

receive justice, provided that she could prove her claim. Antonia then took the ring from her finger and handed it to him, saying, 'Noble Emperor, I can prove it with this ring. See whether you recognize it.' At this point the emperor realized that he had been caught by his own words, yet all the same he wished to keep his promise to her and immediately had her led to his chambers and dressed in noble garments, and he took her as his wife."

## 7. CHRISTINE SPEAKS TO RECTITUDE.

II.7.1 "My lady, because I understand and clearly see that women are overwhelmingly innocent of what they are so frequently accused, now make me better acquainted than ever with their accusers' great guilt. Once more I cannot remain quiet regarding a practice with widespread currency among men—and even among some women—that when women are pregnant and then give birth to daughters, their husbands are upset and grumble because their wives did not give birth to sons. And their silly wives, who should be supremely joyful that God has delivered them to safety and, similarly, should heartily thank Him, are unhappy because they see their husbands upset. Why does it happen, my lady, that they grieve so? Are daughters a greater liability to their parents than sons, or less loving and more indifferent toward their parents than sons are?"

"Dear friend," she replied, "because you ask me the cause from which this springs, I can assure you that it comes from the excessive simplemindedness and ignorance of those who become so upset. Yet the principal reason which moves them is the cost which they fear the marriage of their daughters will force them to pay. Also, some are upset because they are afraid of the danger that, by bad advice, their daughters could be deceived when they are young and naïve. But all of these reasons are nothing when examined with common sense. For, as regards their fear that their daughters might do something foolish, one need only instruct them in wisdom when

they are young, making sure that the mother herself sets a good example of integrity and learnedness, for if the mother lives foolishly, she will hardly be an example for the daughter. The daughter should also be protected from bad company and raised in accordance with strict rules which she respects, for the discipline exercised over children and young people prepares them to live upright lives for their whole lifetime. Similarly, as far as cost is concerned, I believe that if the parents looked closely at that incurred on account of their sons—whether in teaching them knowledge or skills, or in simple upkeep, and even in superfluous expenses, whether on a large, middle, or small scale, for silly companions or for a lot of frivolities—they will hardly find a greater financial advantage in having sons rather than daughters. And if you consider the anger and worry which many sons cause their parents—for they often get involved in harsh and bitter riots and brawls or pursue a dissolute life, all to the grief and expense of their parents—I think that this anguish can easily exceed the worries which they have because of their daughters. See how many sons you will find who gently and humbly care for their parents and mothers in their old age, as they are supposed to. I insist that they are few and far between, although there are and have been many who have helped when it was too late. Thus, after a father and mother have made gods out of their sons and the sons are grown and have become rich and affluent—either because of their father's own efforts or because he had them learn some skill or trade or even by some good fortune—and the father has become poor and ruined through misfortune, they despise him and are annoyed and ashamed when they see him. But if the father is rich, they only wish for his death so that they can inherit his wealth. Oh! God knows how many sons of great lords and rich men long for their parents' deaths so that they can inherit their lands and wealth. Petrarch observed the situation accurately when he remarked, 'Oh foolish men, you desire children, but

you could not have such mortal enemies; for, if you are poor, they will be annoyed with you and will wish for your death, in order to be rid of you; and if you are rich, they will wish for your death no less, in order to have your possessions.' I certainly do not mean that all sons are like this, but there are many who are. And if they are married, God knows their enormous greed to sap their fathers and mothers. It hardly matters to them whether these miserable old people die of hunger, provided, of course, that they inherit everything. Some sustenance indeed! Nor does it matter to them when their mothers are widowed, then—when they ought to comfort them and be the support and aid in their old age—those same mothers, who so cherished and so lovingly and tenderly nourished their children, are well rewarded for all their trouble! For these evil offspring think that everything should be theirs, and if their widowed mothers do not give them everything they want, they do not hesitate to vent their displeasure on them. God knows how much reverence is shown there! Moreover, what is worse, they have no pangs of conscience about bringing lawsuits and court proceedings against their mothers. This is the reward which many parents have after having spent all their lives trying to acquire some wealth or put their children ahead. There are many sons like this, and there may well be daughters like this, too. But if you are very attentive, you will find more sons than daughters who are so corrupt. And let us suppose that all sons were good, nevertheless one usually sees the daughters keep their fathers and mothers company more often than the sons, and the daughters visit them more, comfort them more, and take care of them in sickness and old age more frequently. The reason is that the sons wander through the world in every direction and the daughters are calmer and stay closer to home, just as you can see from your own experiences; for even though your brothers are quite normal, very loving, and virtuous, they went out into the world and you alone remained to give your

mother a little company, which is her greatest comfort in old age. For this reason, I tell you in conclusion that those who are troubled and upset when daughters are born to them are exceedingly foolish. And since you have got me onto this topic, let me tell you about several women mentioned among others in various writings who were quite natural and most loving toward their parents."

8. HERE SHE BEGINS TO TALK ABOUT DAUGHTERS WHO LOVED THEIR PARENTS, AND FIRST, ABOUT DRYPETINA.

"Drypetina, queen of Laodacia, was much beloved of her father. She was the daughter of the great king Mithridates and loved him so much that she followed him in all his battles. She was quite ugly, for she had an extra row of teeth—a monstrosity—but she was so well loved by her father that she never left his side, whether in prosperity or in misfortune. Although she was queen and lady of a great kingdom which would have allowed her to live in ease and leisure in her own country, she shared in all the pains and labors which her father suffered during his many campaigns. After he was conquered by Pompey the Great, she never left his side but attentively and diligently took care of him. II.8.1

9. HERE SHE SPEAKS OF HYPsipYLE.

"Hypsipyle placed herself in mortal danger in order to save her father, who was named Thoas and who was king of Lemnos. When his country rebelled against him and a raging mob stormed the palace to kill him, his daughter Hypsipyle hid him in a chest and then went outside to calm the people down. This did not do her much good at all, and after they had searched for the king everywhere and could not find him, they turned their swords against Hypsipyle and threatened to kill her unless she told them where the king was. They also promised that if she told them, they would crown her queen and obey her. But the good and true daughter, who loved her father's life more than being queen, was not in the least swayed by II.9.1

worry about being evicted by foreign armies, for this work has the special property that its owners cannot be expelled. Now a New Kingdom of Femininity is begun, and it is far better than the earlier kingdom of the Amazons, for the ladies residing here will not need to leave their land in order to conceive or give birth to new heirs to maintain their possessions throughout the different ages, from one generation to another, for those whom we now place here will suffice quite adequately forever more.

“And after we have populated it with noble citizens, my sister, Lady Justice, will come and lead the Queen, outstanding over all, and accompanied by princesses of the highest dignity who will reside in the uppermost apartments and in the lofty towers. It is fitting that on her arrival the Queen find her City supplied and peopled with noble ladies who will receive her with honors as their sovereign lady, empress of all their sex. But what citizens will we place here? Will they be dissolute or dishonored women? Certainly not, rather they shall all be women of integrity, of great beauty and authority, for there could be no fairer populace nor any greater adornment in the City than women of good character. Now let us go, dear friend, for now I am putting you to work, and I will go ahead so that we can go look for them.” II.12.2

13. CHRISTINE ASKS LADY RECTITUDE WHETHER WHAT THE BOOKS AND MEN SAY IS TRUE, THAT MARRIED LIFE IS SO HARD TO ENDURE BECAUSE OF WOMEN AND THE WRONG THEY CAUSE. RECTITUDE ANSWERS AND BEGINS TO SPEAK OF THE GREAT LOVE SHOWN BY WOMEN FOR THEIR HUSBANDS.

Then, as we were searching for these women by order of Lady Rectitude, I spoke these words as we went along, “My lady, truly you and Reason have solved and settled all the problems and questions which I could not answer, and I consider myself very well informed about what I asked. I have learned a great deal from you: how all II.13.1

things which are feasible and knowable, whether in the area of physical strength or in the wisdom of the mind and every virtue, are possible and easy for women to accomplish. But could you now please confirm for me whether what men claim, and what so many authors testify, is true—a topic about which I am thinking very deeply—that life within the institution of marriage is filled and occupied with such great unhappiness for men because of women's faults and impetuosity, and because of their rancorous ill-humor, as is written in so many books? Many assert that these women care so little for their husbands and their company that nothing else annoys them as much? For this reason, in order to escape and avoid such inconveniences, many authorities have advised wise men not to marry, affirming that no women—or very few—are loyal to their mates. Valerius wrote to Rufus along similar lines, and Theophrastus remarked in his book that no wise man should take a wife, because there are too many worries with women, too little love, and too much gossip, and that, if a man marries in order to be better taken care of and nursed in sickness, a loyal servant could better and more loyally care for him and serve him and would not cost him nearly as much, and that if the wife becomes sick, the languishing husband does not dare budge from her side. But enough of such things, which would take too long to recite in full, therefore I say to you, dear lady, that if these remarks are true, so evil are these faults that all the other graces and virtues which women could possess are wiped out and canceled by them."

"Certainly, friend," she replied, "just as you yourself once said regarding this question, whoever goes to court without an opponent pleads very much at his ease. I assure you that women have never done what these books say. Indeed, I have not the slightest doubt that whoever cared to investigate the debate on marriage in order to write a new book in accordance with the truth would uncover other data. How many women are there actually, dear

friend—and you yourself know—who because of their husbands' harshness spend their weary lives in the bond of marriage in greater suffering than if they were slaves among the Saracens? My God! How many harsh beatings—without cause and without reason—how many injuries, how many cruelties, insults, humiliations, and outrages have so many upright women suffered, none of whom cried out for help? And consider all the women who die of hunger and grief with a home full of children, while their husbands carouse dissolutely or go on binges in every tavern all over town, and still the poor women are beaten by their husbands when they return, and *that* is their supper! What do you say to that? Am I lying? Have you never seen any of your women neighbors so decked out?"

And I said to her, "Certainly, my lady, I have seen many, and I feel very sorry for them."

"I believe you, and to say that these husbands are so unhappy with their wives' illnesses! Please, my friend, where are they? Without my having to say any more to you, you can easily see that such foolishness spoken and written against women was and is an arbitrary fabrication which flies in the face of the truth. For men are masters over their wives, and not the wives mistresses over their husbands, who would never allow their wives to have such authority. But let me hasten to assure you that not all marriages are conducted with such spite, for there are those who live together in great peacefulness, love, and loyalty because the partners are virtuous, considerate, and reasonable. And although there are bad husbands, there are also very good ones, truly valiant and wise, and the women who meet them were born in a lucky hour, as far as the glory of the world is concerned, for what God has bestowed upon them. You know this perfectly well from your own experience, for you had such a good husband that, given a choice, you could not have asked for better, whom no other man in your judgment could surpass in kindness, peacefulness, loyalty, and true love,

and for whose sake the remorse over Fate's having taken him from you will never leave your heart. In spite of what I have told you—and it is true that there are many women greatly mistreated by their husbands—realize, however, that there are very different kinds of women, and some unreasonable, for if I claimed that they were all good, I could easily be proven a liar, but that is the least part. I will not meddle with evil women, for such women are like creatures alienated from their own nature.

II.13.2 “But to speak of good women, as for this Theophrastus, whom you have mentioned, and who says that a man can be cared for by his servant as loyally and as carefully as by his wife—ha! How many good women there are who are so conscientious in caring for their husbands, healthy or sick, with a loyal love as though their husbands were gods! I do not think that you will ever find such a servant. And since we have taken up this question, let me give you numerous examples of the great love and loyalty shown by women for their husbands. Now we have come back to our City, thank God, with all the noble company of fair and upright women whom we will lodge there. Here is the noble queen Hypsicratea, long ago the wife of the rich king Mithridates. We will lodge her first of all in the noble residence and palace which has been readied for her because she is from such an ancient time and of such worthiness.”

#### 14. HERE SHE SPEAKS OF QUEEN HYPsicRATEA.

II.14.1 “How could any creature show greater love for another than the fair, good, and loyal Hypsicratea showed for her husband? She demonstrated this well. She was the wife of the great king Mithridates, who ruled over a realm consisting of countries of twenty-four different languages. Although this king was supremely powerful, the Romans waged a very harsh war against him. No matter where he went, during his long absences from court or in the thick of battle, his faithful wife never left him. Even though this king had several concubines, as was



night, that he managed to gain entry inside, where he found the people asleep whom he then savagely attacked. But this noble lady Triaria—who had followed her husband all through the night—was nearby and fully armed, girded with her sword. In her eagerness for her husband to win the victory she fought fiercely in the fray next to him, now here, now there, in the darkness of the night. She felt neither fear nor revulsion but conducted herself so bravely that after this battle she enjoyed everyone's respect and was able to accomplish many amazing deeds. Thus she demonstrated well the great love which she had for her husband, as Boccaccio himself noted, approving the marriage bond which others want to attack."

16. MORE CONCERNING QUEEN ARTEMISIA.

"Of all the ladies who have loved their husbands devotedly and who have demonstrated their love in fact, I would like to add, regarding that noble lady Artemisia, queen of Caria, that, just as was said above, insofar as she had followed King Mausolus into so many battles and was stricken and overcome with as much grief as anyone could bear when he died, she showed no less devotion in the end than she had demonstrated during his lifetime. For she performed all the solemn rites which could be administered to a king, in observance of the customs of that time, and during a dignified funeral in the presence of the princes and barons, she had his body cremated. She herself gathered his ashes together, washing them with her tears before she placed them in a gold vessel. Now it struck her that there was no reason why the ashes of the man whom she had so loved should have any other sepulcher than the heart and body where the root of this great love resided, and so for this reason, little by little, over a period of time, she drank these ashes mixed with wine until she had consumed them all. Nevertheless, she still wished to build a sepulcher to her husband's memory to serve forever as his memorial. Toward this end she

II.16.1

spared no expense, but sought out four artisans who knew how to plan and execute wonderful edifices, named Scopa, Briaxes, Thimotheus, and Leocares, all outstanding craftsmen. The queen told them how she wished the sepulcher to be constructed for her lord, King Mausolus, and for it to be the most imposing sepulcher which any king or prince in the world had ever had, for she wished her husband's name to last forever through this marvelous work. And the artisans replied that they would gladly follow her instructions. The queen ordered a large amount of marble along with as much jasper in various colors as they might want. The work was arranged in the same way in which these same artisans had erected a great stone structure of superbly carved marble before the city of Halicarnassus, the chief city of Caria. Its base was a square with each side forty-four feet in length and one hundred forty feet in height. There was an even greater wonder, for this massive edifice rested entirely on thirty large stone columns carved out of marble. Each of the four artisans carved one façade, all the while trying to outmatch the others. Their workmanship was so marvelous that it commemorated not only the man for whom it had been built but also evoked admiration for the subtlety of the artisans. A fifth artisan, named Ytheron, came to complete the work, and he built a spire for this edifice which rose forty steps above what the others had constructed. Afterward came a sixth worker, named Pithis, who carved a chariot out of marble and placed it on top of the entire monument. This work was so marvelous that it was reputed to be one of the seven wonders of the world. Because it had been built for King Mausolus, the edifice took its name from him and was called the 'Mausoleum.' Furthermore, because this sepulcher was the most imposing ever built for a king or prince, every other sepulcher for a king or prince has since been called a mausoleum, according to Boccaccio. Artemisia's loyal love for her faithful spouse thus was clear both in her acts and in this token, a love which lasted as long as she lived."

would be an enormous benefit and advantage to assassinate him. So they conspired against him and deliberated on how to kill him. These men withdrew to the house of a woman in whom they had such great trust that they did not hesitate in the least to discuss their conspiracy in front of her. One evening, as they were dining at her house and planning to put their enterprise into effect the next day, they were not wary enough to keep from speaking. They were overheard by chance by someone who, in order to flatter the emperor and win his favor, went and immediately told him what he had heard. As a result, no sooner had the conspirators left this woman's house than the emperor's sergeants arrived at her door. Failing to find the men, they brought the woman before the emperor, who interrogated her at length on this matter. Yet she proved herself marvelously constant and discreet in that he was totally unable to draw out of her who these men were, nor even an admission that she knew anything, either by offering and promising her wonderful gifts or by force of torture (which he did not spare in the least)."

28. REFUTATIONS OF THE CLAIM THAT A MAN IS DESPICABLE WHO BELIEVES HIS WIFE'S ADVICE OR LENDS IT CREDENCE. CHRISTINE ASKS SOME QUESTIONS TO WHICH RECTITUDE REPLIES.

"My lady, for the reasons which I have heard from you and because I have seen so much sense and well-being in women, I am surprised that several authors claim that men who believe or lend credence to their wives' advice are despicable and foolish." II.28.1

She replied, "I told you before that while all women are not wise, those men who have good and wise wives behave like fools when they fail to believe them. You can see this from what I said to you earlier, for if Brutus had believed Portia, his wife, and not killed Julius Caesar, he himself would not have been killed, nor would the resulting evil have occurred. Because we are on this

subject, I will tell you about several other men whom misfortune befell because they did not believe their wives. If Julius Caesar, whom we have discussed, had believed his sagacious and virtuous wife—who, as best she could, because of the many signs which appeared foreboding her husband's death and because of her horrible dream the night before, had tried to prevent him from going to the senate on that day—he would not have gone and would never have been killed.

II.28.2 “However, the same applies to Pompey, who was married to Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar, just as I told you before, and then, after her death, to another very noble lady, named Cornelia. In regard to what was said before, Julia loved Pompey so much that she never wanted to leave him, regardless of what misfortune might happen to him. Even when he was forced to flee by sea after being defeated in battle by Julius Caesar, the good lady remained with him and accompanied him through every danger. And when he arrived in the kingdom of Egypt, Ptolemy, the king there, treacherously pretended to be glad at his arrival and sent his retainers out to meet him, as though he were warmly welcoming Pompey; but this maneuver was designed to kill him. These retainers told Pompey to come into their boat and leave his own people behind so that they could more easily bring him into the harbor in their own lighter vessel. But as he was about to enter their boat, his wise and virtuous wife, Cornelia, tried to dissuade him from going at all and from taking leave of his own people. Seeing that he was not going to believe her (whose heart foretold nothing good coming from this), she tried at all costs to throw herself into the boat with him, but he would not allow it, and it was necessary to restrain her by force. The sorrow of this valiant woman began at this moment and did not decrease for the rest of her life, for he was not very far from her when she (who had trained her look nowhere else but on him and who had followed him the whole way with her eyes) saw him murdered by these traitors in

their ship. She would have thrown herself into the sea for grief had she not been forcibly prevented from doing so.

“Moreover, similar misfortune befell the brave Hector of Troy, for on the night before he was killed, his wife Andromache had a marvelous vision that if Hector went into battle the following day, he would surely die. Therefore, the lady, frightened by this vision which was no dream but a true prophecy, begged him first with clasped hands, then by kneeling down before him, and finally by holding their two beautiful children in her arms, to delay his going into battle that day. But he disparaged all her words, considering that it would always be a source of shame for him if he had not gone into battle because of a woman’s advice and urgings, nor would he delay for his father’s or his mother’s sake, whom Andromache invoked. Thus, what she had predicted came true, for Hector was killed by Achilles, and it would have been better if he had believed her. II.28.3

“I could give you countless examples of men who suffered misfortune in various ways because they did not deign to believe the advice of their good and wise wives. If evil befell these men who disparaged their wives’ advice, the wives should not be blamed.” II.28.4

29. RECTITUDE GIVES EXAMPLES OF MEN WHO WERE FAVORED WITH GOOD FORTUNE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THEIR WIVES.

“I will tell you about those men favored with good fortune because they followed the advice given by their wives, and let this proof suffice, for I could say so much that it would be an endless process, and what I told you before about many wise and virtuous ladies on this subject applies here, too. The emperor Justinian, whom I mentioned to you before, had a baron as his companion whom he loved as much as himself. This baron was named Belisarius, and he was a very brave knight. Therefore, the emperor made him the master and commander of his II.29.1

cavalry, and had him sit at his table and served with the same dignity, and, in short, he showed Belisarius so many signs of love that his other barons became quite jealous and told the emperor that Belisarius intended to put him to death and assume control of the empire. The emperor believed this report too readily and, intending to put Belisarius to death covertly, commanded him to fight against a people called the Vandals whom he would not be able to defeat because of their overwhelming strength. When Belisarius heard this command, he realized and knew for sure that the emperor would not have charged him with this mission unless he had surely fallen from the emperor's favor and good will. He was grieved that he could do nothing more and he left for home. When his wife, who was named Antonia and who was the empress' sister, saw him lying in bed, pale and pensive, his eyes filled with tears, she took pity on him and repeatedly asked him what the matter was, so that, in great pain, he told her the cause of his sorrow. After having listened to him, the wise lady pretended to be very joyful, and consoled him, saying, 'What! Is that all that is bothering you? You must not be so upset!' As this happened during the time when the faith of Jesus Christ was still quite new, the good lady, who was a Christian, then said, 'Have faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified, and through this faith and with His help, you will surely triumph. If the envious desire to destroy you with their false words, you will show with your good deeds that they are liars and taken in by their own lies. So trust in me and do not disparage my words. Let all your hope be in the Living God, and I promise you that you will conquer. Take care not to give the slightest appearance of being burdened by this matter or of being sad, but instead seem glad, like someone who is quite happy. I will tell you when to assemble your army as hastily as possible. In addition, take care that no one knows where you wish to go. Also arrange to have plenty of ships and then divide your army into two parts, and, as quickly and as

secretly as you can, invade Africa with one part of your army and immediately attack your enemies. I will have the other part of your troops with me, and we will arrive by sea from the other side of the port, and, while the enemy will be trying to join battle with you, we will come in from the other flank into the cities and towns and will put everyone to death and everything to the torch and destroy them all.' Belisarius followed this advice and so acted like a wise man and organized the expedition according to what she had said, no more, no less. Everything turned out so well for him that he was able to conquer and subjugate his enemies. He captured the king of the Vandals and won such a noble victory through the good counsel, sense, and valiance of his wife that the emperor loved him more than ever.

"Likewise, a second time it happened that, because of false gossip spread by envious courtiers, Belisarius again fell from the emperor's grace and was completely stripped of his duties with the cavalry. Nevertheless, his wife comforted him and gave him hope. Then the emperor himself was deposed from his rule over the empire by the same envious courtiers. However, because of his wife's advice, Belisarius managed with all his power intact to return the emperor to his throne, even though the emperor had done him great wrong. Thus the emperor realized the loyalty of his knight and the treason of the others, and this all thanks to the wisdom and sound advice of the shrewd lady. II.29.2

"Similarly, King Alexander did not disparage the counsel and worth of the queen, his wife, who was the daughter of Dares, the king of Persia. When Alexander realized that he had been poisoned by his disloyal servants, he wanted to throw himself in the river to end his life more quickly because of the enormous pain he was in. The lady met him while he was on his way and began to comfort him, even though she herself was very grieved. She told him to go back, to lie down in his bed, and to speak to his barons there, and to formulate his ordinances II.29.3

as befitted an emperor of his dignity, for it would have been a great loss of honor if one could say afterward that impatience had completely overcome him. So he believed his wife and thanks to her advice instituted his ordinances."

30. CHRISTINE SPEAKS OF THE GREAT BENEFIT ACCRUED AND ACCRUING EVERY DAY TO THE WORLD BECAUSE OF WOMEN.

II.30.1 "My lady, I see the endless benefits which have accrued to the world through women and nevertheless these men claim that there is no evil which has not come into the world because of them."

"Fair friend," she answered, "you can see from what I have already said to you that the contrary of what they say is true. For there is no man who could sum up the enormous benefits which have come about through women and which come about every day, and I proved this for you with the examples of the noble ladies who gave the sciences and arts to the world. But, if what I have said about the earthly benefits accruing thanks to women is not enough for you, I will tell you about the spiritual ones. Oh, how could any man be so heartless to forget that the door of Paradise was opened to him by a woman? As I told you before, it was opened by the Virgin Mary, and is there anything greater one could ask for than that God was made man? And who can forget the great benefits which mothers bring to their sons and which wives bring to their husbands? I implore them at the very least not to forget the advantages which touch upon spiritual good. Let us consider the Law of the Jews. If you recall the story of Moses, to whom God gave the written Law of the Jews, you will find that this holy prophet, through whom so much good has come about, was saved from death by a woman, just as I will tell you.

II.30.2 "In the time when the Jews were in servitude to the kings of Egypt, it was foretold that a man would be born among the Hebrews who would lead the people of Israel



out of servitude to these kings. When Moses, that noble leader, was born, his mother, not daring to nurse him, was forced to place him in a small basket and send him downstream. So it happened—according to the will of God who saves whatsoever pleases Him—that Ther-mutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, was playing on the riverbank at the very moment when the little basket floated by on the water, and she immediately had the basket brought to her in order to find out what was inside. When she saw that it was such a lovely child that a more beautiful child could not be imagined, she was terribly glad. She had him nursed and claimed him as her own, and, because through a miracle he would not take the breast of a woman of a foreign religion, she had him nursed by a Hebrew woman. When Moses, elected by God, was grown, it was he to whom our Lord gave the Law and who delivered the Jews from the hands of the Egyptians, and he passed through the Red Sea and was the leader and guide of the children of Israel. And this great benefit came to the Jews thanks to the woman who saved him.”

31. CONCERNING JUDITH, THE NOBLE LADY AND WIDOW WHO SAVED HER PEOPLE.

“Judith, the noble lady and widow, saved the people of Israel from perishing when Nebuchadnezzar II sent Holophernes, the leader of his cavalry, to the Jews after he had conquered the land of Egypt. With all his might, Holophernes besieged the Jews in the city and conducted such a savage campaign against them that they were hardly able to resist. He cut off their water pipes, and their food supplies were nearly exhausted. The Jews had no hope of holding out and were practically at the point of being captured by this man who threatened them so much; they were in great distress, so they unceasingly prayed to God to take mercy on His people and to defend them from the hands of their enemies. God heard their prayers and just as He intended to save the human race

II.31.1

Dagobert founded the church which still stands there.”

36. AGAINST THOSE MEN WHO CLAIM IT IS NOT GOOD FOR WOMEN TO BE EDUCATED.

Following these remarks, I, Christine, spoke, “My lady, I realize that women have accomplished many good things and that even if evil women have done evil, it seems to me, nevertheless, that the benefits accrued and still accruing because of good women—particularly the wise and literary ones and those educated in the natural sciences whom I mentioned above—outweigh the evil. Therefore, I am amazed by the opinion of some men who claim that they do not want their daughters, wives, or kinswomen to be educated because their mores would be ruined as a result.” II.36.1

She responded, “Here you can clearly see that not all opinions of men are based on reason and that these men are wrong. For it must not be presumed that mores necessarily grow worse from knowing the moral sciences, which teach the virtues, indeed, there is not the slightest doubt that moral education amends and ennobles them. How could anyone think or believe that whoever follows good teaching or doctrine is the worse for it? Such an opinion cannot be expressed or maintained. I do not mean that it would be good for a man or a woman to study the art of divination or those fields of learning which are forbidden—for the holy Church did not remove them from common use without good reason—but it should not be believed that women are the worse for knowing what is good.

“Quintus Hortensius, a great rhetorician and consummately skilled orator in Rome, did not share this opinion. He had a daughter, named Hortensia, whom he greatly loved for the subtlety of her wit. He had her learn letters and study the science of rhetoric, which she mastered so thoroughly that she resembled her father Hortensius not only in wit and lively memory but also in her excellent delivery and order of speech—in fact, he II.36.2

surpassed her in nothing. As for the subject discussed above, concerning the good which comes about through women, the benefits realized by this woman and her learning were, among others, exceptionally remarkable. That is, during the time when Rome was governed by three men, this Hortensia began to support the cause of women and to undertake what no man dared to undertake. There was a question whether certain taxes should be levied on women and on their jewelry during a needy period in Rome. This woman's eloquence was so compelling that she was listened to, no less readily than her father would have been, and she won her case.

II.36.3 "Similarly, to speak of more recent times, without searching for examples in ancient history, Giovanni Andrea, a solemn law professor in Bologna not quite sixty years ago, was not of the opinion that it was bad for women to be educated. He had a fair and good daughter, named Novella, who was educated in the law to such an advanced degree that when he was occupied by some task and not at leisure to present his lectures to his students, he would send Novella, his daughter, in his place to lecture to the students from his chair. And to prevent her beauty from distracting the concentration of her audience, she had a little curtain drawn in front of her. In this manner she could on occasion supplement and lighten her father's occupation. He loved her so much that, to commemorate her name, he wrote a book of remarkable lectures on the law which he entitled *Novella super Decretalium*, after his daughter's name.

II.36.4 "Thus, not all men (and especially the wisest) share the opinion that it is bad for women to be educated. But it is very true that many foolish men have claimed this because it displeased them that women knew more than they did. Your father, who was a great scientist and philosopher, did not believe that women were worth less by knowing science; rather, as you know, he took great pleasure from seeing your inclination to learning. The feminine opinion of your mother, however, who wished

to keep you busy with spinning and silly girlishness, following the common custom of women, was the major obstacle to your being more involved in the sciences. But just as the proverb already mentioned above says, 'No one can take away what Nature has given,' your mother could not hinder in you the feeling for the sciences which you, through natural inclination, had nevertheless gathered together in little droplets. I am sure that, on account of these things, you do not think you are worth less but rather that you consider it a great treasure for yourself; and you doubtless have reason to."

And I, Christine, replied to all of this, "Indeed, my lady, what you say is as true as the Lord's Prayer."

37. HERE CHRISTINE SPEAKS TO RECTITUDE, WHO ARGUES AGAINST THOSE MEN WHO SAY THAT THERE ARE FEW CHASTE WOMEN, AND SHE TELLS OF SUSANNA.

"From what I see, my lady, all good and virtuous things are found in women. Where does the opinion that there are so few chaste women come from? Were this so, then all their other virtues would be nothing, since chastity is the supreme virtue in women. But from what I have heard you say, the complete opposite of what those men claim seems to be the case." II.37.1

She replied, "From what I have already actually told you and from what you know about this, the contrary is quite obvious to you, and I could tell you more about this and then some. How many valiant and chaste ladies does Holy Scripture mention who chose death rather than transgress against the chastity and purity of their bodies and thoughts, just like the beautiful and good Susanna, wife of Joachim, a rich man of great authority among the Jews? Once when this valiant lady Susanna was alone relaxing in her garden, two old men, false priests, entered the garden, approached her, and demanded that she sin with them. She refused them totally, whereupon, seeing their request denied, they threatened to denounce her to the authorities and to claim that they

young men, handsome and eager for love, and living in leisure. She spent her life there without stain and without reproach for the slightest lapse. Such deeds, says our author, merit praise, just like the example of a young woman of outstanding beauty who was the daughter of Mark Anthony, who himself led a carnal and lubricious life. Nevertheless, his bad example did not keep her from being safe among the burning flames, filled with chastity, and not for a short time either, for she persevered her entire lifetime until her death in old age.

II.43.2 "I could find many examples for you of such beautiful women living quite chastely in a worldly setting, particularly at court and among young men. Even nowadays, rest assured, there are many of them. There is a great need for me to do this, regardless of what malicious gossips might say, for I do not think that in all times past there were so many evil tongues as there are today, nor so many men inclined to slander women without reason as there are today. And there is no doubt that if these beautiful, virtuous women about whom I have spoken to you, were living now, they would be viciously attacked out of jealousy, instead of winning the praise which the Ancients gave them.

II.43.3 "But to return to our subject of those good and chaste ladies leading an honest life even when they resided among and visited the most worldly people, Valerius discusses the noble Sulpitia who was of great beauty and yet reputed to be the most chaste lady in Rome."

44. REFUTING THOSE MEN WHO CLAIM WOMEN WANT TO BE RAPED, RECTITUDE GIVES SEVERAL EXAMPLES, AND FIRST OF ALL, LUCRETIA.

II.44.1 Then I, Christine, spoke as follows, "My lady, I truly believe what you are saying, and I am certain that there are plenty of beautiful women who are virtuous and chaste and who know how to protect themselves well from the entrapments of deceitful men. I am therefore troubled and grieved when men argue that many women

want to be raped and that it does not bother them at all to be raped by men even when they verbally protest. It would be hard to believe that such great villainy is actually pleasant for them."

She answered, "Rest assured, dear friend, chaste ladies who live honestly take absolutely no pleasure in being raped. Indeed, rape is the greatest possible sorrow for them. Many upright women have demonstrated that this is true with their own credible examples, just like Lucretia, the noblest Roman woman, supreme in chastity among Roman women, wife of a nobleman named Tarquin Collatinus. Now, when another man, Tarquin the Proud, son of King Tarquin, was greatly taken with love for this noble Lucretia, he did not dare to tell her because of the great chastity he saw in her, and, despairing of achieving his goal with presents or entreaties, he considered how he could have her through ruse. Claiming to be a close friend of her husband, he managed to gain entrance into her house whenever he wished, and once, knowing her husband was not at home, he went there and the noble lady received him with the honors due to someone whom she thought to be a close friend of her husband. However, Tarquin, who had something altogether different on his mind, succeeded in entering Lucretia's bedroom and frightened her terribly. Put briefly, after trying to coax her for a long time with promises, gifts, and favors, he saw that entreaties were getting him nowhere. He drew his sword and threatened to kill her if she made a sound and did not submit to his will. She answered that he should go ahead and kill her, for she would rather die than consent. Tarquin, realizing that nothing would help him, concocted a great malice, saying that he would publicly declare that he had found her with one of his sergeants. In brief, he so scared her with this threat (for she thought that people would believe him) that finally she suffered his rape. Lucretia, however, could not patiently endure this great pain, so that when daylight came she sent for her husband, her

father, and her close relatives who were among the most powerful people in Rome, and, weeping and sobbing, confessed to them what had happened to her. Then, as her husband and relatives, who saw that she was overwhelmed with grief, were comforting her, she drew a knife from under her robe and said, 'This is how I absolve myself of sin and show my innocence. Yet I cannot free myself from the torment nor extricate myself from the pain. From now on no woman will ever live shamed and disgraced by Lucretia's example.' Having said this, she forcibly plunged the knife into her breast and collapsed dead before her husband and friends. They rushed like madmen to attack Tarquin. All Rome was moved to this cause, and they drove out the king and would have killed his son if they had found him. Never again was there a king in Rome. And because of this outrage perpetrated on Lucretia, so some claim, a law was enacted whereby a man would be executed for raping a woman, a law which is fitting, just, and holy."

45. ON THIS SAME SUBJECT SHE SPEAKS OF THE QUEEN OF THE GALATIANS.

II.45.1 "The story of the noble queen of the Galatians, the wife of King Orgiagon, is appropriate to this subject. When the Romans were making their great conquests in foreign lands, they captured this king of the Galatians in battle, and his wife along with him. While they were in the Roman camp, the noble queen, who was quite beautiful, simple, chaste, and virtuous, greatly pleased one of the officers of the Roman army, who was holding the king and queen prisoner. He entreated her and coaxed her with fine presents, but after he saw that pleading would not work, he violently raped her. The lady suffered terrible sorrow over this outrage and could not stop thinking of a way to avenge herself, biding her time until she saw her chance. When the ransom was bought to deliver her husband and herself, the lady said that the money should be turned over in her presence to the

good man could be found when Jonah the prophet went there on behalf of our Lord to destroy it unless it turned away from its evil. It was even worse in the city of Sodom, as was obvious when fire from Heaven destroyed it after Lot's departure. Moreover, note that in the company of Jesus Christ, where there were only twelve men, there was still one very bad man among them. And men dare to say that all women must be good and that one should stone those who are not! I would simply ask them to look at themselves and then let him who is without sin cast the first stone! And what are they supposed to be? Indeed, I maintain that when men are perfect, women will follow their example."

54. CHRISTINE ASKS RECTITUDE WHETHER WHAT MANY MEN SAY IS TRUE, THAT SO FEW WOMEN ARE FAITHFUL IN THEIR LOVE LIVES; AND RECTITUDE'S ANSWER.

II.54.1 Proceeding further, I, Christine, again spoke, "My lady, let us now move on to other questions and for a short while go beyond the topics developed up to now, for I would like to ask you several questions, if I were sure that they would not bother you, since the subject I want to discuss goes somewhat beyond the temperament of reason."

She replied to me, "Friend, ask what you like, for the disciple who must ask the master questions in order to learn ought not to suffer reproof for inquiring about everything."

"My lady, a natural behavior of men toward women and of women toward men prevails in the world which is not brought about by human institutions but by the inclination of the flesh, and in which men and women love one another with a very strong love strengthened in turn by foolish pleasure. And they do not know for what reason and to what end such a mutual love is implanted in them. Men usually claim that women, in spite of everything they promise regarding this wide-



spread passion usually called one's 'love life,' are rarely constant, not very loving, and amazingly false and fickle. All of this stems from the frivolousness of their hearts. Among other Latin authors who level this charge is Ovid, who makes serious accusations in his *Ars amatoria*. When he finishes his attack, Ovid (as well as others) says that everything contained in his books regarding women's deceptive manners and malice was for the benefit of the common good, in order to warn men about women's ruses so that they could better avoid them, like the snake hidden in the grass. If you would, dear lady, teach me the truth of this matter."

She replied, "Dear friend, as for the charge that women are deceitful, I really do not know what more I can say to you, for you yourself have adequately handled the subject, answering Ovid and the others in your *Epistre au Dieu d'Amour* and your *Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose*. But, as for the point you mention that these men attack women for the sake of the common good, I can show you that it has never been a question of this. And here is the reason: the common good of a city or land or any community of people is nothing other than the profit or general good in which all members, women as well as men, participate and take part. But whatever is done with the intention of benefiting some and not others is a matter of private and not public welfare. Even less so is an activity in which one takes from some and gives to others, and such an activity is perpetrated for the sake of private gain, and at the same time it constitutes, quite simply, a crime committed for the benefit of one person and to the disadvantage of the other. For they never address women nor warn them against men's traps even though it is certain that men frequently deceive women with their fast tricks and duplicity. There is not the slightest doubt that women belong to the people of God and the human race as much as men, and are not another species or dissimilar race, for which they should be excluded from moral teachings. Therefore, I conclude that if these men

had acted in the public good—that is, for both parties—they should also have addressed themselves to women and warned them to beware of men's tricks just as they warned men to be careful about women. But leaving behind these questions and pursuing the others, that is, whether women show so little love where they set their hearts and whether women are more constant than these men claim, it will be enough for me to deduce the point for you from examples of women who persevered in their love until death. First, I will tell you of the noble Dido, queen of Carthage, whose great value I discussed above and which you yourself have spoken of earlier in your works."

55. CONCERNING DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE, ON THE SUBJECT OF CONSTANT LOVE IN WOMEN.

II.55.1 "Just as was said above, during the time in which Dido, queen of Carthage, was living happily in her city and ruling gloriously in peace, it happened by chance that Aeneas, fugitive from Troy following its destruction, leader and captain of many Trojans, tossed about by many storms, his ships wrecked and provisions exhausted, having lost many of his men, in need of rest, out of money, weary of wandering at sea, and in need of shelter, arrived in the port of Carthage. And when, out of fear of inadvertently landing without permission, he sent to the queen to know whether it would please her that he come into port, the noble lady, full of honor and valiance and well aware that the Trojans enjoyed a better reputation than any other nation of the world at that time and that Aeneas was of the royal house of Troy, not only gave him leave to land but also went out with a most noble company of barons and ladies and maidens to the shore to meet him and there received him and his entire company with the greatest honor. She brought him into her city and honored and feasted him and put him at ease. Why should I give you a long account? Aeneas was able to rest so long there that he hardly recalled the torments

he had suffered. Dido and Aeneas spent so much time with one another that Love, who knows how to subjugate all hearts with the greatest of skill, made them become enamored of one another. But as experience showed, Dido's love for Aeneas was far greater than his love for her, for even though he had given her his pledge never to take any other woman and to be hers forever, he left after she had restored and enriched him with property and ease, his ships refreshed, repaired, and placed in order, filled with treasure and wealth, like a woman who had spared no expense where her heart was involved. He departed at night, secretly and treacherously, without farewells and without her knowledge. This was how he repaid his hostess. His departure caused so much grief for the unhappy Dido, who had loved too much, that she wished to renounce all joy and her own life. Indeed, after lamenting a great deal, she threw herself into a large fire which she had lit. Others say she killed herself with Aeneas' own sword. And so the noble queen Dido died in such a pitiful manner, who has been honored so greatly that her fame has surpassed that of all other women of her time."

56. CONCERNING MEDEA IN LOVE.

"Medea, daughter of the king of Colchis, and who possessed such great knowledge, loved Jason with a too great and too constant love. This Jason was a knight of Greece and exceedingly brave at arms. He had heard that on the island of Colchis—which was part of the country over which Medea's father was king—there lived a marvelous golden sheep, protected by different enchantments and that, even though the fleece of this sheep seemed impossible to win, it was nevertheless prophesied that a knight would win it. On hearing this, Jason, eager to increase his fame even more, left Greece with a large company seeking to test himself in such a quest. After arriving in Colchis, the king of the land told him that it was impossible for the Golden Fleece to be won by arms

II.56.1

HERE BEGINS THE THIRD PART OF THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES, WHICH TELLS HOW THE HIGH ROOFS OF THE TOWERS WERE COMPLETED AND BY WHOM AND WHICH NOBLE LADIES WERE CHOSEN TO RESIDE IN THE GREAT PALACES AND LOFTY MANSIONS.

1. THE FIRST CHAPTER TELLS HOW JUSTICE LED THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN TO LIVE IN THE CITY OF LADIES.

**L**ady Justice then turned to me in her sublime manner and said, "Christine, to tell the truth, it seems to me that you have worked extraordinarily well at building the City of Ladies, according to your capacities and with the aid of my sisters which you have put to excellent use. Now it is time for me to undertake the rest, just as I promised you. That is, to bring and to lodge here the most excellent Queen, blessed among women, with her noble company, so that she may rule and govern the City, inhabited by the multitude of noble ladies from her court and household, for I see the palaces and tall mansions ready and furnished, the streets paved to receive her most excellent and honorable company and assembly. Let princesses, ladies, and all women now come forward to receive her with the greatest honor and reverence, for she is not only their Queen but also has ministry and dominion over all created powers after the only Son whom she conceived of the Holy Spirit and carried and who is the Son of God the Father. And it is right that the assembly of all women beg this most lofty and excellent sovereign princess to reside here below in her humility with them in their City and congregation without disdain or spite because of their insignificance compared to her highness. Yet, there is no need to fear that her humility, which surpasses all others, and her more than angelic goodness will allow her to refuse to inhabit and reside in the City of Ladies, and above all, in the *III.1.1*

palace already prepared for her by my sister Rectitude, which is constructed solely of glory and praise. Let all women now accompany me, and let us say to her:

III.1.2     “‘We greet you, Queen of Heaven, with the greeting which the Angel brought you, when he said, *Hail Mary*, which pleased you more than all other greetings. May all the devout sex of women humbly beseech you that it please you well to reside among them with grace and mercy, as their defender, protector, and guard against all assaults of enemies and of the world, that they may drink from the fountain of virtues which flows from you and be so satisfied that every sin and vice be abominable to them. Now come to us, Heavenly Queen, Temple of God, Cell and Cloister of the Holy Spirit, Vessel of the Trinity, Joy of the Angels, Star and Guide to those who have gone astray, Hope of the True Creation. My Lady, what man is so brazen to dare think or say that the feminine sex is vile in beholding your dignity? For if all other women were bad, the light of your goodness so surpasses and transcends them that any remaining evil would vanish. Since God chose His spouse from among women, most excellent Lady, because of your honor, not only should men refrain from reproaching women but should also hold them in great reverence.’”

III.1.3     The Virgin replied as follows: “O Justice, greatly beloved by my Son, I will live and abide most happily among my sisters and friends, for Reason, Rectitude, and you, as well as Nature, urge me to do so. They serve, praise, and honor me unceasingly, for I am and will always be the head of the feminine sex. This arrangement was present in the mind of God the Father from the start, revealed and ordained previously in the council of the Trinity.”

Here Justice answered, while all the women knelt with their heads bowed, “My Lady, may honor and praise be given to you forever. Save us, our Lady, and pray for us to your Son who refuses you nothing.”

amazing force and constancy. But let this suffice for you, for it seems to me that I have acquitted myself well of my office in completing the high roofs of your City and in populating it for you with outstanding ladies, just as I promised. These last examples will serve as the doorways and gates into our City. And even though I have not named all the holy ladies who have lived, who are living, and who will live—for I could name only a handful!—they can all be included in this City of Ladies. Of it may be said, '*Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei.*' So I turn it over to you, finished perfectly and well enclosed, just as I promised. Farewell and may the peace of the Lord be always with you."

#### 19. THE END OF THE BOOK: CHRISTINE ADDRESSES THE LADIES.

III.19.1 My most honored ladies, may God be praised, for now our City is entirely finished and completed, where all of you who love glory, virtue, and praise may be lodged in great honor, ladies from the past as well as from the present and future, for it has been built and established for every honorable lady. And my most dear ladies, it is natural for the human heart to rejoice when it finds itself victorious in any enterprise and its enemies confounded. Therefore you are right, my ladies, to rejoice greatly in God and in honest mores upon seeing this new City completed, which can be not only the refuge for you all, that is, for virtuous women, but also the defense and guard against your enemies and assailants, if you guard it well. For you can see that the substance with which it is made is entirely of virtue, so resplendent that you may see yourselves mirrored in it, especially in the roofs built in the last part as well as in the other parts which concern you. And my dear ladies, do not misuse this new inheritance like the arrogant who turn proud when their prosperity grows and their wealth multiplies, but rather follow the example of your Queen, the sovereign Virgin, who, after the extraordinary honor of being

chosen Mother of the Son of God was announced to her, humbled herself all the more by calling herself the handmaiden of God. Thus, my ladies, just as it is true that a creature's humility and kindness wax with the increase of its virtues, may this City be an occasion for you to conduct yourselves honestly and with integrity and to be all the more virtuous and humble.

And you ladies who are married, do not scorn being subject to your husbands, for sometimes it is not the best thing for a creature to be independent. This is attested by what the angel said to Ezra: Those, he said, who take advantage of their free will can fall into sin and despise our Lord and deceive the just, and for this they perish. Those women with peaceful, good, and discrete husbands who are devoted to them, praise God for this boon, which is not inconsiderable, for a greater boon in the world could not be given them. And may they be diligent in serving, loving, and cherishing their husbands in the loyalty of their heart, as they should, keeping their peace and praying to God to uphold and save them. And those women who have husbands neither completely good nor completely bad should still praise God for not having the worst and should strive to moderate their vices and pacify them, according to their conditions. And those women who have husbands who are cruel, mean, and savage should strive to endure them while trying to overcome their vices and lead them back, if they can, to a reasonable and seemly life. And if they are so obstinate that their wives are unable to do anything, at least they will acquire great merit for their souls through the virtue of patience. And everyone will bless them and support them. III.19.2

So, my ladies, be humble and patient, and God's grace will grow in you, and praise will be given to you as well as the Kingdom of Heaven. For Saint Gregory has said that patience is the entrance to Paradise and the way of Jesus Christ. And may none of you be forced into holding frivolous opinions nor be hardened in them, III.19.3

lacking all basis in reason, nor be jealous or disturbed in mind, nor haughty in speech, nor outrageous in your acts, for these things disturb the mind and lead to madness. Such behavior is unbecoming and unfitting for women.

*III.19.4* And you, virgin maidens, be pure, simple, and serene, without vagueness, for the snares of evil men are set for you. Keep your eyes lowered, with few words in your mouths, and act respectfully. Be armed with the strength of virtue against the tricks of the deceptive and avoid their company.

*III.19.5* And widows, may there be integrity in your dress, conduct, and speech; piety in your deeds and way of life; prudence in your bearing; patience (so necessary!), strength, and resistance in tribulations and difficult affairs; humility in your heart, countenance, and speech; and charity in your works.

*III.19.6* In brief, all women—whether noble, bourgeois, or lower-class—be well-informed in all things and cautious in defending your honor and chastity against your enemies! My ladies, see how these men accuse you of so many vices in everything. Make liars of them all by showing forth your virtue, and prove their attacks false by acting well, so that you can say with the Psalmist, “the vices of the evil will fall on their heads.” Repel the deceptive flatterers who, using different charms, seek with various tricks to steal that which you must consummately guard, that is, your honor and the beauty of your praise. Oh my ladies, flee, flee the foolish love they urge on you! Flee it, for God’s sake, flee! For no good can come to you from it. Rather, rest assured that however deceptive their lures, their end is always to your detriment. And do not believe the contrary, for it cannot be otherwise. Remember, dear ladies, how these men call you frail, unserious, and easily influenced but yet try hard, using all kinds of strange and deceptive tricks, to catch you, just as one lays traps for wild animals. Flee, flee, my ladies, and avoid their company—under these



smiles are hidden deadly and painful poisons. And so may it please you, my most respected ladies, to cultivate virtue, to flee vice, to increase and multiply our City, and to rejoice and act well. And may I, your servant, commend myself to you, praying to God who by His grace has granted me to live in this world and to persevere in His holy service. May He in the end have mercy on my great sins and grant to me the joy which lasts forever, which I may, by His grace, afford to you. Amen.

HERE ENDS THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES.

