1

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Man.”

“I would have him accomplished in letters, at least in those studies which are called the humanities, and able to speak and understand not only the Latin language but also Greek. Let him know the poets, and the orators and the historians. Let him be proficient in writing, verse, and prose, especially in this vulgar tongue of ours; for besides the enjoyment he will find in it, he will never lack agreeable entertainment with the ladies, who are usually fond of such things….

The game of tennis….is nearly always played in public, and is one of those sports to which a crown lends much distinction. Therefore I would have our Courtier practice this….There are certain other exercises that can be practiced in public and in private, like dancing: and in this I think the Courtier ought to have a care, for when dancing in the presence of many and in a place full of people, it seems to me that he should preserve a certain dignity.”

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Woman.”

“Many faculties of the mind are as necessary to woman as to a man: likewise gentle birth, to avoid affection, to be naturally graceful in all her doings, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not quarrelsome, not silly, to know how to win and keep the favor of her mistress and of all others, to practice well and gracefully the exercises that befit women…Beauty is more necessary to her than to the courtier, for in truth that woman lacks much who lacks in beauty. Then, too, she ought to be more circumspect and take greater care not to give occasion for evil being said of her….Let him obey, please and honor his lady with all reverence, and hold her dearer than himself, and prefer her convenience and pleasures to his own, and love in her not less the beauty of mind than of body. Therefore, let him take care not to leave her to fall into any kind of error, but by admonition and good advice let him always seek to lead her on to modesty, to temperance, to true chastity….In such fashion will our courtier be most acceptable to his lady, and she will always show herself obedient, sweet and affable to him, and as desirous of pleasing him as of being loved by him….

Women are imperfect creatures, and consequently have less dignity than men, and that they are not capable of the virtues that men are capable of. . . . Very learned men have written that, since nature always intends and plans to make things most perfect, she would constantly bring forth men if she could; and that when a woman is born, it is a defect or mistake of nature, and contrary to what she would wish to do: . . . Thus, a woman can be said to be a creature produced by chance and accident. Nevertheless, since these defects in women are the fault of nature that made them so, we ought not on that account to despise them, or fail to show them the respect which is their due. But to esteem them to be more than what they are seems a manifest error to me.”

2

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Man.”

“My lords, you must know that I am not content with the Courtier unless he is also a musician, and besides being able to understand and read notes, he must be able to play different instruments. For music is the best relaxation or medicine for the troubled spirit and most becoming and praiseworthy in time of leisure and especially in the courts, where besides the relief from boredom that music gives us, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and gentle spirit is easily affected by harmony and filled with sweetness. Thus, it is no surprise, that in ancient and modern times, musicians have always been favoured and have found refreshing spiritual food in music.”

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3

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Man.”

“I wish to discuss another matter, which I think very important and therefore think our Courtier should not overlook: and this is to know how to draw and to know the art, of painting.

Do not be surprised that I want this an art, which today seems to be that of an artisan and not for a gentleman; I remember having read that the ancients, especially in Greece, had the boys of noble birth study painting in school as an honourable and necessary thing and it was recognized as the first of the liberal arts, while at the same time by public edict forbidden to slaves. Among the Romans, too, it was held in the highest honour...

And truly one who does not honour this art this unreasonable to me, for this universal fabric that we see—with heaven so richly adorned with shining stars and in the middle earth circled by seas, varied with mountains, valleys and rivers and decorated with so many different trees, beautiful flowers and grasses—may be said to be a great and noble picture, composed by the hand of nature and of God; and whoever is able to imitate it, seems to me to deserve great praise.”

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Woman.”

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4

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Man.”

“I am of the opinion that the principal and true profession of the Courtier ought to be that of arms; which I would have him follow actively above all else, and be known among others as bold and strong, and loyal to whomsever he serves. And he will win a reputation for these good qualities by exercising them at all times and in all places, since one may never fail in this without severest censure….And….I would have him well built and shapely of limb, and would have him show strength and lightness and suppleness, and know all bodily exercises that befit a man of war: whereof I think the first should be to handle every sort of weapon well on foot and on horse, to understand the advantages of each and especially to be familiar with those weapons that are ordinarily used among gentlemen.”

*The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione – on the “Universal Woman.”

“Many faculties of the mind are as necessary to woman as to a man: likewise gentle birth, to avoid affection, to be naturally graceful in all her doings, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not quarrelsome, not silly, to know how to win and keep the favor of her mistress and of all others, to practice well and gracefully the exercises that befit women…Beauty is more necessary to her than to the courtier, for in truth that woman lacks much who lacks in beauty. Then, too, she ought to be more circumspect and take greater care not to give occasion for evil being said of her….Let him obey, please and honor his lady with all reverence, and hold her dearer than himself, and prefer her convenience and pleasures to his own, and love in her not less the beauty of mind than of body. Therefore, let him take care not to leave her to fall into any kind of error, but by admonition and good advice let him always seek to lead her on to modesty, to temperance, to true chastity….In such fashion will our courtier be most acceptable to his lady, and she will always show herself obedient, sweet and affable to him, and as desirous of pleasing him as of being loved by him….

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