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978-0-521-15830-5 - The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia

Edited by Albert Feuillerat and Sir Philip Sidney

Excerpt

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THE  
COUNTESSSE  
OF PEMBROKES  
ARCADIA,

WRITTEN BY SIR PHILIPPE  
SIDNEI.

LONDON

Printed for William Ponsonbie.

*Anno Domini, 1590.*

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TO MY DEARE LADIE  
AND SISTER, THE COUN-  
TESSE OF PEMBROKE.

*H*ere now have you (most deare, and most worthy to be most deare Lady) this idle worke of mine: which I fear (like the Spiders webbe) will be thought fitter to be swept away, then worn to any other purpose. For my part, in very trueth (as the cruell fathers among the Greekes, were woont to doo to the babes they would not foster) I could well find in my harte, to cast out in some desert of forgetfulnes this child, which I am loath to father. But you desired me to doo it, and your desire, to my hart is an absolute commandement. Now, it is done onelie for you, onely to you: if you keepe it to your selfe, or to such friendes, who will weigh errors in the ballaunce of good will, I hope, for the fathers sake, it will be pardoned, perchance made much of, though in it selfe it have deformities. For indeede, for severer eyes it is not, being but a trifle, and that triflinglie handled. Your deare selfe can best witnes the maner, being done in loose sheetes of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest, by sheetes, sent unto you, as fast as they were done. In summe, a young head, not so well stayed as I would it were, (and shall be when God will) having many many fancies begotten in it, if it had not ben in some way delivered, would have growen a monster, & more sorie might I be that they came in, then that they gat out. But his chiefe

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*safetie, shalbe the not walking abroad; & his chiefe protection, the bearing the liverye of your name; which (if much much good will do not deceave me) is worthy to be a sãctuary for a greater offender. This say I, because I knowe the vertue so; and this say I, because it may be ever so; or to say better, because it will be ever so. Read it then at your idle tymes, and the follyes your good judgement wil finde in it, blame not, but laugh at. And so, looking for no better stuffe, then, as in an Haberdashers shoppe, glasses, or feathers, you will continue to love the writer, who doth excedinglie love you; and most most hartelie praies you may long live, to be a princi-pall ornament to the familie of the Sidneis.*

Your loving Brother

*Philip Sidnei.*

*T*He division and summing of the Chapters was not of Sir Philip Sidneis dooing, but adventured by the over-seer of the print, for the more ease of the Readers. He therefore submits himselfe to their judgement, and if his labour answeare not the worthines of the booke, desireth pardon for it. As also if any defect be found in the Eclogues, which although they were of Sir Phillip Sidneis writing, yet were they not perused by him, but left till the worke had bene finished, that then choise should have bene made, which should have bene taken, and in what manner brought in. At this time they have bene chosen and disposed as the over-seer thought best.

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TEN BY SIR PHILIP  
SIDNEI.

THE FIRST BOOKE.

CHAP. I.

<sup>1</sup>*The sheperdish complaints of the absented lovers Strephon and Claius.* <sup>2</sup>*The second shipwrack of Pyrocles and Musidorus.*  
*Their strange saving, <sup>3</sup>enterview, and <sup>4</sup>parting.*

**I***T was in the time that the earth begins to put on her new* apparel against the approach of her lover, and that the Sun running a most evē course becoms an indifferent arbiter betweene the night and the day; when the hopelesse shepheard *Strephon* was come to the sandes, which lie against the Island of Cithera; where viewing the place with a heavy kinde of delight, and sometimes casting his eyes to the Ileward, he called his friendly rivall, the pastor *Claius* unto him, and setting first downe in his darkened countenance a dolefull copie of what he would speake: O my *Claius*, said he, hether we are now come to pay the rent, for which we are so called unto by over-busie Remembrance, Remembrance, restlesse Remembrance, which claymes not onely this dutie of us, but for it will have us forget our selves. I pray you when wee were amid our flocke, and that of other shepeheardes some were running after their sheep strayed beyond their bounds, some delighting their eyes with seeing them nibble upon the short and sweete grasse, some medicining their sicke ewes, some setting a bell for an ensigne of a sheepish squadron, some with more leasure inventing new games of exercising their bodies & sporting their wits: did Remembrance graunt us any holiday, eyther for pastime

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or devotion, nay either for necessary foode or naturall rest? but that still it forced our thoughts to worke upō this place, where we last (alas that the word last should so long last) did gaze our eyes upon her ever flourishing beautie: did it not still crie within us? Ah you base minded wretches, are your thoughts so deeply bemired in the trade of ordinary worldlings, as for respect of gaine some paultry wooll may yeeld you, to let so much time passe without knowing perfectly her estate, especially in so troublesome a season? to leave that shore unsaluted, from whence you may see to the Island where she dwelleth? to leave those steps unkissed wherein *Urania* printed the farewell of all beautie? Wel then, Remembraunce commaunded, we obeyed, and here we finde, that as our remembrance came ever cloathed unto us in the forme of this place, so this place gives newe heate to the feaver of our languishing remembrance. Yonder my *Claius*, *Urania* lighted, the verie horse (me thought) bewayled to be so disburnd: and as for thee, poore *Claius*, when thou wentst to help her downe, I saw reverence and desire so deuide thee, that thou didst at one instant both blushe and quake, and in stead of bearing her, weart ready to fall downe thy selfe. There shee sate, vouchsafing my cloake (then most gorgeous) under her: at yonder rising of the ground she turned her selfe, looking backe toward her woonted abode, and because of her parting bearing much sorrow in hir eyes, the lightsomnes whereof had yet so naturall a cherefulness, as it made even sorrow seeme to smile; at that turning she spake unto us all, opening the cherrie of hir lips, & Lord how greedily mine eares did feed upon the sweete words she uttered? And here she laide her hand over thine eyes, when shee saw the teares springing in them, as if she would conceale them from other, and yet her selfe feele some of thy sorrow: But woe is me, yonder, yonder, did she put her foote into the boate, at that instant as it were deviding her heavenly beautie, betweene the Earth and the Sea. But when she was imbarcked, did you not marke how the windes whistled, & the seas daunst for joy, how the sailes did swel with pride, and all because they had *Urania*? O *Urania*, blessed be thou *Urania*, the sweetest fairenesse and fairest sweetness: with that worde his voice brake so with sobbing, that he could say no further; and *Claius* thus answered. Alas my *Strephon* (said he) what

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needes this skore to reckon up onely our losses? What doubt is there, but that the light of this place doth call our thoughtes to appeare at the court of affection, held by that racking steward, Remembraunce? Aswell may sheepe forget to feare when they spie wolues, as wee can misse such fancies, when wee see any place made happie by her treading. Who can choose that saw her but thinke where she stayed, where she walkt, where she turned, where she spoke? But what is all this? truely no more, but as this place served us to thinke of those thinges, so those thinges serve as places to call to memorie more excellent matters. No, no, let us thinke with consideration, and consider with acknowledging, and acknowledge with admiration, and admire with love, and love with joy in the midst of all woes: let us in such sorte thinke, I say, that our poore eyes were so inriched as to behold, and our low hearts so exalted as to love, a maide, who is such, that as the greatest thing the world can shewe, is her beautie, so the least thing that may be prayed in her, is her beautie. Certainly as her eye-lids are more pleasant to behold, then two white kiddes climbing up a faire tree, and browsing on his tendrest braunches, and yet are nothing, compared to the day-shining starres contayned in them; and as her breath is more sweete then a gentle Southwest wind, which comes creeping over flowrie fieldes and shaddowed waters in the extreeme heate of summer, and yet is nothing, compared to the hony flowing speach that breath doth carrie: no more all that our eyes can see of her (though when they have seene her, what else they shall ever see is but drie stuble after clovers grasse) is to bee matched with the flocke of unspeakeable vertues laid up delightfully in that best builded folde. But in deede as wee can better consider the sunnes beautie, by marking how he guildes these waters, and moun-taines them by looking upon his owne face, too glorious for our weake eyes: so it may be our conceits (not able to beare her sun-stayning excellencie) will better way it by her workes upon some meaner subject employed. And alas, who can better witnesse that then we, whose experience is grounded upon feeling? hath not the onely love of her made us (being silly ignorant shepherds) raise up our thoughts above the ordinary levell of the worlde, so as great clearkes do not disdain our conference? hath not the desire to seeme worthie in her eyes

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made us when others were sleeping, to sit vewing the course of heavens? when others were running at base, to runne over learned writings? when other marke their sheepe, we to marke our selves? hath not shee throwne reason upon our desires, and, as it were given eyes unto *Cupid*? hath in any, but in her, love-fellowship maintained friendship betweene rivals, and beautie taught the beholders chastitie? He was going on with his praises, but *Strephon* bad him stay, & looke: & so they both perceaved a thing which floted drawing nearer and nearer to the banke; but rather by the favourable working of the Sea, then by any selfe industrie. They doubted a while what it should be; till it was cast up even hard before thē: at which time they fully saw that it was a man: Wherupon running for pitie sake unto him, they found his hands (as it should appeare, constanter frends to his life then his memorie) fast griping upon the edge of a square small coffer, which lay all under his breast: els in him selfe no shew of life, so as the boord seemed to bee but a beere to carry him a land to his Sepulchre. So drew they up a young man of so goodly shape, and well pleasing favour, that one would think death had in him a lovely countenance; and, that though he were naked, nakednes was to him an apparrell. That sight increased their compassion, and their compassion called up their care; so that lifting his feete above his head, making a great deale of salt water to come out of his mouth, they layd him upon some of their garments, and fell to rub and chafe him, till they brought him to recover both breath the servant, & warmth the companion of living. At length, opening his eyes, he gave a great groane, (a dolefull note but a pleasaunt dittie) for by that, they found not onely life, but strength of life in him. They therefore continued on their charitable office, until (his spirits being well returned,) hee (without so much as thanking them for their paines) gate up, and looking round about to the uttermost lymittes of his sight, and crying upon the name of *Pyrocles*, nor seeing nor hearing cause of comfort: what (said he) and shall *Musidorus* live after *Pyrocles*? therewithall hee offered wilfully to cast destruction & himselfe againe into the sea: a strange sight to the shepherds, to whom it seemed, that before being in apparance dead had yet saved his life, and now comming to his life, shoulde be a cause to procure his death; but they ranne unto him, and



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pulling him backe, (then too feeble for them) by force stickled that unnatural fray. I pray you (said he) honest men, what such right have you in me, as not to suffer me to doe with my self what I list? and what pollicie have you to bestow a benefite where it is counted an injury? They hearing him speake in Greek (which was their naturall language) became the more tender hearted towards him; and considering by his calling and looking, that the losse of some deare friend was great cause of his sorow; told him they were poore men that were bound by course of humanitie to prevent so great a mischief; and that they wisht him, if opinion of some bodies perishing bred such desperate anguish in him, that he should be comforted by his owne prooffe, who had lately escaped as apparant danger as any might be. No, no (said hee) it is not for me to attend so high a blissefulness: but since you take care of mee, I pray you finde meanes that some Barke may be provided, that will goe out of the haven, that if it be possible we may finde the body farre too precious a foode for fishes: and for the hire (said he) I have within this casket, of value sufficient to content them. *Claius* presently went to a Fisherman, & having agreed with him, and provided some apparrell for the naked stranger, he embarked, and the Shepheards with him: and were no sooner gone beyond the mouth of the haven, but that some way into the sea they might discern (as it were) a stayne of the waters colour, and by times some sparkes and smoke mounting thereout. But the young man no sooner saw it, but that beating his brest, he cried, that there was the beginning of his ruine, intreating them to bend their course as neere unto it as they could: telling, how that smoake was but a small relique of a great fire, which had drivē both him & his friend rather to committe themselves to the cold mercie of the sea, then to abide the hote crueltie of the fire: and that therefore, though they both had abandoned the ship, that he was (if any where) in that course to be met withall. They steared therefore as neere thetherward as they could: but when they came so neere as their eies were ful masters of the object, they saw a sight full of piteous strangenes: a ship, or rather the carkas of the shippe, or rather some few bones of the carkas, hulling there, part broken, part burned, part drowned: death having used more then one dart to that destruction. About it floted great store

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of very rich thinges, and many chestes which might promise no lesse. And amidst the precious things were a number of dead bodies, which likewise did not onely testifie both elemēts violence, but that the chiefe violence was growen of humane inhumanitie: for their bodies were ful of grisly wounds, & their bloud had (as it were) filled the wrinkles of the seas visage: which it seemed the sea woulde not wash away, that it might witnes it is not alwaies his fault, when we condemne his crueltie: in summe, a defeate, where the conquered kept both field and spoile: a shipwrack without storme or ill footing: and a wast of fire in the midst of water.

But a litle way off they saw the mast, whose proude height now lay along; like a widdow having lost her make of whom she held her honor: but upon the mast they saw a yong man (at least if he were a man) bearing shew of about 18. yeares of age, who sate (as on horsback) having nothing upon him but his shirt, which being wrought with blew silk & gold; had a kind of resemblance to the sea: on which the sun (then neare his Westerne home) did shoote some of his beames. His haire (which the young men of Greece use to weare very long) was stirred up & down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it, as the sea had to kisse his feet; himselve full of admirable beautie, set foorth by the strangenes both of his seate & gesture: for, holding his head up full of unmoved majestie, he held a sworde aloft with his faire arme, which often he waved about his crowne as though he would threaten the world in that extremitie. But the fishermen, when they came so neere him, that it was time to throwe out a rope, by which hold they might draw him, their simplicity bred such amasement, & their amasement such a superstitiō, that (assuredly thinking it was some God begotten betweene *Neptune* and *Venus*, that had made all this terrible slaughter) as they went under sayle by him, held up their hands, and made their prayers. Which when *Musidorus* sawe, though he were almost as much ravished with joy, as they with astonishment, he leapt to the Mariner, and tooke the rope out of his hande and (saying, doest thou live, and arte well? who answered, thou canst tell best, since most of my well beyng standes in thee,) threwe it out, but alreadie the shippe was past beyond *Pyrocles*: and therefore *Musidorus* could doo no more but perswade the