

## The Two Noble Kinsmen

### SYNOPSIS

#### *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

(a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher)

On the day planned for his wedding to Hippolyta, Duke Theseus of Athens is asked by three queens to go to war against King Creon of Thebes, who has not allowed their husbands to be buried with the proper ceremonies. In Thebes the 'two noble kinsmen', Palamon and Arcite, realize that their hatred of Creon's tyranny must take second place to the defence of the city, but although they fight bravely Theseus is victorious.

Imprisoned in Athens, the cousins catch sight of Hippolyta's sister, Emilia, and both fall in love with her at first sight. Arcite is released, but disguises himself so that he can remain in Athens and talk to Emilia, while Palamon escapes with the help of the jailer's daughter, who loves him. When they meet, the cousins agree that they must fight to the death for Emilia, but they are found by Theseus, who decides that, instead of having them executed as he at first plans, he will arrange a tournament. The winner will marry Emilia, who is unsure which of the two she prefers. The loser will also lose his head.

The jailer's daughter has been driven mad by unrequited love, but accepts her former boyfriend when he pretends to be Palamon. Before the tournament Arcite prays to Mars, while Palamon prays to Venus. Emilia prays to Diana for the victory to go to the man who loves her most. Although Arcite is the winner, he is thrown from his horse before Palamon can be executed, and with his last breath Arcite leaves Emilia to Palamon, who meditates on love and desire. Theseus accepts the new situation.

Media:

CD Audio:

*The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

*[Michael Mitchell]*