

cannot be moderate or restrain by his wisdom the impulse of wantonness or keep from doing things that lead to death. Indeed, it is said that wise men become more wild with love and indulge more ardently in the pleasures of the flesh than those who have less knowledge to control them. But wise men, after they have sinned in love are accustomed to despise the excesses of lust more than those who have little knowledge to support them. Who was filled with greater wisdom than Solomon, yet he sinned by wantoning beyond measure, and because of his love for women he did not fear to worship strange gods. And who was found greater or more famous for wisdom than David the Prophet, who, although he had innumerable concubines, lusted after the wife of Urias and dishonored her in adultery and like a perfidious homicide killed her husband?²⁴ What lover of women, then, can moderate his own desire if men so strong in the precepts of wisdom could make no use of it when the love of women was in question, and could not restrain their wantonness?

Again we confound lovers with another argument. The mutual love which you seek in women you cannot find, for no woman ever loved a man or could bind herself to a lover in the mutual bonds of love. For a woman's desire is to get rich through love, but not to give her lover the solaces that please him. Nobody ought to wonder at this, because it is natural. According to the nature of their sex all women are spotted with the vice of a grasping and avaricious disposition, and they are always alert and devoted to the search for money or profit. I have traveled through a great many parts of the world, and although I made careful inquiries I could never find a man who would say that he had discovered a woman who if a thing was not offered to her would not demand it insistently and would not hold off from falling in love unless she got rich gifts in one way or another. But even though you have given a woman innumerable presents, if she discovers that you are less attentive about giving her things than you used to be, or if she learns that you have lost your money, she will treat you like a

²⁴ II Kings (II Samuel), chap. 11.

perfect stranger who has come from some other country, and everything you do will bore her or annoy her. You cannot find a woman who will love you so much or be so constant to you that if somebody else comes to her and offers her presents she will be faithful to her love. Women have so much avarice that generous gifts break down all the barriers of their virtue. If you come with open hands, no women will let you go away without that which you seek; while if you don't promise to give them a great deal, you needn't come to them and ask for anything. Even if you are distinguished by royal honors, but bring no gifts with you, you will get absolutely nothing from them; you will be turned away from their doors in shame.²⁵ Because of their avarice all women are thieves, and we say they carry purses. You cannot find a woman of such lofty station or blessed with such honor or wealth that an offer of money will not break down her virtue, and there is no man, no matter how disgraceful and low-born he is, who cannot seduce her if he has great wealth. This is so because no woman ever has enough money—just as no drunkard ever thinks he has had enough to drink. Even if the whole earth and sea were turned to gold, they could hardly satisfy the avarice of a woman.

Furthermore, not only is every woman by nature a miser, but she is also envious and a slanderer of other women, greedy, a slave to her belly, inconstant, fickle in her speech, disobedient and impatient of restraint, spotted with the sin of pride and desirous of vainglory, a liar, a drunkard, a babbler, no keeper of secrets, too much given to wantonness, prone to every evil, and never loving any man in her heart.

Now woman is a miser, because there isn't a wickedness in the world that men can think of that she will not boldly indulge in for the sake of money, and, even if she has an abundance she will not help anyone who is in need. You can more easily scratch a diamond with your fingernail than you can by any human ingenuity get a woman to consent to giving you any of her savings. Just as Epicurus believed that the highest good lay in serving the belly, so a woman thinks that the only things

²⁵ Ovid *Art of Love* II. 279-280.

worth while in this world are riches and holding on to what she has. You can't find any woman so simple and foolish that she is unable to look out for her own property with a greedy tenacity, and with great mental subtlety get hold of the possessions of someone else. Indeed, even a simple woman is more careful about selling a single hen than the wisest lawyer is in deeding away a great castle. Furthermore, no woman is ever so violently in love with a man that she will not devote all her efforts to using up his property. You will find that this rule never fails and admits of no exceptions.

That every woman is envious is also found to be a general rule, because a woman is always consumed with jealousy over another woman's beauty, and she loses all pleasure in what she has. Even if she knows that it is the beauty of her own daughter that is being praised, she can hardly avoid being tortured by hidden envy. Even the neediness and the great poverty of the neighbor women seem to her abundant wealth and riches, so that we think the old proverb which says

The crop in the neighbor's field is always more fertile,
And your neighbor's cow has a larger udder.²⁶

seems to refer to the female sex without any exceptions. It can hardly come to pass that one woman will praise the good character or the beauty of another, and if she should happen to do so, the next minute she adds some qualification that undoes all she has said in her praise.

And so it naturally follows that a woman is a slanderer, because only slander can spring from envy and hate. That is a rule that no woman ever wanted to break; she prefers to keep it unbroken. It is not easy to find a woman whose tongue can ever spare anybody or who can keep from words of detraction. Every woman thinks that by running down others she adds to her own praise and increases her own reputation—a fact which shows very clearly to everybody that women have very little sense. For all men agree and hold it as a general rule that words of

²⁶ Ovid *Art of Love* 1. 349-350.

dispraise hurt only the person who utters them, and they detract from the esteem in which he is held; but no woman on this account keeps from speaking evil and attacking the reputation of good people, and so I think we must insist that no woman is really wise. Every quality that a wise man has is wholly foreign to a woman, because she believes, without thinking, everything she hears, and she is very free about insisting on being praised, and she does a great many other unwise things which it would be tedious for me to enumerate.

Every woman, likewise, is sullied by the vice of greediness, because every woman tries with all her might to get everything good for herself, not only from other men but even from a husband who is very suitable for her, and when she gets them she tries to keep them so that they are of no use to anybody. So great is the avarice by which women are dominated that they think nothing of running counter to the laws, divine and human, and they try to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Indeed, women think that to give to no one and to cling with all their might to everything, whether rightly or wrongly acquired, is the height of virtue and that all men ought to commend it. To this rule there are no exceptions, not even in the case of the Queen.

Woman is also such a slave to her belly that there is nothing she would be ashamed to assent to if she were assured of a fine meal, and no matter how much she has she never has any hope that she can satisfy her appetite when she is hungry; she never invites anybody to eat with her, but when she eats she always seeks out hidden and retired places and she usually likes to eat more than normal. But although in all other respects those of the feminine sex are miserly and hold with might and main to what they have, they will greedily waste their substance to gobble up food, and no one ever saw a woman who would not, if tempted, succumb to the vice of gluttony. We can detect all these qualities in Eve, the first woman, who, although she was created by the hand of God without man's agency, was not afraid to eat the forbidden fruit and for her gluttony was deservedly driven from her

home in Paradise.²⁷ So if that woman who was created by the hand of God without sin could not refrain from the vice of gluttony, what about the others whom their mothers conceived in sin and who never live free from fault? Therefore let it be laid down for you as a general rule that you will rarely fail to get from a woman anything you desire if you will take the trouble to feed her lavishly and often.

Woman is commonly found to be fickle, too, because no woman ever makes up her mind so firmly on any subject that she will not quickly change it on a little persuading from anyone. A woman is just like melting wax, which is always ready to take a new form and to receive the impress of anybody's seal. No woman can make you such a firm promise that she will not change her mind about the matter in a few minutes. No woman is ever of the same mind for an hour at a time, so that Martianus had good reason to say, "Come now, cease your delay, for a woman is always fickle and changeable."²⁸ Therefore you must not hope to get any satisfaction from any woman's promise unless you are sure you already have the thing she promises you; it is not expedient to rely upon the civil law for what a woman promises, but you should always bring your bag with you, ready to take it. When dealing with women there seems to be no exception to that old saying, "Don't delay; putting off things you are ready for always does harm."²⁹

We know that everything a woman says is said with the intention of deceiving, because she always has one thing in her heart and another on her lips. No man can pride himself on knowing a woman so well or on being on such good terms with her that he can know her secret thoughts or when she means what she says. No woman ever trusts any of her men friends, and she thinks every one of them is a

²⁷ "Adam, set in Paradise, lost the glory of immortality through gluttony. . . . Adam was made of mud by the hands of God." Augustine *Sermon cxlvii* (referring to Genesis iii. 17).

²⁸ The passage comes ultimately from Vergil's *Aeneid* iv. 569; Trojel says that he has been unable to find the passage in the works of Martianus Capella.

²⁹ The passage is from Lucan's *Pharsalia* i. 281, but it is quoted by Hildebert of Le Mans in his *Moral Philosophy* (i. 28), from which Andreas seems to get other ideas.

downright deceiver; so she always keeps herself in the mood for deception, and everything she says is deceitful and uttered with a mental reservation. Therefore never rely upon a woman's promise or upon her oath, because there is no honesty in her; always be careful to keep your intentions hidden from her, and never tell her your secrets; in that way you may cheat one trick with another and forestall her frauds. Samson's good character is well enough known to everybody, but because he couldn't keep his secrets from a woman he was, we read, betrayed by her in the duplicity of her heart, was overcome by a troop of his enemies, and was captured and deprived of both his bodily strength and his eyesight.³⁰ We learn, too, of innumerable other women who, according to the stories, have shamefully betrayed husbands or lovers who were not able to keep secrets from them.

Every woman is likewise stained by the sin of disobedience, because there isn't in the world a woman so wise and discreet that, if anyone forbids her to misuse anything she will not strive against this prohibition with all her might and do what she is told not to. Therefore the remark of the wise man, "We strive for what is forbidden, and always want what is denied us,"³¹ should be applied to all women without exception.

We read, too, of a very wise man who had a wife whom he hated. Because he wanted to avoid the sin of killing her with his own hand, and he knew that women always strive eagerly after what is forbidden them, he prepared a very valuable flask into which he put wine of the best and most fragrant kind, mixed with poison, and he said to his wife, "My sweetest wife, be careful not to touch this vessel, and don't venture to taste any of this liquor, because it is poisonous and deadly to human beings." But the woman scorned her husband's prohibition, for no sooner had he gone away than she drank some of the forbidden liquor and so died of the poison. But why should we mention this, since we know of worse cases? Wasn't it Eve, the first woman, who, although she was formed by the hand of God, destroyed herself by

³⁰ *Judg.* 16: 15-21.

³¹ Ovid *Amours* III. iv. 17.