Titre: The Defence of Good Women  
Auteur: Elyot, Thomas (1490–inconnu)  
Date de publication: 1545  
Édition transcrite: (Londre: Thomas Berthelet, 1540)  
Source de l’édition: Early English Books Online 7659, The British Library  
<<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99841220>>  
Transcription par: Kosta Gligorijevic et Zoli Filotas, université McGill, 2015.

Principes généraux de transcription: L’édition de 1545(Londre: Thomas Berthelet, 1545) a été consultée pour deux pages manquantes. Les notes marginales ont été incluses dans le corps du texte entre crochet.   
Statut: Complétée et corrigée, version 1.0, octobre 2016.

Ce travail fait partie du projet *L’égalité et la supériorité dans les traités féministes de la Renaissance et de l’époque moderne*, un projet financé par le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada.

LE TEXTE COMMMENCE APRÈS CETTE LIGNE

THE DEFENCE OF GOOD women, deuised and made by Sir Thomas Elyot knyght.

ANNO .M .D . XL. V.

1534

[page 1 begins]

The argument.

A Contencion betwene two gentill

men, the one named Laninius, the

other Landidus. Laninius, like a

curre, at womens condicions is alway bar =

kyng: but Landidus, whiche maiee be in=

terpreted, benigne or gentill, iudgeth euer

well, and roproueth but seldom. Betwene

them two, the estimacion of womankinde

cometh in question. After long disputaci=

on, wherin Landidus (as reason is) hath

the preheminence, at the last, for a perfect

conclusion, Queene Zenobia (which liued

aboute the yere after the incarnation

of Chryste. 274. the noble Aureli=

ane being emperour of Rome)

by the example of hir life,

confirmeth his argumentes, and also

vanquissheth the

obstinate mynd

of froward

Lanini=

us, and so endeth

the matier.

[page 2]

CANINIVS, CAN=

DIDVS, ZENOBIA

CANINIVS.

SVCHE IS THE condicion of Uenus derlynges, so longe as they bee stirred with pleasant afectoions\*, they be still insensible in the felyng of Sapience. Ye all do knower Candidus, kinsman to Auerliane the emperour that nowe is, an honest yonge ientilman, well lerned and courtaise, so that his noblenesse doth apere in his maners. Yesterdaye did I see hym deuisyng with ladies, wherby I coniected, that he was a louer, and therfore I lamented\*. And as he hapned to come by me, I rouned him in the eare

A ii

[page 3]

and saide to him softely: Beware noble yong man, I perceiue ye be gyued, plucke out your legges ere the boltes be riueted. Thereat he smiled, and laiyng his hand uppon mine, he saide to me priuely: I wot what ye meane. I pray you be to morowe with me at Tiburtum, whiche is but a littell out of the citie, where I haue a faire and commodious lodging, there shal we soupe with some other iuentilmen. And there wil I vanquishe youre wilfull opinion conceiued against women: or elles I being vanquished with sufficient reason, wil from henseforth leaue at mine affection. And so departed he from me. This is Tiburtum, for yonder is the palaice of Hadrian, well Candidus will not be longe, his noble nature wil not let him breke promisse: for lacke of faithe defaceth al vertues. CANDIDVS. Ye spake neuer a more true sentence, nor a more honest. for undoubtedly faith, which some do call truste, is of iustice so gret a porcion, that without it, neither god maie bee pleased, nor any weale Publyke may be surely stablished. And thei which do lacke it them selfes, with a littel touche broken be not a little offended. CANINIVS. It is truely spoken, and nowe to talke of the matter, for the which ye willed me to mete with you, here is nowe happened a righte good occasion. CANDI. Ye meane the matier concernyng women, which we two now haue taken vpon vs. CANINI. Euen the same maister Candidus. CANDI. Goe to on goddes name: what haue ye to

A iii

charge with all women? CANI. Nay first I praye you tell me one thyng that I will aske of you. Be not ye of that sect of philosophers called Pirhonici? CANDI. What meane ye therby I know not that secte: yet haue I sene a good parte of philosophie. CANI. It is the sect which affirmeth, that nothing is in deede as it seemeth to be, saiyng, that snowe is blacke and not white, the erth is not stable and but euer mouing, &?? an other froward affection, contrary to trueth and all common reason. CANDI. No no Caninius, I neuer fauoured suche vaine opinion. CANI. yet many one doth, changing onely the termes. For sens snowe is so often times sene, they feare to say that it is blacke, leste they shoulde therfore be laughed to scorne. But vertue, who is not so commonly seene, and of so menne loked on, is nowe of diuerse men so peruersely estemed, that it is of some called foly, of many men fantasy, and of some curiositie. Also the fauourers therof are littell sette by, as persons vnprofitable and nothyng worldly. But to our purpose, I asked of you, if ye wer of the secte called Pirhonici: for if ye so were, I wolde thinke it vaine to reason then with you. But ye saie, ye be not of that sect, then is it as I said at my first commyng hither. CANDI. What is that I praye you? CANI. ye that be louers be dull and insensible in feeling of Sapience. for althoughe ye be infourmed by daily experience, that in woman kinde faithe neuer rested, yet be you still as

A iiii

[page 4]

blind as your littell god Cupide, for the childish affections which ye beare to your ladies, causeth you to think the thinges which ye se, to be nothing but vanities. CANDI. Now in good faith that is merily spoken. CANI. Wel yet, some haue repented them bitterly finding the linke sodainly broken, and in the stede of faith falshod and trechery. CANDI. Nay ye now do but rail I promise you truly. in dede both by reding and heresay I haue found women much blames for their inconstancy: but for their inconstancy I neuer perceiued any suche lacke to be in them, but rather the contrary. CANI. Sir by the consent of al autours my wordes be confirmed, and your experience in comparison therof is to be littel estemed. CANDI. I perceiue ye be of the company, whiche disapointed somtime of your purpose, ar fallen in a frenesy, and for the displesure of one, do spring on all women the poyson of infamie. But nowe Caninius, sense ye be wise and wel lerned, subdue your passion, for vnpacient hering, with wordes hastely and vnaduisedi spoken, is a signe of foly and litel discrecion\*. wherfore now here me speke thoughe it shal not fauour to your opinion. The authors whom ye so muche do set by, for the more part were poetes. which sort of persons\* among the latines & grekes wer neuer had but in smal reputacion. For I culd neuer rede that in any weale publike of notable memory, POetes were called to any honorable place, office, or dignity. Plato out of the publike weale which he had deuised,

B v

[page 5]

wolde haue all poetes vtterly excluded. Tulli, who next vnto Plato excelled all other in vertue and eloquence, wolde not haue in his publike weale any poetes admitted. The cause why they were soo littell estemed was, for as muche as the more part of their inuencions consisted in leasinges, or in steryng vp of wanton appetites, or in pouryng out, in railynge, their poison of malice. For with their ownde goddes and goddesses were they so malaperte, that with their adueoutris they filled great volumes. Jupiter, whom thei cal kyng of goddes and of men, they bryng hym out of heauen to his harlottes transfourmed somtime into a bull, an other tyme lyke a ramme, a stinkyng gote or a serpent. His queene Juno lyke a cowe. Mercurius like a wulfe. No they lefte heauen vnpolluted, fainynge that the god Mars made Vulcane cokeolde, committynge aduoutry with Venus, wife to Vulcanus. But Vulcane was a wily pye, and said nothynge, but being a smythe, he made such suttell manakles, that er the two louers were ware, he tyed them so faste to gether, that they mought not be seuered: and than called the hole route of goddes and goddesses, and made them to se Mars and Venus where they lay naked, wherat thei al lewghe, but Mars was angry, and Venus allmost ashamed. Other poetes there be, which in their mooste lamentable and wofull ditties so doe humble them selfes to their maistresses, as thei wold licke the dust from their

[page 6]

slippers, and as so one as eyther by age, or with hauntyng of brothelles, the flame of carnalitie is throughly quenched, or elles if women do constantly refuse their vnhonest desires, anone arme thei their pennes and tonges with serpentine malice, obiectyng against al women\* most beastly condicions. Wherby they more detect their propre inconstancy, then womennes vnfaithfulnesse. CANI. Now in good faithe ye haue well circumscribed your maisters propreties. CANDI. Whom call ye my maisters? CANI. Mary poetes. for in their warked is the onely study of you that be louers. For that boke, whiche lacketh complaintes with wepynges and sighinges, is to you men that be amorous wonderfull tedious. CANDI. Truely Caninius ye are muche abused, takyng me to be of that sorte of wantons. Nay truely. Trewe louers, of which company I confesse my selfe to be one, are in no parte of their condicions. for onely delityng in the honest behauour, wisedome and gentilnesse of ladies, or other matrones or damselles, we therfore desire to be in their companies, and by mutuall deuisyng to vse honest solace. But shewe me Caninius, what other auctoritie haue ye, to ptoue that in womenne lacketh fidelitie. CANI. Why set ye so littell by poetes and poetry? CANDI. Ye whan they excede the termes of honestie. But if they make verses, conteynyng quicke sentences, void of ribauldry, or in the commendacion of vertue some pratie allegory, or do set forth any notable

[page 7]

she had priuely hydde, semyng in wordes and countenance desirous to be with her husband, whom she mooste tenderly loued, she perced her owne herte, and with him was buried: not withstandynge that of kyng Cyrus, whom her husband had muche praysed a littel before, she was in mariage desyred. Porcia, doughter to the wise Lato, and wife unto Brutus, whan she had heard of the death of her husband, finding occasion to be alone from her seruantes, she takyng the hote burning coles out of a chimnay, deuoured them hastely, and forthwith died. Also what Senece by the sentence of the cruell Nero the emperour was condemned to die, his wife called Paulina, desirous to be continuall companion with her olde husband, caused also her veines to be perced, and so wolde haue died, had not Nero commanded her vaines to be bounde, & the bloude to be stopped. She nothwithstandinge afterwarde lyued in sorowe contynuall more paynefulle than deathe, and duringe her life, her dedely pale coour declared to all men, whiche before knewe her, the bytter sorowes, whiche for her husbande she alway susteined. In the tyme of the cruell confederacy of Lepidus, Octauiane, and Antony, a gentylman called Ligaryus, was by his wife and a mayden seruant, kept at Rome in his house priuely: but what for feare of punishmente, and hope of rewarde, he at the last was discouered, who beyng ledde to be beheded, his louynge wyfe continually folowed, desyryng the ministers to put her

B ii

[page 9]

also to death with her husband, alleging, that also to die she had wel deserued, for as muche as she had kepte her husband at home, after that she knew that he was attainted: buy seeying that no man dyd take regarde to her harty request, she returned home to her house, & shuttyng faste all the doores, and absteynynge from all meates and drynkes, finally with sorowe and famyne she ended her lyfe, and departed to her husbande, whom she so muche loued. But lest we shuld be to longe from our supper, I wil cesse to recite any mo stories, wher of there be no litel numbre, declarynge the constance of ladies and damselles. And if ye wolde saye, that there hath ben and is a much greatter numbre of them that are ill, and full of vnfaithfulnesse, yet if that wer true, than must ye consider, that in al kindes of thinges, are commonly found more warse than better, or elles shoulde good thinges lacke theyr estimacion, as it shall appere by this conclusion. For he that neuer hath sene any other metall than golde, maruayleth not at it, nor in his estimacion setteth much by it. And where ther be none other stoones founde but Diamandes, Saphyres, Emerauldes, and Rubyes, there men do treade on theym, and sell theim for triffles. But if one shulde come to a countreye, whiche semed barrayne, couered with an infynyte numbre of stones ragged, of yi colour and facion, if he chaunce to fynde here and there a pointed Diamande, wel proporcioned and orient: I dare saye, he wyll laie vp

B iii

[page 10]

those fewe Diamandes as a great treasure, and not remebryng the ragged stones, in the beholdynge of them, take noo littell pleasure: Semblably althoughe a greatte numbre of women perchance were viciouse, yet oughte not a man reproche therfore the hole kynde of women, sense of them vndoubtedly many be vertouse. CANINI. Ye haue wel assembled thinges for your purpose. But what saie you to Aritstotel, whom ye haue skypte ouer, in the namynge of philosophers? he saith, that a woman is a worke of nature vnperfecte. And moreouer, that her propretie is to delyte in rebukyng, and to be alway comlpainyng, and neuer contented. Nowe take heede maister Cadidus. Perfection is euer constante and neuer chauungeth, but a woman is a creature vnperfit, she therfore mai neuer be stable or constante. ye knowe this fourme of argument, for I espy by your talkyng ye ar lerned in logike. More ouer, rebukynge is a mislykynge, and no man myslyketh the thynge that he loueth, but all that he loueth he fauoureth and lyketh: but women of their nature do delite in rebukynge, and the thynge, wherin any person\* deliteth, he coueteth, and coueytyng it, he wil at the last (if it be in his power) execute it. Women therfore lackynge some other, on whom they maye practise theyr propretie, wyll rebuke some time theyr husbandes, whom perchaunce they loued: and than misliketh she the thing that she erst loued. Wherfore ye muste graunte, that she is vnconstante. Also who

B. iiii.

[page 11]

that is neuer contente, may neuer be constant, the cause why is to al men apparant. Wherfore there nedeth not any more argument, women for these reasons that I haue rehersed be of their nature alwaie unconstant. is it not thus? Nowe ?? me that nut maister Candidus. I know it be to hard for your teth, although ye were as wel tothed as Curius Dentatus, which as men say, helde faste a ship with his teth vntil it was taken. CANDI. ?? good faith Caninius ye ar ?? companion. But although me teathe bee not so stronge, yet shal I so vse my tonge in the stede of my tethe, that I wyll therwith open your cobnut?? that to al theim that wyll be contented with reason, it shall appere well, that it is pipped??. CANI. In faythe ye be a mete aduocate for women, sense ye haue tethe in your tonge, for like wise haue they all, if they be tothlesse. CANDI. And it semeth that ye lacke teth to hold in your tong that it go not to lauesse. But nowe will I assay to knacke your nutte maister Caninius. Where ye said, that of a purpose I skipt ouer Aristotell, there ye saied truely, In good faith so did I. And here haue at your blockehouse, oute of the whiche is shot againste women al this artillery. Sir what I affirmed, that none of the philosophers which were honest and continent, wrate any thynge in dispraise of womankinde. I remembred euen tha\* your master Aristotel, and iuged him not worthie to be of that numbre, but his report much lesse tp be regarded, that\* the feigninges

B v

[page 12]

of poetes, whom I haue rehersed, and for this intente. For Poetes wrate againste women in wanton ditties, to content men with newe fangled deuises. But the reproche to women\*, geuen by Aristotel, was in treating of matter weighty and serious, wherby it appereth, that the saied wordes so spitefully spoken, proceded only of cankred malice, whervnto he was of his own nature disposed, whiche maie be of them shortly perceiued, that be holdeth in his warked, none other philosopher escape vnrebuked. Ne truely he was ashamed to rent with rebukes the immortall fame of Plato his maister, of whose diuine mouthe he had twenty yeres sucked the moste swere hony of noble philosophie, whiche malice grewe of this occasion, as auncient authors haue made therof mencion. For as muche as where he was more curiouse in his apparaile and decking, then ws conuenient to his profession, also more light in countenaunce, and dissolute in liuynge, then bevame an instructour of vertue and wisedom, Plato therfore preferred other his scholers before him, whiche he very displesauntly takyng, soughte occasion to rebuke his master, whan\* he was dead, which he neuer darst while he was liuing. That Aristotel was dissolute & also inconstant, it maie appere by this, whiche is writen of him. for to Hermia whiche was his concubine he did sacrifice, and made solemne hymnes while she was liuyng. Can ye compare any madnesse or foly, to this mannes abuse and vnconstancy?

[page 13]

Maie there be so great an abuse, as to geue diuine honours to a mortall creature, also to an harlot and common sinner? what vnconstancy was in hym, whiche calleth that a creature vnperfit, to whom he did solemne sacrifice, sange deuoute hymnes, and often times kneled? To blaspheme so his goddesse, ought not this great philosopher be foule ashamed? Wherfore Caninius by mine aduise, do ye not leane more to his auctoritie than vnto trueth, vertue, and honestie, but consider his nature inclined to malice, his fonde errour and vaine curiositie, and that whiche ye dispraise in women, apparaunte inconstancy. CANI. Y[e?] haue a great affection to Plato [&?]

perceiue veraily: but will ye deny, taht a woman is of hir nature vnperfecte? CANDI. ye mary will I. for wherin do you note her to be vnperfitte? Is it in the soule or in the bodie? CANI. In bothe of them trewely, for they be weaker than men, and haue their fleshe softer, lesse heare on their visages, and their voice sharper, and as I haue redde, they haue in some partes of their bodies, their boones fewer. And as concernynge the soule, they lacke hardinesse, and in perilles are timerous, more delicate then men, vnapte to peinefulnesse, except thet be therto constrained, or stered by wilfulnesse: And the witte, that they haue, is not substanciall but apishe: neuer florysshyng but in vngraciousnesse, or in trimmyng them selues with pratie deuises, or excusyng their faultes with vnstudied answeres,

[page 14]

or in praty mockes or scorneful daliaunce, or to inuent mischieues to saciate their malice. In other thinges it is vnapt vnto knowlage, except one or two, which I haue red of, who in Rome haue pleaded as Oratours. But that is not to be maruailed at, sens they beyng instructed in eloquence, their domesticall exercise, I will not say chidyng, maketh them bolde to contende in pleadyng. In the partes of wisedome and ciuile policy, thei be founden vnapt, and to haue littell capacitie. But their moste vnperfection i s their unconstancye, whiche procedeth of their said naturall debilite. For where as the affection of muche dread or muche loue aboundeth, stabilitie lacketh, and witte littell preuaileth. Contrary to this I dare wel say ye can make none euasion. CANDI. yes, & disproue al your malicious conclusion. But I pray you Caninius, let me aske you a question. Be all the bokes of your maister Aristotel or equall authoritie? CANI. ye that be they verily. CANDI. In the institucion of householde keping, called Oeconomice, Aristotel writeth in this wise. The company most according to nature, is that which is ordeined of man and woman, which was constitute, not to the intente onely to bryng forth their semblable as other beastes perticipatours of nature and with out reason, but for loue specially, and mutual assistence. and he saith also in the same boke, and not far from thense: This company is not because that eche of them hath in euery thyng and the same al their

[page 15]

vertues, like profitable, but some of their vertues seme to be contrary one to an other, and yet in conclusion they agree to one purpose. for nature made man more strong and couragious, the woman more weake fearfull and scrupulouse, to the intent that she for hir feblenesse shulde be more circumspecte, the man for his strengthe muche more aduenturous. Be not these the wordes of your maister? how saye you? CANI. Where ye saie trueth I will not deny you, it is of his sentence the very pithe and effect. for he wrate in greke ye know well inough. wherfore they be not in the same wordes as ye do speke them. CANDI. It maketh no matter if I do truely inteprete them. But nowe to our purpose. Is perfection and vnperfection in thynges, any thynge elles, than abundance and lacke of that, which is expedient to the end wervnto nature hath ordeined them? CANI. Naye in good sothe, for I thunke that a true definicion. CANDI. But let me se, where I called it abundance, I moughte better haue named it sufficience\*. for abundance [Marginal note: Abundance.] dothe properly signifie more than is necessarye. Sufficience descryueth [Marginal note: Sufficience\*.] the thyng with boundes and limittes, the excesse wherof is called superfluitie, and the lacke may be named necessitie. CANI. In faither ye be to curiouse. Perdy the worde neyther made nor marred any thynge of your purpose. for abundance and sufficiente is commonly taken for one thyng. CANDI. ye and that hath dubuerted the order of al thing.for truly wordes

C

[page 16]

vsed in their propre significacion, do brynge thinges to a plaine vnderstandynge. And where they bee muche abused and wrested from theyr trewe meanynge, they cause sondry errours and perpetual contencion. But let vs nowe retourne to our question. Claye is a kynde of erthe softe and claimmy, and for those qualities seruethe to make walles for houses, and to that end hath his perfection: Although a stone me a matter hard and consolidate, and serueth also for walles, and maketh them stronger\* to serue for municion. The horse hath muche strengthe, and therfore is apte for tourneis & burdeins: the shepe is feble and fearefull, & maie therfore easily be shorne. And yet eche of these in his hynde hath his perfections. To men nature hath geuen puissaunce in membres, braunes hard and consolidate, the skin thicke, perchance mo bones as ye say, to susteine outwarde labours. And to seme the more terrible, muche heare on their visage. To women she hath geuen the contrarie: to thende and intent, whiche your maister rehersed, that hir debilitie shuld make hir more circumspect, in the kepynge (saith he) at home suche thynges as his husbande, by this puissance hath gotten. for those wordes also he added to them\*, whiche are before spoken. Is not that a company accordynge to nature, where the one dilygentely kepeth that, which the other by labour prepareth? for what profiteth it to prepare, where saulfe kepyng [Marginal note: Seafynge & kepynge] lacketh? In preparynge is labour or study, of kepynge commeth vse

C ii

[page 17]

and commoditie, and therfore to speke indifferently\*, it deserueth muche more praise than the geatyng. But nowe tel me one thing. wherin suppose you dothe a man excell all other creatures? is it in greatnesse or puissance of body? CANI. No verily. CANDI. Than wherin syppose ye? CANI. In that that his soule is adorned with reason. CANDI. Stop there I pray you a lytell season: what call ye reason? CANI. Why be ye now to learne? what thing is reason. CANDI. Ye by my holy dome. And this is the cause. for many men leane to their synguler opinion, iudgyng al that is contrary, to stande with no reason. wherfore I pray you make me thereof a true definicion. CANI. I wyll, to content with your fantasi, although that ye can do it I know well muche better than I. Reason [Marginal note: Reason] is the principall parte of the soule diuine and immortal, wherby man dothe discerne good from yll. this thing whiles it discerneth or seuereth the one frome the other, it is called Discreton: whan it taketh [Marginal note: Discretion\*.] the one and leaueth the other, it is named Election\*, iugement of some [Marginal note: Efection.] men. The exercise therof is called prudence, of some Circumspection\*. [Marginal note: Prudence. Circumspection.] And yet is euerich of these thinges nothing but reason, which to man is so propre, that lackyng it, he loseth his denominacion. CANDI. In good faith ye haue made of reason a right good description. And now I perceiue that the thynge, wherby man excelleth al other creatures, is reason only. CANINI. Ye verily. CANDI. What thynke you, is reason onely in men? is it

C. ui.

[page 18]

not also in womenne suppose you? CANI yes, that is it naturallye, for the worde Man, whiche I named, includeth as well woman as man, whan it is written or spoken so generally. CANDI. I am glad that I haue founde you so resonable in talking of reason. But what saithe you [Marginal note: Wytte.] by sharpenesse of witte, doth it not betwene man\* and beast make lyke diuersitie? CANI. No surely. for wytte is of the parte of manne that is mortall, and that is founded by dayly experience. For where the vapours in the body be pure and suttell, whiche do ascend into the brayne, the wyt becometh sharpe and delycate: And where thei be grosse ponderous and smoky, the wytte is dull and nothyng pleasant. And therfore phisicions haue experiences\* by clarifiyng and temperating\* the corporal humours to correcte the wytte, which eis eyther with grosse matter smouldred or choked. But reason mought neuer be brought into a beaste, whiche by nature lacketh it. And yet in diuerse of them haue been perceyued soo suttill wyttes, that therin men\* haue semed to be of them vainquished. CANDI. I thynke it to be true that ye say. Than in whom reason moste dothe appere, ye will affyrme, dothe moste excell a beast in his nature. CANI. ye mayster Candidus, that maie ye be sure. CANDIDVS. ANd ye were agreed while ere, that to kepe diligently that which is gotten, is worthy more prayse than in the gettynge. CANI. ye, for there comethe more effecte of the kepynge. CANDI.

C iiii

[page 19]

And so ye conclude, that the power of reason is more in the prudente and diligent kepynge, than in the valiaunt or politike geating: And thatDiscretion, Election, & Prudence, whiche is all ad in euerye parte reason, doo excell strengthe, wytte, and hardinesse: And consequentely they, in whome be those vertues, in that that they haue them, do excell in iuse estimacion them that be stronge, hardy, or politike in heatynge of any thynge. CANI. ye haue well gathered together al that conclusion\*. CANDI. Beholde Caninus, where ye bee nowe: ye haue soo muche extolled reason, that in the respecte thereof bodily strength remayneth as nothinge: for as muche as the corporall powers, with powers of the soule can make no comparison\*. And ye haue not denied, but taht this word Man, vnto whom reason perteineth, doth imply in it both man and woman. And agreyng vnto Aristotels saying, ye haue confirmed, that prudence, whiche in effect is nothing but reason, is more aptly applied to the woman, wher by she is more circumspecte in kepyng, as strengthe is to the man, that he maie be more valiaunt in geattyng. And likewise ye haue preserref the prudence in kepyng, for the vtilitie therof, before the valiauntnesse in geattyng. nd semblably them which be prudent in kepyng, before them that be only stronge and hardy in heattyng. And so ye haue concluded, that women, which are prudent in keping, be more excellent then men in reason, whiche be onely stronge and

C v

[page 20]

in geatyng. And where excellency is, there is moste perfection. Wherfore a woman is not a creature vnperfect, but as it seemeth is more perfit than manne. CANI. Why, haue ye dalied herefore with me all this long season? CANDI. Surely I haue vsed nether daliaunce nor sophistry: but if ye consider it well, ye shal find it but a natural induction\*, and plaine to al them that haue any capacity. But yet haueI somwhat more to saie to you. Ye saied more ouer Caninius, that the wittes of women were apte onely to tifils and shrewdenesse, and not to wisedome and ciuile policie. I will be plaine to you, I am sory to finde in your wordes such maner of leudenesse, I crie you mercie, I wolde haue saied so muche vnientilnesse, and in your own wordes so muche forgetfulnesse. CANI. ye haue twise granted, that naturall reason is in women as well as in men. CANI. ye and what then? CANDI. Than haue women also Discretion, Election, & Prudence, which do make that wisedome, whiche perteineth to gouernaunce. And erdy, many artes and necessarie occupacions haue ben inuented by women, as I will bring now some vnto your remembrance. Latine letters were first founded by Nicostrata, called also Carmentis. The .vii. liberal artes and oetry bu the .ix. maidens called the Musis. Why was Minerua honored for a godesse ?? but because she founde firste in Grecia, plantyng or settyunge of trees: also the vse of amrour: and

[page 21]

as some do testifie, she inuented makyng of fortresses, and many necesary and notable sciences. Also that the wittes of women be not vnapt to laudable studies, it apereth by Diotima and Spasia two honest maidens, which in all partes of philosophy were so wel lerned, that Scrates, master to Plato, nothyng disdained to come to their lessons, and called Diotima alway his maistresse. Cleobulina, the doughter of Cleobulus, one of the seuen wise men of Grece, wrate diffuse and mysticall questions in heroicall versis. Also Leoncium a woman, excelled all men of hir time in wisedome and eloquence, in so muche as she wrate against Theophrast, the most eloquent disciple of Aristotel, in womens defence, whiche boke if it nowe had remained, shulde haue ben sufficient to haue put you to silence. If the lernyng and wisedome of the lady Casandra, doughter to king Priamus, had ben regarded more then tha counsaile of flatterers, the citie of Troy and kingdom of Frigia, had lenger remained, And Priamus with his noble succesion hadde many yeres rained. Behold our progenitours the ancient Romans in all extreme dangers, whan other counsaile bitterly sailed did not they resorte to the bokes of Sibilla Cumana, called also Aalthea? and pursuing hir aduise, which she had there declared, did they not escape the perils whiche than were imminente? Hundredes of suche women are in stories remembred, but for spede of time I will passe them ouer, sens

[page 22]

I truste that these be sufficiente to proue, that the hole kinde of women be not vnapt vnto wisedome, as he haue supposed. As concernyng strength and valiaunt courage, whiche ye surmise to lacke in them, I could make to you no lesse replication, and by old stories and late experience proue, that in armes women haue ben found of no littell reputacion, but I will omit that for this time, for as muche as to the more parte of wise menne it shal not sound muche to their commendacion: Sauynge that we nowe haue one example amonge vs as well as fortitude as of al other vertues, whiche in mine opinion shall not be inconuenient, to haue at this time declared, and so of this matier to make a conclusion. CANINI. And I haue mine eares thereto prepared. CANDI. The best matier is euer good to be spared, vntil the tale be almost at an ende, and than shall the herers with the length therof be litel offended. Sir ther dwelleth here by me a lady, late a gret queene and wife of Odenatus kyng of Palmirie, whiche is a citie and countrey in Surry, hir name is Zenobia: she hath had of our host victory twise and nowe late was taken prisoner by Aurelian the emperour, al be it for hir nobilitie vertue and courage, she was pardoned of hir life, and a faire house is appointed to hir in this village, she is well lerned in greke, and doth competently vnderstand latine, but excellently the Egypcian language. She hir self teacheth hir children good letters, and beyng nowe vacant from

[page 23]

from other businesse, writeth as they say of Alexandria and the orient eloquent stories. I haue boden her to supper, it wyl not nowe be longe or she come hyther. And whan ye doo here hew, I dare wel saye, ye wyll be chaunged frome your opinion, and confesse, that in womenne is bothe courage, constance, and reason. CANINIVS. But I pray you of this matter say to her nothynge. CANDI. Ah, I see well ye be loth to come to a rekenyng. Thus do they all that be of your facion, In wise womens absence speke reprochefullye, and whan they be present, flatter them plesauntly. But lo where she commeth, let vs mete with her. Your ladiship is very hartely welcome. ZENO. Ye haue cause me to do, that I haue vsed very seldome. CANDI. What is that madame? ZENO. To be out of myne onwe house at this tyme of the nyghte. CANDI. I thanke therfore your ladiship. for I thinke the same, but I wyll promyse you, nothing shal come to youre hearyng or syghte, but that bothe to here and see may stand with your worshyp. ZENO. That I hartely prate you, for the remembrance\* of my princely astate maye not susteine woordes of dishonestie. And because I am nowe as a priuate personne, I feare the common successe of familiaritie. CANDI. What is that madame I praye you hartely. ZENO. For I drede infamy, I tell you playnly, more than euer I didde the losse of my libertie. CANDI. No such thig shall happen madame I promise you trewely. for here ye shal fynde

D

[page 24]

no men but of honeste condicion. ZENOBIA. Yet some in deuisyng with ladies, reioysyng to be therfore hadde in a certaine suspicion, will by the way of daliaunce conuey from them some thyng, whiche beyng shewed, do ingender in the beholders some dishonest opinion. Diuerse be not ashamed, to make their aduant, that they have receiued, whiche of hir that they speke of, was neuer ones profered. These thynges maister Candidus haue made me a fraide, to come to suppers and bankettes. CANI. Mary that is well saide. And yet some time suche thinges haue ben sene offered. CANDI. Perchance of some yong maidens, which did it of courtesy, yet much more hath ben asked that hath ben denaied. I haue knowen it my selfe, I promyse you faythfully. ZENOBIA. Truely I lyke not suche maner of foly, I haue ben brought vp in other study. CANDI. I praye you madame, let me aske you a question: but firste pleaseth it you to sit downe and reste you? for I trowe your supper is not yet redy. ZEN. Nowe what is youre demaunde, speake on hardily? CAN. Of what age was your ladishyp when first ye were maried? ZENO. Twenty yeres and aboue. CANDI. It was great pitie that ye soo longe taryed. ZENO. But it was the more for my commoditie. For I knewe the better what longed tomy duetie. CANDI. Yur duetie madame, what meane ye therby? ZENOBIA. For by my study in moral philosophy, wherin I spent the yeres betwen sixtene and twen

D ii

[page 25]

ty, I perceiued, that without prudence & constanci, women mought be brought lightly into errour & foly, and made therefore vnmete for that company wherevnto their wer ordeined: I meane, to be assistence and comfort to man through their fidelitie, whiche other bestes are not, excepte their be by the force of manne thereto constrayned. I found\* also, that Iustice techeth vs women, to honour our husbandes nexte after godL which honour resteth in due obedience, wherby mutuall loue betwyxte theym is in a more feruence. for vndoubtedly no woman hym loueth, whose hate or displeasure she nothyng feareth. [Marginal note: Iustise.] Also Iustice restrayneth vs to do any thynge, whiche is not semely. [Marginal note: Fortitude.] By Fortitude are we stil kept in a vertuouse constancy as wel in resistyng affections and wanton persuasion, as also to susteyne (whan they do happen) afflictions pacyently. But in a woman, no vertue is equal to Temperaunce, wherby [Marginal note: Temperance\* in women.] in hir wordes and dedes she alway vsed a iust moderacion, knowynge whan tyme is to speke, and whan to kepe silence, whan to bee occupyed, and what to bee merie. And if she measure it to the wil of hir husbande, she dooeth the more wysely: except it may tourne them bothe to losse or dyshonestie yet than shuld she seme rather to giue him wise counsail, than to appere disobedient or sturdy. In euery of these thynges consisted by duetie, whiche I shulde not soo wel haue knowen, if to my husbande I had soner be wedded. CANI. In dede ye had been past learning thereof,

D iii

[page 26]

whan ye had ones ben bedded. ZE. In good faythe te saie truely. so??? what I had ben out of the dread of my father (who kept me in this study continually) and had ones tasted the pleasaunt deuises, whiche are prouyded for queenes and other great ladyes, ye maye well suppose I shulde soone haue loste that delectation, whiche I had in study. CAN. Ye saie euen truthe by the faithe of my body. but madame, after that ye were maried, what profit was to you, the knowlege of letters? ZENO. Muche, maister Candidus I promyse you verily. for duryng the lyfe of my noble husband of famous memory, I was neuer herd or sene, saie or do any thynge, whiche mought not contente hym, or omytte any thyng, whiche shilde delite hym, suche circumspection\* good lernynge mynystred vnto me, that in huntynge and other pastymes, I retayned alway such grauitie, that of any dyssolute appetyte, none coulde conceyue of me any suspicion: and yet my learnyng was had of none honeste man in any derysion. But after the deathe of my husbande, I founde of learnynge a meruaylous treasure. For whan I consydered the state of thinges, whyche than happened togyther, what daunger was to the realme imminenthe for lacke of a gouernoure, and that my chyldren for theyr tender youthe shulde be lyttell regarded, and I being a woman, shoulde nothyng be feared. Also what tutours my chyldren shulde haue, it was veraie vncertaine. Ambicion alway raignyng

E iiii

[page 27 NB: the previous page appears twice in EEBO; I skip over the duplicate]

in euery countrey, whiche can not gladly suffer in any one personne suche maner of soueraintie, that vnder the name of protection, he shulde haue in subiection all the nobilitie. And althoughe that suche one mought happen to be, yet hauyng in remembraunce as wel auncient histories as late exaumples, I dradde, leste in so greatte authoritie Ambicion and Auarice [Marginal note: Ambicion. Auarice.] mought cause men to forget theyr obedience truste and fidelitiee. I considered also, that the realme of Palmyry, was enuironed with enemyes. for on the one syde was the hoste of the Romaines, which alwaie wayted to fynde oportunitte, to enuade my realme, and to subdue it vnder their empire. The theues of Araby wer on the other syde, whiche al ready were entred the marches, and spoiled the countrey. The kynge of Media, to be discharged of his tribute, ioyned with our ennemies, willynge to brynge my realme in perpetuall captiuitie. Was it any meruayle, if all these thynges did excedyngly trouble me? CANDI. But finally madame, what remedy founde ye? ZENO. After that I hadde a littell bethoughte me, I determined to prepare remedies quickely, and to susteine fortune at al times paciently. And to the intente that the name of a woman, shulde not amonge the people be had in contempt, I vsed so my procedynges, that none of them mought be said to be does womanly. Wherfore I sate alway abrode amonge my nobles and counsailours, and saied mine opinion, so that it seemed to

D v

[page 28]

theim all, that it stode with good reason. I came often times among the people, and remembred vnto them, the libertie and honour whiche they had receiued, by the excellent prowes of my noble husband, shewynge to them my children, whiche for tender age than were but feeble, exhorting theim with sundry oracions to retein their fidelitie. I visited al the hole realme and the marches, reedified fortressis, and newe made also sundrie municions. Moreouer, I cauled good lawes to be published, oseruyng theim firste in mine owne householde, and caused them in al other places to be well executed. I made Iustice chiefe ruler of mine affection, and in all consultations wolde I be present, where I herde all other speke firste, that I wold nt be ignorant: and than shewed mine aduise, wherin I semed, not to be negligente. Touchynge my seruantes I vsed such a diligent scrutiny, that they were alway personnes of singuler honestie. By this maner industry I quietly gouerned the realme of Palmirie. And also added muche more to mine empire, not soo muche by force, as by renouine of iuste and politike gouernaunce, whiche all men had in such admiracion, that diuerse of our said ennemies, whiche against the realme erste did conspire, and had inuaded mu iurisdiction, chase rather to leaue their hostilitie, and to remaine in our subiection, than to retourne to their own countrey. To the whiche wisedome and policie I attained bu the studie of noble philosophy.

[page 29]

Also therby I acquired such magnanimite, that nowe I kepe in as strait?? subiection al affections, and passions, as the Romaines dooe nowe me and my children. All this considered, my studie was to me much more commodious, because it was so longe or I were maried. Wherfore I maie conclude, that I had well taried. CANDI. Ye haue saied very well by the faith of my body. And all that ye haue spoken I haue before herd as wel of your frendes as of your ennemies confessed. Nowe saie you Caninius, be you any thynge chaunged in your opinion? CANI. I wolde neuer haue loked for suche a conclusion. I see well enoughe, that women, beyng wel and vertuously brought vp, do not onely with men participate in reason, but som also in fidelitie and constancie be equall vnto them. CANDIDVS. Mama your supper is redy, may it like you to enter in towarde it. ZENO. With right good will: but yet if this ientilman hath aughte to saie againste women, I am not vnprouided for the defende theim. CANI. No madame, I am by your ladiship all redy satisfied, he is wise that with reason is shortely contented. And where reason serueth not, sylence is praysed. ZENOBIA. Yet a good minde, in sylence, is euer well occupied. CANDIDVS. And he that thynketh well, and speaketh trueth, is most to be loued. Madame, I wil leade you the waye into my house. ZENOBIA. With good will I folowe you. CANI. The concludion is good, where bothe partes

[page 30]

are pleased. And if they bothe be wise, it maketh no matter though fooles be offended.

Thus endeth the defence

of good women.

LONDIN in ædibus Tho-

mæ Bertheleti typis

impress.

Cum priuilegio ad impri

mendum solum.