, there will be that mutual respect and reverence, which is the chiefest happiness of wedlock. Now as to that respect that comes from without, carrying with it more force of law than voluntary and reciprocal duty, or that comes by fear and shame,

And many other curbs, that loose desire  
And lawless frisks of wanton heat require,

these are always present with those who are coupled in matrimony. Whereas in love there is so much continency, so much modesty, and so much of loyal affection, that even if it happen upon an intemperate and lascivious soul, it is thereby diverted from all other amours, by cutting off all malapert boldness and bringing down the insolence of imperious pride; instead of which it introduces modest bashfulness, silence, and submission, and adorning it with decent and becoming behavior, makes it for ever after the obedient observer of one lover. Most certainly you have heard of that celebrated and highly courted courtesan Lais, how her beauty inflamed all Greece, or rather how two seas strove for her. This famous beauty, being seized with an ardent affection for Hippolochus the Thessalian, leaving the Acrocorinthus, as the poet describes it,

With sea-green water all encompassed round,

and privately avoiding the great army (as I may call it) of those that courted her favor, withdrew herself modestly to the enjoyment of him only; but the women, incensed with jealousy and envying her surpassing beauty, dragged her into the temple of Venus, and there stoned her to death; for which reason it is called to this day the temple of Venus the Murderess. We ourselves have known several young damsels, mere slaves, who never would submit to the embraces of their masters, and private men who have disdained the company of queens, when love had the absolute dominion of their hearts. For, as in Rome, when there is a dictator chosen, all other chief magistrates lay down their offices; so all such persons, where love is truly predominant, are immediately free and manumitted from all other lords and masters, and afterwards live like servants in the temple of Love. And indeed a virtuous and generous lady, once linked to her lawful husband by an unfeigned affection, will sooner choose the embraces of bears and dragons, than to be the bed-fellow of any other person whatsoever but her only spouse.

22. Of this although we might produce examples without number, yet among you, that are now joined (as it were) in the same dance and festival with Love,\* it will not be from the purpose to relate the story of Camma the Galatian. For she being a woman of transcendent beauty, and married to Sinatus the tetrarch. Synorix, one of the most powerful men in all Galatia, fell desperately in love with her; and that he might enjoy her, murdered her husband Sinatus, since he could not prevail with her either by force or persuasion, while her husband was alive. Thereupon Camma, having no other sanctuary for the preservation of her chastity nor consolation in her affliction, retired to the temple of Diana, where she remained a votaress to the Goddess, not admitting any person so much as to speak to her, though she

had many suitors that sought her in wedlock. But when Synorix boldly presumed to put the question to her, she neither seemed to reject his motion, neither did she upbraid him with the crime he had committed; as if he had been induced to perpetrate so vile an act, not out of any malicious intent to Sinatus, but merely out of a pure and ardent love and affection to her. Thereupon he came with greater confidence, and demanded her in marriage. She, on the other side, met him no less cheerfully; and leading him by the hand to the altar of the Goddess, after she had poured forth a small quantity of hydromel well tempered with a rank poison, as it were an atonement offering to the Goddess, she drank off the one half of that which remained herself, and gave the other half to the Galatian. And then, so soon as she saw he had drunk it off, she gave a loud groan, and calling her deceased husband by his name; This day, said she, my most dear and beloved husband, I have long expected, as having lived, deprived of thee, a desolate and comfortless life. But now receive me joyfully; for thy sake I have revenged myself upon the most wicked among men, willing to have lived with thee, and now no less rejoicing to die with him. Thus Synorix, being carried out of the temple, soon after expired; but Camma, surviving him a day and a night, is reported to have died with an extraordinary resolution and cheerfulness of spirit.

23. Now in regard there have been many such, as well among us as among the barbarians, who can bear with those that reproach Venus that, being coupled and present with Love, she becomes a hindrance of friendship? Whereas any sober and considerate person may rather revile the company of male with male, and justly call it intemperance and lasciviousness,

A vile affront to Nature, no effect  
Of lovely Venus or of chaste respect.

And therefore, as for those that willingly prostitute their bodies, we look upon them to be the most wicked and flagitious persons in the world, void of fidelity, neither endued with modesty nor any thing of friendship; and but too truly and really, according to Sophocles,

They who ne'er had such friends as these,  
Believe their blessing double;  
And they that have them, pray the Gods  
To rid them of the trouble.

And as for those who, not being by nature lewd and wicked, were circumvented and forced to prostitute themselves, there are no men whom these always look upon with greater suspicion and more perfect hatred than those that deluded and flattered them into so vile an act, and they bitterly revenge themselves when they find an opportunity. For Crateas killed Archelaus, who had rid him in his youth; and Pytholaus slew Alexander of Pherae. Periander tyrant of the Ambraciotes asked his minion, whether he were not yet with child; which the lad took so heinously that he stabbed him.

On the other hand, among women that are married, these are but the beginnings of friendship, as it were, a communicating and imparting of great and sacred mysteries. The pleasure of coition is the least thing; but the honor, the submission to mutual love and fidelity which daily germinates from this, convince us that neither the Delphians raved, who gave the name of Arma (union) to Venus, nor that Homer was in an error, who called the conjunction of man and woman by the name of friendship; but that Solon was a lawgiver the most experienced in conjugal affairs, who decreed that a husband should lie with his wife thrice a month at least, — not for pleasure's sake, but that, as cities renew their treaties one with another at such a time, so the alliance of matrimony might be renewed by this enjoyment, after the jars which may have arisen in the mean time. But you will say, there are many men in love with women that act amiss and furiously. But are there not more enormities committed by those that are enamored upon boys?



So often as these eyes of mine behold  
That beardless youth, that smooth and lovely boy,  
I faint and fall; then wish I him to hold  
Within mine arms, and so to die with joy;  
And that on tomb were set, where I do lie,  
An epigram, mine end to testify.

But though there is this raging passion after boys, as well as a dotage upon women, yet can neither be said to be truly love. And therefore it is an absurdity to aver that women are not capable even of other virtues. For why speak of so many signals of their chastity, prudence, justice, and fidelity, when we find others no less eminent for their fortitude, resolution, and magnanimity; after all which, to tax them of being naturally incapable of friendship only – not to mention the other virtues – is a hard case. For they are naturally lovers of their children, affectionate to their husbands; and this same natural affection of theirs, like a fertile soil, as it is capable of friendship, so is no less pliable to persuasion, nor less accompanied with all the graces. But as poetry, adapting to speech the condiments of melody, measure, and rhythm, renders the wholesome and instructive part of it so much the more moving, and the noxious part so much the more apt to corrupt the mind; so, Nature having adorned a woman with the charms of beauty and persuasive language, a lascivious woman makes use of these perfections to please herself and deceive others, but in a modest and sober woman they work wonders towards the gaining and fixing the good will and favor of her husband. Therefore Plato exhorted Xenocrates, otherwise generous and brave, but very morose in his humor, to sacrifice to the Graces; but he would have exhorted a virtuous and modest woman to sacrifice to Love, for his propitious favor to her marriage, in ordering it so that her behavior may prove a sufficient charm to keep her husband at home,...and that he may not ramble after other women, and then be forced to exclaim, as in the comedy,

Curse to this rage of mine, so given to roam;  
What a good wife do I abuse at home!

For in wedlock to love is a far greater blessing than to be beloved; since it preserves and keeps people from falling into many errors, nay, all those that corrupt and ruin matrimony.

24. As for those passionate affections which at the beginning of conjugal love raise certain fits, which are somewhat sharp and biting, most fortunate Zeuxippus, I would not have you fear them, like an ulcer or scarification. Though perhaps it would not be amiss, if it should cost you some small wound to be joined to a virtuous woman, like trees that grow together when grafted by incision upon a proper stock. The beginning of conception itself is a kind of exulceration; for there can be no mixture of things that are not affected reciprocally one by the other. The very mathematical rudiments do not a little perplex little children at the first, and philosophy troubles the brains of young beginners; but this corroding humor is not lasting, either to these or to lovers. Insomuch that a man would think that love at first resembled the mixture of two liquors, which, when once they begin to incorporate, by their ebullition discover some little disgusts; for so love at the beginning bubbles up with a kind of effervency, till being settled and purified it acquires a firm and stable constitution. For this indeed is properly that kind of mixture which is called a thorough mixture; whereas the love of other friends, conversing and living together, is like the touches and interweavings of Epicurus's atoms, subject to raptures and separations, but can never compose such a union as proceeds from love assisting conjugal society. For neither are the pleasures received from any other source so great, nor the benefits conferred on others so lasting, nor is the glory and beauty of any other friendship so noble and desirable,

As when the man and wife at board and bed  
Under one roof a life of concord lead.

Moreover, it is a thing warranted by law; while Nature shows us that even the Gods themselves stood in need of love for the sake of common procreation. Thus the poets tell us that earth is in love with the showers, and heaven with the earth; and the natural philosophers are of opinion that the sun is in love with the moon, that they copulate every month, and that the moon conceives by virtue of that conjunction. And it would of necessity follow that the earth, which is the common mother of all mankind, of all animals, and of all manner of plants, would one day cease and be extinguished, should that same ardent love and desire infused by the God forsake matter, and matter cease to pursue and lust after the principles and motions of generation.

But that we may not seem to wander too far or spend our time in trifles, you yourselves are not ignorant that these pederasties are by many said to be the most uncertain and least durable things in the world, and that they are derided by those that make use of them, who affirm that the love of boys, like an egg, may be destroyed by a hair;† and the lovers themselves are like the wandering Scythians, who, having spent their spring in flowery and verdant pastures, presently dislodge from thence, as out of an enemy's country. And Bion the Sophister was yet more sharp and satirical, when he called the beards of young and beautiful striplings by the names of Harmodii and Aristogitons (i.e. tyrant-killers), since by that budding show of manhood their lovers are delivered from their pleasant tyranny. But these imputations are not justly charged upon true lovers. Elegant therefore was that which was said by Euripides. For as he was clasping and embracing the fair Agatho, after the down began to sprout forth upon his chin, he cried that the very autumn of lovely youths was pleasing and delightful. But I say more than this, that the love of virtuous women does not decay with the wrinkles that appear upon their faces, but remains and endures to their graves and monuments. Then again, we shall find but few male couples of true lovers, but thousands of men and women conjoined together in wedlock, who have reciprocally and inviolably observed a community of affection and loyalty to the end of their lives. I shall instance only one example, which happened in our time, during the reign of Caesar Vespasian.

25. Julius, who was the first that occasioned the revolt in Galatia, among many other confederates in the rebellion had one Sabinus, a young gentleman of no mean spirit, and for fame and riches inferior to none. But having undertaken a very difficult enterprise, they miscarried; and therefore expecting nothing but death by the hand of justice, some of them killed themselves, others made their escapes as well as they could. As for Sabinus, he had all the opportunities that could be to save himself by flying to the barbarians; but he had married a lady, the best of women, which they called by the name of Empone, as much as to say a heroess. This woman it was not in his power to leave, neither could he carry her conveniently along with him. Having therefore in the country certain vaults or cellars under ground, where he had hid his treasures and movables of greatest value, which were only known to two of his freed bondmen, he dismissed all the rest of his servants, as if he had intended to poison himself. And taking along with him his two faithful and trusty servants, he hid himself in one of the vaults, and sent another of his enfranchised attendants, whose name was Martalius, to tell his wife that her husband had poisoned himself and that the house and his corpse were both burnt together, designing by the lamentation and unfeigned grief of his wife to make the report of his death the more easily believed; which fell out according to his wish. For the lady, so soon as she heard the news, threw herself upon the floor, and continued for three days together without meat or drink, making the most bitter outcries, and bewailing her loss with all the marks of a real and unfeigned anguish; which Sabinus understanding, and fearing her sorrow might prevail with her to lay violent hands upon herself, he ordered the same Martalius to tell her that he was yet alive and lay hid in such a place; however, that she should for a while continue her mourning, and be sure so to counterfeit her grief that she should not be discovered. And indeed in all other things the lady acted her part so well, and managed her passion to that degree, that no woman could do it better. But having still a longing desire to see her husband, she went to him in the night and returned again so privately that nobody took any notice of her. And thus she continued keeping him

company for seven months together, that it might be said to differ very little from living in hell itself. Where after she had so strangely disguised Sabinus with a false head of hair, and such odd sort of habit, that it was impossible for him to be known, she carried him to Rome along with her undiscovered to several that met him. But not being able to obtain his pardon, she returned with him back to his den, and for many years lived with him under ground; only between whiles she went to the city, and there showed herself in public to several ladies, her friends and familiar acquaintance. But that which was the most incredible of all things, she so ordered her business that none of the ladies perceived her being with child, though she bathed at the same time with them. For such is the nature of that same ointment wherewith the women anoint their hair to make it of a red-golden color, that by its fatness and oiliness it plumps and swells up the flesh of the body, and brings it up to an embonpoint. So that the lady, no less liberal of her ointment than diligent to chafe and rub her body limb by limb, by the proportionable rising and swelling of her flesh in every part, concealed the swelling of her belly. And when she came to be delivered, she endured the pains of her child-bearing alone by herself, like a lioness, hiding herself in her den with her husband; and there, as I may say, she bred up in private her two male whelps. For at that time she was delivered of two boys, of which there was one who was slain in Egypt; the other, whose name was also Sabinus, was but very lately with us at Delphi.

For this reason Caesar put the lady to death; but dearly paid for the murder by the utter extirpation of his whole posterity, which in a short time after was utterly cut off from the face of the earth. For during his whole reign, there was not a more cruel and savage act committed; neither was there any other spectacle which in all probability the Gods and Daemons more detested, or any from which they more turned away their eyes in abomination of the sight. Besides, she abated the compassion of the spectators by the stoutness of her behavior and the grandeur of her utterance, than which there was nothing that more exasperated Vespasian; when, despairing of her husband's pardon, she did as it were challenge the emperor to exchange her life for his, telling him withal, that she accounted it a far greater pleasure to live in darkness under ground as she had done, than to reign in splendor like him.

26. Here, as my father told me, ended the discourse concerning Love in the neighborhood of Thespieae; at what time they saw one of Pisiass's friends, by name Diogenes, coming at a good round pace towards them; to whom when Soclarus, while he was yet at a distance, cried out, No tidings of war, Diogenes, I hope? No, no, said he, that ne'er can be at a wedding; and therefore mend your pace, for the nuptial sacrifice stays only for your coming. All the rest of the company were exceeding glad, only Zeuxippus asked whether Pisiass were still angry. On the contrary, said Diogenes, as he before opposed the match, so now he was the first to approve what Ismenodora had done; and at the same time, putting on a garland upon his head and throwing a white nuptial robe about his shoulders, he is to march before all the company through the market-place, to give thanks to the God of Love.

Well done, by Jupiter, come away, come away then, cried my father, that we may laugh and be merry with our friend, and adore the Deity. For there is no doubt that he is propitiously present with his favor and approbation.