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SUMMARY: In honour of Oxford's marriage to Anne Cecil on 16 December 1571, Giles Fletcher the elder (d.1611) composed a Latin eclogue entitled *In nuptias clarissimi D. Edouardi Vere, Comitiss Oxoni, et Ann Cecili optima ac illustrissima feminae. Aecloga Callianissa*. In addition to celebrating the marriage, the verses suggest that Oxford was an expert horseman. Fletcher was the father of the poets Giles Fletcher the younger (1565/6-1623) and Phineas Fletcher, and the uncle of the dramatist John Fletcher (1579-1625). The translation below of part of the eclogue was made by B.M. Ward from the manuscript at Hatfield House (see Ward, B.M., *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 From Contemporary Documents* (London: John Murray, 1928) pp. 60-1, 64).

Fortunate art thou as a father-in-law, witnessing the marriage of thy daughter, and happy art thou as a son-in-law, and thou maiden in thy husband, and last of all, happy bridegroom in thy bride. Not as an oath-breaker doth Hymen join these bands, for both the bridegroom and the bride possess that which each may love, and every quality which may be loved. For like a river swelling the banks, by means of intercourse and sympathy love will arise, and the glory of rank, and children recalling the qualities of both parents, for the valour of the father and the prudence of the mother will come out in the offspring. . . . Hail to thee, Hymen, hail!

But if at any time with fiery energy he should call up a mimicry of war, he controls his foaming steed with a light rein, and armed with a long spear rides to the encounter. Fearlessly he settles himself in the saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with spurred heel he rouses his charger. The gallant animal with fiery energy collects himself together, and flying quicker than the wind, beats the ground with his hoofs, and again is pulled up short as the reins control him.

Bravo, valiant youth! 'Tis thus that martial spirits pass through their apprenticeship in war. Thus do yearling bulls try the feel of each other's horns. Thus too do goats not yet expert in fighting begin to butt one against the other, and soon venture to draw blood with their horns.

The country sees in thee both a leader pre-eminent in war, and a skilful man-at-arms. Thy valour puts forth leaves, and begins to bear early fruit, and glory already ripens in thy earliest deed.