

SUMMARY: *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought With a Million of Repentance* (STC 12245) was entered in the Stationers' Register to William Wright 'upon the peril of Henry Chettle' on 20 September 1592, and was printed for Wright by John Danter and John Wolfe. Henry Chettle, who had entered into partnership with Danter and William Hoskins in 1591, and who continued to work for Danter for several years after the partnership dissolved, claimed in a prefatory epistle to *Kind-Heart's Dream* that, because Greene's handwriting was illegible, he (Chettle) had copied out Greene's manuscript so that the work could be licenced (see Jowett, John, 'Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and Greene's Groatsworth of Wit', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, December 1993, 87:4, pp. 453-86 at p. 469, and Jowett, John, 'Notes on Henry Chettle', *Review of English Studies*, August 1994, New Series, 45:180, pp. 384-8 at p. 385).

A second repentance pamphlet, *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, was entered to John Danter in the Stationers' Register on 6 October 1592. However a few months earlier a work entitled *The Repentance of a Conycatcher, with the life and death of [blank] Mourton and Ned Browne, two notable conycatchers The one latelie executed at Tyborne the other at Aix in Ffraunce* had been entered to Danter on 21 August 1592 (see Jowett, 'Johannes Factotum', p. 464). The material described in this entry of 21 August 1592 pertaining to the life and repentance of Ned Browne was published in the same year under a new title as *The Black Book's Messenger*. The remaining material mentioned in this entry involving the life and repentance of Mourton was never published as *The Repentance of a Conycatcher*, despite a promise to that effect by Greene in the epistle to *The Black Book's Messenger*, and it seems likely that this material concerning the life and repentance of Mourton was revised and published after Greene's death on 3 September 1592 as *The Repentance of Robert Greene*. See, for example, the passages in *The Repentance of Robert Greene* which use the cant language of thieves and cony-catchers, and the author's confession that he has 'exceeded all other' in theft and murder, which suggest that Mourton's life and repentance formed the original of *The Repentance of Robert Greene*. *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* and *The Repentance of Robert Greene* provide almost every biographical 'fact' known about Greene's life. However after decades of intensive research scholars have been unable to find the slightest trace in the historical records of Norwich of a Greene family which corresponds in any respect to the description given by Robert Greene of his alleged family and background in *The Repentance of Robert Greene*, which suggests that the family background in Norwich described in *The Repentance of Robert Greene* may actually have been the family background of the cony-catcher Mourton. If this is in fact what occurred, all the autobiographical material concerning the writer Robert Greene contained in *The Repentance of Robert Greene* becomes, by definition, highly suspect.

Similarly, the fact that Henry Chettle admitted copying the manuscript of *Groatsworth* after Greene's death renders the autobiographical material in *Groatsworth* suspect, particularly since some details in the latter part of the life of Roberto in *Groatsworth* may owe something to the material on Mourton in the unpublished *The Repentance of a Conycatcher*. At the same time, it is clear from the style of *Groatsworth* that it was not written by Henry Chettle, as has sometimes been alleged on the basis of Warren Austin

1969 study. The style and vocabulary of *Groatsworth* are consonant with the style and vocabulary of Greene's other prose tracts. Moreover Austin himself acknowledged that his 1969 study was inconclusive (see Austin, Warren, 'Groatsworth and Shake-scene', *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, Spring 1992).

The modern spelling version of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* below was prepared from the Bodley Head edition of 1923 by G.B. Harrison.

Greene's Groatsworth of Wit,
bought with a million of repentance

Describing the folly of youth, the falsehood of makeshift
flatterers, the misery of the negligent, and
mischiefs of deceiving courtesans

Written before his death and published at his dying request

Foelicem fuisse infaustum

London
Imprinted for William Wright
1592

To the gentlemen readers

Gentlemen, the swan sings melodiously before death, that in all his lifetime useth but a jarring sound. Greene, though able enough to write, yet deeplier searched with sickness than ever heretofore, sends you his swan-like song for that he fears he shall never again carol to you wonted love-lays, never again discover to you youth's pleasures. However yet sickness, riot, incontinence have at once shown their extremity, yet if I recover, you shall all see more fresh sprigs than ever sprang from me, directing you how to live, yet not dissuading ye from love. This is the last I have writ, and I fear me the last I shall write. And however I have been censured for some of my former books, yet, gentlemen, I protest they were as I had special information. But passing them, I commend this to your favourable censures, that like an embryo without shape I fear me will be thrust into the world. If I live to end it, it shall be otherwise; if not, yet will I commend it to your courtesies, that you may as well be acquainted with my repentant death as you have lamented my careless course of life. But as *Nemo ante obitum felix* [=No man can be called happy before his death], so *Acta exitus probat* [=The outcome is the measure of our actions]. Beseeching therefore so to be deemed hereof as I deserve, I leave the work to your likings, and leave you to your delights.

In an island bounded with the ocean there was sometime a city situated, made rich by merchandise and populous by long peace. The name is not mentioned in the antiquary, or else worn out by time's antiquity; what it was, it greatly skills not, but therein thus it happened. An old new-made gentleman herein dwelt, of no small credit, exceeding wealth, and large conscience. He had gathered from many to bestow upon one, for though he had two sons, he esteemed but one, that being (as himself) brought up to be gold's bondsman was therefore held heir-apparent of his ill-gathered goods. The other was a scholar, and married to a proper gentlewoman, and therefore least regarded, for 'tis an old-said saw: *To learning and law/ There's no greater foe/ Than they that nothing know.*

Yet was not the father altogether unlettered, for he had good experience in a noverint, and by the universal terms therein contained had driven many a young gentleman to seek unknown countries. Wise he was, for he bore office in his parish and sat as formally in his fox-furred gown as if he had been a very upright-dealing burgess. He was religious too, never without a book at his belt, and a bolt in his mouth ready to shoot through his sinful neighbour. And Latin he had somewhere learned, which, though it were but little, yet was it profitable, for he had this philosophy written in a ring, *Tu tibi cura*, which precept he curiously observed, being in self-love so religious as he held it no point of charity to part with anything of which he, living, might make use.

But as all mortal things are momentary, and no certainty can be found in this uncertain world, so Gorinius (for that shall be this usurer's name), after many a gouty pang that had pinched his exterior parts, many a curse of the people that mounted into heaven's presence, was at last with his last summons by a deadly disease arrested, whereagainst,

when he had long contended, and was by physicians given over, he called his two sons before him, and, willing to perform the old proverb *Qualis vita finis ita* [=As the life, so the end], he thus prepared himself, and admonished them.

My sons (for so your mother said ye were, and so I assure myself one of you is, and of the other I will make no doubt), you see the time is come which I thought would never have approached, and we must now be separated, I fear never to meet again. This sixteen years daily have I lived vexed with disease, and might I live sixteen more, however miserably, I should think it happy. But death is relentless, and will not be entreated; witless, and knows not what good my gold might do him; senseless, and hath no pleasure in the delightful places I would offer him. In brief, I think he hath with this fool my eldest son been brought up in the university, and therefore accounts that in riches is no virtue. But thou, my son (laying then his hand on the younger's head), have thou another spirit, for without wealth, life is a death. What is gentry, if wealth be wanting, but base servile beggary? Some comfort yet it is unto me to think how many gallants sprung of noble parents have crouched to Gorinius to have sight of his gold (O gold, desired gold, admired gold!), and have lost their patrimonies to Gorinius because they have not returned by their day that adored creature, how many scholars have written rimes in Gorinius' praise, and received (after long capping and reverence), a sixpenny reward in sign of my superficial liberality. Briefly, my young Lucanio, how I have been revered thou seest, when honest men, I confess, have been set far off. For to be rich is to be anything, wise, honest, worshipful, or what not? I tell thee, my son, when I came first to this city my whole wardrobe was only a suit of white sheepskins; my wealth an old groat; my winning, the wide world. At this instant (O grief, to part with it), I have in ready coin threescore thousand pound; in plate and jewels, 15 thousand; in bonds and specialties as much; in land, nine hundred pound by the year, all which, Lucanio, I bequeath to thee. Only I reserve for Roberto, thy well-read brother, an old groat (being the stock I first began with), wherewith I wish him to buy a groatsworth of wit, for he in my life hath reproved my manner of life, and therefore at my death shall not be contaminated with corrupt gain.

Here, by the way, gentlemen, must I digress to show the reason of Gorinius' present speech. Roberto being come from the Academy to visit his father, there was a great feast provided where, for table-talk, Roberto, knowing his father and most of the company to be execrable usurers, inveighed mightily against that abhorred vice, insomuch that he urged tears from divers of their eyes, and compunction in some of their hearts. Dinner being past, he comes to his father, requesting him to take no offence at his liberal speech, seeing what he had uttered was truth. *Angry, son?* said he. *No, by my honesty (and that is somewhat, I may say to you), but use it still, and if thou canst persuade any of my neighbours from lending upon usury, I should have the more customers.* To which, when Roberto would have replied, he shut himself into his study and fell to tell over his money.

This was Roberto's offence. Now return we to sick Gorinius who, after he had thus unequally distributed his goods and possessions, began to ask his sons how they liked his bequests. Either seemed agreed, and Roberto urged him with nothing more than repentance of his sin. *Look to thy own,* said he, *fond boy. And come, my Lucanio, let me*

give thee good counsel before my death. As for you, sir, your books are your counsellors, and therefore to them I bequeath you. Ah Lucanio, my only comfort, because I hope thou wilt, as thy father, be a gatherer, let me bless thee before I die. Multiply in wealth, my son, by any means thou mayest. Only fly alchemy, for therein are more deceits than her beggarly artists have words, and yet are the wretches more talkative than women. But my meaning is thou shouldst not stand on conscience in causes of profit, but heap treasure upon treasure for the time of need. Yet seem to be devout, else shalt thou be held vile. Frequent holy exercises, grave company, and above all use the conversation of young gentlemen who are so wedded to prodigality that once in a quarter necessity knocks at their chamber-doors. Proffer them kindness to relieve their wants, but be sure of good assurance; give fair words till days of payment come, and then use my course: spare none. What though they tell of conscience (as a number will talk)? Look but into the dealings of the world, and thou shalt see it is but idle words. Seest thou not many perish in the streets and fall to theft for need whom small succour would relieve? Then where is conscience, and why art thou bound to use it more than other men? Seest thou not daily forgeries, perjuries, oppressions, rackings of the poor, raisings of rents, enhancing of duties, even by them that should be all conscience if they meant as they speak? But, Lucanio, if thou read well this book (and with that he reached him Machiavel's works at large) thou shalt see what 'tis to be so fool-holy as to make scruple of conscience where profit presents itself. Besides, though hast an instance by the [sic for 'thy'] threadbare brother here, who, willing to do no wrong, hath lost his child's right, for who would wish anything to him that knows not how to use it?

So much, Lucanio, for conscience. And yet, I know not what's the reason, but somewhat stings me inwardly when I speak of it. Aye, father, said Roberto, it is the worm of conscience that urges you at the last hour to remember your life, that eternal life may follow your repentance. Out, fool, said this miserable father, I feel it now. It was only a stitch. I will forward with my exhortation to Lucanio. As I said, my son, make spoil of young gallants by insinuating thyself amongst them, and be not moved to think their ancestors were famous, but consider thine were obscure, and that thy father was the first gentleman of the name. Lucanio, thou art yet a bachelor, and so keep thee till thou meet with one that is thy equal, I mean in wealth. Regard not beauty; it is but a bait to entice thine neighbour's eye, and the most fair are commonly most fond. Use not too many familiars, for few prove friends, and as easy it is to weigh the wind as to dive into the thoughts of worldly glazers. I tell thee, Lucanio, I have seen fourscore winters besides the odd seven, yet saw I never him that I esteemed as my friend but gold, that desired creature, whom I have so dearly loved and found so firm a friend as nothing to me, having it, hath been wanting. No man but may think dearly of a true friend, and so do I of it, laying it under sure locks, and lodging my heart therewith.

*But now (ah, my Lucanio), now must I leave it, and to thee I leave it with this lesson: love none but thyself, if thou wilt live esteemed. So turning him to his study where his chief treasure lay, he loud cried out in the wise man's words: *O mors quam amara, O death, how bitter is thy memory to him that hath all pleasures in this life, and so with two or three lamentable groans he left his life, and to make short work, was by Lucanio his son interred, as the custom is, with some solemnity.**

But leaving him that hath left the world to Him that censureth of every worldly man, pass we to his sons, and see how his long-laid-up store is by Lucanio looked into. The youth was of condition simple, shamefast, and flexible to any counsel, which Roberto perceiving, and pondering how little was left to him, grew into an inward contempt of his father's unequal legacy and determinate resolution to work Lucanio all possible injury. Hereupon thus converting the sweetness of his study to the sharp thirst of revenge, he (as envy is seldom idle) sought out fit companions to effect his unbrotherly resolution. Neither in such a case is ill company far to seek, for the sea hath scarce so many jeopardies as populous cities have deceiving sirens, whose eyes are adamant, whose words are witchcrafts, whose doors lead down to death. With one of these female serpents Roberto consorts, and they conclude whatever they compassed equally to share to their contents. This match made, Lucanio was by his brother brought to the bush, where he had scarce pruned his wings but he was fast limed, and Roberto had what he expected. But that we may keep form, you shall hear how it fortuneth.

Lucanio being on a time very pensive, his brother brake with him in these terms. *I wonder, Lucanio, why you are disconsolate, that want not anything in the world that may work your content. If wealth may delight a man, you are with that sufficiently furnished. If credit may procure any comfort, your word, I know well, is as well accepted as any man's obligation. In this city are fair buildings and pleasant gardens, and cause of solace; of them I am assured you have your choice. Consider, brother, you are young; then plod not altogether in meditating on our father's precepts which, howsoever they savoured of profit, were most unsavoury to one of your years applied. You must not think but sundry merchants of this city expect your company, sundry gentlemen desire your familiarity, and by conversing with such you will be accounted a gentleman, otherwise a peasant if ye live thus obscurely. Besides, which I had almost forgot, and then had all the rest been nothing, you are a man by nature furnished with all exquisite proportion, worthy the love of any courtly lady, be she never so amorous. You have wealth to maintain her (of women not little longed for). Words to court her you shall not want, for myself will be your secretary. Briefly, why stand I to distinguish ability in particularities when in one word it may be said which no man can gainsay: Lucanio lacketh nothing to delight a wife, nor anything but a wife to delight him.*

My young master, being thus clawed and puffed up with his own praise, made no longer delay, but having on his holiday hose, he tricked himself up, and, like a fellow that meant good sooth, he clapped his brother on the shoulder and said: *Faith, brother Roberto, and ye say the word, let's go seek a wife while 'tis hot, both of us together. I'll pay well, and I dare turn you loose to say as well as any of them all. Well, I'll do my best,* said Roberto, *and since ye are so forward, let's go now and try your good fortune.*

With this, forth they walk, and Roberto went directly toward the house where Lamilia (for so we call the courtesan) kept her hospital, which was in the suburbs of the city, pleasantly seated, and made more delectable by a pleasant garden wherein it was situate. No sooner come they within ken but Mistress Lamilia, like a cunning angler, made ready her change of baits that she might effect Lucanio's bane. And to begin, she discovered

from her window her beauteous enticing face, and taking a lute in her hand that she might the rather allure, she sung this sonnet with a delicious voice.

Lamilia's Song

*Fie, fie, on blind fancy,
It hinders youth's joy.
Fair virgins, learn by me
To count love a toy.*

*When love learned first the ABC of delight,
And knew no figures nor conceited phrase,
He simply gave to due desert her right,
He led not lovers in dark winding ways.
He plainly willed to love, or flatly answered no,
But now who lists to prove shall find it nothing so.*

*Fie, fie, on fancy,
It hinders youth's joy.
Fair virgins, learn by me
To count love a toy.*

*For since he learned to use the poet's pen,
He learned likewise with smoothing words to feign,
Witching chaste ears with trothless tongues of men,
And wronged faith with falsehood and disdain.
He gives a promise now, anon he sweareth no,
Who listeth for to prove shall find his changings so.*

*Fie, fie, then on fancy,
It hinders youth's joy.
Fair virgins, learn by me
To count love a toy.*

While this painted sepulchre was shadowing her corrupting guile, hyena-like alluring to destruction, Roberto and Lucanio under her window kept even pace with every stop of her instrument, but especially my young ruffler (that beforetime, like a bird in a cage, had been prentice for three lives, or one-and-twenty years at least, to extreme avarice, his deceased father). O, 'twas a world to see how he sometime simpered it, striving to set a countenance on his new-turned face that it might seem of wainscot proof to behold her face without blushing. Anon he would stroke his bow-bent leg, as if he meant to shoot love-arrows from his shins, then wiped his chin (for his beard was not yet grown) with a gold-wrought handkerchief, whence of purpose he let fall a handful of angels. This golden shower was no sooner rained but Lamilia ceased her song, and Roberto (assuring himself the fool was caught) came to Lucanio (that stood now as one that had stared Medusa in the face) and awaked him from his amazement with these words. *What, in a trance,*

brother? Whence springs these dumps? Are ye amazed at this object? Or long ye to become love's subject? Is there not difference between this delectable life and the imprisonment you have all your life hitherto endured? If the sight and hearing of this harmonious beauty work in you effects of wonder, what will the possession of so divine an essence, wherein beauty and art dwell in their perfectest excellence? Brother, said Lucanio, let's use few words. And she be no more than a woman, I trust you'll help me to win her. And if you do, well, I say no more but I am yours till death us depart, and what is mine shall be yours world without end, Amen.

Roberto, smiling at his simpleness, helped him to gather up his dropped gold, and without any more circumstance led him to Lamilia's house, for of such places it may be said as of hell, *Noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis* [=The gates of hell are open night and day], so their doors are ever open to entice youth to destruction.

They were no sooner entered but Lamilia herself, like a second Helen, courtlike begins to salute Roberto, yet did her wandering eye glance often at Lucanio. The effect of her entertainment consisted in these terms, that to her simple house Signor Roberto was welcome, and his brother the better welcome for his sake, albeit his good report, confirmed by his present demeanour, were of itself enough to give him deserved entertainment in any place, how honourable soever. Mutual thanks returned, they led this prodigal child into a parlour garnished with goodly portraitures of amiable personages, near which an excellent consort of music began at their entrance to play. Lamilia, seeing Lucanio shamefast, took him by the hand, and tenderly wringing him, used these words. *Believe me, gentleman, I am very sorry that our rude entertainment is such as no way may work your content, for this I have noted since your first entering, that your countenance hath been heavy, and the face being the glass of the heart, assures the same is not quiet. Would ye wish anything here that might content you, say but the word, and assure ye of present diligence to effect your full delight.*

Lucanio, being so far in love as he persuaded himself without her grant he could not live, had a good meaning to utter his mind, but wanting fit words, he stood like a truant that lacked a prompter, or a player that, being out of his part at his first entrance, is fain to have the book to speak what he should perform, which Roberto perceiving, replied thus in his behalf. *Madam, the sun's brightness dazzleth the beholder's eyes; the majesty of gods amazeth human men. Tully, prince of orators, once fainted though his cause were good, and he that tamed monsters stood amazed at beauty's ornaments. Then blame not this young man though he replied not, for he is blinded with the beauty of your sun-darkening eyes, made mute with the celestial organ of your voice and fear of that rich ambush of amber-coloured darts whose points are levelled against his heart. Well, Signor Roberto, said she, however you interpret their sharp level, be sure they are not bent to do him hurt, and but that modesty blinds us poor maidens from uttering the inward sorrow of our minds, perchance the cause of grief is ours, however men do colour, for as I am a virgin, I protest (and therewithal she tainted her cheeks with a vermilion blush), I never saw gentleman in my life in my eye so gracious as is Lucanio, only this is my grief, that either I am despised for that he scorns to speak, or else (which is my greater sorrow), I fear he cannot speak.*

Not speak, gentlewoman, quoth Lucanio, that were a jest indeed. Yes, I thank God, I am sound of wind and limb, only my heart is not as it was wont, but and you be as good as your word, that will soon be well, and so craving ye of more acquaintance, in token of my plain meaning receive this diamond which my old father loved dearly, and with that delivered her a ring wherein was a pointed diamond of wonderful worth, which she, accepting with a low congee, returned him a silk riband for a favour tied with a true-love's knot, which he fastened under a fair jewel on his beaver felt.

After this, *Diomedis & Glauci permutatio* [=More than the exchange between Diomedes and Glaucus], my young master waxed crank, and the music continuing, was very forward in dancing to show his cunning, and so desiring them to play on a hornpipe, laid on the pavement lustily with his leaden heels, curvetting like a steed of Signor Rocco's teaching, and wanted nothing but bells to be a hobby-horse in a morris. Yet was he soothed in his folly, and whatever he did Lamilia counted excellent; her praise made him proud, insomuch that if he had not been entreated, he would rather have died in his dance than left off to show his mistress delight. At last reasonably persuaded, seeing the table furnished, he was content to cease and settle him to his victuals, on which (having before laboured) he fed lustily, especially of a woodcock pie wherewith Lamilia, his carver, plentifully plied him. Full dishes having furnished empty stomachs, and Lucanio thereby got leisure to talk, falls to discourse of his wealth, his lands, his bonds, his ability, and how himself with all he had was at Madam Lamilia's disposing, desiring her afore his brother to tell him simply what she meant. Lamilia replied, *My sweet Lucanio, how I esteem of thee mine eyes do witness, that like handmaids have attended thy beauteous face ever since I first beheld thee. Yet seeing love that lasteth gathereth by degrees his liking, let this for that suffice: if I find thee firm, Lamilia will be faithful; if fleeting, she must of necessity be infortunate, that having never seen any whom before she could affect, she should be of him injuriously forsaken. Nay, said Lucanio, I dare say my brother here will give his word for that. I accept your own, said Lamilia, for with me your credit is better than your brother's.*

Roberto brake off their amorous prattle with this speech. *Sith either of you are of other so fond at the first sight, I doubt not but time will make your love more firm. Yet Madam Lamilia, although my brother and you be thus forward, some cross chance may come, for *Multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labe* [sic for 'labra'] [=Many things fall between the cup and the lips]. And for a warning to teach you both wit, I'll tell you an old wives' tale.*

Before ye go on with your tale, quod Mistress Lamilia, let me give ye a caveat by the way, which shall be figured in a fable.

Lamilia's fable

The fox on a time came to visit the grey, partly for kindred, chiefly for craft, and finding the hole empty of all other company saving only one badger, inquired the cause of his

solitariness. He described the sudden death of his dam and sire with the rest of his consorts. The fox made a Friday face, counterfeiting sorrow, but concluding that death's stroke was unavoidable, persuaded him to seek some fit mate wherewith to match. The badger soon agreed, so forth they went, and in their way met with a wanton ewe straggling from the fold. The fox bade the badger play the tall stripling, and strut on his tiptoes: *For, quod he, this ewe is lady of all these launds, and her brother chief bell-wether of sundry flocks.* To be short, by the fox's persuasion there would be a perpetual league between her harmless kindred and all other devouring beasts for that the badger was to them all allied. Seduced, she yielded, and the fox conducted them to the badger's habitation where, drawing her aside under colour of exhortation, pulled out her throat to satisfy his greedy thirst. Here I should note, a young whelp that viewed their walk informed the shepherds of what happened. They followed, and trained the fox and badger to the hole. The fox afore had craftily conveyed himself away. The shepherds found the badger raving for the ewe's murder; his lamentation being held for counterfeit, was by the shepherds' dogs worried. The fox escaped, the ewe was spoiled, and ever since between the badgers and dogs hath continued a mortal enmity.

And now be advised, Roberto, quod she, go forward with your tale. Seek not by sly insinuation to turn our mirth to sorrow. Go to, Lamilia, quod he, you fear what I mean not, but howsoever ye take it, I'll forward with my tale.

Roberto's tale

In the north parts there dwelt an old squire that had a young daughter, his heir, who had (as I know, Madam Lamilia, you have had) many youthful gentlemen that long time sued to obtain her love. But she, knowing her own perfections (as women are by nature proud), would not to any of them vouchsafe favour, insomuch that they, perceiving her relentless, showed themselves not altogether witless, but left her to her fortune when they found her frowardness. At last it fortun'd, among other strangers, a farmer's son visited her father's house, on whom at the first sight she was enamoured, he likewise on her. Tokens of love passed between them, either acquainted other's parents of their choice, and they kindly gave their consent. Short tale to make, married they were, and great solemnity was at the wedding-feast. A young gentleman that had been long a suitor to her, vexing that the son of a farmer should be so preferred, cast in his mind by what means (to mar their merriment) he might steal away the bride. Hereupon he confers with an old beldam called Mother Gunby dwelling thereby, whose counsel having taken, he fell to his practice, and proceeded thus.

In the afternoon, when dancers were very busy, he takes the bride by the hand, and, after a turn or two, tells her in her ear he had a secret to impart unto her, appointing her in any wise in the evening to find a time to confer with him. She promised she would, and so they parted. Then goes he to the bridegroom, and with protestations of entire affect, protests that [sic?] the great sorrow he takes at that which he must utter, whereon depended his especial credit if it were known the matter by him should be discovered. After the bridegroom's promise of secrecy, the gentleman tells him that a friend of his

received that morning from the bride a letter wherein she willed him with some sixteen horse to await her coming at a park side, for that she detested him in her heart as a base country hind with whom her father compelled her to marry. The bridegroom, almost out of his wits, began to bite his lip. *Nay, saith the gentleman, if you will by me be advised, you shall salve her credit, win her by kindness, and yet prevent her wanton complot. And how?* said the bridegroom. *Marry, thus,* said the gentleman. *In the evening (for till the guests be gone she intends not to gad), get you on horseback, and seem to be of the company that attends her coming. I am appointed to bring her from the house to the park, and from thence to fetch a winding compass of a mile about, but to turn unto old Mother Gunby's house where her lover, my friend, abides. When she alights, I will conduct her to a chamber far from his lodging, but when the lights are out, and she expects her adulterous copesmate, yourself (as reason is) shall prove her bedfellow, where privately you may reprove her, and in the morning early return home without trouble. As for the gentleman, my friend, I will excuse her absence to him by saying she mocked me with her maid instead of herself, whom when I knew at her alighting, I disdained to bring her unto his presence.* The bridegroom gave his hand it should be so.

Now by the way you must understand, this Mother Gunby had a daughter who all that day sat heavily at home with a willow garland for that the bridegroom (if he had dealt faithfully), should have wedded her before any other. But men, Lamilia, are unconstant; money now-a-days makes the match, or else the match is marred.

But to the matter. The bridegroom and the gentleman thus agreed, he took his time, conferred with the bride, persuaded her that her husband (notwithstanding his fair show at the marriage) had sworn to his old sweetheart, their neighbour Gunby's daughter, to be that night her bedfellow, and if she would bring her father, his father, and other friends to the house at midnight, they should find it so. At this the young gentlewoman, inwardly vexed to be by a peasant so abused, promised if she saw likelihood of his slipping away, that then she would do according as he directed.

All this thus sorting, the old woman's daughter was trickily attired ready to furnish this pageant, for her old mother provided all things necessary.

Well, supper passed, dancing ended and the guests would home, and the bridegroom pretending to bring some friend of his home, got his horse, and to the park side he rode, and stayed with the horsemen that attended the gentleman. Anon came Marian like mistress bride and, mounted behind the gentleman, away they post, fetch their compass, and at last alight at the old wife's house, where suddenly she is conveyed to her chamber and the bridegroom sent to keep her company, where he had scarce devised how to begin his exhortation but the father of his bride knocked at the chamber-door, at which, being somewhat amazed, yet thinking to turn it to a jest, sith his wife (as he thought) was in bed with him, he opened the door saying: *Father, you are heartily welcome. I wonder how you found us out here. This device to remove ourselves was with my wife's consent, that we might rest quietly without the maids' and bachelors' disturbing. But where's your wife?* said the gentleman. *Why, here in bed,* said he. *I thought,* quoth the other, *my daughter had been your wife, for sure I am today she was given you in marriage. You are*

merrily disposed, said the bridegroom. *What, think you I have other wife? I think but as you speak*, quoth the gentleman, *for my daughter is below, and you say your wife is in the bed. Below?* said he. *You are a merry man.* And with that casting on a night-gown, he went down, where when he saw his wife, the gentleman his father, and a number of his friends assembled, he was so confounded that how to behave himself he knew not, only he cried out that he was deceived. At this the old woman arises, and making herself ignorant of all the whole matter, inquires the cause of that sudden tumult. When she was told the new bridegroom was found in bed with her daughter, she exclaimed against so great an injury. Marian was called in coram; she justified it was by his allurement. He, being condemned by all their consents, was adjudged unworthy to have the gentlewoman unto his wife, and compelled (for escaping of punishment) to marry Marian, and the young gentleman (for his care in discovering the farmer's son's lewdness) was recompensed with the gentlewoman's ever-during love.

Quoth Lamilia: *And what of this?* *Nay, nothing*, said Roberto, *but that I have told you the effects of sudden love. Yet the best is, my brother is a maidenly bachelor, and for yourself, you have not been troubled with many suitors. The fewer the better*, said Lucanio. *But brother, I can you little thank for this tale; hereafter, I pray you, use other table-talk. Let's then end talk*, quoth Lamilia, *and you, Signor Lucanio, and I will go to the chess. To chess*, said he, *what mean you by that?* *It is a game*, said she, *that the first danger is but a check; the worst, the giving of a mate. Well*, said Roberto, *that game ye have been at already then, for you checked him first with your beauty, and gave yourself for mate to him by your bounty. That's well taken, brother*, said Lucanio, *so have we passed our game at chess. Will ye play at tables, then?* said she. *I cannot*, quoth he, *for I can go no further with my game if I be once taken. Will ye play then at cards?* *Aye*, said he, *if it be at one-and-thirty. That fool's game?* said she. *We'll all to hazard*, said Roberto, *and brother, you shall make one for an hour or two. Content*, quoth he. So to dice they went, and fortune so favoured Lucanio that while they continued square play, he was no loser. Anon cozenage came about, and his angels, being double-winged, flew clean from before him. Lamilia, being the winner, prepared a banquet, which finished, Roberto advised his brother to depart home, and to furnish himself with more crowns lest he were out-cracked with newcomers.

Lucanio, loath to be out-countenanced, followed his advice, desiring to attend his return, which he before had determined unrequested. For as soon as his brother's back was turned, Roberto begins to reckon with Lamilia to be a sharer as well in the money deceitfully won as in the diamond so wilfully given. But she, *secundum mores meretricis* [=according to the customs of prostitution], jested thus with the scholar. *Why Roberto, are you so well-read, and yet show yourself so shallow-witted to deem women so weak of conceit that they see not into men's demerits? Suppose (to make you my stale to catch the woodcock, your brother) that, my tongue overrunning my intent, I spake of liberal reward, but what I promised, there's the point. At least what I part with, I will be well advised. It may be you will thus reason: Had not Roberto trained Lucanio unto Lamilia's lure, Lucanio had not now been Lamilia's prey; therefore, sith by Roberto she possesseth the prize, Roberto merits an equal part. Monstrous absurd if you so reason. As well you may reason thus: Lamilia's dog hath killed her a deer; therefore his mistress must make him a*

pasty. No, poor penniless poet, thou art beguiled in me, and yet I wonder how thou couldst, thou hast been so often beguiled. But it fareth with licentious men as with the chased boar in the stream, who being greatly refreshed with swimming, never feeleth any smart until he perish, recurelessly wounded with his own weapons. Reasonless Roberto, that having but a broker's place, askest a lender's reward. Faithless Roberto, that hast attempted to betray thy brother, irreligiously forsaken thy wife, deservedly been in thy father's eye an abject, thinkest thou Lamilia so loose to consort with one so lewd? No, hypocrite; the sweet gentleman, thy brother, I will till death love, and thee while I live, loathe. This share Lamilia gives thee; other gettest thou none.

As Roberto would have replied, Lucanio approached, to whom Lamilia discoursed the whole deceit of his brother, and never rested intimating malicious arguments till Lucanio utterly refused Roberto for his brother, and forever forbade him his house. And when he would have yielded reasons, and formed excuse, Lucanio's impatience (urged by her importunate malice) forbade all reasoning with them that was reasonless, and so giving him Jack Drum's entertainment, shut him out of doors, whom we will follow, and leave Lucanio to the mercy of Lamilia.

Roberto, in an extreme ecstasy, rent his hair, cursed his destiny, blamed his treachery, but most of all exclaimed against Lamilia, and in her against all enticing courtesans, in these terms.

*What meant the poets in invective verse,
To sing Medea's shame, and Scylla's pride,
Calypso's charms, by which so many died?
Only for this, their vices they rehearse
That curious wits, which in this world converse,
May shun the dangers and enticing shows
Of such false sirens, those home-breeding foes
That from the eyes their venom do disperse.
So soon kills not the basilisk with sight,
The viper's tooth is not so venomous,
The adder's tongue not half so dangerous,
As they that bear the shadow of delight,
Who chain blind youths in trammels of their hair
Till waste bring woe, and sorrow haste despair.*

With this he laid his head on his hand, and leant his elbow on the earth, sighing out sadly:
Heu patior telis vulnera facta meis! [=Alas, I suffer wounds made by my own weapons.]

On the other side of the hedge sate one that heard his sorrow who, getting over, came towards him and brake off his passion. When he approached, he saluted Roberto in this sort.

Gentleman, quoth he, (for so you seem), I have by chance heard you discourse some part of your grief, which appeareth to be more than you will discover or I can conceit. But if

you vouchsafe such simple comfort as my ability may yield, assure yourself that I will endeavour to do the best that either may procure you profit or bring you pleasure, the rather for that I suppose you are a scholar, and pity it is men of learning should live in lack.

Roberto, wondering to hear such good words for that this iron age affords few that esteem of virtue, returned him thankful congratulations, and (urged by necessity), uttered his present grief, beseeching his advice how he might be employed. *Why, easily, quoth he, and greatly to your benefit, for men of my profession get by scholars their whole living. What is your profession?* said Roberto. *Truly, sir,* said he, *I am a player. A player?* quoth Roberto. *I took you rather for a gentleman of great living, for if by outward habit men should be censured, I tell you, you would be taken for a substantial man. So am I where I dwell,* quoth the player, *reputed able at my proper cost to build a windmill. What though the world once went hard with me, when I was fain to carry my playing-fardel a-footback? Tempora mutantur [=Times change]. I know you know the meaning of it better than I, but I thus construe it: It's otherwise now. For my very share in playing-apparel will not be sold for two hundred pounds.* Truly, said Roberto, *'tis strange that you should so prosper in that vain practice for that it seems to me your voice is nothing gracious.* Nay, said the player, *I mislike your judgment. Why, I am as famous for Delphrigus, and the King of Fairies, as ever was any of my time. The Twelve Labours of Hercules have I terribly thundered on the stage, and played three scenes of the devil in The Highway To Heaven. Have ye so?* said Roberto. *Then I pray you, pardon me.* Nay, more, quoth the player, *I can serve to make a pretty speech, for I was a country author, passing at a moral, for 'twas I that penned The Moral Of Man's Wit, The Dialogue Of Dives, and for seven years' space was absolute interpreter to the puppets. But now my almanac is out of date:*

*The people make no estimation
Of morals teaching education.*

Was not this pretty for a plain rime extempore? If ye will, ye shall have more. Nay, *it's enough,* said Roberto, *but how mean you to use me? Why, sir, in making plays,* said the other, *for which you shall be well paid if you will take the pains.*

Roberto, perceiving no remedy, thought best in respect of his present necessity to try his wit, and went with him willingly, who lodged him at the town's end in a house of retail, where what happened our poet, you shall after hear. There, by conversing with bad company, he grew *a malo in peius* [=from bad to worse], falling from one vice to another, and so having found a vein to finger crowns, he grew cranker than Lucanio, who by this time began to droop, being thus dealt with by Lamilia. She, having bewitched him with her enticing wiles, caused him to consume in less than two years that infinite treasure gathered by his father with so many a poor man's curse. His lands sold, his jewels pawned, his money wasted, he was cashiered by Lamilia, that had cozened him of all. Then walked he like one of Duke Humphrey's squires, in a threadbare cloak, his hose drawn out with his heels, his shoes unseamed lest his feet should sweat with heat. Now (as witless as he was) he remembered his father's words, his unkindness to his brother, his carelessness of himself. In this sorrow he sate down on penniless bench where, when

opus and *usus* told him by the chimes in his stomach it was time to fall unto meat, he was fain with the chameleon to feed upon the air, and make patience his best repast.

While he was at this feast, Lamilia came flaunting by, garnished with the jewels whereof she beguiled him, which sight served to close his stomach after his cold cheer. Roberto, hearing of his brother's beggary, albeit he had little remorse of his miserable state, yet did seek him out to use him as a property, whereby Lucanio was somewhat provided for. But being of simple nature, he served but for a block to whet Roberto's wit on, which the poor fool perceiving, he forsook all other hopes of life, and fell to be a notorious pander, in which detested course he continued till death.

But Roberto, now famous for an arch-playmaking-poet, his purse like the sea sometime swelled; anon like the same sea fell to a low ebb. Yet seldom he wanted, his labours were so well esteemed. Marry, this rule he kept, whatever he fingered aforehand was the certain means to unbind a bargain, and being asked why he so slightly dealt with them that did him good, *It becomes me*, saith he, *to be contrary to the world, for commonly, when vulgar men receive earnest, they do perform; when I am paid anything aforehand, I break my promise.* He had shift of lodgings, where in every place his hostess writ up the woeful remembrance of him, his laundress, and his boy, for they were ever his in household, beside retainers in sundry other places. His company were lightly the lewdest persons in the land, apt for pilfery, perjury, forgery, or any villainy. Of these he knew the casts to cog at cards, cozen at dice; by these he learned the legerdemains of nips, foists, cony-catchers, crossbiters, lifts, high lawyers, and all the rabble of that unclean generation of vipers, and pithily could he paint out their whole courses of craft. So cunning he was in all crafts as nothing rested in him almost but craftiness. How often the gentlewoman his wife laboured vainly to recall him is lamentable to note, but as one given over to all lewdness, he communicated her sorrowful lines among his loose trulls, that jested at her bootless laments. If he could any way get credit on scores, he would then brag his creditors carried stones, comparing every round circle to a groaning O procured by a painful burden. The shameful end of sundry his consorts, deservedly punished for their amiss, wrought no compunction in his heart, of which one, brother to a brothel he kept, was trussed under a tree as round as a ball.

To some of his swearing companions thus it happened. A crew of them sitting in a tavern carousing, it fortun'd an honest gentleman and his friend to enter their room. Some of them being acquainted with him, in their domineering drunken vein would have no nay, but down he must needs sit with them; being placed, no remedy there was but he must needs keep even compass with their unseemly carousing, which he refusing, they fell from high words to sound strokes, so that with much ado the gentleman saved his own, and shifted from their company. Being gone, one of the tipplers, forsooth, lacked a gold ring; the other sware they see the gentleman take it from his hand. Upon this, the gentleman was indicted before a judge, the honest men are deposed, whose wisdom weighing the time of the brawl gave light to the jury what power wine-washing poison had. They, according unto conscience, found the gentleman not guilty, and God released by that verdict the innocent.

With his accusers thus it fared. One of them for murder was worthily executed; the other never since prospered; the third, sitting not long after upon a lusty horse, the beast suddenly died under him, God amend the man.

Roberto, every day acquainted with these examples, was notwithstanding nothing bettered, but rather hardened in wickedness. At last was the place justified, *God warneth men by dreams and visions in the night and by known examples in the day, but if he return not, He comes upon him with judgment that shall be felt.* For now, when the number of deceits caused Roberto be hateful almost to all men, his immeasurable drinking had made him the perfect image of the dropsy, and the loathsome scourge of lust tyrannized in his bones. Lying in extreme poverty, and having nothing to pay but chalk, which now his host accepted not for current, this miserable man lay comfortlessly languishing, having but one groat left (the just proportion of his father's legacy) which, looking on, he cried: *O now it is too late, too late to buy wit with thee, and therefore I will see if I can sell to careless youth what I negligently forgot to buy.*

Here (gentlemen) break I off Roberto's speech, whose life in most parts agreeing with mine, found one self punishment as I have done. Hereafter suppose me the said Roberto, and I will go on with that he promised; Greene will send you now his groatsworth of wit, that never showed a mite's worth in his life, and though no man now be by to do me good, yet ere I die I will by my repentance endeavour to do all men good.

*Deceiving world, that with alluring toys
Hast made my life the subject of thy scorn,
And scornest now to lend thy fading joys
To length my life, whom friends have left forlorn,
How well are they that die ere they be born,
And never see thy sleights, which few men shun,
Till unawares they helpless are undone.*

*Oft have I sung of love, and of his fire,
But now I find that poet was advised
Which made full feasts increasers of desire,
And proves weak love was with the poor despised.
For when the life with food is not sufficed,
What thought of love, what motion of delight,
What pleasance can proceed from such a wight?*

*Witness my want, the murderer of my wit.
My ravished sense of wonted fury reft
Wants such conceit as should, in poems fit,
Set down the sorrow wherein I am left,
But therefore have high heavens their gifts bereft
Because so long they lent them me to use,
And I so long their bounty did abuse.*

*O that a year were granted me to live,
 And for that year my former wit restored.
 What rules of life, what counsel would I give?
 How should my sin with sorrow be deplored?
 But I must die of every man abhorred.
 Time loosely spent will not again be won,
 My time is loosely spent, and I undone.*

O horrenda fames, how terrible are thy assaults, but *vermis conscientiae* [=the worm of conscience], more wounding are thy stings. Ah, gentlemen that live to read my broken and confused lines, look not I should (as I was wont) delight you with vain fantasies, but gather my follies all together, and as ye would deal with so many parricides, cast them into the fire. Call them Telegones, for now they kill their father, and every lewd line in them written is a deep-piercing wound to my heart; every idle hour spent by any in reading them brings a million of sorrows to my soul. O that the tears of a miserable man (for never any man was yet more miserable) might wash their memory out with my death, and that those works with me together might be interred. But sith they cannot, let this my last work witness against them with me how I detest them. Black is the remembrance of my black works, blacker than night, blacker than death, blacker than hell.

Learn wit by my repentance (gentlemen) and let these few rules following be regarded in your lives.

1. First, in all your actions set God before your eyes, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Let His word be a lantern to your feet, and a light unto your paths; then shall you stand as firm rocks, and not be mocked.
2. Beware of looking back, for God will not be mocked, and of him that hath received much, much shall be demanded.
3. If thou be single, and canst abstain, turn thy eyes from vanity, for there is a kind of women, bearing the faces of angels but the hearts of devils, able to entrap the elect if it were possible.
4. If thou be married, forsake not the wife of thy youth to follow strange flesh, for whoremongers and adulterers the Lord will judge. The door of a harlot leadeth down to death, and in her lips there dwells destruction; her face is decked with odours, but she bringeth a man to a morsel of bread and nakedness, of which myself am instance.
5. If thou be left rich, remember those that want, and so deal that by thy wilfulness thyself want not. Let not taverners and victuallers be thy executors, for they will bring thee to a dishonourable grave.
6. Oppress no man, for the cry of the wronged ascendeth to the ears of the Lord; neither delight to increase by usury, lest thou lose thy habitation in the everlasting tabernacle.

7. Beware of building thy house to thy neighbour's hurt, for the stones will cry to the timber. We were laid together in blood, and those that so erect houses, calling them by their names, shall lie in the grave like sheep, and death shall gnaw upon their souls.

8. If thou be poor, be also patient, and strive not to grow rich by indirect means, for goods so gotten shall vanish like smoke.

9. If thou be a father, master or teacher, join good example with good counsel, else little avail precepts where life is different.

10. If thou be a son or servant, despise not reproof, for though correction be bitter at the first, it bringeth pleasure in the end.

Had I regarded the first of these rules, or been obedient to the last, I had not now at my last end been left thus desolate. But now, though to myself I give *consilium post facta* [=advice after the fact], yet to others they may serve for timely precepts. And therefore (while life gives leave) I will send warning to my old consorts which have lived as loosely as myself; albeit weakness will scarce suffer me to write, yet to my fellow-scholars about this city will I direct these few ensuing lines.

To those gentlemen, his quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plays,
R.G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities

If woeful experience may move you, gentlemen, to beware, or unheard-of wretchedness entreat you to take heed, I doubt not but you will look back with sorrow on your time past, and endeavour with repentance to spend that which is to come.

Wonder not, (for with thee will I first begin) thou famous gracer of tragedians, that Greene, who hath said with thee, like the fool, in his heart *There is no God* should now give glory unto His greatness, for penetrating is His power, His hand lies heavy upon me, He hath spoken unto me with a voice of thunder, and I have felt he is a God that can punish enemies. Why should thy excellent wit, His gift, be so blinded that thou shouldst give no glory to the Giver? Is it pestilent Machiavellian policy that thou hast studied? O peevish folly! What are his rules but mere confused mockeries, able to extirpate in small time the generation of mankind? For if *Sic volo, sic iubeo* [=Thus I wish, thus I command] hold in those that are able to command, and if it be lawful *fas & nefas* [=right and wrong] to do anything that is beneficial, only tyrants should possess the earth and they, striving to exceed in tyranny, should each to other be a slaughterman till, the mightiest outliving all, one stroke were left for death, that in one age man's life should end. The broacher of this diabolical atheism is dead, and in his life had never the felicity he aimed at, but as he began in craft, lived in fear and ended in despair. *Quam inscrutabilia sunt Dei iudicia* [=How inscrutable are the judgments of God]! This murderer of many brethren had his conscience seared like Cain, this betrayer of Him that gave His life for him inherited the portion of Judas, this apostata perished as ill as Julian, and wilt thou,

my friend, be his disciple? Look but to me, by him persuaded to that liberty, and thou shalt find it an infernal bondage. I know the least of my demerits merit this miserable death, but wilful striving against known truth exceedeth all the terrors of my soul. Defer not (with me) till this last point of extremity, for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.

With thee I join young Juvenal, that biting satirist, that lastly with me together writ a comedy. Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words. Inveigh against vain men, for thou canst do it, no man better, no man so well. Thou hast a liberty to reprove all, and name none, for one being spoken to, all are offended; none being blamed, no man is injured. Stop shallow water still running, it will rage, or tread on a worm and it will turn. Then blame not scholars vexed with sharp lines if they reprove thy too much liberty of reproof.

And thou, no less deserving than the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferior, driven (as myself) to extreme shifts, a little have I to say to thee, and were it not an idolatrous oath, I would swear by sweet St. George thou art unworthy better hap sith thou dependest on so mean a stay.

Base-minded men, all three of you, if by my misery you be not warned, for unto none of you (like me) sought those burrs to cleave, those puppets (I mean) that spake from our mouths, those antics garnished in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whom they all have been beholding, is it not like that you, to whom they all have been beholding, shall (were ye in that case as I am now) be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and being an absolute Johannes factotum is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country. O that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes imitate your past excellence and nevermore acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband of you all will never prove an usurer, and the kindest of them all will never prove a kind nurse; yet, whilst you may, seek you better masters, for it is pity men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasure of such rude grooms.

In this I might insert two more that both have writ against these buckram gentlemen, but let their own works serve to witness against their own wickedness if they persevere to maintain any more such peasants. For other newcomers, I leave them to the mercy of these painted monsters who (I doubt not) will drive the best-minded to despise them. For the rest, it skills not though they make a jest at them.

But now return I again to you three, knowing my misery is to you no news, and let me heartily entreat you to be warned by my harms. Delight not (as I have done) in irreligious oaths, for from the blasphemers' house a curse shall not depart. Despise drunkenness, which wasteth the wit and maketh men all equal unto beasts. Fly lust as the deathsman of the soul, and defile not the temple of the Holy Ghost. Abhor those epicures whose loose life hath made religion loathsome to your ears and, when they soothe you with

terms of mastership, remember Robert Greene, whom they have so often flattered, perishes now for want of comfort. Remember, gentlemen, your lives are like so many lighted tapers that are with care delivered to all of you to maintain; these with wind-puffed wrath may be extinguished, which [sic for 'with?'] drunkenness put out, which [sic for 'with?'] negligence let fall, for man's time is not of itself so short but it is more shortened by sin. The fire of my light is now at the last snuff, and for want of wherewith to sustain it, there is no substance left for life to feed on. Trust not then (I beseech ye) to such weak stays, for they are as changeable in mind as in many attires. Well, my hand is tired and I am forced to leave where I would begin, for a whole book cannot contain their wrongs, which I am forced to knit up in some few lines of words.

Desirous that you should live,
though himself be dying,
Robert Greene.

Now to all men I bid farewell in like sort with this conceited fable of that old comedian, Aesop.

An ant and a grasshopper, walking together on a green, the one carelessly skipping, the other carefully prying what winter's provision was scattered in the way, the grasshopper, scorning (as wantons will) this needless thrift (as he termed it), reproved him thus:

*The greedy miser thirsteth still for gain,
His thrift is theft, his weal works others' woe.
That fool is fond which will in caves remain
When 'mongst fair sweets he may at pleasure go.*

To this the ant, perceiving the grasshopper's meaning, quickly replied:

*The thrifty husband spares what unthrift spends,
His thrift no theft, for dangers to provide.
Trust to thyself, small hope in want yield friends;
A cave is better than the deserts wide.*

In short time these two parted, the one to his pleasure, the other to his labour. Anon harvest grew on, and reft from the grasshopper his wanted moisture. Then weakly skipped he to the meadow's brink, where till fell winter he abode. But storms continually pouring, he went for succour to the ant, his old acquaintance, to whom he had scarce discovered his estate, but the waspish little worm made this reply:

*Pack hence, quoth he, thou idle lazy worm,
My house doth harbour no unthriftly mates.
Thou scornedst to toil, and now thou feelest the storm,
And starvest for food while I am fed with cates.*

*Use no entreats, I will relentless rest,
For toiling labour hates an idle guest.*

The grasshopper, foodless, helpless and strengthless, got into the next brook, and in the yielding sand digged for himself a pit, by which he likewise engraved this epitaph:

*When spring's green prime arrayed me with delight,
And every power, with youthful vigour filled,
Gave strength to work whatever fancy willed,
I never feared the force of winter's spite.*

*When first I saw the sun the day begin,
And dry the morning's tears from herbs and grass,
I little thought his cheerful light would pass,
Till ugly night with darkness entered in,
And then day lost I mourned, spring past I wailed,
But neither tears for this or that availed.*

*Then too, too late I praised the emmet's pain,
That sought in spring a harbour gainst the heat,
And in the harvest gathered winter's meat,
Preventing famine, frosts, and stormy rain.*

*My wretched end may warn green-springing youth
To use delights as toys that will deceive,
And scorn the world before the world them leave,
For all world's trust is ruin without ruth.
Then blest are they that like the toiling ant,
Provide in time gainst winter's woeful want.*

With this the grasshopper, yielding to the weather's extremity, died comfortless without remedy. Like him, myself; like me, shall all that trust to friends or time's inconstancy. Now faint I of my last infirmity, beseeching them that shall bury my body to publish this last farewell written with my wretched hand.

Foelicem fuisse infaustum

A letter written to his wife, found with this book after his death.

The remembrance of the many wrongs offered thee, and thy unreprieved virtues, add greater sorrow to my miserable state than I can utter or thou conceive. Neither is it lessened by consideration of thy absence, (though shame would hardly let me behold thy face) but exceedingly aggravated for that I cannot (as I ought) to thy own self reconcile myself, that thou mightest witness my inward woe at this instant, that have made thee a

woeful wife for so long a time. But equal heaven hath denied that comfort, giving at my last need like succour as I have sought all my life, being in this extremity as void of help as thou hast been of hope. Reason would, that after so long waste, I should not send thee a child to bring thee greater charge, but consider he is the fruit of thy womb, in whose face regard not the father's faults so much as thy own perfections. He is yet Greene, and may grow straight if he be carefully tended; otherwise, apt enough (I fear me) to follow his father's folly. That I have offended thee highly I know, that thou canst forget my injuries I hardly believe, yet persuade I myself if thou saw my wretched estate, thou couldst not but lament it; nay, certainly I know thou wouldst. All my wrongs muster themselves before me, every evil at once plagues me. For my contempt of God, I am condemned of men; for my swearing and forswearing, no man will believe me; for my gluttony, I suffer hunger; for my drunkenness, thirst; for my adultery, ulcerous sores. Thus God hath cast me down that I might be humbled, and punished me for example of other sinners, and although he strangely suffers me in this world to perish without succour, yet trust I in the world to come to find mercy by the merits of my Saviour, to whom I commend thee, and commit my soul.

Thy repentant husband for his disloyalty, Robert Greene.

Foelicem fuisse infaustum

FINIS