

**CECILIA
GONZAGA**

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Cecilia Gonzaga by R. C. Trevelyan

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*Revised
by R. C. Trevelyan*
BY
R. C. TREVELYAN

AUTHOR OF "POLYPHEMUS" AND OTHER POEMS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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TO MY WIFE



CECILIA GONZAGA

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,