III

The infortunate mariage of a Gentleman, called Antonio Bologna, wyth the Duchesse of Malfi, and the pitifull death of them both.*

The great Honor and authority men haue in thys World, and the greater their estimation is, the more sensible and notorious are the faultes by them committed, and the greater is their shamer. In lyke manner more difficult it is for that man to tolerate and sustaynes Fortune, which al the dayes of his life hath lyued at his ease, if by chance he fall into any great necessity than for hym whych neuer felt but woe, mishap, and aduersity.... Thus I say, because a woman being as it were the Image of sweetenesse, curtesie and shamefastnesse, so soone as she steppeth out of the right tract, and abandoneth the sweete smel of hir duety and modesty, besides the denigration of hir honour, thrusteth her selfe into infinite Troubles, causeth ruine of such whych shall bee honoured and praied, if Womens Allurementes solicited theym not to Folly....In the vrym tyme [of Henry VII] then lyued a Gentleman of Naples called Antonio Bologna, who haung bin master of Household to Frederick of Aragon, sometime king of Naples, after the French had expelled those of Aragon out of that City, the sayde Bologna retyred into France, and thereby recovered the goods, which he possessed in his country. The Gentleman besides that he was valiant of his persone, a good man of Warre, and wel esteemed amongs the best, had a passing number of good graces, which made him to be loued and cherished of every wight; and for riding and managing of great horse, he had not his fellow in Italy: he could also play excideynge well and trim uppon the Lute, whose sayding voyce so wel agreed therewith, that the most melancholike persons would forget their heaviness, vpon hearing of his heauenly voyce; and besides these qualityes, he was of personage comedy, and of good proportion.... This Gentleman was Myster of the kinge of Naples household, and beyn a gentle person, a good Courtier, wel trained vp, and wyse for government of himselfe in the Courtre and in the seruice of Princes, the Duchesse of Malfi thought to intreate him that he would serue hir, in that office which he serued the King. This Duchesse was of the house of Aragon, and sister to the Cardinall of Aragon, which then was a ych and puissant personage. Being resolued, and persuaded, that Bologna was dewously affected to the house of Aragon, as one brought vp there from a Chylde: shee sent for him home to his House, and vpon hys repairi use dnto hir these, or like Wordes: "Myster Bologna, sith your ill fortune, nay rather the vnhap of our whole House is sutch, as your good Lord and Myster hath forgon his state and dignitie, and that you therewithall haue lost a good Maister, without other recompence but the praye which every man giueth you for your good service, I haue thought good to intreate you to doe me the honor, as to take charge of the governement of my House, and to vse the same, as you did that of the King you maister. I know well that the office is to unworthy for your calling; notwithstanding you be not ignorant what I am, and how neare to him in bloud, to whom you haue bene a Seruaunte so faithfull and Louing: and albeith that I am no Queene, endued with greatest revenue, yet with that little portyoun I haue, I beare a Pryncely heart: and such as you by experience do knowe what I haue done, and dayly do to those which depart my service, recompensing them according to theiure paine and trauala: magnificence is observed as well in the Courts of poore Princes, as in the stately Palaces of great Kings and monarchoe."... The gentleman heareny that curioys demand of the Dutchesse, knowing himselfe how deepely bound he was to the name of Aragon, and led by some unkowne provocation to his great il luck, answered hir in this wise: "I would to God, Madame, that with so good reason and equity I were able to make denyall of your commandemnt, as iustly you maye require the same: wherefore for the bounden duety which I owe to the name and memorie of the house of Aragon, I make promise that I shall not only sustaine the trauel, but also the daunger of my Lyfe, dayly to be offred for your seruice: but I feele in mynde I know not what, which commandeth me to withdraw my selfe to lyue alone at home within my lyttle house, and to be content with that I haue, forgoing the sumptuous charge of Prynces houses, which Lyfe would be wel liked of my self, were it not for the feare that you Madame should be discontented with my refusall, and that you should conceiue, that I disdained your offred charge, or contempne your Court for respect of the great Office I bare in the Courtre of the Kyng, my Lord and Myster: for I cannot receive more honour, than to serue hir, which is the paragon of that flock and royal race. Therefore at all adventures I am resolued to obey your will."... Thys Lady waxed very weary of lying alone, and greuued hir Hearte to by wythoute a match, specially in the Nyght, when the secrete silence and darkenes of the same presenteth befores the eyes of hir mind, the Image of the pleasure which she felt in the lyfe tyme of hir deceased Lord and Husband,

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* William Painter, *The second Tyme of the Palace of Pleasure*, containing store of goodly Histories, Tropial matters, and other Morall argumentes, very requisite for delight and profit (second augmented edition, 1573). This story is called "The Twenty-Third Nouell."
wherof now feelyng hir selfe despoyled, she felt a
continuall Combat, and durst not attemt
which she desired most, but eschued the thyng
wherof hir Mind lyked best.... Who then could blame
hys fayre Princesse, if (pressed wyth desire of marre,
so remove the teuchish instagations of her wanen flesh,
and hauing in hir presence a man so wise) she did set
hir minde on hym, or fantasy to mary him? Would
that party for calmyng of his thirst and hunger, being set
at a table before sundry sorts of delicius viandes, ease his
hunger?.... Thus Bologna framed the plot for inter
uyntment of the Duchesse (albeit hir loue already was
fully bent vpon hir) and forfity hym selfe against any
perillous myshap and chaunce that might succeede, as
ordinarily you see that Louers concyue all things for
their aduantage, and fantasique dreams agreeable to
their most desire, resembling the Mad and Bedlem
persons which hauo before their eyes, the figured Fannies
which cause the concept of their fury, and stay
themselves upon the vision of that which most troublh
their offended Brayne.... “Bologna shall be my
Husband, for of a freend I poynto to make my loyll
and lawful Husband, meaning thereby not to offend
God and men together, and pretend to liue without
offence of conscience, whereby my soule shall not be
hindred for any thyng I do, by marrying whom I do
strangely loue. I am sure not to be deceyved in loue.
He loueth me so much or more as I do him, but
hareth not declare the same, fearing to be refused and
cast of with shame. Thus 2 unitted wils, and 2 hearts tied
gethers with equal knot cannot chose but bring forth
fruits worthy of such society. Let men say what they
list, I will doc none otherwise than my heade and mynd
haue already framed. Simblably I neede not make
accompt to any persone for my fact, my body, and
reputation beyng in full liberty and freedome. The
bond of mariage made, sholde the faiure wythynge
men would fynde, and leaundyng myne estate, I shall do
no wrong but to the greatness of hir house, which
maketh me amongs men right honorable. But these
honors he nothing worth, where the Mynd is voyd of
contentation, and wher the hearte pryckte forwarde by
deare leauent the Bodye and Mynde restlesse wythout
quiet.”... Behold the first Acte of this Tragedy... for
albeit theyr mariage was secrete, and therby politike
Govermed themselves in their stelthes and robberyes
of Loue, and that Bologna more ofte helde the state of
the Stewarde of the House by Daye, than of Lorde of the
same, and by Nyghte supplied that Place, yet in the
ende, the thyng was perceyved which they deseryd to
bee closely kep... the Duchess after many pleasures
(being ripe and plentifull) became with childe, which at
the firste astonned the maried couple: neuerthelesses the
same so well was proyded for, as the firste Childbed
was kept secrete, and none did know thereof... the
Duchesse being great with Childe agayne, and
delivered of a Girle, the benessee of the same was
not so secretrly done, but that it was discovered.... And
this was the second Acte of this Tragicalle Historie, to
see a fugitive husband secretly to mary, especially hir,
vpon whome hee ought not so mucht as to loke but
with feare and reuerence.... True it is, that marriages be
don in heauen and performed in earth, but that saying
may not be applied to foole, which goureth them
selues by carnall desires, whose scope is but pleasure,
and the reward many times equall to their follic... The
Cardinall night nor day did sleepe, and his brother still
did wat to performe his othe of reuenge.... These
two infortunate, Husband and Wyfe, were chased
from all places.... He might well haue sauied himself
and his eldest sonne by flight, being both wel mounted
vpon two good Turkey horses, which ran so fast, as
the quarrel out of a Crosbow. But he loued to mucht
his wife and children, and woulde kepe them company
both in lyfe and death... she was greatly deceyved, and
knew within shorte space after, the good will that hir
Brethren bare hir: for so soone as these Gallants had
conducte hir into the kyngdome of Naples, to one of
the Castels of hir sonne, she was committed to prysyon
wyth hir children, and she also that was the secretary of
hir infortunate mariage... And now hearken the most
sorrowfull scene of all the Tragedy. The little Chylde
which had seene all this furious game executed vpon
their mother and hir mayde, as nature provoked them,
or as some presage of their myshap might lead them
thereunto, kneeld vpon their knees before those Tyrant,
and embracing there Legges, wayled in suyche
wyse, as I thinke that any other, except a pitilesse
heart spoyled of all humanity, would haue had compassion.
And impossible it was for them, to vnoyde the embracementes of those innocent creature, which
seemed to foresee their death by Sauage lookes and
Countenance of those Roysters.... But who can appease a
heart determined to worke mischief, and hath sworne the death of another forced thereunto by
some special commandment? The Aragon brethren
ment hereby nothing else, but to roote out the whole
name and race of Bologna... Such ende had the
infortunate mariage of him, which ought to have
contended himselfe wyth that degree and honor that he had
acquered by the deedes and glory of his vertues, so
mucht by eche wight recommended: we ought neuer
to climb higher than our force permitteth, ne yet sur
mount the bounds of duty, and lesse suffer our selues
to be haled fondly forth with desire of brutal sensuality.