FRANCESCO BARBARO
On Wifely Duties

Translated by BENJAMIN G. KOHL

Our ancestors, my dear Lorenzo, were accustomed to making gifts on the occasion of the marriages of their friends or relatives as a token of the obligations that they felt or the love they bore toward the couple. Now this custom (as has happened to many others instituted by our ancestors) is no longer observed among us. For it happens that many people, for a variety of reasons, often borrowed money so that they could give the finest presents to those who were usually very rich. And in sowing these gifts (if I may speak in this way), they seem to me to be imitating those Babylonian peasants for whom (as the father of history, Herodotus, writes) fertile fields were expected to return two-hundredfold, and often even three-hundredfold. 1 I would call these fields anything but fertile and fruitful; but even though they were very poor, these people sent presents to the very rich while they themselves lacked everything and the wealthy had plenty. For this reason, driven on by hope for gain or for money, they lent their property at high interest. But I think they deserve to be deluded in their hoped-

for riches because they were trying to gain reward by means of a deceitful liberality and were striving for many and great advantages. But I find myself very different from these people, especially when I am dealing with you who has so many riches and such great wealth and has enjoyed so much good fortune in all your affairs that I do not see what could be the use of gifts. So I refrain from talking about the necessities of life since you have a great many precious clothes and elegant and rich furnishings in several places. Besides, when I recall the many pleasant discussions we have had, it seems to me that it would be more pleasant and welcome for you if you could be given something not from my fortune but from your friend Francesco. Therefore, I have decided to write in dedication to you some brief comments on wifely virtues that I judge may be very useful on the occasion of your marriage, and perhaps not completely useless in the future. And if you will find what follows to be different from the usual precepts; it is on account of the mediocrity of my intellect that these precepts are not expressed in a more ornate style or explained at greater length. I have, for the most part, followed the ideas expressed by Zaccaria Trevisan, that very distinguished Venetian and learned man of our age, who is endowed with wisdom, justice, great experience in public affairs, and great learning, and who is closely bound to me by ties of friendship. When sometimes we had discussions on these matters, he elegantly summarized what the ancients had said on this matter.

Nor indeed do I undertake the composition of this tract just in order to instruct you yourself, but I am also attempting to teach several others of our age through you. Although I hope to instruct them in what they ought to be doing, you who have already followed these precepts, are now following them, and will continue to follow them in the future can see them more clearly in yourself for others. Really, how can I instruct you who have by nature been endowed with dignity, laud, and honor and have had such fine models at home? The very path to glory is clearly open to you who are filled with such instruction joined to nature. Indeed, you have imitated that outstanding man, your father Giovanni, and your most distinguished brother, Cosimo, and you have been abundantly fortified with their authority, wisdom, and advice. In addition to these, you know several fine and very learned men with whom you have often spoken. Indeed, when I was with you I observed the great care and diligence with which you treated and esteemed that very learned man Roberto Rossi, from whose side you were almost never—and rightly—absent. Moreover, add to this your familiarity with that most eloquent man Leonardo Bruni, as well as with our very learned scholar, Niccolò. From these men, I trust, you have heard and learned carefully a great deal on our theme as well as on many other topics. Even though you have already discussed the nature of marriage, yet I do not think it would be contrary to my love toward you if you understood just what I think on the same topic, for I have considered that it would be very pleasing for you to have something written on the subject in my own words. When Xenocrates refused to accept fifty talents of gold received from Alexander as a gift, as if the philosopher did not need royal presents, Alexander said: “Even if it is not right for Xenocrates to use the gifts of Alexander, still it is proper for Alexander to seem to be generous to Xenocrates.” Thus, although you have been so well instructed that you perhaps don’t consider my advice especially necessary for you, writing this treatise still seemed to me a valuable thing to do, both in instructing young men and in honor of our close friendship.

Now, although all aspects of philosophy are both fruitful and profitable, and no part of it ought to be left uncultivated and undiscussed, still there is a field of it that is especially rich and fertile. Thus marriage, from which all domestic duties follow, should be begun, practiced, and ended honorably, truly, and wisely, according to the best customs and the most sacred teaching. Indeed, for this reason you can easily see the bond of our will and the depth of our friendship. Indeed, I shall consider that I have

3. Stressing the distinction of the Medici family, Barbaro names Lorenzo’s father, Giovanni Bicci de’ Medici (1360–1429), and his older brother Cosimo (1389–1464), who in 1434 was to become the first Medici ruler of Florence.
4. The list is of Lorenzo’s intellectual friends and mentors in Florence, whom Barbaro came to know in 1415: Roberto Rossi (ca. 1355–ca. 1420), who was Lorenzo’s tutor, Leonardo Bruni, and Niccolò Niccoli.
5. Plutarch, Regum et imperatorum Apotheosemata, Alexander 30; Moralia 811E.
6. Cf. Cicero, De officiis 3.2.5.
Chapter 1. On the Faculty of Obedience

Your wedding present is one that you ought to receive on the occasion of your marriage. It is a token of affection and esteem from your friends and loved ones. It is a symbol of your new life together and a reminder of the love and support that you will receive from your community.

The choice of your wedding presents is an important aspect of your preparation for marriage. It is a way to express your appreciation for the love and support that others have given you. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of taking care of your loved ones and showing them how much you care.

Your wedding presents should be thoughtful and meaningful. They should reflect your personalities and interests, and they should be something that your guests will enjoy and appreciate. Consider giving gifts that are unique or personalized, such as custom jewelry or a personalized wedding album.

It is important to consider the cost of your wedding presents. While it is important to be grateful for your guests' generosity, it is also important to be mindful of your budget. Consider giving gifts that are affordable and meaningful, rather than something that is expensive but not necessarily meaningful.

Your wedding presents are a reflection of your love and respect for your guests. They are a way to show them how much you appreciate their love and support during this special time in your life. It is important to choose gifts that are thoughtful and meaningful, and that reflect your personalities and interests.

Chapter 2. On Witty Duties

Difficult and complete care in domestic matters. We shall discuss vocabulary and comprehension. Focus your habits, modesty of life, and your duties. This will make a virtue, with those good habits that were differently disposed by a vice. Will there make these things that it be worth the whole life. Tinctures, there are these things that it be worth your while.

This is now the remaining part to be done here, in which it is

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*The text continues on the next page.*
we advise them not to wear it, so that they do not give affront to their husbands, with whom they ought to live peacefully and pleasantly. I think that ear guards (for so they are called because they protect the ear) are far more necessary for wives than for wrestlers, for the ears of the latter are only subject to blows, but indeed the former are subject to bills of repudiation accompanied by deep humiliation. Hence, wives must take great care that they do not entertain suspicions, jealousy, or anger on account of what they hear with their ears. Indeed, wives can often prevent such errors if they will only follow the prudent example of King Alexander, who, when someone was accused and brought before him for trial, would always stop up one of his ears so that he might later open it to the accused who might want to defend himself. Indeed, it seems that Hermione was speaking the truth when she testified that she was brought to ruin by wicked women with whom she had been on familiar terms. Therefore, if wives should at some time become suspicious, let them stay away from slanderous women, stop up their ears, and suppress their mutterings, so that (as the proverb has it) “fire is not added to fire.” Let wives learn to follow that saying of Philip, that most outstanding king. This man was urged once by his courtiers to be harsher toward the Greeks who, though they had received many benefits from him, still criticized and slandered him. But he said: “What would they do if they were ever to receive bad treatment from us?” In the same way, when troublesome women say, “Your husband esteems you, who are so obedient and affectionate, only very little,” then wives should answer, “What if I willingly and actively lost my modesty with my shame and my great desire for him along with my love?” A certain master found his runaway slave in a workhouse, and because the slave had been punished enough the master said: “Would that I had found you somewhere else than in this place.” The wife who is angry with her husband because of jealousy and is considering a separation should ask herself this question: If I put myself in a workhouse because I hate a whore, what could make her far happier and more fortunate than this? She would see me almost

shipwrecked, while at the same time she was sailing with favorable winds and securely casting her anchor into my marriage bed? Euripides, in his usual manner, greatly criticized those who were accustomed to listening to the harp while they were at dinner, for such music was better fitted to soothing anger or sadness than to relaxing those already immersed in pleasure. In similar fashion I would criticize wives who when they are happy and contented sleep with their husbands but when they are angry sleep apart and reject their husbands’ affections, which through pleasantness and pleasure easily bring about reconciliation. The word Juno in Homer means “overseer of the nuptial ties,” and if I remember correctly, when she spoke of Tethys and Oceanus, she declared that she would compose their differences and bring them together in lovemaking and nocturnal embraces. At Rome when there arose any differences between husband and wife, they entered the temple of the appeasing goddess where, after the spectators had been ushered out, they discussed everything frankly, and, finally, they returned home reconciled.

It was considered very good for domestic peace and harmony if a wife had kept her husband’s love with total diligence. At the Olympic games that were dedicated to the great god Jupiter and attended by all of Greece, Gorgias used his eloquence to urge a union of all the Greeks. Melanthus said: Our patron attempts to persuade us that we should all join together in a league, but he cannot bring himself and his wife and her maid—who are only three people—to a mutual agreement (for the wife was very jealous because Gorgias was wildly enamoured of her maid). Likewise, Philip was for a long time displeased with the queen Olympias and Alexander. And when Demaratus of Corinth returned from Greece, Philip eagerly and closely questioned him about the union of the Greeks. Demaratus said to him: “Philip, I consider it a very bad thing that you are spending all your energy in bringing peace and concord to all of Greece when you are not yet reconciled with your

11. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecpta 45; Moralia 144E.
12. Cf. Plutarch De recta ratione audiendi 2; Moralia 38B.
13. Cf. Plutarch Vitae Parallelae, Alexander 42.2.
14. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecpta 40; Moralia 143F.
15. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecpta 41; Moralia 144A.
19. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecpta 43; Moralia 144BC.
Chapter 2: On Love

This chapter has been said that she does not displease with her husband on any point. But of course we can always be happy in love, if we are not too particular about the details. In order that there may be a virtue, and things be correct in them. In order that our hearts may be as calm as they are in love, so that our husbands will be what they are to the end. Wherefore, if you want to live so to your hearts, and become what you are to the end, it behooves you to have both love and patience. But let your hearts be as calm as you may. And you shall know, if you want to live so to your hearts, and become what you are to the end, it behooves you to have both love and patience. But let your hearts be as calm as you may.
husbands to love by means of potions and amorous incantations. I would compare such wives to fishermen who catch fish with poison bait (as they still do in certain parts of Tuscany), and in so doing make the fish tasteless and almost inedible. Really, such women seem to be scarcely different from travelers who prefer to lead the blind than follow these who can see.44

Therefore, mutual love should freely and diligently be acquired, nurtured, and preserved. This principle is illustrated by the lives and actions of the most distinguished women, and if wives imitate these they themselves will successfully meet the trials of virtue, love, and constancy. For example, Panthea wonderfully loved and delighted her husband, Abradatus, prince of Susa, and even as a captive she preserved her fidelity to him and made Cyrus a friend. In providing honorably for her husband, moreover, she did not squander his wealth but stored it. Abradatus fought valiantly against the Egyptians, who were the allies of Croesus, in order both to win the affection of Cyrus and to be a worthy husband to his wife Panthea. Then, performing his duty as a brave commander and stalwart soldier, he gave up his life in battle. Panthea, so that she might make him the most honorable sacrifice, desperately sought out his dead body and committed suicide upon it.45 Likewise, Cassandane so loved Cyrus that when she was about to die she found it was more bitter for her to leave Cyrus than to depart this life. For this reason Cyrus, who did not want to act as an ungrateful husband, lamented her long after her death and ordered all those whom he governed to go into mourning in her honor.46 The wife of Themistocles loved him so much that it was generally acknowledged that she thought of nothing except her affection and love for her husband. For this reason it happened that the most famous leader of Greece yielded to her in all matters. Hence she was able to bring about more changes than any other Greek of her time. For whatever she wanted Themistocles also wanted, whatever Themistocles wanted the Athenians wished as well, and whatever the Athenians desired the whole of Greece desired.47 Thesta, the sister of the elder Dionysius, was married to Polyeides, who, after he had been treated as an enemy by his brother-in-law, fled from Sicily. Then Dionysius called upon his sister and accused her of failing to report the flight of her husband even though she knew about it. Thesta, relying upon her reputation for constancy and outstanding virtue, responded: O Dionysius, do I seem to you to be such a vile and terrible woman that if I had known of my husband’s flight I would have refused to go with him as a companion and partner in his misfortune? Indeed, it would be more acceptable to me to be called the wife of Polyeides, the exile, than the sister of Dionysius, the tyrant. The Syracusans so admired the loftiness of her character that, after the tyrant had been expelled, they conferred royal honors on her as long as she lived. When she died men of all sorts and conditions—indeed, the entire population of Syracuse—attended her funeral.48 Armenia, the wife of Tigranes, is another noble example to women. For when Cyrus waged a campaign against the Assyrians, she was not able to bear the absence of her husband, so she followed Tigranes very willingly everywhere as his untriumphant companion through thick and thin.49 In Homer, Andromache showed her great affection for Hector, on whom she bestowed all her love, as in this passage:

You are my sole father, and indeed my venerable mother, you are my sweet brother, you are my spouse, admirable in all respects.50

Eventually driven insane by her husband’s death, she ran through the city and wandered on the walls of Troy.

At this point I should speak of the virtue of the excellent wife Camma. Although her story is a long one, still its dignity, nobility, and distinction will be pleasing both to you and to others who will read this treatise. Therefore, we shall set about telling her story in detail. Sinatus and Sinorix, who were united to each other by blood, no doubt excelled the other tetrarchs of Galatia in power, renown, and glory. Of the two, Sinatus took as his wife Camma,

24. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecipua 5–6; Moralia 139A.
27. Cf. Plutarch De liberis educandis 2; Moralia 1CD.
30. Cf. Homer Iliad 6.428; and Plutarch. Coniugalia praecipa 4B; Moralia 145A.
Chapter 3: On Moderation

Accepts which have been described here, peculiarly by Dr. Pierce, will not differ too much from the develop a pattern that is peculiar to Dr. Pierce. In this chapter, which is not yet to be considered, and yet is different and in the general argument which may be called the same with what are called "reformers," and make the examples of the present, and that the real idea of this, is not so much to call in mind the very great power of, but also to consider the whole of human passions, help for the community. If there is anything I were to remember here the greatest degree.

If this is true, then, how?
and preserved. This quality is not only pleasing to the husband but also seems very noble to all those who hear about it. Moderation in a wife is believed to consist especially in controlling her demeanor, behavior, speech, dress, eating, and lovemaking. We shall discuss briefly these things that we have perceived either by our natural powers, learning, or experience; and since the first two qualities mentioned above amount to the same thing, we shall discuss them together.

Now demeanor, which is above all the most certain expression of the personality and is found in no living creature except man, demonstrates signs of an honest, respectful, and abstemious character. In demeanor the habits that nature might otherwise have hidden completely are detected. One’s demeanor declares and manifests many things without the use of words. From the face and its movement the disposition of an individual may be known. Even in dumb animals we discern anger, pleasure, and other such emotions from the movement of the body and from the eyes, which testify and make clear what kind of emotions there are inside. Wherefore many who trust in facial characteristics maintain that one can learn many things about an individual’s nature in this way. But I digress too much.

I therefore would like wives to evidence modesty at all times and in all places. They can do this if they will preserve an evenness and restraint in the movements of the eyes, in their walking, and in the movement of their bodies; for the wandering of the eyes, a hasty gait, and excessive movement of the hands and other parts of the body cannot be done without loss of dignity, and such actions are always joined to vanity and are signs of frivolity. Therefore, wives should take care that their faces, countenances, and gestures (by which we can penetrate by careful observation into the most guarded thoughts) be applied to the observance of decency. If they are observant in these matters, they will merit dignity and honor; but if they are negligent they will not be able to avoid censure and criticism. Still, I am not asking that a wife’s face be unpleasant, with a sour expression, but, rather, it should be pleasant. And her demeanor should not be clumsy but gracefully dignified. Moreover, I earnestly beg that wives observe the precept of avoiding immoderate laughter. This is a habit that is indecent in all persons, but it is especially hateful in a woman. On the other hand, women should not be censured if they laugh a little at a good joke and thus lapse somewhat from their serious demeanor. Demosthenes used to rehearse his legal speeches at home in front of a mirror so that with his own eyes he could judge what he should do and what he should avoid in delivering his speeches at court. We may well apply this practice to wifely behavior.

I wish that wives would daily think and consider what the dignity, the status of being a wife requires, so that they will not be lacking in dignified comportment. We know that Spartan wives used to go about with their faces covered, while Spartan virgins went about with their faces uncovered. When the Spartan Charillus was asked about this practice he answered: Our ancestors permitted this liberty to young virgins so that they might find husbands; but they prohibited it in married women so that they might understand that it was not their place to seek husbands but to care for and keep those they already had. Indeed, our Cretan subjects permit a similar custom. They allow their young girls to stand in their doorways and sing and joke and play games with their suitors. But when their women are married they have to stay at home, just as do those women who are dedicated to the rite of Vesta; and they can scarcely even go out, as if it would be unlawful for them even to see strange men. Who would not agree that they took this custom from Xenophon? One can easily learn from the following anecdote how much Xenophon would control the gaze of women. For when Tigranes returned home from service under King Cyrus with his kinsmen and his beloved wife Armenia, many men praised the king’s manners, the size of his body, and his gracefulness. Tigranes asked Armenia what she thought of Cyrus’s beauty, but Armenia, swearing before the immortal gods, answered: “I never turned my eyes away from you. Therefore, I am quite ignorant of what Cyrus’s size or shape may be.” That story is consistent with the principles of Gorgias, who wanted women to be shut up at home so that nothing could be known about them except their reputation. But Thucydides did not think that they merited such

34. These strictures on propriety are taken from Cicero De legibus 1.9.27, and De officiis 1.34–36.125–39.
36. Cf. Plutarch Apol·hagnosta Lasonia, Charillus 2; Moralia 232C.
37. Cf. Xenophon Cyropaedia 3.1.41.
Chapter 4

Speech and Tone

speech...
often only the conveyors of ignorance. Yet a certain Venetian citizen, whom I don’t think it is necessary to name at present, praises silence only in those who cannot gain approval by their genius, authority by their wisdom, or renown by their well-wrought speeches. To this man I usually answer that the principal consideration in every matter refers to the person and to the place as well as to the time. Even if I were to concede, following his opinion, that it is usually appropriate for men to speak, still I consider such speechmaking to be, in the main, repugnant to the modesty, constancy, and dignity of a wife. For this reason the author Sophocles, who is certainly no worse than the Venetian I am discussing—and most men consider him better—has termed silence the most outstanding ornament of women. Therefore, women should believe they have achieved glory of eloquence if they will honor themselves with the outstanding ornament of silence. Neither the applause of a declamatory play nor the glory and adoration of an assembly is required of them, but all that is desired of them is eloquent, well-considered, and dignified silence. But what am I doing? I must be very careful, especially since I am treating silence, that I do not perhaps seem to you too talkative.

Chapter 5. On Dress and Other Adornments

This is the point at which to discuss dress and other adornments of the body, which when they are not properly observed, lead not only to the ruin of a marriage but often to the squandering of a patrimony as well. All authorities who have studied these matters bear witness to this fact. If indeed one is pleased by the always praiseworthy rule of moderation, women will be recognized for modesty, and care will be taken for personal wealth and, at the same time, for the city as a whole. Here this fine precept should be followed: wives ought to care more to avoid censure than to win applause in their splendid style of dress. If they are of noble birth, they should not wear mean and despicable clothes if their wealth permits otherwise. Attention must be given, we believe, to the condition of the matter, the place, the person, and the time; for who cannot, without laughing, look upon a priest who is dressed in a soldier’s mantel or someone else girdled with a statesman’s purple at a literary gathering or wearing a toga at a horse race. Hence, we approve neither someone who is too finely dressed nor someone who is too negligent in her attire, but, rather, we approve someone who has preserved decency in her dress. Excessive indulgence in clothes is a good sign of great vanity. Moreover, experience and authorities have shown that such wives are apt to turn from their own husbands to other lovers. King Cyrus ought to be an example to our women that they should not strive too much to have expensive clothes, for Cyrus seems to be equal to his great name, which in the Persian tongue means “sun,” both in his admirable wisdom and in his splendid moderation. When ambassadors came from the king of India to make peace with the Assyrians in the city of his uncle Cyaxares, the uncle wanted the choicest part of his army to appear before them. He sent orders to his general Cyrus to appear as soon as possible with all his troops in the courtyard of the royal palace and the large market square. Cyrus carried out these orders and came with order, dignity, and unbelievable speed, wearing only a thin garment, even though Cyaxares had sent him a purple robe, a precious necklace, and other Persian ornaments to wear so that his nephew, the general of his army, might seem all the more splendid and well-dressed. But Cyrus despised all these things greatly, and it seemed to others and to himself the highest decoration to be seen arriving ready to fight with the well-trained army almost before the royal messenger had returned to Cyaxares. A similar disdain for fine apparel would bring great honor to our wives.

Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, gave two very precious garments to Lysander so that his daughters might be more finely dressed. But Lysander refused the gifts and ordered the garments returned to Dionysius, saying that his daughters would be even more finely attired without the garments. Julia, the daughter of Caesar Augustus, imagined that her fine attire was sometimes offensive to

46. Cf. Plutarch De recta ratione audiendi 2; Moralia 38AB.
47. Sophocles Ajax 293.
49. Cf. Xenophon Cyropaedia 2.4.1–6.
50. Cf. Plutarch Coniugalia praecepta 26; Moralia 141E.
Chapter 6: On Food and Drink

You might think about those things that are faithfully allowed, but can do without those things that are prohibited by law. In this way, you please the Holy Spirit and obey the body of the apostles, not out of necessity, but because it is a matter of conscience. I write this to you in order to maintain my position, from my personal experience, that many of those who are placed in positions of authority and influence, who are supposed to be models of physical nature, are not close to God in anything they do. The same is also true of the Christian laity. Many of them live in sin, and many of them are not even aware of it. Some of them even have affairs, and others are guilty of theft and fraud. Most of them are not interested in the things of God, but more in the things of the world. Therefore, I urge you to be careful and considerate in all your dealings, and to live in a manner that is pleasing to God.
just as it is now forbidden to the Syrians and the Persians. In order that any transgression of this rule might be easily detected, a kiss was instituted among members of the Roman family so that from the smell it could be discovered who had been drinking. Those women who broke the law were not only held in low esteem, but, as Cato tells us, they also had to pay a heavy fine. 64 This kind of intemperance very often leads to and invites the most illicit pleasures. For this reason some heathen peoples justly used to place statues of Venus and her father Bacchus together in the same temple, so that those who came in order to see the image of Venus would first have to pay honor to the statue of Bacchus. 65 Surely in such degenerates the mind and character become very weak, and they can understand nothing divine, can remember nothing honorable, and think of nothing sacred. Rather, their minds are devoid of reason and judgment, and they always define as the highest good what the prurient senses demand. As Cicero writes, if brutes could speak, they would call it sensuality. 66 Cyrus easily warded off the attack of Spargapisces, the son of Tomyris, who had a very fine army, and weakened his desire to conquer and extinguished his will to resist. Indeed Cyrus, who was upright and ready to do battle, halted the advance of Spargapisces, who had been destroyed by wine and reveling, seized and destroyed him. 67 Did not the luxuries of Capua weaken Hannibal’s strength more than the defeat at Cannae troubled the Romans? 68 De we really need more examples? Unless a very moderate care is exercised over eating and drinking, the mind itself, transgressing the limits of moderation, becomes shipwrecked and falls into ruin.

Of all the various sorts and conditions of humankind, there are scarcely any brought up in the lap of luxury who will be able to observe decent behavior or even preserve a pretense of moderation. Those who follow nature as a guide require very little, but those who follow pleasure to a sumptuous satiety always desire what is immense and infinite. I admire the frugality of that Spartan who having caught some fish gave them to a chef to be prepared. But the chef, in his manner, wanted cheese, oil, vinegar, and many other condiments so that the fish might be seasoned more delicately. To him the Spartan said: ‘If I had all the things that you are asking for, I would not have needed the fish in the first place.’ 69 Indeed, the vices of Venus and uncontrolled lovemaking do not simply follow but are the inevitable result of the delights of Alexandria and the feasts of Syracuse. As a fine custom, the Spartans used to exhibit drunken slaves at their banquets so that intemperance in drinking would appear as a deformity to their wives and children. For the slaves always attracted the attention of the onlookers with their folly, and they appeared not only worthy of pity but even miserable and most unfortunate. I do not believe that those fine ancients were pleased by the misery of their slaves. Rather, they considered that whatever was evil in a slave was even worse among free men. 70 Thus, wives should very carefully observe drunken maidservants so that they themselves can perceive just what they ought to avoid. For although, as Homer says, wine gives a great deal of vigor to weary bodies, immoderate consumption makes one weak in the mind and leaves the senses decayed as in senility. 71 The great power of wine in such that the heat that is naturally given to us is overcome by a more violent force, and our natural energy is not gradually but suddenly consumed. 72 Just how harmful that dangerous and tumultuous vapor is to our correct understanding of things is obvious, for under the influence of drink we can neither reason, nor make a logical argument, nor refute, nor discourse well. What more need I say? The poets report that because of drink a great many men have become swine, asses, and lions. Indeed, one must be doubly careful to avoid drunkenness because women with dulled mind or neglectfulness of important matters become (as Aristotle reminds us) even more prone to other vices. 73 Moreover, moderation and naturalness in the mother’s life will be an aid to the child, for whose benefit I have in large part

61. Cf. Plutarch De cæsi carnis 1.5; Moralia 995C.
65. Cf. Aristotle Politica 1.13.8:1260a, and Oeconomia 3.3.4.
Chapter 7: On the Regulation of Longevity

Care! Now at this point we ought to discuss longevity. For, long live and that of our children; when they are already
somewhat old, and that of their children. In which case every
sensible man will perceive that the preservation of
life, so that both generation and moderation will accompany
their children, will be so much the better for them, and make
them more useful, even when they are older. And when they
are older, and when they are not old enough to understand
very beginning, much more so in those cases in which they are
in the beginning of life, the preservation of the same will
be of greater assistance and comfort. And when it is of
being old, it will be of greater assistance. And when it is of
the substance of the soul, that is, the soul of the body, it is
of the substance of the body, that is, the soul of the body.

An Observation on the Christian and Pagan Sources of the Doctrine of

This is an important point, for the preservation of the soul
and the body is of great importance. And when it is of
the substance of the soul, that is, the soul of the body, it is
of the substance of the body, that is, the soul of the body.

How much a good physician needs to be prepared for any
danger that may arise, and to know the best remedies for
the particular case.
or passionately embrace one's wife in the presence of one's children, how much more important is it that nothing immoderate, nothing wanton should take place before the eyes that wives ought especially to please? Hiero fined Epicharmus, the comic poet, very heavily because he publicly made an indecent remark in the presence of his wife; for the dignity of marriage is so venerable that it is proper that no access should be given to the eyes and ears of strangers. The decency of the Athenians demonstrates this principle beautifully when they returned with the seals unbroken the letters they had intercepted that King Philip had sent to his wife Olympias; indeed, they held that it was completely wrong for a stranger, or even an enemy, to share the secrets exchanged between a husband and his wife. It is therefore proper that wives always be careful and thoughtful in such matters so that they may win praise, honors, and crowns of gold. Hence, nothing should seem so pleasant and delightful that it would ever keep them from their obligation to do everything in a modest manner. In this matter wives should follow the example of many illustrious women. I do not know if Brasilla was the first among these, but surely her great deeds should not be passed over in silence in our own age.

She was born of noble parents at Durazzo, as we know from the testimony of certain authors, and when she had been taken captive during a pirate raid she was in danger of being raped. But this beautiful woman, even in that great peril, preserved her sacred and uncorrupted chastity by the use of her wit, virtue, and lofty spirit; and with many words she stayed the aggression and repelled the fury of her captor, Čerić. And she struck a bargain with him that if she could preserve her chastity, she would provide him with a magic ointment that would render him immune to harm from military arms. Convinced by the argument of this fine and chaste woman and the virgin's reputation for magic, he put Brasilla under guard while she went out to gather herbs, and he eagerly awaited the concoction of the ointment. Then, with great courage, she approached Čerić and promised that she would render him safe from harm not with mere words but with herbs. After she had anointed her own neck with the ointment, she offered her throat to him. Indeed, Čerić, who rashly believed that she was quite immune, cut off her head with his sword and was amazed at such a display of chastity. What more need be said? If wives would want to be as they ought to be, there would be no need of further examples and exhortations. So that we do not further delay the discussion of those matters that we ought to treat next, we shall end our treatment of modesty here.

Chapter 8. On Domestic Matters and the Managements of Households and Servants

Both the time and place require that we now speak with you concerning domestic matters, and I wish to talk with you about a few topics that we know by common experience to be the most useful of all. But I will not include in this small and limited space all the things that learned men have treated, since some do not pertain to our present topic in any case and besides these matters can be understood by reading their books. It will be enough if, out of many things, we treat as briefly and summarily as possible those topics that are absolutely essential to our little treatise. I therefore would treat the whole matter of domestic affairs as it concerns the management of the household and servants and dependents, and especially the education of the children. We shall discuss this last topic later, but first let us treat the two former matters.

We are interested in the care of our property and the diligence proper to our servants and staff because it is necessary to have both property and servants, without whose help family life itself cannot exist. Surely it is in these two things that the management of domestic matters primarily is involved, for unless a wife imposes her own judgment and precepts on these matters, the operation of the household will have no order and will be in great disarray. Men are naturally endowed with strength of mind and body; both for these and other reasons, they provision their homes by their labor, industry, and willingness to undergo hardships. Conversely, I think we may infer that since women are by nature weak they should