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Baldassare Castiglione
Collected Works

THE RENAISSANCE COLLECTION



The Collected Works of
BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE

(1478-1529)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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Version 1

The Renaissance Collection

BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE



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Collected Works of Baldassare Castiglione



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The Translations



Casatico, modern day Marcaria, 68 miles southeast of Milan — Castiglione was born in Casatico, near Mantua, Lombardy

The Book of the Courtier (1561 translation)



Translated by Thomas Hoby, 1561

The son of a minor noble family, Baldassare Castiglione was born in Casatico, near Mantua, Lombardy in 1478. At the age of sixteen, he was sent to Milan, then under the rule of Duke Ludovico Sforza, to begin his humanistic studies at the school of the renowned teacher of Greek, Demetrios Chalkokondyles, and Georgius Merula. In 1499, Castiglione's father died unexpectedly and he returned to Casatico to take his place as the head of the family. His duties included numerous official and diplomatic missions representing the Court of Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, whom Castiglione accompanied in Louis XII of France's royal entry into Milan. On a diplomatic mission to Rome, Castiglione met Francesco Gonzaga's brother-in-law, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, husband of Francesco's sister Elisabetta Gonzaga; and in 1504, a reluctant Francesco allowed Castiglione to leave and take up residence in that court.

Urbino at that time boasted one of the most refined and elegant courts in Italy, functioning as a cultural centre, managed by the Duchess Elisabetta and her sister-in-law Emilia Pia. Regular guests included: Pietro Bembo; Ludovico da Canossa; Giuliano de' Medici; Cardinal Bibbiena; the brothers Ottaviano and Federigo Fregoso from the Republic of Genoa; Francesco Maria della Rovere and Cesare Gonzaga, a cousin of both Castiglione and the Duke. The hosts and guests organised intellectual contests, pageants, dances, concerts, recitations, plays and other cultural activities, while also producing esteemed literary works.

In 1508 Francesco Maria della Rovere succeeded as Duke of Urbino and Castiglione was posted as envoy to Henry VIII of England. Also, Castiglione and the new Duke, who had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Papal States, took part in Pope Julius II's expedition against Venice, during the Italian Wars. For this the Duke conferred on Castiglione the title of Count of Novilara, a fortified hill town near Pesaro. When Pope Leo X was elected in 1512, Castiglione was sent to Rome as ambassador from Urbino. There he was associated with many artists and writers; including Raphael, whom he already knew from Urbino and who frequently sought his advice. In tribute to their friendship, Raphael painted his famous portrait of Castiglione, now held at the Louvre.

In 1516 Castiglione returned to Mantua, where he married a young lady called Ippolita Torelli, descendant of another noble Mantuan family. That Castiglione's love for Ippolita was of a very different nature from his former platonic attachment to Elisabetta Gonzaga is evidenced by the two deeply passionate letters he wrote to her that have survived. Unhappily, she died abruptly four years later, while Castiglione was away in Rome as ambassador for the Duke of Mantua.

In 1521 Pope Leo X conceded to him the tonsura (first sacerdotal ceremony) and so commenced Castiglione's second, ecclesiastical career. A few years later, Pope Clement VII dispatched him to Spain as ambassador of the Holy See in Madrid and in this role he followed court of Emperor Charles V to Toledo, Seville and Granada. In 1527, at the time of the Sack of Rome, Pope Clement VII suspected Castiglione of having conducted a biased friendship with the Spanish Emperor. Castiglione answered both the Pope and Valdés in two famous letters from Burgos. He took Valdés to task, severely and at length, in his response to the latter's comments about

the Sack of Rome. While in his letter to the Pope, he criticised Vatican policies, asserting that its own inconsistencies and vacillations had undermined its stated aim of pursuing a fair agreement with the Emperor and had provoked Charles V to attack.

Against all expectations, Castiglione received the Pope's apologies and the Emperor honored him with the offer of the position of Bishop of Avila. Historians today believe that Castiglione had carried out his ambassadorial duties to Spain in an honorable manner and bore no responsibility for the Sack of Rome.

A seminal work of the high Italian Renaissance, which had a lasting and far-reaching impact across Europe, Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) is a lengthy philosophical dialogue on the topic of what constitutes an ideal courtier, who is worthy to befriend and advise a prince or political leader. Inspired by the Spanish court during his time as Ambassador of the Holy See (1524-1529), Castiglione set the book in his years as a courtier in the Duchy of Urbino. It was enormously popular and was assimilated by its readers into the genre of prescriptive courtesy books or books of manners — dealing with issues of etiquette, self-presentation, and morals, particularly at princely or royal courts. *Il libro del cortegiano* minutely portrays the small courts of the Renaissance period that were vanishing in the Italian Wars — with a reverent tribute to the friends of Castiglione's youth. Castiglione especially pays tribute to the chastely married Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga of Urbino, to whom he had addressed a sequence of Platonic sonnets (see poetry section). *Il libro del cortegiano* was composed over the course of twenty years, beginning in 1508, and ultimately published in 1528 by the Aldine Press in Venice just before the Castiglione's death.

The text is organised as a series of conversations supposed to have taken place over four nights in 1507 between the courtiers of the Duchy of Urbino, at a time when Castiglione was himself a member of the Duke's Court, though the author himself is not included as one of the interlocutors. The nature of an ideal courtier is debated between the many characters on the basis of various qualities, such as the need for noble rank, physical prowess, modesty and pleasant physique, among other attributes. Different characters grant different levels of importance to these various qualities throughout the discussion.

The ideal courtier is described as having a cool mind, a good voice (with beautiful, elegant and brave words) along with a dignified bearing and gestures. At the same time, the courtier is expected to have a warrior's spirit, to be athletic and enjoy a sound knowledge of the humanities, classics and fine arts. Over the course of four evenings, various members of the court try to describe the perfect gentleman. In the process, they debate the nature of nobility, humour, women and, of course, love.

Of the many qualities Castiglione's characters attribute to their perfect courtier, oratory and the manner in which the courtier presents himself while speaking is amongst the most highly discussed. To Castiglione, the courtier's speech and behaviour in general should make others "marvel at him, to transform himself into a beautiful spectacle for others to contemplate." Castiglione's characters discuss how this ideal courtier should strive to impress his audience and win its approval. Similar to the Classical Roman rhetoricians Cicero and Quintilian, Castiglione places stress on the importance of delivery while speaking. In Book I, the Count states that when the courtier speaks he must have a "sonorous, clear, sweet and well sounding" voice that is neither too effeminate nor too rough and be "tempered by a calm face and with a play of the eyes that shall give an effect of grace". This grace (*grazia*) becomes an important element in the courtier's appearance to the audience.

Other principal themes include the impression of effortlessness (*sprezzatura*); the essence of humour; the best form of Italian to speak and write; the relation between the courtier and his prince (stressing the need to speak frankly and not to flatter); the qualities of the ideal court lady (notably “a discreet modesty”); and the definition of honourable love.

Il libro del cortegiano was a great publishing success by the standards of the time. It was originally written for and read by noblewomen, including the poet Vittoria Colonna, Isabella d’Este, marchioness of Mantua and the author’s mother. The book was widely distributed around Europe, with editions printed in six languages and in as many as twenty European centres. The 1561 English translation by Thomas Hoby had a major influence on the conception of what a true English gentleman should be. Castiglione’s text enjoyed influence for many generations, not least in Elizabethan England following Hoby’s translation, at a time when Italian culture was very much in fashion. Noted English readers included politicians such as Thomas Cromwell and Sir Christopher Hatton, intellectuals such as Roger Ascham, Robert Burton and Francis Bacon, and perhaps included the poets Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare.

Castiglione’s great book successfully defined the modern archetype of the Western ‘gentleman’. It transformed elite identity across Europe by shifting the standard of nobility from raw military force to an integrated balance of physical skill, classical letters and effortless social grace. Few works of the Renaissance period have had such a lasting impact as *Il libro del cortegiano* on the development of Europe’s social conduct, influencing major literary and political figures for generations.

IL LIBRO DEL CORTEGIANO
DEL CONTE BALDESAR
CASTIGLIONE.



Hassi nel privilegio, & nella gratia ottenuta dalla Illustrissima
Signoria che in questa, ne in niun'altra Città del suo
dominio si possa imprimere, ne altroue
impresso uendere questo libro
del Cortegiano per x. anni
sotto le pene in esso
contenute.

The first edition's title page



Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione by Raphael, Louvre Museum, c. 1515

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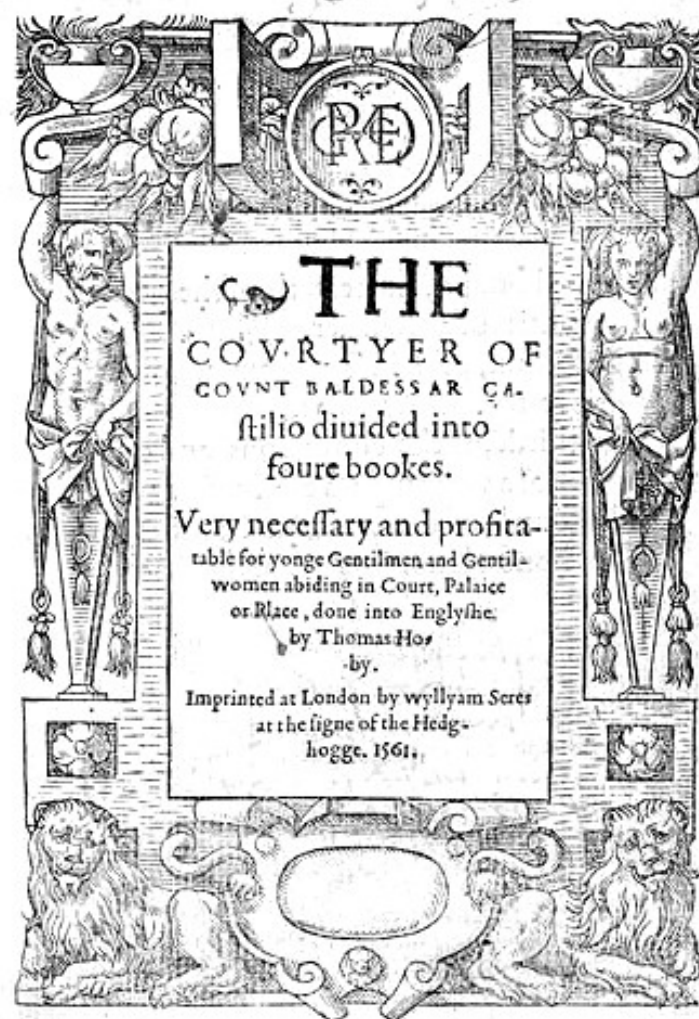
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The first edition title page of this translation

THE PRINTER TO THE READER

GREETYNG.



NOWE *AT THE* length (gentle reader) through the diligence of Maister Hoby in penninge, and mine in printing, thou hast here set forth unto thee, the booke of the Courtier: which for thy benefite had bene done longe since, but that there were certain places in it whiche of late yeares beeing misliked of some, that had the perusing of it (with what reason judge thou) the Authour thought it much better to keepe it in darknes a while, then to put it in light unperfect and in peecemeale to serve the time. Use it therfore, and so peruse it, that for thy profite, first he, and then I, maye thinke our travayle herein wel imployed.

Fare well.

THOMAS SACKEVYLLE IN COMMENDATION OF THE WORKE. TO THE READER.



These royall kinges, that reare up to the skye
Their Palaice tops, and decke them all with gold:
With rare and curious woorkes they feed the eye:
And showe what riches here great Princes hold.
A rarer work and richer far in worth,
Castilios hand presenteth here to the,
No proud ne golden Court doth he set furth
But what in Court a Courtier ought to be.
The Prince he raiseth hounge and mightie walles,
Castilio frames a wight of noble fame:
The kinge with gorgeous Tyssue claddes his halles,
The Count with golden vertue deckes the same,
Whos passing skill lo Hobbies pen displaise
To Brittain folk, a work of worthy praise.



End of Sample