
THE SECOND PART OF CONY-CATCHING

Containing the discovery of certain wondrous cozenages, either superficially passed over
or utterly untouched in the first, as the nature of:

The black art
The vincent's law
The prigging law
The curbing law
The lifting law
The foist
The nip
Picking of locks
Cozenage at bowls
Horse-stealing
Hooking at windows
Stealing of parcels
The pickpocket
The cutpurse

With sundry pithy and pleasant tales worthy the reading of all estates that are enemies to
such base and dishonest practices

Mallem non esse quam non prodesse patrie

R.G.

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To the young gentlemen, merchants, citizens, apprentices, yeomen and plain country farmers, health

When Scaevola, gentlemen, saw his native city besieged by Porsena, and that Rome, the mistress of the world, was ready to be mastered by a professed foe to the public estate, he entered boldly into the enemy's camp, and in the tent of the king (taking him for the king) slew the king's secretary, whereupon condemned, brought to the fire, he thrust his right hand into the flame, burning it off voluntary because it was so infortunate to miss the fatal stab he had intended to his country's enemies, and then with an honourable resolution, breathed out this: *Mallet non esse quam non prodesse patriae*.

This instance of Scaevola greatly hath emboldened me to think no pains nor danger too great that groweth to the benefit of my country, & though I cannot, as he, manage with my curtal-ax, nor attempt to unleague Porsena, yet with my pen I will endeavour to display the nature and secrets of divers cozenages more prejudicial to England than the invasion of Porsena was to Rome. For when that valiant king saw the resolution of Scaevola, as one dismayed at the honour of his thoughts, he sorrowed so brave a man had so desperately lost his hand, and thereupon grew friends with the Romans.

But gentlemen, these cony-catchers, these vultures, these fatal harpies that putrify with their infections this flourishing estate of England as if they had their consciences seared with a hot iron, & that, as men delivered up into a reprobate sense, grace were utterly exiled from their hearts, so with the deaf adder they not only stop their ears against the voice of the charmer, but dissolutely without any spark of remorse stand upon their bravadoes, and openly in words & actions maintain their palpable and manifest cozenages, swearing by no less than their enemies' blood, even by God himself, that they will make a massacre of his bones and cut off my right hand for penning down their abominable practices. But alas for them, poor snakes, words are wind, & looks but glances; every thunderclap hath not a bolt, nor every cony-catcher's oath an execution. I live still, & I live to display their villainies, which, gentlemen, you shall see set down in most ample manner in this small treatise.

But here by the way give me leave to answer an objection that some inferred against me, which was that I showed no eloquent phrases nor fine figurative conveyance in my first book as I had done in other of my works, to which I reply that [Greek phrase], a certain decorum is to be kept in everything, and not to apply a high style in a base subject. Beside, the faculty is so odious, and the men so servile and slavish-minded, that I should dishonour that high mystery of eloquence, and derogate from the dignity of our English tongue either to employ any figure or bestow one choice English word upon such disdained rake-hells as those cony-catchers. Therefore humbly I crave pardon, and desire I may write basely of such base wretches who live only to live dishonestly, for they seek the spoil and ruin of all, and like drones eat away what others labour for.

I have set down divers other laws untouched in the first, as their vincent's law, a notable cozenage at bowls when certain idle companions stand and make bets, being compacted with the bowlers, who look like honest-minded citizens, either to win or lose as their

watchword shall appoint. Then, the prigger or horse-stealer, with all his gins belonging to his trade, and their subtle cautels to amend the statute. Next, the curbing law, which some call but too basely hookers, who either dive in at windows, or else with a hook, which they call a curb, do fetch out whatsoever, either apparel, linen or woollen that be left abroad. Beside, I can set down the subtilty of the black art, which is picking of locks, a cozenage as prejudicial as any of the rest, and the nature of the lift, which is he that stealeth any parcels, and slyly taketh them away.

This, gentlemen, have I searched out for your commodities, that I might lay open to the world the villainy of these cozening caterpillars who are not only abhorred of men but hated of God, living idly to themselves, & odiously to the world. They be those foolish children that Solomon speaks of that feeds themselves fat with iniquity, those untamed heifers that will not break [sic?] the yoke of labour, but get their livings by the painful thrift of other men's hands. I cannot better compare them than unto vipers, who while they live are hated & shunned of all men as most prejudicial creatures. They feed upon hemlock and aconiton and such fatal & empoisoned herbs, but the learned apothecaries takes them, cuts off their heads, and after they be embowelled of their flesh, they make the most precious mithridate. So these cony-catchers, foists, nips, priggers & lifts, while they live are most unprofitable members of the commonwealth. They glut themselves as vipers upon the most loathsome and detestable sins, seeking after folly with greediness, never doing anything that is good till they be trussed up at Tyburn, and then is a most wholesome mithridate made of them, for by their deaths others are forewarned for falling into the like enormities. And as the gangrena is a disease incurable by the censure of the churgeons unless the member where it is first be cut off, so this untoward generation of loose libertines can by no wholesome counsels nor advised persuasions be dissuaded from their loathsome kind of life till by death they be fatally and finally cut off from the commonwealth, whereof spake Ovid well in his *Metamorphosis*:

Immedicabile vulnus

Ense resecandum est ne pars sincera trahitur.

Sith then this cursed crew, these Machiavellians that neither care for God nor devil, but set with the Epicures gain and ease the *summum bonum*, cannot be called to any honest course of living, if the honourable and worshipful of this land look into their lives, and cut off such upstarting suckers that consume the sap from the root of the tree, they shall neither lose their reward in heaven, nor pass over any day wherein there will not be many faithful prayers of the poor exhibited for their prosperous success and welfare, so deeply are these monstrous cozeners hated in the commonwealth.

Thus, gentlemen, I have discovered in brief what I mean to prosecute at large, though not eloquently, yet so effectually that if you be not altogether careless, it may redound to your commodity. Forewarned, forearmed; burnt children dread the fire, and such as neither counsel nor other men's harms may make to beware are worthy to live long, and still by the loss. But hoping these secrets I have set abroad and my labours I have taken in searching out those base villainies shall not be only taken with thanks but applied with

care, I take my leave with this farewell: God either confound or convert such base-minded cozeners.

Yours, R.G.

THE SECOND PART OF CONY-CATCHING

The discovery of the prigging law, or nature of horse-stealing

To the effecting of this base villainy of prigging or horse-stealing, there must of necessity be two at the least, and that is the prigger and the marter. The prigger is he that steals the horse, and the marter is he that receives him, and chops and changeth him away in any fair, mart or other place where any good vent for horses is, and their method is thus. The prigger, if he be a lance-man, that is, one that is already horsed, then he hath more followers with him, and they ride like gentlemen, and commonly in the form of drovers, & so coming into pasture-grounds or enclosures, as if they meant to survey for cattle, do take an especial and perfect view where prankers or horses be that are of worth, and whether they be trammelled or no, that is whether they have horse-locks or no. Then lie they hovering about till fit opportunity serve, and in the night they take him or them away, and are skilful in the black art for picking open the trammels or locks, and so make haste till they be out of those quarters.

Now if the priggers steal a horse in Yorkshire, commonly they have vent for him in Surrey, Kent or Sussex, and their marters that receive them at his hand chops them away in some blind fairs after they have kept them a month or two till the hue and cry be ceased and passed over. Now if their horse be of any great valure and sore sought after, and so branded or ear-marked that they can hardly sell him without extreme danger, either they brand him with a cross brand upon the former, or take away his ear-mark, and so keep him at hard-meat till he be whole, or else sell him in Cornwall or Wales if he be in Cumberland, Lincolnshire, Norfolk or Suffolk, but this is if the horse be of great valour and worthy the keeping. Marry, if he be only coloured and without brands, they will straight spot him by sundry policies, and in a black horse, mark saddle spots, or star him in the forehead and change his tail, which secrets I omit lest I should give too great a light to other to practise such lewd villainies.

But again to our lance-men priggers, who as before I said, cry with the lapwing farthest from their nest, and from their place of residence where the [sic for 'their?'] most abode is, furthest from thence they steal their horses, and then in another quarter as far off they make sale of them by the marter's means, without it be some base prigger that steals of mere necessity and beside is a trailer. The trailer is one that goeth on foot, but meanly attired like some plain gran [sic for 'man?'] of the country, walking in a pair of boots without spurs, or else without boots, having a long staff on his neck and a black buckram bag at his back, like some poor client that had some writing in it, and there he hath his saddle, bridle and spurs, stirrups and stirrup-leathers, so quaintly and artificially made that it may be put in the slop of a man's hose, for his saddle is made without any tree, yet hath both cantle & bolsters only wrought artificially of cloth and bombast, with folds to wrap up in a short room. His stirrups are made with vices and gins that one may put them in a pair of gloves, and so are his spurs, and then a little white leather head-stall and reins with a small Scottish brake or snaffle, all so featly formed that, as I said before, they may be put in a buckram bag. Now this trailer, he bestrides the horse which he priggeth, and

saddles and bridles him as orderly as if he were his own, and then carries him far from the place of his breed, and there sells him.

Oh, will some man say, it is easier to steal a horse than to sell him, considering that her Majesty and the honourable Privy Council hath in the last act of Parliament made a strict statute for horse-stealing and the sale of horses, whose proviso is this: that no man may buy a horse untolled, nor the toll be taken without lawful witnesses that the party that selleth the horse is the true owner of him upon their oath and special knowledge, and that who buyeth a horse without this certificate or proof shall be within the nature [sic] of felony as well as the party that stealeth him. To this I answer that there is no act, statute nor law so strict conveyed but there be straight found starting-holes to avoid it, as in this. The prigger, when he hath stolen a horse and hath agreed with his marter or with any other his confederate or with any honest person to sell the horse, bringeth to the toller, which they call the rifler, two honest men either apparelled like citizens or plain country yeomen, and they not only affirm but offer to depose that they know the horse to be his upon their proper knowledge, although perhaps they never saw man nor horse before, and these perjured knaves be commonly old knights of the post that are foisted off from being taken for bail at the King's Bench or other places, and seeing for open perjuries they are refused there, they take that course of life, and are wrongly called equerries, but it were necessary and very much expedient for the commonwealth that such base rogues should be looked into, and be punished as well with the pillory as the other with the halter. And thus have I revealed the nature of priggers or horse-stealers briefly, which if it may profit, I have my desire, but that I may recreate your minds with a pleasant history, mark the sequel.

A pleasant story of a horse-stealer

Not far from Tenro in Cornwall a certain prigger, a horse-stealer, being a lance-man, surveying the pastures thereabouts spied a fair black horse without any white spot at all about him. The horse was so fair and lusty, well-proportioned, of a high crest, of a lusty countenance, well-buttocked and strongly trussed, which set the prigger's teeth a-water to have him. Well, he knew the hardest hap was but a halter, and therefore he ventured fair, and stole away the prancer, and seeing his stomach was so good as his limbs, he kept him well, and by his policy seared him in the forehead, and made him spotted in the back as if he had been saddle-bitten, and gave him a mark in both ears whereas he had but a mark in one. Dealing thus with his horse, after a quarter of a year, that all hurly-burly was past for the horse, he came riding to Tenro to the market, and there offered him to be sold. The gentleman that lost the horse was there present, and looking on him with other gentlemen liked him passing well, and commended him, insomuch that he beat the price of him, bargained & bought him, and so when he was tolled, and that the horse-stealer clap [sic?] him good luck, *Well, my friend,* quoth the gentleman, *I promise thee I like the horse the better in that once I lost one as like him as might be, but that mine wanted these saddle-spots and this star in the forehead.* *It may be so, sir,* said the prigger, and so the gentleman and he parted. The next day after he caused a letter to be made, and sent the gentleman word that he had his horse again that he lost, only he had given him a mark or two, and for that he was well rewarded, having twenty mark for his labour. The

gentleman, hearing how he was cozened by a horse-stealer, and not only robbed but mocked, let it pass till he might conveniently meet with him to revenge it.

It fortuned not long after that this lance-man prigger was brought to Tenro jail for some such matter, and indeed it was about a mare that he had stolen, but as knaves have friends, especially when they are well-moneyed, he found divers that spake for him, and who said it was the first fault, and the party plaintiff gave but slender evidence against him, so that the judge spake favourably in his behalf. The gentleman as then sat in the bench, and calling to mind the prigger's countenance, how he had stolen his horse and mocked him, remembered he had the letter in his pocket that he sent him, and therefore rising up, spake in his behalf, and highly commended the man, and desired the judges for one fault he might not be cast away. *And besides, may it please you, quoth he, I had this morning a certificate of his honesty and good behaviour sent me, and with that he delivered them the letter, and the judge and the rest of the bench smiled at this conceit, and asked the fellow if he never stole a horse from that gentleman. No, quoth the prigger, I know him not. Your Honours mistakes me, said the gentleman, he did but borrow a black horse of me, and marked him with a star in the forehead, and asked twenty mark of me for his labour, and so discoursed the whole matter, whereupon the quest went upon him and condemned him, and so the prigger went to heaven in a string, as many of his faculty had done before.*

The vincent's law, with the discovery thereof

The vincent's law is a common deceit or cozenage used in bowling-alleys amongst the baser sort of people that commonly haunt such lewd and unlawful places, for although I will not discommend altogether the nature of bowling if the time, place, persons and such necessary circumstances be observed, yet as it is now used, practiced & suffered, it groweth altogether to the maintenance of unthrifths that idly and disorderly make that recreation or [sic for 'a?'] cozenage. Now the manner and form of their devise is thus affected. The bawkers, for so are the common haunters of the alley termed, apparelled like very honest and substantial citizens, come to bowl as though rather they did it for sport than gains, & under that colour of carelessness do shadow their pretended knavery. Well, to bowls they go, and then there resort of all sorts of people to behold them, some simple men brought in of purpose by some cozening companions to be stripped of his crowns, others, gentlemen or merchants, that, delighted with the sport, stand there as beholders to pass away the time. Amongst these are certain old soakers which are lookers-on, and listen for bets, either even or odd, and these are called gripes, and these fellows will refuse no lay if the odds may grow to their advantage, for the gripes and the bawkers are confederate, and their fortune at play ever sorts according as the gripes have placed their bets, for the bawker, he marketh how the lays goes, and so throws his casting, so that note this, the bowlers cast ever booty, and doth win or lose as the bet of the gripe doth lead them. For suppose even be up for the game, and the one hath three and the other none, then the vincent, for that is the simple man that stands by & is not acquainted with the cozenage, nor doth so much as once imagine that the bawkers that carry such a countenance of honest substantial men would by any means or for any gains be persuaded to play booty, well, this vincent, for so the cozeners or gripes please to term

him, seeing three to none, beginneth to offer odds on that side that is fairest to win. *What odds?* says the gripe. *Three to one*, says the vincent. *No*, says the gripe, *it is more*, and with that they come to four for none. Then the vincent offers to lay four to one. *I take six to one*, says the gripe. *I lay it*, says the vincent, and so they make a bet of some six crowns, shillings or pence as the vincent is of ability to lay, & thus will sundry take their odds of him. Well, then, the bawkers go forward with their bowls, and win another cast, which is five. Then the vincent grows proud, & thinks both by the odds and goodness of the play that it is impossible for his side to lose, and therefore takes and lays bets freely. Then the bawker's fortune begin[s] to change, and perhaps they come to three for five, and still, as their luck changes, diversity of bets grow on, till at last it comes to five and five, and then the gripe comes upon the vincent and offers him odds, which if the vincent take, he loseth all, for upon what side the gripe lays, that side ever wins, how great soever the odds be at the first on the contrary part, so that the cozenage grows in playing booty, for the gripe and the bawker meet at night, & there they share whatsoever termage they have gotten, for so they call the money that the poor vincent loseth unto them.

Now to shadow the matter the more, the bawker that wins and is aforehand with the game will lay frankly that he shall win, and will bet hard and lay great odds, but with whom? Either with them which play with him that are as crafty knaves as himself, or else with the gripe, and this makes the poor innocent vincent stoop to the blow, and to lose all the money in his purse. Besides, if any honest men that holds themselves skilful in bowling offer to play any set match against these common bawkers, if they fear to have the worse, or suspect the other's play to be better than theirs, then they have a trick in watering of the alley to give such a moisture to the bank that he that offers to strike a bowl with a shoare shall never hit it whilst he lives because the moisture of the bank hinders the proportion of his aiming. Divers other practices there are in bowling tending unto cozenage, but the greatest is booty, and therefore would I wish all men that are careful of their coin to beware of such cozeners, and not to come in such places where a haunt of such hell-rakers are resident, & not in any wise to stoop to their bets lest he be made a vincent, for so manifest and palpable is their cozenage that I have seen men stone-blind offer to lay bets frankly, although they can see a bowl come no more than a post, but only hearing who plays, and how the old gripes make their lays. Seeing then as the game is abused to a deceit that is made for an honest recreation, let this little be a caveat for men to have an insight into their knavery.

A table of the laws contained in this second part

1 Black art	picking of locks
2 Combing [sic for 'curbing'?] law	hooking at windows
3 Vincent's law	cozenage at bowls
4 Prigging law	horse-stealing
5 Lifting law	stealing of any parcels

The discovery of the words of art used in these laws

In black art:

The picklock is called a charm.
He that watcheth, a stand.
Their engines, wresters.
Picking the lock, farsing.
The gains gotten, pelfry.

In combing [sic for 'curbing'?] law:

He that hooks, the comber [sic for 'curber'?].
He that watcheth, the warp.
The hook, the comb [sic for 'curb'?].
The good, snappings.
The gin to open the window, the tricker.

In lifting law:

He that first stealeth, the lift.
He that receives it, the marker.
He that standeth without, and carries it away, the santar.
The goods gotten, garbage.

In vincent's law:

They which play booty, the bankers [sic?].
He that betteth, the gripe.
He that is cozened, the vincent.
Gains gotten, termage.

In prigging law:

The horse-stealer, the prigger.
The horse, the pranker.
The tolling place, All-Hallows.
The toller, the rifler,
The sureties, equerries.

For the foist and the nip, as in the first book.

THE SECOND PART OF CONY-CATCHING

The professors of this law, being somewhat dashed and their trade greatly impoverished by the late editions of their secret villainies, seek not a new means of life but a new method how to fetch in their conies and to play their pranks, for as grievous is it for them to let slip a country farmer come to the term that is well apparelled and in a dirty pair of boots (for that is a token of his new coming up, and a full purse) as it was for the boys of Athens to let Diogenes pass by without a hiss. But the countrymen, having had partly a caveat for their cozenage, fear their favourable speeches and their courteous salutations as deadly as the Greeks did the whistle of Polyphemus. The cony-catcher now no sooner cometh in company and calleth for a pair of cards but straight the poor cony smokes him and says: *Masters, I bought a book of late for a groat that warns me of card-play, lest I fall amongst cony-catchers. What, dost thou take us for such?* says the verser. *No, gentlemen,* says the cony, *you may be men of honest disposition, but yet pardon me, I have forsworn cards ever since I read it.* At this reply, God wot, I have many a cozening curse at these cony-catchers' hands, but I solemnly stick to the old proverb: The fox, the more he is cursed, the better he fares. But yet I will discover some of their newest devises, for these caterpillars resemble the nature of the sirens, who sitting with their watching eyes upon the rocks to allure sea-passengers to their extreme prejudice, found out most heavenly melody in such pleasing chords that whoso listens to their harmony lends his ear unto his own bane and ruin, but if any wary Ulysses pass by and stop his ears against their enchantments, then have they most delightful jewels to show him as glorious objects to inveigle his eye with such pleasant vanities, that coming more nigh to behold them, they may dash their ship against a rock, and so utterly perish. So these cony-catchers, for that I smoked them in my last book, and laid open their plots and policies wherewith they draw poor conies into their lay [sic?], seeking with the orators *benevolentiam captare*, and as they use rhetorical tropes and figures the better to draw their hearers with the delight of variety, so these moths of the commonwealth apply their wits to wrap in wealthy farmers with strange and uncouth conceits.

Tush, it was so easy for the setter to take up a cony before I discovered the cozenage that one stigmatical shameless companion amongst the rest would in a bravery wea[r] parsley in his hat, and said he wanted but aqua-vitae to take a cony with, but since he hath looked on his feet and valed his plumes with the peacock, and swears by all the shoes in his shop I shall be the next man he means to kill for spoiling of his occupation, but I laugh at his bravadoes, and though he speaks with his eunuch's voice and wears a long sword like a morris-pike, were it not I think he would with Bathyllus hang himself at my invective his name should be set down with the nature of his follies, but let him call himself home from this course of life and this cozenage, and I shall be content to shadow what he is with pardon. But from this digression again to the double diligence of these cony-catchers, whose new sleights, because you shall the more easily perceive, I will tell you a story pleasant and worth the noting.

A pleasant tale of the cony-catchers

Not long since certain Exeter merchants came up to London to traffic such wares as their city commodities affords, & one of them, whose name I conceal, called Master F., having leisure at will, walked about the city to visit his friends, and by chance met with two or three cony-catchers, amongst whom was one of his old and familiar acquaintance. This gentleman at that time taking the setter's office upon him, seeing such a fat cony so fit for his purpose, began to pitch his hay with this courteous and clawing gratulation. *What, Master F., quoth he, welcome to London, and well are you met. I see time may draw friends together. Little did I think to have seen you here, but sith opportunity hath granted me such a favour to meet with such an unlooked for man, we'll at the next tavern drink a pint of wine together to your welcome and the health of our friends.* The merchant, hearing the gentlemen ply him with such plausible entertainment, stooped as a poor cony and granted to take his courtesy, and with them went the verser, a lusty fellow, well appalled, and as smooth-tongued as if every word came out of an orator's ink-horn. This jolly squire that played the verser, when he came at the tavern-door, would needs drop away and offered to be gone, but the setter said to him: *Nay, I pray you, sir, stay and drink with this friend of mine, for I have not a more familiar acquaintance in Exeter.* The merchant simply also entreated him, and with few words he was satisfied, and as three of them went in together and asked for a room, the boy showed them up into a chamber, and as soon as they came to, the verser, having a pair of cards in his pocket, for they thought it too suspicious to call for a pair, stepped to the window and clapped his hand on the ledge, and laughed. *Gog's wounds, quoth he, a man can neither come into tavern nor ale-house but he shall find a pair of cards in the window. Here hath been some praying, and have left their books behind them.* Boy, quoth he, *throw me a couple of faggots on the fire, and set a pottle of sack too, and burn it, and sir,* he says to the setter, *thou and I will play at cards who shall pay for it.* Content, says the setter, *so you will play at a game that I can play at, which is called mumchance.* I know it well, says the verser. *Have with you for a pottle of burnt sack.* And so to it they go, as before in my first part I describe it unto you, the poor merchant, the simple honest cony, calling the card.

Well, the verser lost, and at last they reveal the policy to the cony, who wondered at the strange devise, and solemnly swore it was impossible for him either to lose, or the other to win. As thus they sat drinking, the setter showed him divers tricks at cards to pass away the time because their barnacle stayed over-long, who at last, attired like a serving-man, came and thrust open the door and said: *Masters, by your leave, I look for a greyhound that hath broken my slip & is run into this house. In faith, friend,* quoth the setter, *here is none, nor did we see any.* Then by your leave, gentlemen, quoth he, *and sit you merry, I had rather have given forty shillings than have lost the dog.* Nay, stay, sir, quoth the verser, *and drink a cup of sack with us.* At that the barnacle came in, and courteously took it of them, and made sore lament for his dog, saying he durst scarce look his master in the face. *But I hope,* quoth he, *he is run to the farmer's house where he was brought up, and therefore I'll seek him nowhere today.* With that he called for a pint of wine to requite their courtesies withal, and the verser answered that they would take none of him as a gift, but if he would play for a pint or a quart, he should be welcome into their company. At this he sat down and said he would. Then they induced him to play at mumchance, and the cony called the card, so the barnacle lost all, who being in a great

chafe cursed his luck and the cards, and offered to play three games, 12 pence. The setter took him up, and secretly asked the cony if he would be his half, or play with him himself. *In faith*, says the merchant, *I dare play with him as long as five shillings last, and so much I will venture.* With that the barnacle drew out a purse with some three or four pence in it, and to this game they go, with vie and revie till the barnacle had lost all his money. Then he blasphemed the name of God mightily, and laid his sword and his cloak to pawn to the goodman of the house, and borrowed money of it to the value of some 20 shillings. The cony smiled at this, for he counted all his own, & winked upon the verser and the setter. Again they go to it, and they make five games for ten shillings, and every card to be vied at the loser's pleasure. The cony won three of them, and the barnacle never a one. Then he exclaimed against fortune, and swore he would make short work, and of a ring he borrowed thirty shillings more, and vied hard. Well, that game he won, and got some twenty shillings of the cony, who thought it was but a chance that could not hit in seven year again, and the next game they vied, and laid some five pound by on the belt, so that the vie and call came to some seven pound. Then the barnacle struck in his chopped card and wipe[d] the cony's mouth clean for troubling his purse with any of those crowns; yea, he so handled ye poor merchant that of nine pound he had in his purse, these three base cony-catchers left him never a penny.

Although he was sore nipped on the head with this hard fortune, yet he brooked it with patience, and little suspected that his countryman, the setter, had sifted him out of his money, and therefore drunk to him friendly, and took his leave without smoking them at all, and went quiet though discontent to his lodging. The cony-catchers, they shared the purchase, and went singing home as winners do that have leave and leisure to laugh at the spoil of such wealthy and honest merchants.

Not long after this the cony chanced to come to my chamber to visit me for old acquaintance, where he found a book of cony-catching new come out of the press, which when he had smiled at for the strangeness of the title, at last he began to read it, and there saw how simply he was made a cony and stripped of his crowns. With that he fetched a great sigh and said: *Sir, if I had seen this book but two days since it had saved me nine pound in my purse*, and then he rehearsed the whole discourse, how kindly he was made a cony.

Thus you may see that these base cony-catchers spare not their own acquaintance nor familiar friends, but like vultures seek to prey upon them, and like the harpy infects that house wherein they harbour. So odious is their base and detestable kind of cozenage that the very nips, the cutpurses I mean, desire to smoke them, and have them in as great contempt as they themselves are despised of others, holding the cony-catcher for their inferior, for, say the nips, I disdain to use my occupation against any friend, or to draw a purse from him that I am familiarly acquainted with, whereas the cony-catcher preyeth most upon his countrymen and friends, and at the first hand comes with a smiling face to embrace that man whom presently he means to spoil and cozen. Again the nip useth his knife, and if he see a bung lie fair, strikes the stroke, and ventures his neck for it if he be taken, which is a certain point (say they) of resolution, though in the basest degree, but the cony-catcher, like a coward, keeps himself within compass of law, as the picture of a

faint-hearted cozener, like a fawning cur wags his tail upon him he means most deadly to bite. Then let this be a caveat for all men and all degrees to take heed of such prejudicial peasants, who like worms in a nut eat the kernel herein they are bred, and are so venomous-minded that like the viper they disparage whomsoever they light on.

I know I shall have many braves uttered against me for this invective, but so I may profit my countrymen, I will hazard myself against their deepest villainies, and therefore sleeping never a whit the worse for their bravado, I commit such enemies of the flourishing estate of England to the consideration of the justices, who I hope will look into the loose life of bad, base and dishonest caterpillars.

A pleasant tale of a horse, how at Uxbridge he cozened a cony-catcher, and had like to brought him to his neck-verse

It fortun'd that not long since certain cony-catchers met by hap a pranker or horse-steale[r] at Uxbridge, who took up his inn where those honest crews lodged, & as one vice follows another, was as ready to have a cast at cards as he had a hazard at a horse. The cony-catchers who supped with him, seeing him pliant to receive the blow, began to lay the plot how they might make him stoop all the money in his purse, & so for a pint of wine drew him in at cards by degrees, as these rake-hells do, *lento gradu*, measure all things by minutes. He fell from wine to money, and from pence to pounds, that he was stripped of all that ever he had, as well crowns, apparel as jewels, that at last to maintain the main and to check vies with revies, he laid his horse in the hazard and lost him. When the prigger had smoked the game, and perceived he was bitten of all the bite in his bung, and turned to walk penniless in Mark Lane, as the old proverb is, he began to chafe and to swear and to rap out Gog's nownes [=wounds] and his pronouns while at voluntary he had sworn through the eight parts of speech in the *Accidence*, avowing they had cozened him both of his money and horse, whereupon the gross ass, more hardy than wise, understanding the cony-catchers were gone, went to the constable and made hue & cry after them, saying they had robbed him of his horse. At this the headboroughs followed amain, and by chance met with another hue and cry that came for him that had stolen, which hue and cry was served upon the horse-stealer, and at that time as far as I can either conjecture or calculate, the cony-catchers were taken suspicious for the same horse, and the rather for that they were found loose livers, & could yield no honest method or means of their maintenance, upon this for the horse they were apprehended, & bound over to the sessions at Westminster to answer what might be objected against them in her Majesty's behalf.

Well, the horse-stealer brake from his keepers and got away, but the rest of the rascal crew, the cony-catchers I mean, were brought to the place of judgment, and there like valiant youths they thrust twelve men into a corner, who found them guiltless for the fact, but if great favour had not been shown they had been condemned & burnt in the ears for rogues. Thus the horse-stealer made hue & cry after the cony-catchers, and the man that had lost the horse, he pursued the horse-stealer, so that a double hue and cry passed on both sides, but the cony-catchers had the worse, for what they got in the bridle they lost in the saddle; what they cozened at cards had like to cost them their necks at the sessions,

so that when they were free and acquitted, one of the cony-catchers in a merry vein said he had caught many conies, but now a horse had like to caught him, *And so deeply*, quoth he, *that Miserere mei had like to have been my best matins.*

Thus we may see that *Fallere fallentem non est fraus* [=To deceive the deceiver is no deceit], every deceit hath his due; he that maketh a trap falleth into the snare himself, and such as covet to cozen all are crossed themselves oftentimes almost to the cross, and that is the next neighbour to the gallows. Well, gentlemen, thus I have bewrayed much and gotten little thanks, I mean of the dishonest sort, but I hope such as measure virtue by her honours will judge of me as I deserve. Marry, the goodmen cony-catchers, those base excrements of dishonesty, they in their huffs report they have got one (blank), I will not bewray his name, but a scholar they say he is, to make an invective against me in that he is a favourer of those base reprobates, but let them, him and all know the proudest peasant of them all dare not lift his plumes in disparagement of my credit, for if he do, I will for revenge only appoint the jakes-farmers of London, who shall caze them in their filthy vessels and carry them as dung to manure the barren places of Tyburn, and so for cony-catchers an end.

A discourse, or rather discovery of the nip and the foist, laying open the nature of the cutpurse and pickpocket

Now gentlemen, merchants, farmers and termers, yea, whosoever he be that useth to carry money about him, let him attentively hear what a piece of new-found philosophy I will lay open to you, whose opinions, principles, aphorisms, if you carefully note and retain in memory, perhaps save some crowns in your purse ere the year pass, and therefore thus. The nip & the foist, although their subject is one which they work on, that is, a well-lined purse, yet their manner is different, for the nip useth his knife, and the foist his hand, the one cutting the purse, the other drawing the pocket, but of these two scurvy trades, the foist holdeth himself of the highest degree, and therefore they term themselves gentlemen foists, and so much disdain to be called cutpurses as the honest man that lives by his hand or occupation, insomuch that the foist refuseth even to wear a knife about him to cut his meat withal lest he might be suspected to grow into the nature of the nip. Yet as I said before is their subject and haunt both alike, for their gains lies by all places of resort and assembly; therefore their chief walks is Paul's, Westminster, the Exchange, plays, Bear-Garden, running at tilt, the Lord Mayor's day, any festival meetings, frays, shootings or great fairs; to be short, wheresoever there is any extraordinary resort of people, there the nip and the foist have fittest opportunity to show their juggling agility.

Commonly, when they spy a farmer or merchant whom they suspect to be well-moneyed, they follow him hard until they see him draw his purse; then, spying in what place he puts it up, the stall or the shadow being with the foist or nip meets the man at some straight turn & justles him so hard that the man, marvelling and perhaps quarrelling with him, the whilst the foist hath his purse and bids him farewell. In Paul's (especially in the term-time) between ten and eleven, then is their hours, and there they walk, and perhaps, if there be great press, strike a stroke in the middle walk, but that is upon some plain man

that stands gazing about, having never seen the church before, but their chieftest time is at divine service, when men devoutly given do go up to hear either a sermon or else the harmony of the choir and the organs. There the nip and the foist, as devoutly as if he were some zealous parson, standeth soberly with his eyes elevated unto heaven when his hand is either on the purse or in the pocket, surveying every corner of it for coin. Then when the service is done and the people press away, he thrusteth amidst the throng, and there worketh his villainy. So likewise in the markets they note how every one putteth up his purse, and there either in a great press or while the party is cheapening of meat, the foist is in their pocket, and the nip hath the purse by the strings, or sometimes cuts out the bottom, for they have still their stalls following them, who thrusteth and justleth him or her whom the foist is about to draw. So likewise at plays, the nip standeth there, leaning like some mannerly gentleman against the door as men go in, and there finding talk with some of his companions, spieth what every man hath in his purse, and where, in what place and in which sleeve or pocket he puts the bung, and according to that, so he worketh, either where the thrust is great within, or else as they come out at the doors. But suppose that the foist is smoked, and the man misseth his purse, & apprehendeth him for it, then straight he either conveyeth it to his stall, or else droppeth the bung, and with a great brave he defieth his accuser, and though the purse be found at his foot, yet because he hath it not about him he comes not within compass of life. Thus have they their shifts for the law, and yet at last so long the pitcher goeth to the brook that it cometh broken home, and so long the foists put their villainy in practice that westward they go, and there solemnly make a rehearsal sermon at Tyburn.

But again to their places of resort; Westminster, aye marry, that is their chieftest place that brings in their profit. The term-time is their harvest, and therefore like provident husbandmen they take time while time serves and make hay while the sun shines, following their clients, for they are at the Hall very early, and there they work like bees, haunting every court, as the Exchequer Chamber, the Star Chamber, the King's Bench, the Common Pleas, and every place where the poor client standeth to hear his lawyer handle his matter, for alas, the poor country gentleman or farmer is so busied with his causes, and hath his mind so full of cares to see his counsel and to ply his attorney that the least thing in his thought is his purse, but the eagle-eyed foist or nip, he watcheth, and seeing the client draw his purse to pay some charges or fees necessary for the court, marketh where he putteth it, and then when he thrusteth into the throng, either to answer for himself or to stand by his counsellor to put him in mind of his cause, the foist draws his pocket, and leaves the poor client penniless. This do they in all courts, and go disguised like serving-men, wringing the simple people by this juggling subtil[t]y. Well might therefore the honourable & worshipful of those courts do to take order from [sic for 'for?'] such vild and base-minded cutpurses, that as the law hath provided death for them if they be taken, so they might be rooted out especially from Westminster where the poor clients are undone by such roguish catchers. It boots not to tell their course at every remove of her Majesty when the people flock together, nor at Bartholomew Fair, or the Queen's Day at the tilt-yard and at all other places of assembly, for let this suffice, at any great press of people or meeting, there the foist and the nip is in his kingdom. Therefore let all men take this caveat, that when they walk abroad amid any of the forenamed places or like assemblies, that they take great care for their purse how they place it, and not

leave it careless in their pockets or hose, for the foist is so nimble-handed that he exceeds the juggler for agility, and hath his legerdemain as perfectly. Therefore an exquisite foist must have three properties that a good surgeon should have, and that is an eagle's eye, a lady's hand, and a lion's heart: an eagle's eye to spy a purchase, to have a quick insight where the bung lies, and then a lion's heart not to fear what the end will be, and then a lady's hand to be little and nimble, the better to dive into the pocket.

These are the perfect properties of a foist, but you must note that there be diversities of this kind of people, for there be city nips, & country nips which haunt from fair to fair, and never come in London unless it be at Bartholomew Fair or some other great and extraordinary assemblies. Now there is a mortal hate between the country foist and the city foist, for if the city foist spy one of the conies [sic for 'country foists'?] in London, straight he seeks by some means to smoke him, and so the country nip, if he spy a city nip in any fair, then he smokes him straight, and brings him in danger if he flee not away the more speedily. Beside there be women foists and women nips, but the woman foist is most dangerous, for commonly there is some old hand or moutfair [sic] strumpet who inveigleth either some ignorant man or some young youth to folly. She hath straight her hand in his pocket and so foists him of all that he hath. But let all men take heed of such common harlots, who either sit in the streets in evenings, or else dwell in bawdy-houses and are pliant to every man's lure. Such are always foists and pickpockets, and seek the spoil of all such as meddles with them, and in cozening of such base-minded lechers as give themselves to such lewd company are worthy of whatsoever befalls, and sometime they catch such a Spanish pip that they have no more hair on their head than on their nails.

But leaving such strumpets to their souls' confusion and bodies' correction in Bridewell, again to our nips and foists, who have a kind of fraternity or brotherhood among them, having a hall or place of meeting where they confer of weighty matters touching their workmanship, for they are provident in that. Every one of them hath some trusty friend whom he calleth his treasurer, and with him he lays up some rateable portion of every purse he draws, that when need requires and he is brought in danger, he may have money to make composition with the party. But of late there hath been a great scourge fallen amongst them, for now if a purse be drawn of any great value, straight the party maketh friends to some one or other of the Council or other inferior her Majesty's justices, and then they send out warrants, if they cannot learn who the foist is, to the keepers of Newgate, that they take up all the nips and foists about the city, and let them lie there while the money be reanswered unto the party, so that some pay three pound, nay five pound at a time according as the same loss did amount unto, which doth greatly impoverish their trade and hinder their figging-law. Therefore about such causes grows their meeting, for they have a kind of corporation, as having wardens of their company and a hall. I remember their hall was once about Bishopsgate near unto Fisher's Folly, but because it was a noted place they have removed it to Kent Street, and as far as I can learn it is kept at one Laurence Pickering's house, one that hath been, if he be not still, a notable foist. A man of good calling he is, and well allied, brother-in-law to Bull, the hangman. There keep they their feasts and weekly meetings fit for their company. Thus have I partly set down the nature of the foist and the nip, with their special haunts, as a

caveat to all estates to beware of such wicked persons, who are as prejudicial to the commonwealth as any their faculty whatsoever, and although they be by the great discretion of the judges and justices daily trussed up, yet still there springeth up young that grow in time to bear fruit fit for the gallows. Let then every man be as careful as possibly he may, and by this caveat take heed of his purse, for the prey makes the thief, and there and [sic for 'an'?] end.

A merry tale how a miller had his purse cut in Newgate market

It fortuned that a nip and his stall, drinking at the Three Tuns in Newgate market, sitting in one of the rooms next to the street, they might perceive where a mealman stood selling of meal, and had a large bag by his side where by conjecture there was some store of money. The old cole, the old cutpurse I mean, spying this, was delighted with the show of so glorious an object, for a full purse is as pleasing to a cutpurse' eye as the curious physiognomy of Venus was to the amorous god of war, and entering to a merry vein, as one that counted that purchase his own, discovered it to the novice, and bade him go & nip it. The young toward scholar, although perhaps he had stricken some few strokes before, yet seeing no great press of people, and the mealman's hand often upon his bag as if he had in times past smoked some of their faculty, was half afraid and doubted of his own experience, and so refused to do it. *Away, villain, saith the old nip, art thou faint-hearted? Belongs it to our trade to despair? If thou wilt only do common work, and not make experience of some hard matters to attempt, thou wilt never be master of thine occupation. Therefore try thy wits, and do it.* At this the young stripling stalks me out of the tavern, and feeling if his cuttle-bung were glib and of a good edge, went to this mealman to enter combat hand to hand with his purse, but seeing the mealman's eye was still abroad, and for want of other sport that he played with his purse, he was afraid to trust either to his wit or fortune, and therefore went back again without any act achieved. *How now, saith the old nip, what hast thou done? Nothing, quoth he. The knave is so wary that it is impossible to get any purchase there, for he stands playing with his purse for want of other exercise.* At this his fellow looks out and smiles, making this reply: *And dost thou count it impossible to have the mealman's bung? Lend me thy knife, for mine is left at home, & thou shalt see me strike it straight, and I will show thee a method how perhaps hereafter to do the like after my example, and to make thee a good scholar, and therefore go with me and do as I shall instruct thee. Begin but a feigned quarrel, and when I give thee a watchword, then throw flour in my face, and if I miss his purse, let me be hanged for my labour.* With that he gave him certain principles to observe, and then paid for the wine, and out they went together.

As soon as they were come to the mealman, the old nip began to jest with the other about the miller's sack, and the other replied as knavishly. At last the elder called the younger rogue. *Rogue, thou swain? quoth he, dost thou or darrest thou dishonour me with such a base title?* And with that, taking a whole handful of meal out of the sack, threw it full in the old nip's neck and his breast, and then ran way. He being thus dusted with meal, entreated the mealman to wipe it out of his neck, and stooped down his head. The mealman, laughing to see him so rayed and whited, was willing to shake off the meal, and the whilst, while he was busy about that, the nip had stricken the purse and done his

feat, and both courteously thanked the mealman and closely went away with his purchase. The poor man, thinking little of this cheat, began again to play with his purse-strings, and suspected nothing till he had sold a peck of meal, and offered to change money, and then he found his purse bottomless, which struck such a cold quandary in his stomach as if in a frosty morning he had drunk a draught of small beer next his heart. He began then to exclaim against such villains, and called to mind how in shaking the dust out of the gentleman's neck he shook his money out of his purse, and so the poor mealman fetch[ed] a great sigh, knit up his sack, and went sorrowing home.

A kind conceit of a foist performed in Paul's

While I was writing this discovery of foisting, & was desirous of any intelligence that might be given me, a gentleman, a friend of mine, reported unto me this pleasant tale of a foist, & as I well remember, it grew to this effect. There walked in the middle walk a plain country farmer, a man of good wealth, & that had a well-lined purse only barely thrust up in a round slop, which a crew of foists having perceived, their hearts were set on fire to have it, and every one had a fling at him, but all in vain, for he kept his hand close in his pocket and his purse fast in his fist like a subtle churl that either had been forewarned of Paul's or else had aforetime smoked some of that faculty. Well, howsoever, it was impossible to do any good with him, he was so wary. The foists, spying this, strained their wits to the highest string how to compass this bung, yet could not all their politic conceits fetch the farmer over, for justle him, chat with him, offer to shake him by the hand, all would not serve to get his hand out of his pocket.

As last one of the cure [sic for 'crew'], that for his skill might have been doctorate in his mystery, amongst them all chose out a good foist, one of a nimble hand & great agility, and said to the rest thus: *Masters, it shall not be said such a base peasant shall slip away from such a crew of gentlemen foists as we are, and not have his purse drawn, and therefore this time I'll play the stale myself, and if I hit him not home, count me for a bungler forever.* And so he left them, and went to the farmer, and walked directly before him & next him three or four turns. At last, standing still, he cried: *Alas, honest man, help me; I am not well,* and with that sunk down suddenly in a sound. The poor farmer, seeing a proper young gentleman (as he thought) fall dead afore him, stepped to him, held him in his arms, rubbed him and chafed him. At this there gathered a great multitude of people about him, and the whilst the foist drew the farmer's purse, and away. By that the other thought the feat was done, he began to come something to himself again, and so half staggering, stumbled out of Paul's and went after the crew where they had appointed to meet, and there boasted of his wit and experience. The farmer, little suspecting this villainy, thrust his hand into his pocket and missed his purse, searched for it, but lining and shells and all was gone, which made the countryman in a great maze, that he stood still in a dump so long that a gentleman perceiving it asked what he ailed. *What ail I, sir,* quoth he, *truly, I am thinking how men may long as well as women. Why dost thou conjecture that, honest man?* quoth he. *Marry, sir,* answers the farmer, *the gentleman even now that sound here, I warrant him breeds his wife's child, for the cause of his sudden qualm that he fell down dead grew of longing.* The gentleman demanded how he knew that. *Well enough, sir,* quoth he, *and he hath his longing too, for the poor man*

longed for my purse, and thanks be to God, he hath it with him. At this all the hearers laughed, but not so merrily as the foist and his fellows, that then were sharing his money.

A quaint conceit of a cutler & a cutpurse

A nip having by fortune lost his cuttle-bung, or having not one fit for his purpose, went to a cunning cutler to have a new made, and prescribed the cutler such a method and form to make his knife, and the fashion to be so strong, giving such a charge of the fineness of the temper and well setting of the edge that the cutler wondered what the gentleman would do with it, yet because he offered so largely for the making of it, the cutler was silent and made few questions, only he appointed him the time to come for it, and that was three days after. Well, the time being expired, the gentleman nip came, and seeing his knife, liked it passing well, and gave him his money with advantage. The cutler, desirous to know to what use he would put it, said to the cutpurse thus: *Sir, quoth he, I have made many knives in my days, and yet I never saw any of this form, fashion, temper or edge, & therefore if without offence, I pray you tell me how or to what will you use it.* While thus he stood talking with the nip, he spying the purse in his apron, had cut it passing cunningly, and then having his purchase close in his hand made answer: *In faith, my friend, to dissemble is a folly; 'tis to cut a purse withal, and I hope to have good hansel. You are a merry gentleman,* quoth the cutler. *I tell true,* said the cutpurse, and away he goes.

No sooner was he gone from the stall but there came another and bought a knife, and should have single money again. The cutler, thinking to put his hand in his bag, thrust it quite through at the bottom. All his money was gone, & the purse cut. Perceiving this, and remembering how the man prayed he might have good hansel, he fetched a great sigh and said: *Now I see he that makes a snare first falls into it himself. I made a knife to cut other men's purses, and mine is the first hansel. Well, revenge is fallen upon me, but I hope the rope will fall upon him,* and so he smoothed up the matter to himself, lest men should laugh at his strange fortune.

The discovery of the lifting law

The lift is he that stealeth or prowleth any plate, jewels, bolts of satin, velvet or such parcels from any place by a slight conveyance under his cloak, or so secretly that it may not be espied. Of lifts there be divers kinds, as their natures be different, some base rogues that lift when they come into ale-houses quart-pots, platters, cloaks, swords or any such paltry trash, which commonly is called pilfering or pettilashery, for under the colour of spending two or three pots of ale they lift away anything that cometh within the compass of their reach, having a fine & nimble agility of the hand as the foist had.

These are the common and rascal sorts of lifts, but the higher degrees and gentlemen lifts have to the performance of their faculty three parties of necessity: the lift, the marker and the santar. The lift, attired in the form of a civil country gentleman, comes with the marker into some mercer's shop, haberdasher's, goldsmith's or any such place where any particular parcels of worth are to be conveyed, and there he calls to see a bolt of satin,

velvet or any such commodity, and not liking the pile, colour or brack, he calls for more, and the whiles he begins to resolve which of them most fitly may be lifted, and what garbage (for so he calls the goods stolen) may be most easily conveyed. Then he calls to the mercer's man and says: *Sirrah, reach me that piece of velvet or satin, or that jewel, chain or piece of plate*, and whilst the fellow turns his back, he commits his garbage to the marker, for note, the lift is without his cloak, in his doublet & hose, to avoid the more suspicion. The marker, which is the receiver of the lift's luggage, gives a wink to the santar that walks before the window, and then the santar, going by in great haste, the marker calls him & says: *Sir, a word with you. I have a message to do unto you from a very friend of yours, and the errand is of some importance. Truly, sir*, says the santar, *I have very urgent business in hand, and as at this time I cannot stay. But one word and no more*, says the marker, and then he delivers him whatsoever the lift hath conveyed unto him, and then the santar goes his way, who never came within the shop and is a man unknown to them all. Suppose he is smoked, and his lifting is looked into, then are they upon their pantofles because there is nothing found about them. They defy the world for their honesty because they be as dishonest as any in the world, and swear as God shall judge them they never saw the parcel lost, but oaths with them are like wind out of a bellows, which being cool, kindleth fire; so their vows are without conscience, and so they call for revenge. Therefore let this be a caveat to all occupations, sciences and mysteries, that they beware of the gentleman lift, and to have an eye to such as cheapen their wares, and not, when they call to see new stuff, to leave the old behind them, for the fingers of lifts are formed of adamant; though they touch not, yet they have virtue attractive to draw any pelf to them as the adamant doth the iron.

But yet these lifts have a subtile shift to blind the world, for this close kind of cozenage they have when they want money. One of them apparels himself like a country farmer, & with a memorandum drawn in some legal form comes to the chamber of some counsellor or sergeant at law with his marker and his santar, and there tells the lawyer his case and desires his counsel, the whilst the marker and the santar lay the platform for any rapier, dagger, cloak, gown or any other parcel of worth that is in the withdrawing or utter chamber, and as soon as they have [+it], they go their way. Then when the lawyer hath given his opinion of the case the lift requires, then he puts in some demur or blind, and says he will have his cause better discovered, and then he will come to his Worship again, so taking his leave without his ten shillings' fee, he goes his ways to share what his companions had gotten. The like method they use with scriveners, for coming by the shop, and seeing any garbage worth the lifting on, starteth in to have an obligation or bill made in haste, and when the scrivener is busy, the lift bringeth the marker to the blow, and so the luggage is carried way.

Now these lifts have their special receivers of their stolen goods, which are two sundry parties, either some notorious bawds in whose houses they lie, and they keep commonly tapping houses, and have young trugs in their house which are consorts to these lifts, and love them so dear that they never leave them till they come to the gallows, or else they be brokers, a kind of idle sort of livers as pernicious as the lift, for they receive at their hands whatsoever garbage is conveyed, be it linen, woollen, plate, jewels, and this they do by a bill of sale, making the bill in the name of John-a-'nokes or John-a-'stiles, so that they

shadow the lift, & yet keep themselves without the danger of the law. Thus are these brokers and bawds as it were efficient causes of the lifters' villainy, for were it not their alluring speeches and their secret concealings, the lift for want of receivers should be fain to take a new course of life, or else be continually driven into great extremes for selling his garbage. And thus much briefly for the nature of the lift.

The discovery of the curbing law

The curber, which the common people call the hooker, is he that with a curb (as they term it) or hook do pull out of a window any loose linen, cloth, apparel, or else any other household stuff whatsoever, which stolen parcels they in their art call snappings. To the performance of this law there be required only two persons, the curber and the warp. The curber his office is to spy in the day-time fit places where his trade may be practised at night, and coming to any window, if it be open, then he hath his purpose; if shut, then growing into the nature of the black art, hath his trickers, which are engines of iron so cunningly wrought that he will cut a bar of iron in two with them so easily that scarcely shall the standers-by hear him. Then when he hath the window open and spies any fat snappings worth the curbing, then straight he sets the warp to watch, who hath a long cloak to cover whatsoever he gets. Then doth the other thrust in a long hook some nine foot in length (which he calleth a curb) that hath at the end a crook with three tines turned contrary, so that 'tis impossible to miss if there be any snappings abroad. Now this long hook they call a curb, and because you shall not wonder how they carry it for being espied, know this, that it is made with joints like an angle-rod, and can be conveyed into the form of a truncheon, & worn in the hand like a walking-staff until they come to their purpose, and then they let it out at the length, and hook or curb whatsoever is loose and within the reach. And then he conveys it to the warp, and from thence (as they lift) their snappings goes to the broker or to the bawd, and there they have as ready money for it as merchants have for their ware in the Exchange. Beside there is a diver, which is in the very nature of the curber, for as he puts in a hook, so the other puts in at the window some little figging boy who plays his part notably, and perhaps the youth is so well-instructed that he is a scholar in the black art, and can pick a lock if it be not too cross-warded, and deliver to the diver what snappings he finds in the chamber. Thus you hear what the curber doth and the diver, and what inconvenience grows to many by their base villainies. Therefore I do wish all men-servants and maids to be careful for their masters' commodities, and to leave no loose ends abroad, especially in chambers where windows open to the street, lest the curber take them as snappings, and convey them to the cozening broker. Let this suffice, and now I will recreate your wits with a merry tale or two.

Of a curber, & how cunningly he was taken

It fortun'd of late that a curber & his warp went walking in the dead of the night to spy out some window open for their purpose, & by chance came by a nobleman's house about London, and saw the window of the porter's lodge open, and looking in spied fat snappings, and bade his warp watch carefully, for there would be purchase, & with that took his curb and thrust it into the chamber, and the porter, lying in his bed, was awake &

saw all, and so was his bedfellow that was yeoman of the wine-cellar. The porter stole out of his bed to mark what would be done, and the first snapping the curber light on was his livery coat. As he was drawing it to the window, the porter easily lifted it off, and so the curber drew his hook in vain, the whilst his bedfellow stole out of the chamber and raised up two or three more, and went about to take them, but still the rogue he plied his business, and lighted on a gown that he used to sit in in the porter's lodge, and warily drew it, but when it came at the window, the porter drew it off so lightly that the hooker perceived it not. Then when he saw his curb would take no hold, he swore and chafed, and told the warp he had hold of two good snaps, and yet missed them both, and that the fault was in his curb. Then he fell to sharpening and hammering of the hook to make it keep better hold, and in again he thrust it, and lights upon a pair of buff hose, but when he had drawn them to the window, the porter took them off again, which made the curber almost mad, & swore he thought the devil was abroad tonight, he had such hard fortune. *Nay, says the yeoman of the cellar, there is three abroad, and we are come to fetch you and your hooks to hell.* So they apprehended these base rogues, & carried them into the porter's lodge and made that their prison. In the morning a crew of gentlemen in the house sat for judges (in that they would not trouble their lord with such filthy caterpillars), and by them were found guilty, and condemned to abide forty blows apiece with a bastinado, which they had solemnly paid, and so went away without any further damage.

Of the subtilty of a curber in cozening a maid

A merry jest and as subtile was reported to me of a cunning curber who had apparelled himself marvellous brave, like some good well-favoured young gentleman, and instead of a man had his warp to wait upon him. This smooth-faced rogue comes into Moor Fields and caused his man to carry a pottle of hippocras under his cloak, and there had learned out amongst others that was drying of clothes of a very well-favoured maid that was there with her flasket of linen, what her master was, where she dwelt, and what her name. Having gotten this intelligence, to this maid he goes and courteously salutes her, and after some pretty chat, tells her how he saw her sundry times at her master's door and was so besotted with her beauty that he had made inquiry what her qualities were, which by the neighbours he generally heard to be so virtuous that his desire was the more inflamed, and thereupon in sign of goodwill and in further acquaintance he had brought her a pottle of hippocras. The maid, seeing him a good proper man, took it very kindly, and thanked him, and so they drunk the wine, and after a little lovers' prattle, for that time they parted.

The maid's heart was set on fire that a gentleman was become a suitor unto her, and she began to think better of herself than ever she did before, and waxed so proud that her other suitors were counted too base for her, and there might be none welcome but this new-come gentleman, her lover. Well, divers times they appointed meetings that they grew very familiar, and he oftentimes would come to her master's house when all but she and her fellow-maids were abed, so that he and the warp his man did almost know every corner of the house. It fortuneed that so long he dallied that at length he meant earnest, but not to marry the maid, whatsoever he had done else, and coming into the fields to her on a washing-day, saw a mighty deal of fine linen worth twenty pound as he conjectured,

whereupon he thought this night to set down his rest, and therefore he was very pleasant with his lover, and told her that that night after her master and mistress were to bed, he would come and bring a bottle [sic for 'pottle'?] of sack with him, and drink with her. The maid, glad at these news, promised to sit up for him, and so they parted till about ten o'clock at night, when he came and brought his man with him, and one other curber with his tools, who should stand without the doors. To be brief, welcome he came, and so welcome as a man might be to a maid. He, that had more mind to spy the clothes than to look on her favour, at last perceived them in a parlour that stood to the streetward, and there would the maid have had him sit. *No, sweeting, quoth he, it is too near the street; we can neither laugh nor be merry but everyone that passeth by must hear us.* Upon that they removed into another room, and pleasant they were and tippled the sack round till all was out, and the gentleman swore that he would have another pottle, and so sent his man, who told the other curber that stood without where the window was he should work at, & away goes he for more sack, and brings it very orderly, and then to their cups they fall again while the curber without had not left one rag of linen behind. Late it grew, and the morning began to wax grey, and away goes the curber and his man, leaving the maid very pleasant with his flattering promises until such time as, poor soul, she went into the parlour and missed all her master's linen. Than what a sorrowful heart she had, I refer to them that have grieved at the like loss.

The discovery of the black art

The black art is picking of locks, and to this busy trade two persons are required, the charm and the stand. The charm is he that doth the feat, and the stand is he that watcheth. There be more that belong to the burglary for conveying away the goods, but only two are employed about the lock. The charm hath many keys and wrests, which they call picklocks, and for every sundry fashion they have a sundry term, but I am ignorant of their words of art, and therefore I omit them, only this, they have such cunning in opening a lock that they will undo the hardest lock, though never so well warded, even while a man may turn his back. Some have their instruments from Italy made of steel, some are made here by smiths that are partakers in their villainous occupations, but howsoever, well may it be called the black art, for the devil cannot do better than they in their faculty. I once saw the experience of it myself, for being in the Counter upon a commandment, there came in a famous fellow in the black art, as strong in that quality as Samson. The party now is dead, and by fortune died in his bed. I, hearing that he was a charm, began to enter familiarity with him, and to have an insight into his art. After some acquaintance he told me much, and one day being in my chamber, I showed him my desk, and asked him if he could pick that little lock that was so well warded, and too little, as I thought, for any of his gins. *Why, sir, says he, I am so experienced in the black art that if I do but blow upon a lock it shall fly open, and therefore let me come to your desk, and do but turn five times about, and you shall see my cunning.* With that I did as he bade me, and ere I had turned five times, his hand was rifling in my desk very orderly. I wondered at it, and thought verily that the devil and his dam was in his fingers.

Much discommodity grows by this black art in shops and noblemen's houses for their plate. Therefore are they most severely to be looked into by the honourable and

worshipful of England, and to end this discourse as pleasantly as the rest, I will rehearse you a true tale done by a most worshipful knight in Lancashire against a tinker that professed the black art.

A true and merry tale of a knight, and a tinker that was a picklock

Not far off from Bolton-in-the-Moors there dwelled an ancient knight, who for courtesy and hospitality was famous in those part. Divers of his tenants making repair to his house offered divers complaints to him how their locks were picked in the night, and divers of them utterly undone by that means, and who it should be they could not tell, only they suspected a tinker that went about the country, and in all places did spend very lavishly. The knight willing, heard what they exhibited, and promised both redress and revenge if he or they could learn out the man.

It chanced not long after their complaints but this jolly tinker (so expert in the black art) came by the house of this knight as the old gentleman was walking afore the gate, and cried for work. The knight, straight conjecturing this should be that famous rogue that did so much hurt to his tenants, called in and asked him if they had any work for the tinker. The cook answered there was three or four old kettles to mend, *Come in, tinker*. So this fellow came in, laid down his budget and fell to his work. *A Black Jack of beer for this tinker*, says the knight. *I know tinkers have dry souls*. The tinker, he was pleasant, and thanked him humbly. The knight sat down by him and fell a-ransacking his budget, and asked wherefore this tool served, and wherefore that. The tinker told him all. At last, as he tumbled amongst his old brass, the knight spied three or four bunches of picklocks. He turned them over quickly as though he had not seen them, and said: *Well, tinker, I warrant thou art a passing cunning fellow, & well skilled in thine occupation by the store of tools thou hast in thy budget. In faith, if it please your Worship*, quoth he, *I am, thanks be to God, my craft's master. Aye, so much I perceive that thou art a passing cunning fellow*, quoth the knight. *Therefore let us have a fresh jack of beer, and that of the best and strongest, for the tinker*. Thus he passed away the time pleasantly, and when he had done his work, he asked what he would have for his pains. *But two shillings of your Worship*, quoth the tinker. *Two shillings*, says the knight, *alas, tinker, it is too little, for I see by thy tools thou art a passing cunning workman. Hold, there is two shillings; come in, shalt drink a cup of wine before thou goest. But I pray, tell me, which way travellest thou?* *Faith, sir*, quoth the tinker, *all is one to me. I am not much out of my way wheresoever I go, but now I am going to Lancaster. I pray thee, tinker, then*, quoth the knight, *carry me a letter to the jailer, for I sent in a fellow thither the other day, and I would send word to the jailer he should take no bail for him. Marry, that I will in most dutiful manner*, quoth he, *and much more for your Worship than that. Give him a cup of wine*, quoth the knight, *And sirrah* (speaking to his clerk), *make a letter to the jailer*, but then he whispered to him and bade him make a mittimus to send the tinker to prison. The clerk answered he knew not his name. *I'll make him tell it thee himself*, says the knight, *and therefore fall you to your pen*. The clerk began to write his mittimus, and the knight began to ask what countryman he was, where he dwelt, & what was his name. The tinker told him all, and the clerk set it in with this proviso to the jailer, that he should keep him fast bolted, or else he would break away.

As soon as the mittimus was made, sealed and subscribed in form of a letter, the knight took it and delivered it to the tinker, and said: *Give this to the chief jailer of Lancaster, & here's two shillings more for thy labour.* So the tinker took the letter and the money, and with many a cap & knee thanked the old knight, and departed, and made haste till he came at Lancaster, and stayed not in the town so much as to taste one cup of nappy ale before he came at the jailer, and to him very briskly he delivered his letter. The jailer took it and read it and smiled a-good, and said: *Tinker, thou art welcome for such a knight's sake. He bids me give thee ye best entertainment I may. Aye, sir, quoth the tinker, the knight loves me well, but I pray you, hath ye courteous gentleman remembered such a poor man as I? Aye, marry, doth he, tinker, and therefore, sirrah, quod he to one of his men, take ye tinker in ye lowest ward, clap a strong pair of bolts on his heels, and a basil of 28 pounds weight, and then, sirrah, see if your picklock will serve the turn to bail you hence.* At this the tinker was blank, but yet he thought the jailer had but jested, but when he heard the mittimus, his heart was cold and had not a word to say; his conscience accused. And there he lay while the next sessions, and was hanged at Lancaster, and all his skill in the black art could not serve him.

FINIS