

Plutarch: “Advice to Bride and Groom” (from *Moralia*)

Nobody will attempt to deny that the status of women has changed materially since Plutarch's time; but, apart from this, a bride today will find in Plutarch's short essay many suggestions regarding whole-souled cooperation and cheerful intellectual companionship with her husband.. Nor is the husband neglected; he can find much sound advice regarding his attitude towards his wife and the respect and consideration that is always due to her.

Plutarch was no mere theorist in these matters. He himself was happily married, and anyone who doubts this should read his letter to his wife (Moralia, 608A).

From Plutarch to Pollianus and Eurydice, health and prosperity.

Following close upon the time-honoured rites which the priestess of Demeter¹ applied to you when you were retiring together to the bridal chamber, a discourse which equally touches both of you and swells the nuptial song will, I think, have a useful effect which will also accord with convention.

In music they used to call one of the conventional themes for the flute the “Horse Rampant,”² a strain which, as it seems, aroused an ardent desire in horses and imparted it to them at the time of mating. Of the many admirable themes contained in philosophy, that which deals with marriage deserves no less serious attention than any other, for by means of it philosophy weaves a spell over those who are entering together into a lifelong partnership, and renders them gentle and amiable toward each other. I have therefore drawn up a compendium of what you, who have been brought up in the atmosphere of philosophy, have often heard, putting it in the form of brief comparisons that it may be more easily remembered, and I am sending it as a gift for you both to

possess in common; and at the same time I pray that the Muses may lend their presence and co-operation to Aphrodite, and may feel that it is no more fitting for them to provide a lyre or lute well attuned than it is to provide that the harmony which concerns marriage and the household shall be well attuned through reason, concord, and philosophy. Indeed, the ancients gave Hermes³ a place at the side of Aphrodite, in the conviction that pleasure in marriage stands especially in need of reason; and they also assigned a place there to Persuasion and the Graces, so that married people should succeed in attaining their mutual desires by persuasion and not by fighting and quarrelling.

1) Solon⁴ directed that the bride should nibble a quince before getting into bed, intimating, presumably, that the delight from lips and speech should be harmonious and pleasant at the outset.

2) In Boeotia, after veiling the bride, they put on her head a chaplet of asparagus; for this plant yields the finest flavoured fruit from the roughest thorns, and so the bride will provide for him who does not run away or feel annoyed at her first display of peevishness and unpleasantness a docile and sweet life together. Those who do not patiently put up with the early girlish disagreements are on a par with those who on account of the sourness of green grapes abandon the ripe clusters to others. Again, many of the newly married women because of their first experiences get annoyed at their husbands, and find themselves in like predicament with those who patiently submit to the bees' stings, but abandon the honeycomb.

3) In the beginning, especially, married people ought to be on their guard against disagreements and clashes, for they see that such household vessels as are made of sections joined together are at the outset easily pulled apart by any fortuitous cause, but after a time, when their joints have become set, they can hardly be separated by fire and steel.

4) Just as fire catches readily in chaff, fibre, and hares' fur, but goes out rather quickly, unless it gets hold of some other thing that can retain it and feed it, so the keen love between newly married people that blazes up fiercely as the result of physical attractiveness must not be regarded as enduring or constant, unless, by being centred about character and by gaining a hold upon the rational faculties, it attains a state of vitality.

5) Fishing with poison is a quick way to catch fish and an easy method of taking them, but it makes the fish inedible and bad. In the same way women who artfully employ love-potions and

¹Cf. O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, p1176. A few references are given regarding marriage rites and customs which are here touched upon, but anyone interested in these matters will consult some book like Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (5th ed. 1922).

²Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 704F.

³Hermes as the patron of arts and sciences, including speaking and writing; cf., for example, the familiar instance in Acts XIV.12.

⁴Plutarch mentions this again in *Moralia*, 279F, and in his *Life of Solon*, chap. XX (p. 89C).

magic spells upon their husbands, and gain the mastery over them through pleasure, find themselves consorts of dull-witted, degenerate fools. The men bewitched by Circe were of no service to her, nor did she make the least use of them after they had been changed into swine and asses, while for Odysseus, who had sense and showed discretion in her company, she had an exceeding great love.

6) Women who prefer to have power over fools rather than to hearken to sensible men, are like persons who prefer to guide the blind on the road rather than to follow persons possessed of knowledge and sight.

7) Women will not believe that Pasiphaë, the consort of a king, fell in love with a bull, in spite of the fact that they see some of their sex who feel bored by uncompromising and virtuous men, and take more pleasure in consorting with those who, like dogs and he-goats, are a combination of licentiousness and sensuality.

8) Men who through weakness or effeminacy are unable to vault upon their horses teach the horses to kneel of themselves and crouch down. In like manner, some who have won wives of noble birth or wealth, instead of making themselves better, try to humble their wives, with the idea that they shall have more authority over their wives if these are reduced to a state of humility. But, as one pays heed to the size of his horse in using the rein, so in using the rein on his wife he ought to pay heed to her position.

9) Whenever the moon is at a distance from the sun we see her conspicuous and brilliant, but she disappears and hides herself when she comes near him. Contrariwise a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away.

10) Herodotus was not right in saying⁵ that a woman lays aside her modesty along with her undergarment. On the contrary, a virtuous woman puts on modesty in its stead, and husband and wife bring into their mutual relations the greatest modesty as a token of the greatest love.

11) Whenever two notes are sounded in accord the tune is carried by the bass; and in like manner every activity in a virtuous household is carried on by both parties in agreement, but discloses the husband's leadership and preferences.

12) The Sun won a victory over the North Wind.⁶ For the wind tried by force to rob a man of his cloak, and blew briskly against him, but the man only drew his garment closer, and held it more tightly together. But when the heat of the sun succeeded the wind,

the man began to get warm, and later very hot, and ended by stripping off his shirt as well as his cloak. This is the way most women act. When their husbands try forcibly to remove their luxury and extravagance they keep up a continual fight and are very cross; but if they are convinced with the help of reason, they peaceably put aside these things and practise moderation.

13) Cato expelled from the Senate⁷ a man who kissed his wife in the presence of his daughter. This perhaps was a little severe. But if it is a disgrace (as it is) for man and wife to caress and kiss and embrace in the presence of others, is it not more of a disgrace to air their recriminations and disagreements before others, and, granting that his intimacies and pleasures with his wife should be carried on in secret, to indulge in admonition, fault-finding, and plain speaking in the open and without reserve?

14) Just as a mirror, although embellished with gold and precious stones, is good for nothing unless it shows a true likeness, so there is no advantage in a rich wife unless she makes her life true to her husband's and her character in accord with his. If the mirror gives back a gloomy image of a glad man, or a cheerful and grinning image of a troubled and gloomy man, it is a failure and worthless. So too a wife is worthless and lacking in sense of fitness who puts on a gloomy face when her husband is bent on being sportive and gay, and again, when he is serious, is sportive and mirthful. The one smacks of disagreeableness, the other of indifference. Just as lines and surfaces, in mathematical parlance, have no motion of their own but only in conjunction with the bodies to which they belong,⁸ so the wife ought to have no feeling of her own, but she should join with her husband in seriousness and sportiveness and in soberness and laughter.

15) Men who do not like to see their wives eat in their company are thus teaching them to stuff themselves when alone. So those who are not cheerful in the company of their wives, nor join with them in sportiveness and laughter, are thus teaching them to seek their own pleasures apart from their husbands.

16) The lawful wives of the Persian kings sit beside them at dinner, and eat with them. But when the kings wish to be merry and get drunk, they send their wives away, and send for their music-girls and concubines.⁹ In so far they are right in what they do, because they do not concede any share in their licentiousness and debauchery to their wedded wives. If therefore a man in private life, who is incontinent and dissolute in regard to his pleasures, commit some peccadillo with a paramour or a maidservant, his wedded wife ought not to be indignant or angry, but she should reason that it is respect for her which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness, and wantonness with another woman.

⁵Herodotus, I.8. Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 37C, and Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition).

⁶Nos. 306 and 307 of the Fables which pass under the name of Aesop. Cf. also Athenaeus, 604F.

⁷The story is told with more humorous details by Plutarch in his *Life of Cato Major*, chap. XVII (p. 346C).

⁸Cf. *Moralia*, 63B.

⁹Cf. *Moralia*, 613A.

17) Kings fond of the arts make many persons incline to be artists, those fond of letters make many want to be scholars, and those fond of sport make many take up athletics. In like manner a man fond of his personal appearance makes a wife all paint and powder; one fond of pleasure makes her meretricious and licentious, while a husband who loves what is good and honourable makes a wife discreet and well-behaved.

18) A young Spartan woman, in answer to an inquiry as to whether she had already made advances to her husband, said, "No, but he has made them to me."¹⁰ This behaviour, I take it, is characteristic of the true mistress of the household, on the one hand not to avoid or to feel annoyed at such actions on the part of her husband if he begins them, and on the other not to take the initiative herself; for the one course is meretricious and froward, the other disdainful and unamiable.

19) A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour.

20) Plato¹¹ asserts that the state is prosperous and happy in which the people hear "mine" and "not mine" most rarely uttered, the reason being that the citizens, so far as in them lies, treat all things of real importance as common property. Much more should such expressions be eliminated from the married state; save that, as physicians tell us that blows on the left side of the body record the sensation on the right side, so, in the same way, it is a lovely thing for the wife to sympathize with her husband's concerns and the husband with the wife's, so that, as ropes, by being intertwined, get strength from each other, thus, by the due contribution of goodwill in corresponding measure by each member, the copartnership may be preserved through the joint action of both. For Nature unites us through the commingling of our bodies, in order that, by taking and blending together a portion derived from each member of a pair, the offspring which she produces may be common to both, so that neither can define or distinguish his own or the other's part therein. Such a copartnership in property as well is especially befitting married people, who should pour all their resources into a common fund, and combine them, and each should not regard one part as his own and another part as the other's, but all as his own and nothing as the other's. As we call a mixture "wine," although the larger of the component parts is water, so the property and the estate ought to be said to belong to the husband even though the wife contribute the larger share.

21) Helen was fond of wealth and Paris of pleasure; Odysseus was

sensible and Penelope virtuous. Therefore the marriage of the latter pair was happy and enviable, while that of the former created an "Iliad of woes" for Greeks and barbarians.

22) The Roman,¹² on being admonished by his friends because he had put away a virtuous, wealthy, and lovely wife, reached out his shoe and said, "Yes, this is beautiful to look at, and new, but nobody knows where it pinches me." A wife, then, ought not to rely on her dowry or birth or beauty, but on things in which she gains the greatest hold on her husband, namely conversation, character, and comradeship, which she must render not perverse or vexatious day by day, but accommodating, inoffensive, and agreeable. For, as physicians have more fear of fevers that originate from obscure causes and gradual accretion than of those which may be accounted for by manifest and weighty reasons, so it is the petty, continual, daily clashes between man and wife, unnoticed by the great majority, that disrupt and mar married life.

23) King Philip was enamoured of a Thessalian woman who was accused of using magic charms upon him. Olympias accordingly made haste to get the woman into her power. But when the latter had come into the queen's presence and was seen to be beautiful in appearance, and her conversation with the queen was not lacking in good-breeding or cleverness, Olympias exclaimed, "Away with these slanders! You have your magic charms in yourself."¹³ And so a wedded and lawful wife becomes an irresistible thing if she makes everything, dowry, birth, magic charms, and even the magic girdle¹⁴ itself, to be inherent in herself, and by character and virtue succeeds in winning her husband's love.

24) On another occasion, when a young man of the court had married a beautiful woman¹⁵ of bad reputation, Olympias said, "That fellow has no brains; else he would not have married on sight." Marriages ought not to be made by trusting the eyes only, or the fingers either, as is the case with some who take a wife after counting up how much she brings with her, but without deciding what kind of a helpmate she will be.

25) Socrates¹⁶ used to urge the ill-favoured among the mirror-gazing youth to make good their defect by virtue, and the handsome not to disgrace their face and figure by vice. So too it is an admirable thing for the mistress of the household, whenever

¹²Cf. Plutarch's *Life of Aemilius Paulus*, chap. V (p. 257B), and Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition).

¹³Much the same story is told of the wife of Hystaspes by Satyrus in his *Life of Euripides* (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, IX p157).

¹⁴Homer, *Il.* XIV.214.

¹⁵Pantica of Cyprus, according to Phylarchus, as quoted by Athenaeus, 609C.

¹⁶Attributed to Bias by Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, III.79 ζ, and by Demetrius Phalereus, *Sayings of the Seven Wise Men*. Other authors (e.g. Diogenes Laertius, II.33) assign it to Socrates.

¹⁰Cf. *Moralia*, 242B.

¹¹*Republic*, p. 462C. Cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 484B and 767D.

she holds her mirror in her hands, to talk with herself — for the ill-favoured woman to say to herself, “What if I am not virtuous?” and the beautiful one, “What if I am virtuous as well?” For if the ill-favoured woman is loved for her character, that is something of which she can be very proud, far more than if she were loved for her beauty.

26) The Sicilian despot¹⁷ sent clothing and jewellery of the costly kind to the daughters of Lysander; but Lysander would not accept them, saying, “These adornments will disgrace my daughters far more than they will adorn them.” But Sophocles,¹⁸ before Lysander, had said this:

Adornment! No, you wretch! Naught that adorns
'Twould seem to be — your crazy mind's desire.

For, as Crates used to say, “adornment is that which adorns,” and that adorns or decorates a woman which makes her more decorous. It is not gold or precious stones or scarlet that makes her such, but whatever invests her with that something which betokens dignity, good behaviour, and modesty.

27) Those who offer sacrifice to Hera, the Protectress of Wedlock,¹⁹ do not consecrate the bitter gall with the other parts of the offering, but remove it and cast it beside the altar — an intimation on the part of him who established this custom that bitterness and anger ought never to find a place in married life. For the acerbity of the mistress, like that of wine, ought to be salutary and pleasant, not bitter like that of aloes, nor suggestive of a dose of medicine.

28) Plato²⁰ advised Xenocrates, who was somewhat churlish in character but otherwise a good and honourable man, to sacrifice to the Graces. It is my opinion that the virtuous woman has especial need of graces in her relations with her husband, in order that, as Metrodorus²¹ used to put it, “she may live pleasantly with him and not be cross all the time because she is virtuous.” The thrifty woman must not neglect cleanliness, nor the loving wife cheerfulness; for asperity makes a wife's correct behaviour disagreeable, just as untidiness has a similar effect upon plain living.

29) The woman who is afraid to laugh and jest a bit with her husband, lest possibly she appear bold and wanton, is no different

from one who will not use oil on her head lest she be thought to use perfume, or from one who will not even wash her face lest she be thought to use rouge. But we observe both poets and public speakers, such as try to avoid vulgarity, narrowness, and affectation in their diction, employing all artistry to move and stir the hearer by means of their subject matter, their handling of it, and their portrayal of characters. So too the mistress of the household, just because she avoids and deprecates everything extravagant, meretricious and ostentatious (and she does well to do so), ought all the more, in the graces of her character and daily life, to employ all artistry upon her husband, habituating him to what is honourable and at the same time pleasant. However, if a woman is naturally uncompromising, arbitrary, and unpleasant, the husband must be consider, and do as Phocion did when Antipater prescribed for him a dishonourable and unbecoming course of action. Phocion said, “You cannot use me as a friend and flatterer both,”²² and so the husband must reason about his virtuous and uncompromising wife, “I cannot have the society of the same woman both as wife and as paramour.”

30) The women of Egypt, by inherited custom, were not allowed to wear shoes,²³ so that they should stay at home all day; and most women, if you take from them gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple, and pearls, stay indoors.

31) Theano,²⁴ in putting her cloak about her, exposed her arm. Somebody exclaimed, “A lovely arm.” “But not for the public,” said she. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition.

32) Pheidias made the Aphrodite of the Eleans with one foot on a tortoise,²⁵ to typify for womankind keeping at home and keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband, and she should not feel aggrieved if, like the flute-player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own.

33) Rich men and princes by conferring honours on philosophers adorn both themselves and the philosophers; but, on the other hand, philosophers by paying court to the rich do not enhance the repute of the rich but lower their own. So is it with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are

¹⁷Dionysius according to Plutarch, *Moralia*, 190E, 229A, and *Life of Lysander*, chap. II (p. 439D). The same story is told of Archidamus in *Moralia* 218E.

¹⁸From an unknown play; cf. Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag.* p310, Sophocles, No. 762.

¹⁹Cf. O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, p1134; also Plutarch, *Frag. 2 of De Daedalis Plataeensis* (in Bernardakis's edition, vol. VII p44).

²⁰The same advice in *Moralia* 769D, in Plutarch's *Life of C. Marius*, chap. II (p. 407A), and a slightly different inference in *Moralia*, 753C.

²¹Cf. *Moralia*, 753C. Cf. *Moralia*, 753C.

²²Cf. *Moralia*, 64C, 188F, 533D; Plutarch's *Life of Phocion*, chap. XXX (p. 755B); *Life of Agis*, chap. II (p. 795E).

²³This is quite contrary to the classical Greek tradition (Herodotus, II.35; Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 339), which errs just as badly in the other direction.

²⁴Wife of Pythagoras the philosopher. The story is told a little more fully by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV p. 522C.

²⁵Pausanias, VI.25.1; cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 381E. Roscher, *Lexikon d. gr. u. rom. Mythologie*, I p412, mentions two ancient bronzes, one Greek and one Etruscan, in which Aphrodite is represented with one foot on a tortoise.

commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman, not as the owner has control over a piece of property, but, as the soul colonists the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill. As, therefore, it is possible to exercise care over the body without being a slave to its pleasures and desires, so it is possible to govern a wife, and at the same time to delight and gratify her.

34) Philosophers²⁶ say of bodies that some are composed of separate elements, as a fleet or an army, others of elements joined together, as a house or a ship, and still others form together an intimate union, as is the case with every living creature. In about the same way, the marriage of a couple in love with each other is an intimate union; that of those who marry for dowry or children is of persons joined together; and that of those who merely sleep in the same bed is of separate persons who may be regarded as cohabiting, but not really living together.²⁷ As the mixing of liquids, according to what men of science say, extends throughout their entire content, so also in the case of married people there ought to be a mutual amalgamation of their bodies, property, friends, and relations. In fact, the purpose of the Roman law-giver²⁸ who prohibited the giving and receiving of presents between man and wife was, not to prevent their sharing in anything, but that they should feel that they shared all things in common.

35) In Leptis, a city of Africa, it is an inherited custom²⁹ for the bride, on the day after her marriage, to send to the mother of the bridegroom and ask for a pot. The latter does not give it, and also declares that she has none, her purpose being that the bride may from the outset realize the stepmother's attitude in her mother-in-law, and, in the event of some harsher incident later on, may not feel indignant or resentful. A wife ought to take cognizance of this hostility, and try to cure the cause of it, which is the mother's jealousy of the bride as the object of her son's affection. The one way at once cure this trouble is to create an affection for herself personally on the part of her husband, and at the same time not to divert or lessen his affection for his mother.

36) Mothers appear to have a greater love for their sons because of a feeling that their sons are able to help them, and fathers for their daughters because of a feeling that the daughters have need of their help. Perhaps, also, because of the honour accorded by man and wife to each other, the one wishes openly to show that

he feels greater esteem and affection for the attributes which are more characteristic of the other. And herein there may perhaps be a divergence, but, on the other hand, it is a nice thing if the wife, in the deference she shows, is observed to incline rather toward her husband's parents than her own, and, if she is distressed over anything, to refer it to them without the knowledge of her own parents. For seeming confidence begets confidence, and love, love.

37) The generals issued orders to the Greeks in Cyrus's army,³⁰ that if the enemy advanced shouting they should receive them with silence, but, on the other hand, if the enemy kept silent, they should charge against them with a shout. Women who have sense keep quiet while their husbands in their fits of anger vociferate, but when their husbands are silent they talk to them and mollify them by words of comfort.

38) Euripides³¹ is right in censuring those who employ the lyre as an accompaniment to wine. For music ought rather to be invoked on occasions of anger and grief rather than to be made an added attraction for those who are engaged in their pleasures. So you two must regard those persons in error who for the sake of pleasure occupy the same bed, but when they get into some angry disagreement repose apart; they ought, instead, at that time especially to invoke Aphrodite, who is the best physician for such disorders. Such no doubt is the teaching of the poet³² when he represents Hera as saying,

I will settle their uncomposed quarrels,
Sending them back to their bed to a union
of loving enjoyment.

39) At all times and in all places a wife ought to try to avoid any clash with her husband, and a husband with his wife, but they ought to be especially on their guard against doing this in the privacy of their bedchamber. The woman in travail and pain kept saying to those who were trying to make her go to bed, "How can the bed cure this ailment which I contracted in bed?" But the disagreements, recriminations, and angry passions which the bed generates are not easily settled in another place and at another time.

40) Hermione seems to speak the truth when she says,³³

Bad women's visits brought about my fall.

This, however, does not come about so simply, but only when marital disagreements and jealousies open not only a wife's doors

²⁶Undoubtedly the Stoic philosophers are meant; cf. *Moralia*, 426A.

²⁷The meaning of this passage is made quite clear by No. 4 of the *fragmenta incerta* of the *Moralia*, in vol. VII of Bernardakis's edition, p151, and Musonius, pp67-68 of O. Hense's edition = Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, LXIX.23.

²⁸Cf. *Moralia*, 265E.

²⁹Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition), amplifies this by a reference to Terence, *Hecyra*, II.1.4: "All mothers-in-law hate their daughters-in-law."

³⁰Possibly a confused reminiscence of Xenophon, *Anabasis*, I.7.4, and I.8.11.

³¹Medea, 190. Cf. also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 710E.

³²Adapted from Homer, *Il.* XIV.205, 209.

³³Euripides, *Andromache*, 930: cf. also Hieronymus, *Adversus Iovinianum*, I chap. XLVIII (vol. II p292 of Migne's edition).

but also her hearing to such women. So, at such a time especially, a woman who has sense ought to stop her ears, and be on her guard against whispered insinuations, so that fire may not be added to fire,³⁴ and she ought to have ready in mind the saying of Philip.³⁵ For it is told that when he was being incited by his friends against the Greeks on the ground that they were being well treated, but were speaking ill of him, he said, “What would happen, then, if we were to treat them ill?” So when these back-biters say, “Your husband treats grievously his loving and virtuous wife.” “Yes, what would happen, then, if I were to begin to hate him and wrong him?”

41) A man whose slave had run away, on catching sight of the fugitive some time later, ran after him; but when the slave got ahead of him by taking refuge in a treadmill, the master said, “Where else could I have wished to find you rather than here?”³⁶ So then let the woman who, on account of jealousy, is entering a writ of divorce, and is in a high dudgeon, say to herself, “Where else would my rival like better to see me, what would she rather have me do, than feel aggrieved with my husband and quarrel with him and abandon my very home and chamber?”

42) The Athenians observe three sacred ploughings: the first at Scirum bin commemoration of the most ancient of sowings; the second in Raria, and the third near the base of the Acropolis, the so-called Buzygius (the ox-yoking).³⁷ But most sacred of all such sowings is the marital sowing and ploughing for the procreation of children. It is a beautiful epithet which Sophocles applied to Aphrodite when he called her “bountiful-bearing Cytherea.”³⁸ Therefore man and wife ought especially to indulge in this with circumspection, keeping themselves pure from all unholy and unlawful intercourse with others, and not sowing seed from which they are unwilling to have any offspring,³⁹ and from which if any issue does result, they are ashamed of it, and try to conceal it.

43) When the orator Gorgias read to the Greeks at Olympia a speech about concord,⁴⁰ Melanthius said, “This fellow is giving us advice about concord, and yet in his own household he has not prevailed upon himself, his wife, and maidservant, three persons only, to live in concord.” For there was, apparently, some love on Gorgias’s part and jealousy on the wife’s part towards the girl. A

man therefore ought to have his household well harmonized who is going to harmonize State, Forum, and friends. For it is much more likely that the sins of women rather than sins against women will go unnoticed by most people.

44) They say that the cat is excited to frenzy by the odour of perfumes. Now if it happened that women were similarly made furious and frantic by perfumes, it would be a dreadful thing for their husbands not to abstain from perfume, but for the sake of their own brief pleasure to permit their wives to suffer in this way. Now inasmuch as women are affected in this way, not by their husband’s using perfume, but by their having connexion with other women, it is unfair to pain and disturb them so much for the sake of a trivial pleasure, and not to follow with wives the practice observed in approaching bees (because these insects are thought to be irritable and bellicose towards men who have been with women)⁴¹ — to be pure and clean from all connexion with others when they approach their wives.

45) Those who have to go near elephants do not put on bright clothes, nor do those who go near bulls put on red;⁴² for the animals are made especially furious by these colours; and tigers, they say, when surrounded by the noise of beaten drums go completely mad and tear themselves to pieces.⁴³ Since, then, this is also the case with men, that some cannot well endure the sight of scarlet and purple clothes, while others are annoyed by cymbals and drums,⁴⁴ what terrible hardship is it for women to refrain from such things, and not disquiet or irritate their husbands, but live with them in constant gentleness?

46) A woman once said to Philip, who was trying to force her to come to him against her will, “Let me go. All women are the same when the lights are out.” This is well said as an answer to adulterous and licentious men, but the wedded wife ought especially when the light is out not to be the same as ordinary women, but, when her body is invisible, her virtue, her exclusive devotion to her husband, her constancy, and her affection, ought to be most in evidence.

47) Plato⁴⁵ used to advise the elderly men more especially to have the sense of shame before the young, so that the young may be respectful toward them; for where the old men are without sense of shame, he felt, no respect or deference is engendered for the young. The husband ought to bear this in mind, and show no greater respect for anybody than for his wife, seeing that their chamber is bound to be for her a school of orderly behaviour or

³⁴Cf. the note on 123F supra.

³⁵Cf. *Moralia*, 179A and 457F. A similar remark of Pausanias is quoted in *Moralia*, 230D.

³⁶A remark of the same tenor is attributed to Phocion by Plutarch, *Moralia*, 188A, and *Life of Phocion*, chap. X (p. 746E).

³⁷Scirum was near Athens on the road to Eleusis; the Rarian plain was near Eleusis; the most convenient references regarding these sacred ploughings are Roscher, *Lexikon der griech. und rom. Mythologie*, s.v. Buzyges, and Harrison and Verrall, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, pp166-8.

³⁸Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag.* p310, Sophocles, No. 763.

³⁹Cf. Plato, *Laws*, p. 839A.

⁴⁰Cf. Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, III pp248-9 (Gorgias, B 7-8a).

⁴¹A wide-spread ancient superstition; the classical references may be found in Magerstedt, *Die Bienenzucht des Altertums*, Sondershausen, 1851.

⁴²Cf. *Moralia*, 330B.

⁴³Cf. *Moralia*, 167C.

⁴⁴An indication that the wife was interested in some foreign religion like the worship of Cybele.

⁴⁵*Laws*, p. 729C. Also cited or referred to by Plutarch, *Moralia*, 14B, 71B, and 272C.

of wantonness. The man who enjoys the very pleasures from which he tries to dissuade his wife is in no wise different from him who bids her fight to the death against the enemies to whom he has himself surrendered.

48) In regard to love of finery, I beg, Eurydice, that you will read and try to remember what was written to Aristylla by Timoxena;⁴⁶ and as for you, Pollianus, you must not think that your wife will refrain from immoderate display and extravagance if she sees that you do not despise these things in others, but, on the contrary, find delight in gilded drinking-cups, pictured walls, trappings for mules, and showy neckbands for horses. For it is impossible to expel extravagance from the wife's part of the house when it has free range amid the men's rooms.

Besides, Pollianus, you already possess sufficient maturity to study philosophy, and I beg that you will beautify your character with the aid of discourses which are attended by logical demonstration and mature deliberation, seeking the company and instruction of teachers who will help you. And for your wife you must collect from every source what is useful, as do the bees, and carrying it within your own self impart it to her, and then discuss it with her, and make the best of these doctrines her favourite and familiar themes. For to her

Thou art a father and precious-loved mother,
Yea, and a brother as well.⁴⁷

No less ennobling is it for a man among other things hear his wife say,

"My dear husband, 'Nay, but thou art to me'⁴⁸
guide, philosopher, and teacher in all that is
most lovely and divine."

Studies of this sort, in the first place, divert women from all untoward conduct; for a woman studying geometry will be ashamed to be a dancer, and she will not swallow any beliefs in magic charms while she is under the charm of Plato's or Xenophon's words. And if anybody professes power to pull down the moon from the sky, she will laugh at the ignorance and stupidity of women who believe these things, inasmuch as she herself is not unschooled in astronomy, and has read in the books about Aglaonice,⁴⁹ the daughter of Hegetor of Thessaly, and how she, through being thoroughly acquainted with the periods of the full moon when it is subject to eclipse, and, knowing beforehand the time when the moon was due to be overtaken by the earth's

shadow, imposed upon the women, and made them all believe that she was drawing down the moon.

It is said that no woman ever produced a child without the co-operation of a man, yet there are misshapen, fleshlike, uterine growths originating in some infection, which develop of themselves and acquire firmness and solidity, and are commonly called "moles."⁵⁰ Great care must be taken that this sort of thing does not take place in women's minds. For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrines and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement, they, left to themselves, conceive many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions.

And as for you, Eurydice, I beg that you will try to be conversant with the sayings of the wise and good, and always have at your tongue's end those sentiments which you used to cull in your girlhood's days when you were with us, so that you may give joy to your husband, and may be admired by other women, adorned, as you will be, without price, with rare and precious jewels. For you cannot acquire and put upon you this rich woman's pearls or that foreign woman's silks without buying them at a high price, but the ornaments of Theano,⁵¹ Cleobulina,⁵² Gorgo,⁵³ the wife of Leonidas, Timocleia,⁵⁴ the sister of Theagenes, Claudia⁵⁵ of old, Cornelia,⁵⁶ daughter of Scipio, and of all other women who have been admired and renowned, you may wear about you without price, and, adorning yourself with these, you may live a life of distinction and happiness.

If Sappho thought that her beautiful compositions in verse justified her in writing⁵⁷ to a certain rich woman,

Dead in the tomb shalt thou lie,
Nor shall there be thought of thee there,
For in the roses of Pierian fields
Thou hast no share,

why shall it not be even more allowable for you to entertain high and splendid thoughts of yourself, if you have a share not only in the roses but also in the fruits which the Muses bring and graciously bestow upon those who admire education and philosophy?

⁵⁰Cf. Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, IV.7.

⁵¹Wife of Pythagoras; cf. 142C, *supra*.

⁵²Also called Eumetis, daughter of Cleobulus; cf. 148C-E, 150E, and 154A-C, *infra*.

⁵³Daughter of Cleomenes, king of Sparta; cf. Herodotus, VII.239.

⁵⁴Plutarch tells of Timocleia's intrepid behaviour after the battle of Chaeroneia in *Moralia*, 259C, and *Life of Alexander*, chap. XII (p. 671A).

⁵⁵Claudia vindicated her virtue when the goddess Cybele was brought to Rome; Livy, XXIX.14.

⁵⁶Better known as the mother of the Gracchi, who said of her sons, "These are my jewels."

⁵⁷Bergk, *Poet. Lyr. Gr.* III p111, Sappho, No. 68; J. M. Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca*, in the L. C. L. I p69.

⁴⁶Plutarch's wife presumably; who Aristylla was we do not know.

⁴⁷Adapted from Homer, *Il.* VI.429.

⁴⁸Adapted from Homer, *Il.* VI.429.

⁴⁹Cf. *Moralia*, 416F. The belief that Thessalian women had the power to draw down the moon was wide-spread in antiquity. It may suffice here to refer to Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 749, and for Aglaonice to Plutarch, *Moralia* 417A.