

## OF LOVE.

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### FLAVIANUS AND AUTOBULUS, SONS OF PLUTARCH.

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

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

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

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

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

AUTOB. What needed my relation, dearest Flavianus, such a proem as this? The occasion that gave birth to

\* See Plato's Phaedrus, p. 230 B.

these discourses of itself (as it were) asks for a chorus, and it requires a theatre; otherwise there is nothing wanting of a complete drama. Therefore let us only beseech Memory, the mother of the Muses, to be propitious and assist us in the discovery of the fable.

2. For a long time before we were born, when our father had newly espoused our mother, an unlucky variance that fell out between their parents caused him to take a journey to Thespieae, with an intention to sacrifice to the God of Love; and he carried my mother also to the feast (for that it properly belonged to her as well to make the feast as to perform the sacrifice), besides several of his familiar acquaintance that accompanied him from his house. Now being arrived at Thespieae, he met with Daphnaeus, the son of Archidamus, who was in love with Lysandra, the daughter of Simon, and who was, above all her suitors, chiefly the most welcome and acceptable to her. There he also found Soclarus, the son of Aristion, who was come from Tithorea; together with Protogenes of Tarsus and Zeuxippus the Lacedaemonian, by whom he had been several times kindly entertained; and he said that most of the chief men among the Boeotians were there also. Thus they stayed for two or three days in the city, entertaining each other with learned discourses, one while in the common wrestling-places, sometimes in the theatres, still keeping company together. After that, avoiding the troublesome contest of the harpers and musicians,—it being found out that all had been settled beforehand by favor and intrigue,—the greatest part brake company, as if they had been discamping out of an enemy's country, retired to Helicon, and took up their lodgings among the Muses. Thither the next morning came to them Anthemion and Piasias, persons of eminent nobility, and both allied to Baccho, surnamed the Fair, and in some way at difference one with another, by reason of the affection which they

severally bore to him. For there was at Thespieae, Ismenodora, of an illustrious family, and wealthy withal; and indeed in all other respects discreet and modest; and moreover she had continued a widow no little time, without spot or stain to her reputation, though both young and beautiful.

Now it happened that while this brisk widow was endeavoring to make up a match between Baccho, who was the son of her intimate friend, and a certain just blooming virgin nearly allied to herself, by often talking with the young gentleman and much frequenting his company, she began to feel some sparks of kindness kindled for him in her own breast. Afterwards hearing him highly commended by others, and speaking many things in his praise herself, and finding him beloved by a great number of persons of the best rank, by degrees she fell desperately in love with the youth; nevertheless with a resolution to do nothing unbeseeming her birth and quality, but after public wedlock to acknowledge him as her husband. But as the match seemed impracticable by reason of the distance of their years, so the mother of the young man suspected the nobility and grandeur of her house not to be correspondent to her son's condition, which rendered him incapable of such a preferment. Moreover, his companions that were wont to go a hunting with him, weighing the difference between his and the age of Ismenodora, filled his head with several scruples, and scaring him with continual frumps and scoffs, more effectually hindered the match than they who labored industriously and seriously to prevent it. And the young man himself felt ashamed at his age to be married to a widow. At last, however, shaking off all others, he applies himself to Pusias and Anthemion for their advice in a matter of so great concernment. The elder of these two, Anthemion, was his cousin, and Pusias the most earnest of his lovers. The latter therefore with

stood the match with all his might, and upbraided Anthemion, as one that went about to betray the young man to Ismenodora. On the other side, Anthemion told Pisias, that he did not well to do as he did, having the reputation of a worthy honest man, to imitate those lewd lovers, and endeavor to deprive his friend of a noble house, a rich wife, and other great conveniences, that he might have the pleasure to see him frequently naked in the wrestling-places, fresh and smooth, and a stranger to female sports.

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

With nimble wings displayed,

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

4. At which the company falling into a loud laughter ; How ! said Protogenes, can you believe that I at this time wage war against love, and that I do not rather fight for love against intemperate desire and lascivious wantonness, which, under the shelter of the most honest and fairest names that are, let themselves loose into the most shameful acts of inordinate lust and concupiscence ? Then Daphnaeus : Do ye number wedlock and the conjunction of man

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

friendship and virtue. And therefore it is that you hear a certain husband in a tragedy thus talking to his wife :

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

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

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

Now if this be the passion you talk of which is to be called Love, it is a spurious and effeminate love that sends us to the women's chambers, as it were to the Cynosarges at Athens. Or rather, as they say there is a sort of generous and true bred mountain eagle, which Homer calls the black eagle and eagle of prey, and then again there is another sort of bastard eagle, that takes fish and birds that are lazy and slow of flight, and wanting food makes a shrill and mournful noise for hunger ; thus the true genuine love is that of boys, not flaming with concupiscence, as according to Anacreon the love of maids and virgins does, neither besmeared with odoriferous ointments, nor alluring with smiles and rolling glances ; but you shall find him plain and simple and undebauched with pleasures in the schools of the philosophers, or in the wrestling-lists and places of public exercise, smart and generous in the chase of youth, and exhorting to virtue all that he finds to be fit objects of his diligence ; whereas that other love, nice and effeminate, and always nestling in the bosoms and beds of women, pursuing soft pleasures, and wasted with unmanly delights, that have no gust of friendship or heavenly ravishment of

mind, is to be despised and rejected of all mankind. This indeed Solon did, when he forbade slaves and servants the use of male familiarity and of dry ointment, but granted them the liberty to accompany with women; as looking upon friendship to be laudable and civil, but pleasure to be a vulgar thing and unbecoming a man born free. Whence it appears that to make love to a slave boy is ignoble and unworthy of a freeman; for this is mere mischievous love of copulation, like the affection toward women.

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

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

Add to this of Solon that other of Aeschylus:

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

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

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