

“Of Apolonius and Silla”

from *Riche his Farewell to Militarie profession: conteinyng pleasaunt discourses fit for a peaceable tyme (1581)*

By Barnabe Rich

The Argument of the Second History

Apolonius Duke, having spent a year's service in the wars against the “Turks, returning homeward with his company by sea, was driven by force of weather to the Isle of Cyprus, where he was well received by Pontus, governor of the same Isle ; with whom Silla, daughter to Pontus, fell so strangely in love, that after Apolonius was departed to Constantinople, Silla, with one man, followed, and coming to Constantinople, she served Apolonius in the habit of a man, and after many pretty accidents falling out, she was known to Apolonius, who, in requital of her love, married her.

There is no child that is born into this wretched world, but before it doth suck the mother's milk, it taketh first a sup of the cup of error, which maketh us, when we come to riper years, not only to enter into actions of injury, but many times to stray from that is right and reason; but in all other things, wherein we show ourselves to be most drunken with this poisoned cup, it is in our actions of love ; for the lover is so estranged from that is right, and wandereth so widefrom the bounds of reason, that he is not able to deem white from black, good from bad, virtue from vice; but only led by the appetite of his own affections, and grounding them on the foolishness of his own fancies, will so settle his liking on such a one, as either by desert or unworthiness will merit rather I to be loathed than loved.

If a question might be asked, what is the ground in deed of reasonable love, whereby the knot is knit of true and perfect friendship, I think those that be wise would answer-- desert; that is, where the party beloved doth requite us with the like; for otherwise, if the bare show of beauty, or the comeliness of personage might be sufficient to confirm us in our love, those that be accustomed to go to fairs and markets might sometimes fall in love with twenty in a day. Desert must then be, of force, the ground of reasonable love; for to love them that hate us, to follow them that fly from us, to fawn on them that frown on us, to curry favour with them that disdain us, to be glad to please them that care not how they offend us, who will not confess this to be an erroneous love, neither grounded upon wit nor reason? Wherefore, right courteous gentlewomen, if it please you with patience to peruse this history following, you shall see Dame Error so play her part with a leash of lovers, a male and two females, as shall work a wonder to your wise judgement, in noting the effect of their amorous devices, and conclusions of their actions-- the first neglecting, the love of a noble dame, young, beautiful, and fair, who only for his goodwill played the part of a serving man, contented to abide any manner of pain only to behold him. He again setting his love of a dame, that despising him (being a noble Duke) gave herself to a serving man, as she had thought; but it otherwise fell out, as the substance of this tale shall better describe. And because I have been something tedious in my first discourse [i.e., “Sappho, Duke of Mantona,” the first of the eight tales in Rich's *Farewell*], offending your patient ears with the hearing of a circumstance over long, from henceforth, that which I mind to write shall be done with such celerity, as the matter that I pretend to pen may in any wise permit me, and thus followeth the history.

During the time that the famous city of Constantinople remained in the hands of the Christians, amongst many other noble men that kept their abiding in that flourishing city, there was one whose

name was Apolonius, a worthy duke, who being but a very young man, and even then new come to his possessions, which were very great, levied a mighty band of men at his own proper charges, with whom he served against the Turk during the space of one whole year, in which time, although it were very short, this young duke so behaved himself, as well by prowess and valiance showed with his own hands, as otherwise by his wisdom and liberality used towards his soldiers, that all the world was filled with the fame of this noble duke. When he had thus spent one year's service, he caused his trumpet to sound a retreat, and gathering his company together, and embarking themselves, he set sail, holding his course towards Constantinople; but, being upon the sea, by the extremity of a tempest which suddenly fell, his fleet was severed, some one way, and some another; but he himself recovered the Isle of Cyprus, where he was worthily received by Pontus, duke and governor of the same isle, with whom he lodged while his ships were new repairing.

This Pontus that was lord and governor of this famous isle was an ancient duke, and had two children, a son and daughter; his son was named Silvio, of whom hereafter we shall have further occasion to speak, but at this instant he was in the parts of Africa, serving in the wars.

The daughter her name was Silla, whose beauty was so peerless that she had the sovereignty amongst all other dames, as well for her beauty as for the nobleness of her birth. This Silla, having heard of the worthiness of Apolonius, this young duke, who besides his beauty and good graces, had a certain natural allurements, that being now in his company in her father's court, she was so strangely attached with the love of Apolonius, that there was nothing might content her but his presence and sweet sight; and although she saw no manner of hope to attain to that she most desired, knowing Apolonius to be but a guest, and ready to take the benefit of the next wind, and to depart into a strange country, whereby she was bereaved of all possibility ever to see him again, and therefore strived with herself to leave her fondness, but all in vain; it would not be, but, like the fowl which is once limed, the more she striveth, the faster she tieth herself. So Silla was now constrained perforce her will to yield to love, wherefore from time to time she used so great familiarity with him, as her honour might well permit, and fed him with such amorous baits as the modesty of a maid could reasonably afford; which when she perceived did take but small effect, feeling herself outraged with the extremity of her passion, by the only countenance that she bestowed upon Apolonius, it might have been well perceived that the very eyes pleaded unto him for pity and remorse. But Apolonius, coming but lately from out the field from the chasing of his enemies, and his fury not yet thoroughly dissolved, nor purged from his stomach, gave no regard to those amorous enticements, which, by reason of his youth, he had not been acquainted withal. But his mind ran more to hear his pilots bring news of a merry wind, to serve his turn to Constantinople, which in the end came very prosperously; and giving Duke Pontus hearty thanks for his great entertainment, taking his leave of himself, and the lady Silla his daughter, departed with his company, and with a happy gale arrived at his desired port. Gentlewomen, according to my promise, I will here, for brevity's sake, omit to make repetition of the long and dolorous discourse recorded by Silla for this sudden departure of her Apolonius, knowing you to be as tenderly hearted as Silla herself, whereby you may the better conjecture the fury of her fever.

But Silla, the further that she saw herself bereaved of all hope, ever any more to see her beloved Apolonius, so much the more contagious were her passions, and made the greater speed to execute that she had premeditated in her mind, which was this. Amongst many servants that did attend upon her, there was one whose name was Pedro, who had a long time waited upon her in her chamber, whereby she was well assured of his fidelity and trust; to that Pedro therefore she bewrayed first the fervency of her love borne to Apolonius, conjuring him in the name of the Goddess of Love herself, and binding him by the duty that a servant ought to have, that tendereth his mistress' safety and good liking, and desiring him with tears trickling down her cheeks, that he would give his consent to aid and assist her, in that she had determined, which was for that she was fully resolved to go to Constantinople, where she might again take the view of her beloved Apolonius, that he, according to

the trust she had reposed in him, would not refuse to give his consent, secretly to convey her from out her father's court according as she would give him direction, and also to make himself partaker of her journey, and to wait upon her, till she had seen the end of her determination.

Pedro, perceiving with what vehemency his lady and mistress had made request unto him, albeit he saw many perils and doubts depending in her pretence, notwithstanding gave his consent to be at her disposition, promising her to further her with his best advice, and to be ready to obey whatsoever she would please to command him. The match being thus agreed upon, and all things prepared in a readiness for their departure, it happened there was a galley of Constantinople ready to depart, which Pedro understanding, came to the captain, desiring him to have passage for himself, and for a poor maid that was his sister, which were bound to Constantinople upon certain urgent affairs; to which request the captain granted, willing him to prepare aboard with all speed, because the wind served him presently to depart.

Pedro now coming to his mistress, and telling her how he had handled the matter with the captain, she liking very well of the device, disguising herself into very simple attire, stole away from out her father's court, and came with Pedro, whom now she called brother, aboard the galley, where all things being in readiness, and the wind serving very well, they launched forth with their oars, and set sail. When they were at the sea, the captain of the galley, taking the view of Silla, perceiving her singular beauty he was better pleased in beholding of her face, than in taking the height either of the sun or stars; and thinking her by the homeliness of her apparel to be but some simple maiden, calling her into his cabin, he began to break with her after the sea fashion, desiring her to use his own cabin for her better ease; and during the time that she remained at the sea, she should not want a bed; and then, whispering softly in her ear, he said, that for want of a bedfellow, he himself would supply that room. Silla not being acquainted with any such talk, blushed for shame, but made him no answer at all. My captain, feeling such bickering within himself, the like whereof he had never endured upon the sea, was like to be taken prisoner aboard his own ship, and forced to yield himself captive without any cannon shot; wherefore, to salve all sores, and thinking it the readiest way to speed, he began to break with Silla in the way of marriage, telling her how happy a voyage she had made, to fall into the liking of such a one as himself was, who was able to keep and maintain her like a gentlewoman, and for her sake would likewise take her brother into his fellowship, whom he would by some means prefer in such sort, that both of them should have good cause to think themselves thrice happy, she to light of such a husband, and he to light of such a brother. But Silla, nothing pleased with these preferments, desired him to cease his talk, for that she did think herself indeed to be too unworthy such a one as he was, neither was she minded yet to marry, and therefore desired him to fix his fancy upon some that were better worthy than herself was, and that could better like of his courtesy than she could do. The captain, seeing himself thus refused, being in a great chafe, he said as followeth:

"Then, seeing you make so little account of my courtesy proffered to one that is so far unworthy of it, from henceforth I will use the office of my authority; you shall know that I am the captain of this ship, and have power to command and dispose of things at my pleasure; and seeing you have so scornfully rejected me to be your loyal husband, I will now take you by force, and use you at my will, and so long as it shall please me, will keep you for mine own store; there shall be no man able to defend you, nor yet to persuade me from that I have determined." Silla, with these words being struck into a great fear, did think it now too late to rue her rash attempt, determined rather to die with her own hands. than to suffer herself to be abused in such sort; therefore she most humbly desired the captain so much as he could to save her credit, and seeing that she must needs be at his will and disposition, that for that present he would depart, and suffer her till night, when in the dark he might take his pleasure, without any manner of suspicion to the residue of his company. The captain, thinking now the goal to be more than half won, was contented so far to satisfy her request, and departed out, leaving her alone in his cabin.

Silla, being alone by herself, drew out her knife, ready to strike herself to the heart, and, falling upon her knees, desired God to receive her soul, as an acceptable sacrifice for her follies, which she had so wilfully committed, craving pardon for her sins ; and so forth continuing a long and pitiful reconciliation to God, in the midst whereof there suddenly fell a wonderful storm, the terror whereof was such, that there was no man but did think the seas would presently have swallowed them; the billows so suddenly arose with the rage of the wind, that they were all glad to fall to heaving out of water, for otherwise their feeble galley had never been able to have brooked the seas. This storm continued all that day and the next night, and they being driven to put romer before the wind [i.e., to let the ship roam where it would] to keep the galley ahead the billow, were driven upon the main shore, where the galley brake all to pieces ; there was every man providing to save his own life; some gat upon hatches, boards, and casks, and were driven with the waves to and fro ; but the greatest number were drowned, amongst the which Pedro was one; but Silla herself being in the cabin, as you have heard, took hold of a chest that was the captain's, the which, by the only providence of God, brought her safe to the shore; the which when she had recovered, not knowing what was become of Pedro her man, she deemed that both he and all the rest had been drowned, for that she saw nobody upon the shore but herself; wherefore, when she had a while made great lamentations, complaining her mishaps, she began in the end to comfort herself with the hope that she had to see her Apolonius, and found such means that she brake open the chest that brought her to land, wherein she found good store of coin, and sundry suits of apparel that were the captain's. And now, to prevent a number of injuries that might be proffered to a woman that was left in her case, she determined to leave her own apparel, and to sort herself into some of those suits, that, being taken for a man, she might pass through the country in the better safety; and as she changed her apparel, she thought it likewise convenient to change her name; wherefore, not readily happening of any other, she called herself Silvio, by the name of her own brother, whom you have heard spoken of before.

In this manner she travelled to Constantinople, where she inquired out the palace of the Duke Apolonius; and thinking herself now to be both fit and able to play the serving man, she presented herself to the duke, craving his service. The duke, very willing to give succour unto strangers, perceiving him to be a proper smug young man, gave him entertainment. Silla thought herself now more than satisfied for all the casualties that had happened unto her in her journey, that she might at her pleasure take but the view of the Duke Apolonius, and above the rest of his servants was very diligent and attendant upon him ; the which the duke perceiving, began likewise to grow into good liking with the diligence of his man, and therefore made him one of his chamber; who but Silvio then was most near about him, in helping of him to make him ready in a morning in the setting of his ruffs, in the keeping of his chamber? Silvio pleased his master so well, that above all the rest of his servants about him, he had the greatest credit, and the duke put him most in trust.

At this very instant, there was remaining in the city a noble Dame, a widow, whose husband was but lately deceased, one of the noblest men that were in the parts of Grecia, who left his lady and wife large possessions and great livings. This lady's name was called Julina, who besides the abundance of her wealth, and the greatness of her revenues, had likewise the sovereignty of all the dames of Constantinople for her beauty. To this lady Julina, Apolonius became an earnest suitor; and according to the manner of wooers, besides fair words, sorrowful sighs, and piteous countenances, there must be sending of loving letters, chains, bracelets, brooches, rings, tablets, gems, jewels, and presents, I know not what; so my duke, who in the time that he remained in the Isle of Cyprus had no skill at all in the art of love, although it were more than half proffered unto him, was now become a scholar in love's school, and had already learned his first lesson; that is, to speak pitifully, to look truthfully, to promise largely, to serve diligently, and to please carefully; now he was learning his second lesson, that is, to reward liberally, to give bountifully, to present willingly, and to write lovingly. Thus Apolonius was so busied in his new study, that I warrant you there was no man that could challenge him for playing the truant, he followed his profession with so good a will; and who must be

the messenger to carry the tokens and love letters to the lady Julina, but Silvio his man; in him the duke reposed his only confidence, to go between him and his lady.

Now, gentlewomen, do you think there could have been a greater torment devised wherewith to afflict the heart of Silla, than herself to be made the instrument to work her own mishap, and to play the attorney in a cause that made so much against herself. But Silla, altogether desirous to please her master, cared nothing at all to offend herself, followed his business with so good a will as if it had been in her own preferment.

Julina, now having many times taken the gaze of this young youth Silvio, perceiving him to be of such excellent perfect grace, was so entangled with the often sight of this sweet temptation, that she fell into as great a liking with the man as the master was with herself; and on a time, Silvio being sent from his master with a message to the lady Julina, as he began very earnestly to solicit in his master's behalf, Julina, interrupting him in his tale, said: "Silvio, it is enough that you have said for your master; from henceforth either speak for yourself, or say nothing at all." Silla, abashed to hear these words, began in her mind to accuse the blindness of love, that Julina, neglecting the good will of so noble a duke, would prefer her love unto such a one, as nature itself had denied to recompense her liking.

And now, for a time leaving matters depending as you have heard, it fell out that the right Silvio indeed (whom you have heard spoken of before, the brother of Silla) was come to his father's court into the Isle of Cyprus; where understanding that his sister was departed in manner as you have heard, conjectured that the very occasion did proceed of some liking had between Pedro her man (that was missing with her) and herself; but Silvio, who loved his sister as dearly as his own life, and the rather for that she was his natural sister, both by father and mother, so the one of them was so like the other, in countenance and favour, that there was no man able to discern the one from the other by their faces, saving by their apparel, the one being a man, the other a woman.

Silvio therefore vowed to his father, not only to seek out his sister Silla, but also to revenge the villain which he conceived in Pedro, for the carrying away of his sister; and thus departing, having travelled through many cities and towns, without hearing any manner of news of those he went to seek for, at the last he arrived at Constantinople; where, as he was walking in an evening for his own recreation, on a pleasant green yard, without the walls of the city, he fortun'd to meet with the lady Julina, who likewise had been abroad to take the air; and as she suddenly cast her eyes upon Silvio, thinking him to be her old acquaintance, by reason they were so like one another, as you have heard before, said unto him, "Sir Silvio, if your haste be not the greater, I pray you let me have a little talk with you, seeing I have so luckily met you in this place." Silvio, wondering to hear himself so rightly named, being but a stranger, not of above two days' continuance in the city, very courteously came towards her, desirous to hear what she would say.

Julina, commanding her train something to stand back, said as followeth: "Seeing my good will and friendly love hath been the only cause to make me so prodigal to offer that I see is so lightly rejected, it maketh me to think that men be of this condition, rather to desire those things which they cannot come by, than to esteem or value of that which both largely and liberally is offered unto them; but if the liberality of my proffer hath made to seem less the value of the thing that I meant to present, it is but in your own conceit, considering how many noble men there hath been here before, and be yet at this present, which hath both served, sued, and most humbly intreated, to attain to that, which to you of myself I have freely offered, and I perceive is despised, or at the least very lightly regarded."

Silvio, wondering at these words, but more amazed that she could so rightly call him by his name, could not tell what to make of her speeches, assuring himself that she was deceived, and did mistake him, did think notwithstanding, it had been a point of great simplicity, if he should forsake that which fortune had so favourably proffered unto him, perceiving by her train, that she was some lady of great honour, and viewing the perfection of her beauty, and the excellency of her grace and countenance, did think it impossible that she should be despised, and therefore answered thus:

“Madam, if before this time I have seemed to forget myself, in neglecting your courtesy, which so liberally you have meant unto me, please it you to pardon what is past, and from this day forwards, Silvio remaineth ready prest [i.e., eager] to make such reasonable amends as his ability may any ways permit, or as it shall please you to command.”

Julina, the gladdest woman that might be, to hear this joyful news, said: “Then, my Silvio, see you fail not tomorrow at night to sup with me at my own house, where I will discourse farther with you, what amends you shall make me.” To which request Silvio gave his glad consent, and thus they departed very well pleased. And as Julina did think the time very long, till she had reaped the fruit of her desire, so Silvio, he wished for harvest before corn could grow, thinking the time as long, till he saw how matters would fall out; but not knowing what lady she might be, he presently (before Julina was out of sight) demanded of one that was walking by, what she was, and how she was called; who satisfied Silvio in every point, and also in what part of the town her house did stand, whereby he might inquire it out.

Silvio, thus departing to his lodging, passed the night with very unquiet sleeps, and the next morning his mind ran so much of his supper, that he never cared, neither for his breakfast, nor dinner; and the day to his seeming passed away so slowly, that he had thought the stately steeds had been tired that draw the chariot of the sun, or else some other Josua had commanded them again to stand, and wished that Phaeton had been there with a whip.

Julina, on the other side, she had thought the clocksetter had played the knave, the day came no faster forwards; but six o'clock being once stricken, recovered comfort to both parties; and Silvio, hastening himself to the palace of Julina, where by her he was friendly welcomed, and a sumptuous supper being made ready, furnished with sundry sorts of delicate dishes, they sat them down, passing the supper time with amorous looks, loving countenances, and secret glances conveyed from the one to the other, which did better satisfy them than the feeding of their dainty dishes.

Supper time being thus spent, Julina did think it very unfitly, if she should turn Silvio to go seek his lodging in an evening, desired him therefore that he would take a bed in her house for the night; and, bringing him up into a fair chamber that was very richly furnished, she found such means, that when all the rest of her household servants were abed and quiet, she came herself to bear Silvio company, where concluding upon conditions that were in question between them, they passed the night with such joy and contentation as might in that convenient time be wished for; but only that Julina, feeding too much of some one dish above the rest, received a surfeit, whereof she could not be cured in forty weeks after, a natural inclination in all women which are subject to longing, and want the reason to use a moderation in their diet. But the morning approaching, Julina took her leave and conveyed herself into her own chamber; and when it was fair daylight, Silvio, making himself ready, departed likewise about his affairs in the town, debating with himself how things had happened, being well assured that Julina had mistaken him; and, therefore, for fear of further evils, determined to come no more there, but took his journey towards other places in the parts of Grscia, to see if he could learn any tidings of his sister Silla.

The Duke Apolonius, having made a long suit, and never a whit the nearer of his purpose, came to Julina to crave her direct answer, either to accept of him, and of such conditions as he proffered unto her, or else to give him his last farewell, Julina, as you have heard, had taken an earnest penny of another, whom she had thought had been Silvio, the duke's man, was at a controversy in herself, what she might do; one while she thought, seeing her occasion served so fit, to crave the duke's good will, for the marrying of his man; then again, she could not tell what displeasure the duke would conceive, in that she should seem to prefer his man before himself, did think it best therefore to conceal the matter, till she might speak with Silvio, to use his opinion how these matters should be handled; and hereupon resolving herself, desiring the duke to pardon her speeches, said as followeth:

“Sir Duke, for that from this time forwards I am no longer of myself, having given my full power and authority over to another, whose wife I now remain by faithful vow and promise; and albeit I know the world will wonder when they shall understand the fondness of my choice, yet I trust you yourself will nothing dislike with me, sith I have meant no other thing than the satisfying of mine own contentation and liking.”

The duke, hearing these words, answered: “Madam, I must then content myself, although against my will, having the law in your own hands, to like of whom you list, and to make choice where it pleaseth you.”

Julina, giving the duke great thanks, that would content himself with such patience, desired him likewise to give his free consent and good will to the party whom she had chosen to be her husband.

“Nay, surely, madam,” quoth the duke, “I will never give my consent that any other man shall enjoy you than myself; I have made too great account of you, than so lightly to pass you away with my good will; but seeing it lieth not in me to let you, having (as you say) made your own choice, so from henceforwards I leave you to your own liking, always willing you well, and thus will take my leave.”

The duke departed towards his own house, very sorrowful that Julina had thus served him; but in the mean space that the duke had remained in the house of Julina, some of his servants fell into talk and conference with the servants of Julina; where, debating between them of the likelihood of the marriage between the duke and the lady, one of the servants of Julina said that he never saw his lady and mistress use so good countenance to the duke himself as she had done to Silvio his man, and began to report with what familiarity and courtesy she had received him, feasted him, and lodged him, and that in his opinion, Silvio was like to speed before the duke or any other that were suitors.

This tale was quickly brought to the duke himself, who making better inquiry into the matter, found it to be true that was reported; and better considering of the words which Julina had used towards himself, was very well assured that it could be no other than his own man that had thrust his nose so far out of joint; wherefore, without any further respect, caused him to be thrust into a dungeon, where he was kept prisoner, in a very pitiful plight.

Poor Silvio, having got intelligence by some of his fellows, what was the cause that the duke his master did bear such displeasure unto him, devised all the means he could, as well by mediation by his fellows, as otherwise by petitions and supplications to the duke, that he would suspend his judgment till perfect proof were had in the matter, and then if any manner of thing did fall out against him, whereby the duke had cause to take any grief, he would confess himself worthy not only of imprisonment, but also of most vile and shameful death; with these petitions he daily plied the duke, but all in vain, for the duke thought he had made so good proof, that he was thoroughly confirmed in his opinion against his man.

But the lady Julina, wondering what made Silvio that he was so slack in his visitation, and why he absented himself so long from her presence, began to think that all was not well; but in the end, perceiving no decoction of her former surfeit, received as you have heard, and finding in herself an unwonted swelling in her belly, assuring herself to be with child, fearing to become quite bankrupt of her honour, did think it more than time to seek out a father, and made such a secret search, and diligent inquiry, that she learned the truth how Silvio was kept in prison by the duke his master; and minding to find a present remedy, as well for the love she bare to Silvio, as for the maintainance of her credit and estimation, she speedily hasted to the palace of the duke, to whom she said as followeth:

“Sir Duke, it may be that you will think my coming to your house in this sort doth something pass the limits of modesty, the which I protest before God, proceedeth of this desire, that the world should know how justly I seek means to maintain my honour; but to the end I seem not tedious with prolixity of words, not to use other than direct circumstances, know, sir, that the love I bear to my only beloved Silvio, whom I do esteem more than all the jewels in the world, whose personage I regard more than my own life, is the only cause of my attempted journey, beseeching you, that all the whole

displeasure, which I understand you have conceived against him, may be imputed unto my charge, and that it would please you lovingly to deal with him, whom of myself I have chosen rather for the satisfaction of mine honest liking, than for the vain pre-eminences or honourable dignities looked after by ambitious minds.”

The duke, having heard this discourse, caused Silvio presently to be sent for, and to be brought before him, to whom he said: “Had it not been sufficient for thee, when I had reposed myself in thy fidelity, and the trustiness of thy service, that thou shouldst so traitorously deal with me, but since that time hast not spared still to abuse me with so many forgeries and perjured protestations, not only hateful unto me, whose simplicity thou thinkest to be such that by the plot of thy pleasant tongue thou wouldst make me believe a manifest untruth ; but most abominable be thy doings in the presence and sight of God, that hast not spared to blaspheme his holy name, by calling him to be a witness to maintain thy leasings, and so detestably wouldst thou forswear thyself in a matter that is so openly known.”

Poor Silvio, whose innocence was such that he might lawfully swear, seeing Julina to be there in place, answered thus:

“Most noble duke, well understanding your conceived grief, most humbly I beseech you patiently to hear my excuse, not minding thereby to aggravate or heap up your wrath and displeasure, protesting before God, that there is nothing in the world which I regard so much, or do esteem so dear, as your good grace and favour; but desirous that your grace should know my innocence, and to clear myself of such impositions, wherewith I know I am wrongfully accused, which as I understand should be in the practising of the lady Julina, who standeth here in place, whose acquittance for my better discharge now I most humbly crave, protesting before the almighty God, that neither in thought, word, nor deed I have not otherwise used myself, than according to the bond and duty of a servant, that is both willing and desirous to further his master’s suits, which if I have otherwise said than that is true, you, madam Julina, who can very well decide the depths of all this doubt, I most humbly beseech you to certify a truth, if I have in any thing missaid, or have otherwise spoken than is right and just.”

Julina, having heard this discourse which Silvio had made, perceiving that he stood in great awe of the duke’s displeasure, answered thus: “Think not, my Silvio, that my coming hither is to accuse you of any misdemeanour towards your master, so I do not deny but in all such embassages wherein towards me you have been employed, you have used the office of a faithful and trusty messenger, neither am I ashamed to confess, that the first day that mine eyes did behold the singular behaviour, the notable courtesy, and other innumerable gifts wherewith my Silvio is endued, but that beyond all measure my heart was so inflamed, that impossible it was for me to quench the fervent love, or extinguish the least part of my conceived torment, before I had bewrayed the same unto him, and of my own motion craved his promised faith and loyalty of marriage; and now is the time to manifest the same unto the world, which hath been done before God, and between ourselves; knowing that it is not needful to keep secret that which is neither evil done nor hurtful to any person, therefore (as I said before) Silvio is my husband by plighted faith, whom I hope to obtain without offence or displeasure of any one, trusting that there is no man that will so far forget himself as to restrain that which God hath left at liberty for every wight, or that will seek by cruelty, to force ladies to marry otherwise than according to their own liking. Fear not then, my Silvio, to keep your faith and promise, which you have made unto me; and as for the rest, I doubt not things will so fall out as you shall have no manner of cause to complain.”

Silvio, amazed to hear these words, for that Julina by her speech seemed to confirm that which he most of all desired to be quit of, said: “Who would have thought that a lady of so great honour and reputation would herself be the ambassador of a thing so prejudicial and uncomely for her estate! What plighted promises be these which be spoken of altogether ignorant unto me, which if it be otherwise than I have said, you sacred gods consume me straight with flashing flames of fire. But what words might I use to give credit to the truth and innocency of my cause? Ah, madam Julina, I

desire no other testimony than your own honesty and virtue, thinking that you will not so much blemish the brightness of your honour, knowing that a woman is, or should be, the image of courtesy, continency, and shamefastness, from the which so soon as she stoopeth, and leaveth the office of her duty and modesty, besides the degradation of her honour, she thrusteth herself into the pit of perpetual infamy. And as I cannot think you would so far forget yourself, by the refusal of a noble duke, to dim the light of your renown and glory, which hitherto you have maintained amongst the best and noblest ladies, by such a one as I know myself to be, too far unworthy your degree and calling, so most humbly I beseech you to confess a truth, whereto tendeth those vows and promises you speak of, which speeches be so obscure unto me, as I know not for my life how I might understand them.” Julina, something nipped with these speeches, said: “And what is the matter that now you make so little account of your Julina, that being my husband indeed, have the face to deny me, to whom thou art contracted by so many solemn oaths? What! Art thou ashamed to have me to thy wife? How much oughtest thou rather to be ashamed to break thy promised faith, and to have despised the holy and dreadful name of God, but that time constraineth me to lay open that which shame rather willeth I should dissemble and keep secret; behold me then here, Silvio, whom thou hast gotten with child; who, if thou be of such honesty, as I trust for all this I shall find, then the thing is done without prejudice, or any hurt to my conscience, considering that by the professed faith thou didst account me for thy wife, and I received thee for my spouse and loyal husband, swearing by the almighty God that no other than you have made the conquest and triumph of my chastity, whereof I crave no other witness than yourself, and mine own conscience.”

I pray you, gentlewomen, was not this a foul oversight of Julina, that would so precisely swear so great an oath, that she was gotten with child by one that was altogether unfurnished with implements for such a turn. For God’s love take heed, and let this be an example to you, when you be with child, how you swear who is the father, before you have had good proof and knowledge of the party; for men be so subtle, and full of sleight, that God knoweth a woman may quickly be deceived.

But now to return to our Silvio, who hearing an oath sworn so divinely that he had gotten a woman with child, was like to believe that it had been true in very deed; but remembering his own impediment, thought it impossible that he should commit such an act, and therefore, half in a chafe, he said, “What law is able to restrain the foolish indiscretion of a woman, that yieldeth herself to her own desires; what shame is able to bridle or withdraw her from her mind and madness, or with what snaffle is it possible to hold her back from the execution of her filthiness? But what abomination is this, that a lady of such a house should so forget the greatness of her estate, the alliance whereof she is descended, the nobility of her deceased husband, and maketh no conscience to shame and slander herself with such a one as I am, being so far unfit and unseemly for her degree; but how horrible it is to hear the name of God so defaced, that we make no more account, but for the maintenance of our mischiefs we fear no whit at all to forswear his holy name, as though he were not in all his dealings most righteous, true and just, and will not only lay open our leasings to the world, but will likewise punish the same with sharp and bitter scourges.”

Julina, not able to endure him to proceed any further in his sermon, was already surprised with a vehement grief, began bitterly to cry out, uttering these speeches following:

“Alas, is it possible that the sovereign justice of God can abide a mischief so great and cursed? Why may I not now suffer death, rather than the infamy which I see to wander before mine eyes? O happy and more than right happy had I been, if inconstant fortune had not devised this treason, wherein I am surprised and caught! Am I thus become to be entangled with snares, and in the hands of him, who enjoying the spoils of my honour, will openly deprive me of my fame, by making me a common fable to all posterity in time to come? Ah, traitor and discourteous wretch, is this the recompense of the honest and firm amity which I have borne thee? Wherein have I deserved this discourtesy? By loving thee more than thou art able to deserve? Is it I, arrant thief, is it I upon whom thou thinkest to work thy mischiefs? Dost thou think me no better worth, but that thou mayest

prodigally waste my honour at thy pleasure? Didst thou dare to adventure upon me, having thy conscience wounded with so deadly a treason? Ah, unhappy, and above all other most unhappy, that have so charely preserved mine honour, and now am made a prey to satisfy a young man's lust, that have coveted nothing but the spoil of my chastity and good name."

Herewithal the tears so gushed down her cheeks, that she was not able to open her mouth to use any further speech.

The duke, who stood by all this while and heard this whole discourse, was wonderfully moved with compassion towards Julina, knowing that from her infancy she had ever so honourably used herself, that there was no man able to detect her of any misdemeanour, otherwise than beseemed a lady of her estate; wherefore, being fully resolved that Silvio his man had committed this villainy against her, in a great fury drawing his rapier, he said unto Silvio:

"How canst thou, arrant thief, show thyself so cruel and careless to such as do thee honour? Hast thou so little regard of such a noble lady, as humbleth herself to such a villain as thou art who, without any respect either of her renown or noble estate, canst be content to seek the wrack and utter ruin of her honour? But frame thyself to make such satisfaction as she requireth, although I know, unworthy wretch, that thou art not able to make her the least part of amends, or I swear by God that thou shalt not escape the death which I will minister to thee with mine own hands, and therefore advise thee well what thou doest."

Silvio, having heard this sharp sentence, fell down on his knees before the duke, craving for mercy, desiring that he might be suffered to speak with the lady Julina apart, promising to satisfy her according to her own contentation.

"Well," quoth the duke, "I take thy word; and therewithal I advise thee that thou perform thy promise, or otherwise I protest before God, I will make thee such an example to the world, that all traitors shall tremble for fear, how they do seek the dishonouring of ladies."

But now Julina had conceived so great grief against Silvio, that there was much ado to persuade her to talk with him ; but remembering her own case, desirous to hear what excuse he could make, in the end she agreed; and being brought into a place severally by themselves, Silvio began with a piteous voice to say as followeth:

"I know not, madam, of whom I might make complaint, whether of you or of myself, or rather of fortune, which hath conducted and brought us both into so great adversity; I see that you receive great wrong, and I am condemned against all right, you in peril to abide the bruit of spiteful tongues, and I in danger to lose the thing that I most desire; and although I could allege many reasons to prove my savings true, yet I refer myself to the experience and bounty of your mind." And here withal loosing his garments down to his stomach, showed Julina his breasts and pretty teats, surmounting far the whiteness of snow itself, saying: "Lo, madam, behold here the party whom you have challenged to be the father of your child; see, I am a woman, the daughter of a noble duke, who only for the love of him, whom you so lightly have shaken off, have forsaken my father, abandoned my country, and in manner as you see, am become a serving man, satisfying myself but with the only sight of my Apolonius; and now, madam, if my passion were not vehement, and my torments without comparison, I would wish that my feigned griefs might be laughed to scorn, and my dissembled pains to be rewarded with flouts. But my love being pure, my travail continual, and my griefs endless, I trust, madam, you will not only excuse me of crime, but also pity my distress, the which I protest I would still have kept secret, if my fortune would so have permitted."

Julina did now think herself to be in a worse case than ever she was before, for now she knew not whom to challenge to be the father of her child; wherefore, when she had told the duke the very certainty of the discourse which Silvio had made unto her, she departed to her own house, with such grief and sorrow that she purposed never to come out of her own doors again alive, to be a wonder and mocking stock to the world.

But the duke, more amazed to hear this strange discourse of Silvio, came unto him; whom when he had viewed with better consideration, perceived indeed that it was Silla, the daughter of Duke Pontus; and embracing her in his arms he said:

“O the branch of all virtue and the flower of courtesy itself, pardon me, I beseech you, of all such discourtesies as I have ignorantly committed towards you; desiring you that without farther memory of ancient griefs, you will accept of me, who is more joyful and better contented with your presence, than if the whole world were at my commandment. Where hath there ever been found such liberality in a lover, which having been trained up and nourished amongst the delicacies and banquets of the court, accompanied with trains of many fair and noble ladies living in pleasure, and in the midst of delights, would so prodigally adventure yourself, neither fearing mishaps, nor misliking to take such pains, as I know you have not been accustomed unto? O liberality never heard of before! O fact that can never be sufficiently rewarded! O true love most pure and unfeigned!” Herewithal sending for the most artificial workmen, he provided for her sundry suits of sumptuous apparel, and the marriage day appointed, which was celebrated with great triumph through the whole city of Constantinople, every one praising the nobleness of the duke, but so many as did behold the excellent beauty of Silla gave her the praise above all the rest of the ladies in the troop.

The matter seemed so wonderful and strange that the bruit was spread throughout all the parts of Grecia, in so much that it came to the hearing of Silvio, who, as you have heard, remained in those parts to inquire of his sister; he being the gladdest man in the world, hasted to Constantinople where coming to his sister, he was joyfully received, and most lovingly welcomed, and entertained of the duke, his brother-in-law. After he had remained there two or three days, the duke revealed unto Silvio the whole discourse how it happened between his sister and the lady Julina, and how his sister was challenged for getting a woman with child. Silvio, blushing with these words, was stricken with great remorse to make Julina amends; understanding her to be a noble lady, and was left defamed to the world through his default, he therefore bewrayed the whole circumstance to the duke; whereof the duke being very joyful, immediately repaired with Silvio to the house of Julina, whom they found in her chamber, in great lamentation and mourning. To whom the duke said, “Take courage, madam, for behold here a gentleman that will not stick both to father your child and to take you for his wife ; no inferior person, but the son and heir of a noble duke, worthy of your estate and dignity.”

Julina, seeing Silvio in place, did know very well that he was the father of her child, and was so ravished with joy, that she knew not whether she were awake, or in some dream. Silvio, embracing her in his arms, craving forgiveness of all that was past, concluded with her the marriage day, which was presently accomplished with great joy and contentation to all parties; and thus Silvio, having attained a noble wife, and Silla his sister her desired husband, they passed the residue of their days with such delight as those that have accomplished the perfection of their felicities.