

though the world be bad, yet it is not come to that pass that men should bear with all the bad conditions that is in some women.

I know I shall be bitten by many because I touch many, but before I go any further, let me whisper one word in your ears, and that is this: whatsoever you think privately, I wish you to conceal it with silence, lest in starting up to find fault you prove yourselves guilty of these monstrous accusations which are here following against some women. And those which spurn if they feel themselves touched prove themselves stark fools in betraying their galled backs to the world, for this book toucheth no sort of women but such as when they hear it will go about to reprove it. For although in some part of this book I trip at your heels, yet I will stay you by the hand so that you shall not fall further than you are willing, although I deal with you after the manner of a shrew, which cannot otherwise ease her curst heart but by her unhappy tongue. If I be too earnest, bear with me a little; for my meaning is not to speak much of those that are good, and I shall speak too little of those that are nought. But yet I will not altogether condemn the bad, but hoping to better the good by the naughty examples of the bad, for there is no woman so good but hath one idle part or other in her which may be amended. For the clearest River that is hath some dirt in the bottom; Jewels are all precious, but yet they are not all of one price nor all of one virtue. Gold is not all of one picture; no more are women all of one disposition. Women are all necessary evils and yet not all given to wickedness; and yet many so bad, that in my conceit if I should speak the worst that I know by some women, I should make their ears glow that hears me, and my tongue would blister to report it. But it is a great discredit for a man to be accounted for a scold, for scolding is the manner of Shrews.

[Swetnam states that he will answer his detractors with silence, for he expects no praise for his labors: "I am weaned from my mother's teat and therefore nevermore to be fed with her pap." Thus no amount of criticism will stop him from "unfolding every pleat and showing every wrinkle of a woman's disposition." However, he confesses, "When I first began to write this book, my wits were gone awool-gathering, . . . and so in the rough of my fury I vowed forever to be an open enemy to women." Later reflection convinced him that he had written with his hand, not his heart, and in the process had prepared a sauce too sharp for a woman's diet and gathered flowers too strong for

*§. The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and
unconstant women or the vanity of them,*

*choöse you whether,
With a Commendation of wise, virtuous,
and honest Women,
Pleasant for married Men, profitable for
young Men, and hurtful to none.*

Joseph Swetnam

1615

*Neither to the best nor yet to the worst, but to the common sort
of Women.*

Musing with myself, being idle, and having little ease to pass the time withal, and I being in a great choler against some women (I mean more than one); and so in the rough of my fury, taking my pen in hand to beguile the time withal, indeed I might have employed myself to better use than in such an idle business, and better it were to pocket up a pelting injury than to entangle myself with such vermin. For this I know, that because women are women, therefore many of them will do that in an hour which they many times will repent all their whole lifetime after. Yet for any injury which I have received of them, the more I consider of it, the less I esteem of the same. Yet perhaps some may say unto me that I have sought for honey, caught the Bee by the tail, or that I have been bit or stung with some of these wasps, otherwise I could never have been expert in betraying their qualities. For the Mother would never have sought her Daughter in the Oven but that she was there first herself. Indeed, I must confess I have been a Traveler this thirty and odd years, and many travelers live in disdain of women. The reason is for that their affections are so poisoned with the heinous evils of unconstant women which they happen to be acquainted with in their travels; for it doth so cloy their stomachs that they censure hardly of women ever afterwards. Wronged men will not be tonguetied; therefore if you do ill, you must not think to hear well. For al-

her nose. Thus he concludes with a promise: "If I offend you at the first, I will make amends at the last." Swetnam signs the epistle, "Yours in the way of Honesty, Thomas Tell-Troth."]

Read it if you please and like as you list: neither to the wisest Clerk nor yet to the starkest Fool, but unto the ordinary sort of giddy-headed young men I send this greeting.

If thou mean to see the Bearbaiting² of women, then trudge to this Bear garden apace and get in betimes. And view every room where thou mayest best sit for thy own pleasure, profit, and heart's-ease, and bear with my rudeness if I chance to offend thee. But before I do open this trunk full of torments against women, I think it were not amiss to resemble those which in old time did sacrifices to Hercules. For they used first to whip all their Dogs out of their City, and I think it were not amiss to drive all the women out of my hearing. For doubt lest this little spark kindle into such a flame and raise so many stinging Hornets humming about my ears that all the wit I have will not quench the one nor quiet the other. For I fear me that I have set down more than they will like of, and yet a great deal less than they deserve. And for better proof I refer myself to the judgment of men which have more experience than myself, for I esteem little of the malice of women. For men will be persuaded with reason, but women must be answered with silence. For I know women will bark more at me than Cerberus, the two-headed Dog, did at Hercules when he came into Hell to fetch out the fair Proserpina,³ and yet I charge them now but with a bulrush in respect of a second book⁴ which is almost ready. I do now but fret them with a false fire, but my next charge shall be with weapons, and my alarm with powder and shot. For then we will go upon these venomous Adders, Serpents, and Snakes and tread and trample them under our feet. For I have known many men stung with some of these Scorpions, and therefore I warn all men to beware the Scorpion. I know women will bite the lip at me and censure hardly of me, but I fear not

1. Wish.

2. A very popular sport in which dogs were set upon a bear chained to a stake.

3. One of the twelve labors of the Greek hero Hercules involved capturing the dog Cerberus (who actually had three heads) and bringing him out of the Underworld. It was the hero Theseus who tried unsuccessfully to carry off Hades' queen Proserpina, and Hercules had to rescue him.

4. This may be mere bluster on Swetnam's part, since no second book was apparently ever published.

the cursed Cow, for she commonly hath short horns. Let them censure of me what they will, for I mean not to make them my Judges, and if they shoot their spite at me, they may hit themselves. And so I will smile at them as at the foolish fly which burneth herself in the candle. And so, friend Reader, if thou hast any discretion at all, thou mayest take a happy example by these most lascivious and crafty, whorish, thievish, and knavish women, which were the cause of this my idle time spending. And yet I have no warrant to make thee believe this which I write to be true, but yet the simple Bee gathereth honey where the venomous Spider doth her poison. And so I will hinder thee no longer from that which ensueth, but here I will conclude lest thou hast cause to say that my Epistles are longer than my book: a Book, I hope I may call it without any offense, for the Collier⁵ calls his horse a Horse, and the King's Great Steed is but a Horse.

If thou Read but the beginning of a book thou canst give no judgment of that which ensueth; therefore I say as the Friar who in the midst of his sermon said often that the best was behind. And so if thou read it all over, thou shalt not be deluded, for the best is behind. I think I have shot so near the white that some will account me for a good Archer. And so, praying thee to look to thy footing that thou run not over thy shoes and so be past recovery before my second book come,

Thy friend nameless,

To keep myself blameless.

CHAPTER 1. This first Chapter sheweth to what use Women were made; it also sheweth that most of them degenerate from the use they were framed unto by leading a proud, lazy, and idle life, to the great hindrance of their poor Husbands.

Moses⁶ describeth a woman thus: "At the first beginning," saith he, "a woman was made to be a helper unto man." And so they are indeed, for she helpeth to spend and consume that which man painfully getteth. He also saith that they were made of the rib of a man, and that their froward nature sheweth; for a rib is a crooked thing good for nothing else, and women are crooked by nature, for small occasion will cause them to be angry.

Again, in a manner she was no sooner made but straightway her

5. One engaged in mining, transporting, or selling coal.

6. Traditionally considered the author of the first five books of the Bible.

mind was set upon mischief, for by her aspiring mind and wanton will she quickly procured man's fall. And therefore ever since they are and have been a woe unto man and follow the line of their first leader.

For I pray you, let us consider the times past with the time present: first, that of David and Solomon,⁷ if they had occasion so many hundred years ago to exclaim so bitterly against women. For the one of them said that it was better to be a doorkeeper and better dwell in a den amongst Lions than to be in the house with a froward and wicked woman, and the other said that the climbing up of a sandy hill to an aged man was nothing so wearisome as to be troubled with a froward woman. And further he saith that the malice of a beast is not like the malice of a wicked woman, nor that there is nothing more dangerous than a woman in her fury.

The Lion being bitten with hunger, the Bear being robbed of her young ones, the Viper being trod on, all these are nothing so terrible as the fury of a woman. A Buck may be enclosed in a Park; a bridle rules a horse; a Wolf may be tied; a Tiger may be tamed; but a froward woman will never be tamed. No spur will make her go, nor no bridle will hold her back, for if a woman hold an opinion, no man can draw her from it. Tell her of her fault, she will not believe that she is in any fault; give her good counsel, but she will not take it. If you do but look after another woman, then she will be jealous; the more thou lovest her, the more she will disdain thee. And if thou threaten her, then she will be angry; flatter her, and then she will be proud. And if thou forbear her,⁸ it maketh her bold, and if thou chasten her, then she will turn to a Serpent. At a word, a woman will never forget an injury nor give thanks for a good turn. What wise man then will exchange gold for dross, pleasure for pain, a quiet life for wrangling brawls, from the which the married men are never free?

Solomon saith that women are like unto wine, for that they will make men drunk with their devices.

Again in their love a woman is compared to a pumice stone, for which way soever you turn a pumice stone, it is full of holes; even so are women's hearts, for if love steal in at one hole it steppeth out at another.

They are also compared unto a painted ship, which seemeth fair

7. Ancient Hebrew kings. David is reputed to have written many of the psalms, and Solomon many of the proverbs.

8. Refrain from scolding her.

outwardly and yet nothing but ballast within her; or as the Idols in Spain which are bravely gilt outwardly and yet nothing but lead within them; or like unto the Sea which at some times is so calm that a cock-boat⁹ may safely endure her might, but anon again with outrage she is so grown that it overwhelmeth the tallest ship that is.

A froward woman is compared to the wind and a still woman unto the Sun, for the sun and the wind met a traveler upon the way and they laid a wager, which of them should get his cloak from him first. Then first the wind began boisterously to blow, but the more the wind blew the more the traveler wrapped and gathered his cloak about him. Now when the wind had done what he could and was never the nearer, then began the Sun gently to shine upon him, and he threw off not only his cloak but also his hat and Jerkin. This moral sheweth that a woman with high words can get nothing at the hands of her husband; never by froward means, but by gentle and fair means she may get his heart blood to do her good.

[Young men do not realize that women bring nothing but trouble. Men who "cudgel their wits and beat their brains" to obtain the favors of women will be speedily disillusioned: "They think they have gotten God by the hand, but within a while after they will find that they have but the Devil by the foot." For women are cunning dissemblers; their beauty is always matched with merciless cruelty and "heavenly looks with hellish thoughts." Thus women are "subtle and dangerous for men to deal with, for their faces are lures, their beauties are baits, their looks are nets, and their words charms, and all to bring men to ruin." Men as diverse as Saint Paul, the Cynic philosopher Diogenes, and the Roman emperor Augustus have all advised against marrying, but the Greek philosopher Socrates expressed the conundrum best: if a man does not marry, he will "live discontented and die without issue," but if he does marry, he will have "continual vexations."]

A gentleman on a time said to his friend, "I can help you to a good marriage for your son." His friend made him this answer: "My son," said he, "shall stay till he have more wit." The Gentleman replied again, saying, "If you marry him not before he hath wit, he will never marry so long as he liveth."

For a married man is like unto one arrested, and I think that many a man would fly up into Heaven if this arrest of marriage kept them not

9. Dinghy.

back. It is said of one named Domettas that he buried three wives and yet never wet one handkerchief, no, nor shed not so much as one tear. Also Ulysses, he had a Dog which loved him well, and when that dog died he wept bitterly, but he never shed one tear when his wife died.¹⁰ Wherefore, if thou marriest without respect but only for bare love, then thou wilt afterwards with sorrow say that there is more belongs to housekeeping than four bare legs in a bed. A man cannot live with his hands in his bosom nor buy meat in the market for honesty without money; where there is nothing but bare walls, it is a fit house to breed beggars into the world. Yet there are many which think when they are married that they may live by love, but if wealth be wanting, hot love will soon be cold, and your hot desires will be soon quenched with the smoke of poverty. To what end then should we live in love, seeing it is a life more to be feared than death? For all thy money wastes in toys and is spent in banqueting, and all thy time in sighs and sobs to think upon thy trouble and charge which commonly cometh with a wife. For commonly women are proud without profit, and that is a good purgation for thy purse; and when thy purse is light, then will thy heart be heavy.

The pride of a woman is like the dropsy, for as drink increaseth the drought of the one, even so money enlargeth the pride of the other. Thy purse must be always open to feed their fancy, and so thy expenses will be great and yet perhaps thy gettings small. Thy house must be stored with costly stuff, and yet perhaps thy Servants starved for lack of meat. Thou must discharge the Mercer's¹¹ book and pay the Haberdasher's man, for her hat must continually be of the new fashion and her gown of finer wool than the sheep beareth any. She must likewise have her Jewel box furnished, especially if she be beautiful, for then commonly beauty and pride goeth together, and a beautiful woman is for the most part costly and no good housewife. And if she be a good housewife, then no servant will abide her fierce cruelty, and if she be honest and chaste, then commonly she is jealous. A King's crown and a fair woman is desired of many.

But he that getteth either of them liveth in great troubles and hazard of his life. He that getteth a fair woman is like unto a Prisoner loaded

10. Although Homer in the *Odyssey* does report that Odysseus (Ulysses) wiped away a tear when his old dog died, the Greek myths recount that Odysseus himself died before his wife, Penelope.

11. Textile dealer's.

with fetters of gold, for thou shalt not so oft kiss the sweet lips of thy beautiful wife as thou shalt be driven to fetch bitter sighs from thy sorrowful heart in thinking of the charge which cometh by her. For if thou deny her of such toys as she stand not in need of, and yet is desirous of them, then she will quickly shut thee out of the doors of her favor and deny thee her person, and show herself as it were at a window playing upon thee. Not with small shot, but with a cruel tongue, she will ring thee such a peal that one would think the Devil were come from Hell, saying, "I might have had those which would have maintained me like a woman, whereas now I go like nobody. But I will be maintained if thou wert hanged." With suchlike words she will vex thee, blubbing forth abundance of dissembling tears (for women do teach their eyes to weep). For do but cross a woman, although it be never so little, she will straightway put finger in the eye and cry; then presently many a foolish man will flatter her and entreat her to be quiet. But that mars all, for the more she is entreated, she will pour forth the more abundance of deceitful tears, and therefore no more to be pitied than to see a Goose go barefoot. For they have tears at command, so have they words at will and oaths at pleasure; for they make as much account of an oath as a Merchant doth which will forswear himself for the getting of a penny. I never yet knew woman that would deny to swear in defense of her own honesty and always standing highly upon it, although she be ashamed to wear it in winter for catching of cold, nor in summer for heat, fearing it may melt away.

Many will say this which I write is true, and yet they cannot beware of the Devil until they are plagued with his Dam; the little Lamb skips and leaps till the Fox come, but then he quivers and shakes. The Bear dances at the stake till the Dogs be upon his back, and some men never fear their money until they come into the hands of thieves. Even so, some will never be warned, and therefore is not to be pitied if they be harmed. What are women that makes thee so greedily to gape after them? Indeed, some their faces are fairer and beautifuller than others; some again stand highly upon their fine foot and hand, or else all women are alike. "Joan is as good as my Lady" according to the Countryman's Proverb, who gave a great sum of money to lie with a Lady. And going homewards, he made a grievous moan for his money, and one, being on the other side the hedge, heard him say that his Joan at home was as good as the Lady. But whether this be true or no myself I do not know, but you have it as I heard it.

If thou marriest a woman of evil report, her discredit will be a spot in thy brow; thou canst not go in the street with her without mocks, nor amongst thy neighbors without frumps,¹² and commonly the fairest women are soonest enticed to yield unto vanity. He that hath a fair wife and a whetstone every one will be whetting thereon; and a Castle is hard to keep when it is assaulted by many; and fair women are commonly caught at. He that marrieth a fair woman everyone will wish his death to enjoy her, and if thou be never so rich and yet but a Clown in condition, then will thy fair wife have her credit to please her fancy. For a Diamond hath not his grace but in gold; no more hath a fair woman her full commendations but in the ornament of her bravery,¹³ by which means there are divers women whose beauty hath brought their husbands into great poverty and discredit by their pride and whoredom. A fair woman commonly will go like a Peacock, and her husband must go like a woodcock.

That great Giant Pamphimapho, who had Bears waiting upon him like Dogs, and he could make tame any wild beast, yet a wanton woman he could never rule nor turn to his will.

Solomon was the wisest Prince that ever was, yet he lusted after so many women that they made him quickly forsake his God which did always guide his steps, so long as he lived godly.

And was not David the best beloved of God and a mighty Prince? Yet for the love of women he purchased the displeasure of his God. Samson was the strongest man that ever was, for every lock of his head was the strength of another man; yet by a woman he was overcome. He revealed his strength and paid his life for that folly. Did not Jezebel for her wicked lust cause her husband's blood to be given to dogs?

Job's wife gave her husband counsel to blaspheme God and to curse him.

Agamemnon's wife, for a small injury that her husband did her, she first committed adultery and afterwards consented to his death.

Also the wife of Hercules, she gave her husband a poisoned shirt, which was no sooner on his back, but did stick so fast that when he would have plucked it off, it tore the flesh with it.¹⁴

12. Jeers.

13. Finery.

14. Deianera, the wife of Hercules, sent him the poisoned shirt in the mistaken belief that it was a love charm. Agamemnon sacrificed his eldest daughter, Iphigenia, in order to procure favorable winds for the Greek fleet to sail for Troy; this was the "small in-

If thou wilt avoid these evils thou must with Ulysses bind thyself to the mast of the ship as he did, or else it would have cost him his life, for otherwise the Syrenian women¹⁵ would have enticed him into the Sea if he had not so done.

[Women madly vacillate between emotions; it is death to deny them anything, but they will despise unsought gifts. They will use all of their wiles to obtain a thing, but once it is obtained they will become scornful and begin to desire something else.]

Women are called night Crows for that commonly in the night they will make request for such toys as cometh in their heads in the day, for women know their time to work their craft. For in the night they will work a man like wax and draw him like as the Adamant¹⁶ doth the Iron. And having once brought him to the bent of their bow, then she makes request for a gown of the new fashion stuff, or for a petticoat of the finest stamell,¹⁷ or for a hat of the newest fashion; her husband being overcome by her flattering speech and partly he yieldeth to her request, although it be a grief to him for that he can hardly spare it out of his stock. Yet for quietness sake he doth promise what she demandeth, partly because he would sleep quietly in his bed. Again, every married man knows this, that a woman will never be quiet if her mind be set upon a thing till she have it.

Now if thou drive her off with delays, then her forehead will be so full of frowns as if she threatened to make clubs trump, and thou never a black card in thy hand. For except a woman have what she will, say what she list, and go where she please, otherwise thy house will be so full of smoke that thou canst not stay in it.

It is said that an old Dog and a hungry flea bite sore, but in my mind a froward woman biteth more sorer; and if thou go about to master a woman in hope to bring her to humility, there is no way to make her good with stripes except thou beat her to death. For do what thou wilt, yet a froward woman in her frantic mood will pull, haul, swerve, scratch and tear all that stands in her way.

jury" that he did to his wife, Clytemnestra. The biblical examples noted here, especially Jezebel and Delilah (seducer of Samson), are commonly invoked representatives of the destructive woman.

15. The Sirens of Greek mythology, whose enchanting song lured sailors to shipwreck and death.

16. Magnet.

17. Red.

What wilt thou that I say more, O thou poor married man? If women do not feel the rain, yet here is a shower coming which will wet them to the skins! A woman which is fair in show is foul in condition; she is like unto a glowworm which is bright in the hedge and black in the hand. In the greenest grass lieth hid the greatest Serpents; painted pots commonly hold the deadly poison; and in the clearest water the ugliest Toad; and the fairest woman hath some filthiness in her.

[Swetnam maintains that women should be judged by their behavior, not their beauty. Innumerable good men have ruined their characters and their fortunes "for the love of wantons."]

CHAPTER II. The Second Chapter sheweth the manner of such Women as live upon evil report; it also sheweth that the beauty of Women hath been the bane of many a man, for it hath overcome valiant and strong men, eloquent and subtle men. And, in a word, it hath overcome all men, as by example following shall appear.

First that of Solomon, unto whom God gave singular wit and wisdom, yet he loved so many women that he quite forgot his God, which always did guide his steps, so long as he lived godly and ruled Justly. But after he had gluttred himself with women, then he could say, "Vanity of vanity! All is but vanity!" He also in many places of his book of Proverbs exclaims most bitterly against lewd women, calling them all that nought is, and also displaith their properties. And yet I cannot let men go blameless although women go shameless, but I will touch them both, for if there were not receivers, then there would not be so many stealers; if there were not some knaves, there would not be so many whores, for they both hold together to bolster each other's villainy. For always birds of a feather will flock together hand in hand to bolster each other's villainy.

Men, I say, may live without women, but women cannot live without men: for Venus, whose beauty was excellent fair, yet when she needed man's help, she took Vulcan, a clubfooted Smith.¹⁸ And therefore, if a woman's face glitter and her gesture pierce the marble wall; or if her tongue be so smooth as oil or so soft as silk, and her words so sweet as honey; or if she were a very Ape for wit or a bag of gold for

18. Classical mythology incongruously depicts Venus, the goddess of love, as married to Vulcan, the lame blacksmith of the gods.

wealth; or if her personage have stolen away all that nature can afford, and if she be decked up in gorgeous apparel, then a thousand to one but she will love to walk where she may get acquaintance. And acquaintance bringeth familiarity, and familiarity setteth all follies abroad;¹⁹ and twenty to one that if a woman love gadding but that she will pawn her honor to please her fantasy.

Man must be at all the cost and yet live by the loss; a man must take all the pains, and women will spend all the gains. A man must watch and ward, fight and defend, till the ground, labor in the vineyard, and look what he getteth in seven years: a woman will spread it abroad with a fork²⁰ in one year, and yet little enough to serve her turn, but a great deal too little to get her good will. Nay, if thou give her never so much and yet if thy personage please not her humor, then will I not give a halfpenny for her honesty at the year's end.

For then her breast will be the harbor of an envious heart, and her heart the storehouse of poisoned hatred; her head will devise villainy, and her hands are ready to practice that which their heart desireth. Then who can but say that women sprung from the Devil? Whose heads, hands, and hearts, minds and souls are evil, for women are called the hook of all evil because men are taken by them as fish is taken with the hook.

For women have a thousand ways to entice thee and ten thousand ways to deceive thee and all such fools as are suitors unto them: some they keep in hand with promises, and some they feed with flattery, and some they delay with dalliances, and some they please with kisses. They lay out the folds of their hair to entangle men into their love; betwixt their breasts is the vale of destruction; and in their beds there is hell, sorrow, and repentance. Eagles eat not men till they are dead, but women devour them alive. For a woman will pick thy pocket and empty thy purse, laugh in thy face and cut thy throat. They are ungrateful, perjured, full of fraud, flouting and deceit, unconstant, waspish, toyish,²¹ light, sullen, proud, discourteous, and cruel. And yet they were by God created and by nature formed, and therefore by policy and wisdom to be avoided. For good things abused are to be refused, or else for a month's pleasure she may hap to make thee go

19. Astir.

20. A kind of agricultural implement; "a fork" was a common term for a spendthrift.

21. Foolish, senseless.

stark naked. She will give thee roast meat, but she will beat thee with the spit. If thou hast crowns in thy purse, she will be thy heart's gold until she leave thee not a whit of white money.²² They are like summer birds, for they will abide no storm, but flock about thee in the pride of thy glory and fly from thee in the storms of affliction. For they aim more at thy wealth than at thy person and esteem more thy money than any man's virtuous qualities. For they esteem of a man without money as a horse doth of a fair stable without meat. They are like Eagles which will always fly where the carrion is.

They will play the horse-leech to suck away thy wealth, but in the winter of thy misery she will fly away from thee not unlike the swallow, which in the summer harboreth herself under the eaves of an house and against winter flieth away, leaving nothing but dirt behind her.

[Swetnam cites numerous quotations from the Old and New Testaments exhorting whores and lewd women. He maintains that harlots weaken man's strength and take away the beauty of the body; they dim the eyesight, cause fever and gout, and even shorten life. A woman is a creature of extremes, with "no mean in her love nor mercy in her hate," and so she is simultaneously a source of pleasure and displeasure to man, causing him great delights and yet most cruelly deceiving him. Despite all this, some foolish men brag of women's beauty and stretch their wits to entertain women; they "weary themselves with dallying, playing, and sporting with women." However, the desire for a woman is both insatiable and ruinous: "If thy head be in her lap, she will make thee believe that thou art hard by God's feet, when indeed thou art just at hell gate." As proof of this, Swetnam relates stories about various real or legendary courtesans of antiquity, listing the famous and powerful men they are said to have ensnared, including the biblical figures of David, Solomon, Samson, Holofernes, and Herod, and the classical figures of Hercules, Socrates, Plato, Hannibal, and Julius Caesar.]

But yet happily some may say unto me, "If thou shouldst refuse the company or the courtesy of a woman, then she would account thee a soft-spirited fool, a milksop, and a meacock."²³ But alas, fond fool, wilt thou more regard their babble than thine own bliss, or esteem more their frumps than thine own welfare? Dost thou not know that women always strive against wisdom, although many times it be to

22. Silver coins.

23. A weakling, coward.

their utter overthrow? Like the Bee which is often hurt with her own honey, even so women are often plagued with their own conceit, weighing down love with discourtesy, giving him a weed which presents them with flowers, as their catching in jest and their keeping in earnest. And yet she thinks that she keeps herself blameless, and in all if vices she would go nameless. But if she carry it never so clean, yet in the end she will be accounted but for a cony-catching quean.²⁴ And yet she will swear that she will thrive as long as she can find one man alive for she thinks to do all her knavery invisible. She will have a fig leaf to cover her shame, but when the fig leaf is dry and withered, it doth show their nakedness to the world. For take away their painted clothes, and then they look like ragged walls; take away their ruffs, and they look ruggedly; their coifs and stomachers,²⁵ and they are simple²⁶ to behold; their hair untrussed, and they look wildly. And yet there are many which lays their nets to catch a pretty woman, but he which getteth such a prize gains nothing by his adventure but shame to the body and danger to the soul. For the heat of the young blood of these wanton leads many unto destruction for this world's pleasure. It chants your minds and enfeebleth your bodies with diseases; it also scanaleth your good names, but most of all it endangereth your souls. How can it otherwise choose, when lust and uncleanness continually keeps them company, gluttony and sloth serveth them at the table, pride and vainglory appareleth them? But these servants will wax weary of their service, and in the end they shall have no other servants to attend them, but only shame, grief, and repentance. But then, oh then you will say, when it is too late, "Oh, would to God that we had been more careful of true, glorious modesty and less cunning to keep wantons company!" Oh therefore remember and think beforehand that every sweet hath his sour. Then buy not with a drop of honey a gallon of gall; do not think that this world's pleasure will pass away with a trifle and that no sooner done but presently forgotten. No, no, answer yourselves that the punishment remaineth eternally, and therefore better it were to be an addle²⁷ egg than an evil bird. For we are not

24. A swindling harlot.

25. Close-fitting caps and embroidered or jeweled garments covering the chest and stomach.

26. Plain, homely.

27. Bewitches, deludes.

28. Rotten.