# CECILIA GONZAGA

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Cecilia Gonzaga by R. C. Trevelyan

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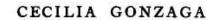
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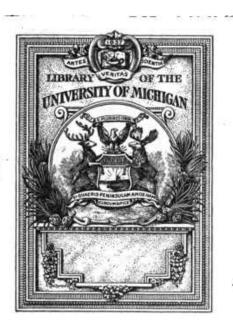
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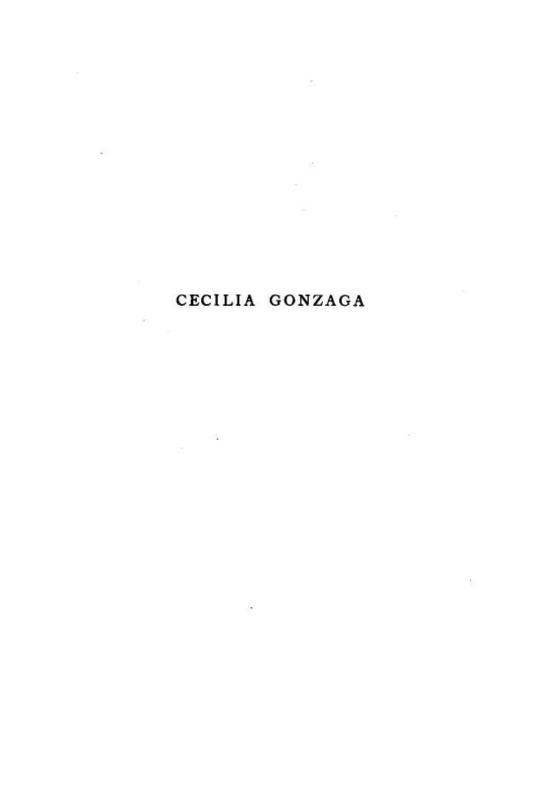
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TO MY WIFE

2





That when my daughter hears your character Profaned and tainted by outrageous slander, Her nature should shrink back and seek escape From her affianced lord, as though he were in truth What now, I trust, he doth but falsely seem?

### ANTONIO

Indeed, I find it strange—most strange, my lord, She welcomes these preposterous hearsay charges, Mere malice of insinuating tongues.

And even were such reports in some part true, To what would this amount, save that I choose My friends to please myself and no man else, Not even his Eminence, and that these friends Are men of spirit, and no puritans?

'Tis not to bring discredit on my court To say 'tis gay—that all men there may use What wholesome social liberty they please. I grant it is no cloister; and 'tis that Maybe condemns it in my bride's strict eyes—That doubtless; since her mad caprice still holds To take the veil and so escape her duty.

#### GONZAGA

None can regret more deeply than I do This strange unhappy whim, which yet proceeds From no perverse contrarious stubbornness,
But from a settled, serious desire;
Which to defeat I know no surer means
Than to convince her that the world has erred
Heeding these tales—that foolish world, my lord,
That, spying smoke, will ever shriek out fire:
Which ancient proverb I would take and turn
To this more kindly, charitable sense,
And say, we men have souls like winter fires,
Now high now low by turns. The first young
flames

That set the chimney roaring, soon sink down, Ill-tended, to a few thin trembling jets, Last flicker out, and nought is left alive Save the charred timber's red and glowing cubes, They too fast fading 'neath an ashen film. Yet stir the logs, or ply the bellows' breath, Quickening in a trice, the flames leap up, And dancing high spread pleasure through the room. So is it with the soul's Promethean fire, Fitful and prompt to dwindle, yet as swift And sudden to revive. Then let my words Come as a timely breath, and fan to flames Your smouldering virtue. From this hour shake off—Refute these slanders, showing forth your soul's Authentic nobler substance to the world,