

THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF CONY-CATCHING

With the new-devised knavish art of fool-taking

The like cozenages and villainies never before discovered

By R.G.

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To all such as have received either pleasure or profit by the two former published books of this argument, and to all beside that desire to know the wonderful sly devises of this hellish crew of cony-catchers

In the time of King Henry the Fourth, as our English chroniclers have kept in remembrance, lived divers sturdy and loose companions in sundry places about the city of London who gave themselves to no good course of life, but because the time was somewhat troublesome, watched diligently when by the least occasion of mutiny offered they might prey upon the goods of honest citizens, and so by their spoil enrich themselves. At that time likewise lived a worthy gentleman whose many very famous deeds (whereof I am sorry I may here make no rehearsal, because neither time nor occasion will permit me) renown his name to all ensuing posterities, he being called Sir Richard Whittington, the founder of Whittington College in London, and one that bare the office of Lord Mayor of this city three several times. This worthy man, well noting the dangerous disposition of that idle kind of people, took such good and discreet order (after he had sent divers of them to serve in the King's wars, and they, loath to do so well, returned to their former vomit) that in no place of or about London they might have lodging or entertainment except they applied themselves to such honest trades and exercises as might witness their maintaining was by true and honest means. If any to the contrary were found, they were in justice so sharply proceeded against as the most hurtful and dangerous enemies to the commonwealth.

In this quiet and most blissful time of peace, when all men (in course of life) should show themselves most thankful for so great a benefit, this famous city is pestered with the like, or rather worse kind of people, that bear outward show of civil, honest and gentlemanlike disposition, but in very deed their behaviour is most infamous to be spoken of. And as now by their close villainies they cheat, cozen, prig, lift, nip and suchlike tricks now used in their cony-catching trade to the hurt and undoing of many an honest citizen and other, so if God should in justice be angry with us, as our wickedness hath well deserved, and (as the Lord forbend) our peace should be molested as in former time, even as they did, so will these be the first in seeking domestical spoil and ruin. Yea, so they may have it, it skills not how they come by it. God raise such another as was worthy Whittington, that in time may bridle the headstrong course of this hellish crew, and force them live as becometh honest subjects, or else to abide the reward due to their looseness.

By reading this little treatise ensuing, you shall see to what marvellous subtile policies these deceivers have attained, and how daily they practise drifts for their purpose. I say no more, but if all these forewarnings may be regarded, to the benefit of the well-minded, and just control of these careless wretches, it is all I desire, and no more than I hope to see.

Yours in all he may, R.G.

THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF CONY-CATCHING, WITH THE NEW-DEvised
KNAVISH ART OF FOOL-TAKING

Being by chance invited to supper where were present divers both of worship and good account, as occasion served for intercourse of talk the present treacheries and wicked devises of the world was called in question, amongst other most hateful and well worthy reprehension, the wondrous villainies of loose and lewd persons that bear the shape of men yet are monsters in condition was specially remembered, and not only they but their complices, their confederates, their base-natured women and close compacters were noted, namely such as term themselves cony-catchers, crossbiters, with their appertaining names to their several cozening qualities, as already is made known to the world by two several imprinted books, by means whereof the present kind of conference was occasioned. Quoth a gentleman sitting at the table, whose deep step into age deciphered his experience, and whose gravity in speech reported his discretion, quoth he, *By the two published books of cony-catching I have seen divers things whereof I was before ignorant; notwithstanding, had I been acquainted with the author, I could have given him such notes of notorious matters that was intending as in neither of the pamphlets are the like set down. Beside, they are so necessary to be known as they will both forearm any man against such treacherous vipers, and forewarn the simpler sort from conversing with them.* The gentleman being known to be within commission of the peace, and that what he spake of either came to him by examinations or by riding in the circuits as other like officers do, was entreated by one man above the rest (as his leisure served him) to acquaint him with those notes, and he would so bring it to pass as the writer of the other two books should have the sight of them, and if their quantity would serve, that he should publish them as a third and more necessary part than the former were. The gentleman replied: *All such notes as I speak are not of mine own knowledge, yet from such men have I received them as I dare assure their truth, and but that by naming men wronged by such mates more displeasure would ensue than were expedient, I could set down both time, place and parties. But the certainty shall suffice without any such offence. As for such as shall see their injuries discovered, and (biting the lip) say to themselves, thus was I made a cony, their names being shadowed, they have no cause of anger in that the example of their honest simplicity beguiled may shield a number more endangered from tasting the like. And seeing you have promised to make them known to the author of the former two books, you shall the sooner obtain your request, assuring him thus much upon my credit and honesty, that no one untruth is in the notes, but every one credible and to be justified if need serve.* Within a fortnight or thereabout afterward, the gentleman performed his promise, in several papers sent the notes which here are in our book compiled together. When thou hast read, say if ever thou heardest more notable villainies discovered. And if thou or thy friends receive any good by them, as it cannot be but they will make a number more careful of themselves, thank the honest gentleman for his notes, and the writer that published both the other and these for general example.

A pleasant tale how an honest substantial citizen was made a cony, and simply entertained a knave that carried away his goods very politicly

What laws are used among this hellish crew, what words and terms they give themselves and their copesmates, are at large set down in the former two books. Let it suffice ye then in this, to read the simple true discourses of such as have by extraordinary cunning and treachery been deceived, and remembering their subtle means there, and sly practices here, be prepared against the reaches of any such companions.

Not long since, a crew of cony-catchers meeting together, and in conference laying down such courses as they severally should take to shun suspect and return a common benefit among them, the carders received their charge, the dicers theirs, the hangers about the court theirs, the followers of sermons theirs, and so the rest to their offices. But one of them especially, who at their wonted meetings when report was made how every purchase was gotten and by what policy each one prevailed, this fellow in a kind of priding scorn would usually say:

In faith, masters, these things are prettily done; common sleights, expressing no deep reach of wit, and I wonder men are so simple to be so beguiled. I would fain see some rare artificial feat indeed, that some admiration and fame might ensue the doing thereof. I promise ye, I disdain these base and petty paltries, and may my fortune jump with my resolution, ye shall hear, my boys, within a day or two that I will accomplish a rare stratagem indeed, of more value than forty of yours, and when it is done, shall carry some credit with it.

They, wondering at his words, desired to see the success of them, and so dispersing themselves as they were accustomed, left this frolic fellow pondering on his affairs. A citizen's house in London which he had diligently eyed and aimed at for a fortnight's space was the place wherein he must perform this exploit, and having learned one of the servant-maid's name of the house, as also where she was born and her kindred, upon a Sunday in the afternoon, when it was her turn to attend on her master and mistress to the garden in Finsbury Fields to regard the children while they sported about, this crafty mate having duly watched their coming forth, and seeing that they intended to go down St. Laurence Lane, stepped before them, ever casting an eye back lest they should turn some contrary way. But their following still fitting his own desire, near unto the conduit in Aldermanbury he crossed the way, and came unto the maid and kissing her, said: *Cousin Margaret, I am very glad to see you well. My uncle your father, and all your friends in the country, are in good health, God be praised.* The maid, hearing herself named, and not knowing the man, modestly blushed, and he perceiving, held way on with her amongst her fellow-apprentices, and thus began again. *I see, cousin, you know me not, and I do not greatly blame you, it is so long since you came forth of the country, but I am such a one's son, naming her uncle right, and his son's name, which she very well remembered, but had not seen him in eleven years. Then taking forth a bowed groat and an old penny bowed he gave it her as being sent from her uncle and aunt, whom he termed to be his father and mother. Withal, quoth he, I have a gammon of bacon and a cheese from my uncle your father which are sent to your master and mistress, which I received of the carrier because my uncle enjoined me to deliver them, when I must entreat your mistress that at Whitsuntide next she will give you leave to come down into*

the country. The maid, thinking simply all he said was true, and as they so far from their parents are not only glad to hear of their welfare but also rejoice to see any of their kindred, so this poor maid, well knowing her uncle had a son so named as he called himself, and thinking from a boy (as he was at her leaving the country) he was now grown such a proper handsome young man, was not a little joyful to see him. Beside, she seemed proud that her kinsman was so neat a youth, and so she held on questioning with him about her friends, he soothing the matter so cunningly as the maid was confidently persuaded of him. In this time one of the children stepped to her mother and said: *Our Marget (mother) hath a fine cousin come out of the country, and he hath a cheese for my father and you.* Whereupon she, looking back said: *Maid, is that your kinsman? Yea, forsooth, mistress, quoth she, my uncle's son whom I left a little one when I came forth of the country.*

The wily treacher, being master of his trade, would not let slip this opportunity, but courteously stepping to the mistress (who loving her maid well because indeed she had been a very good servant, and from her first coming to London had dwelt with her, told her husband thereof) coined such a smooth tale unto them both, fronting it with the gammon of bacon and cheese sent from their maid's father, and hoping they would give her leave at Whitsuntide to visit the country, as they with very kind words entertained him, inviting him the next night to supper, when he promised to bring with him the gammon of bacon and the cheese. Then framing an excuse of certain business in the town, for that time he took his leave of the master and mistress and his new cousin Ma[r]garet, who gave many a look after him (poor wench) as he went, joying in her thoughts to have such a kinsman.

On the morrow he prepared a good gammon of bacon which he closed up in a soiled linen cloth and sewed an old card upon it whereon he wrote a superscription unto the master of the maid and at what sign it was to be delivered, and afterward scraped some of the letters half out, that it might seem they had been rubbed out in the carriage. A good cheese he prepared likewise, with inscription accordingly on it, that it could not be discerned but that some unskilful writer in the country had done it, both by the gross proportion of the letters as also the bad orthography, which amongst plain husbandmen is very common in that they have no better instruction. So hiring a porter to carry them, between five and six in the evening he comes to the citizen's house, and entering the shop, receives them of the porter, whom the honest-meaning citizen would have paid for his pains, but this his maid's new-found cousin said he was satisfied already, and so straining courtesy would not permit him. Well, up are carried the bacon and the cheese, where, God knows, Margaret was not a little busy to have all things fine and neat against her cousin's coming up. Her mistress likewise (as one well affecting her servant) had provided very good cheer, set all her plate on the cupboard for show, and beautified the house with cushions, carpets, stools and other devises of needlework as at such times divers will do to have the better report made of their credit amongst their servants' friends in the country, albeit at this time (God wot) it turned to their own after-sorrowing.

The master of the house, to delay the time while supper was ready, he likewise shows this dissembler his shop, who seeing things fadge so pat to his purpose, could question of this

sort and that well enough, I warrant you, to discern the best from the worst and their appointed places, purposing a further reach than the honest citizen dreamed of, and to be plain with ye, such was this occupier's trade, as though I may not name it, yet thus much I dare utter, that the worst thing he could carry away was worth above 20 nobles because he dealt altogether in whole and great sale, which made this companion forge this kindred and acquaintance, for an hundred pound or twain was the very least he aimed at.

At length the mistress sends word supper is on the table, whereupon up he conducts his guest, and after divers welcomes, as also thanks for the cheese and bacon, to the table they sit, where let it suffice he wanted no ordinary good fare, wine and other knacks, beside much talk of the country, how much his friends were beholding for his cousin Margaret, to whom by her mistress' leave he drank twice or thrice, and she, poor soul, doing the like again to him with remembrance of her father and other kindred, which he still smoothed very cunningly. Countenance of talk made them careless of the time, which slipped from them [+faster?] than they were aware of, nor did the deceiver hasten his departing because he expected what indeed followed, which was that being past ten of the clock, and he feigning his lodging to be at Saint Giles in the Field, was entreated both by the goodman and his wife to take a bed there for that night. For fashion' sake (though very glad of this offer) he said he would not trouble them, but giving them many thanks, would to his lodging though it were further. But wonderful it was to see how earnest the honest citizen and his wife laboured to persuade him, that was more willing to stay than they could be to bid him, and what dissembled willingness of departure he used on the other side to cover the secret villainy intended. Well, at the length, with much ado he is contented to stay, when Margaret and her mistress presently stirred to make ready his bed, which the more to the honest man's hard hap, but all the better for this artificial cony-catcher, was in the same room where they supped, being commonly called their hall, and there indeed stood a very fair bed, as in such sightly rooms in may easily be thought citizens use not to have anything mean or simple. The mistress, lest her guest should imagine she disturbed him, suffered all the plate to stand still on the cupboard, and when she perceived his bed was warmed and everything else according to her mind, she and her husband, bidding him good night, took themselves to their chamber, which was on the same floor, but inward, having another chamber between them and the hall where the maids and children had their lodging. So desiring him to call for anything he wanted, and charging Margaret to look it should be so, to bed are they gone, when the apprentices, having brought up the keys of the street-door and left them in their master's chamber as they were wont to do, after they had said prayers, their evening exercise, to bed go they likewise, which was in a garret backward over their master's chamber. None are now up but poor Margaret and her counterfeit cousin, whom she, loath to offend with long talk because it waxed late, after some few more speeches about their parents and friends in the country, she seeing him laid in bed, and all such things by him as she deemed needful, with a low courtesy, I warrant ye, commits him to his quiet, and so went to bed to her fellows, the maidservants.

Well did this hypocrite perceive the keys of the doors carried into the goodman's chamber, whereof he being not a little glad, thought now they would imagine all things sure, and therefore doubtless sleep the sounder. As for the keys, he needed no help of

them because such as he go never unprovided of instruments fitting their trade, and so at this time was this notable traitor. In the dead time of the night, when sound sleep makes ye ear unapt to hear the very least noise, he forsaketh his bed, & having gotten all the plate bound up together in his cloak, goeth down into the shop, where well remembering both the place and parcels, maketh up his pack with some twenty pounds' worth of goods more. Then settling to his engine, he getteth the door off the hinges, and being forth, lifteth close to again, and so departs, meeting within a dozen paces three or four of his companions that lurked thereabouts for the purpose. Their word for knowing each other, as is said, was 'quest', and this villain's comfortable news to them was 'twag' signifying he had sped. Each takes a fleece for easier carriage, and so away to Bellbrow, which, as I have heard, is, as they interpret it, the house of a thief receiver, without which they can do nothing, and this house, with an apt porter to it, stands ready for them all hours of the night. Too many such are there in London, the masters whereof bear countenance of honest substantial men, but all their living is gotten in this order; the end of such (though they scape awhile) will be sailing westward in a cart to Tyburn. Imagine these villains there in their jollity, the one reporting point by point his cunning deceit, and the other (fitting his humour) extolling the deed with no mean commendations.

But returning to the honest citizen, who finding in the morning how dearly he paid for a gammon of bacon and a cheese, and how his kind courtesy was thus treacherously requited, blames the poor maid, as innocent herein as himself, and imprisoning her, thinking so to regain his own, grief with ill cherishing there shortens her life. And thus ensueth one hard hap upon another, to the great grief both of master and mistress when the truth was known, that they so wronged their honest servant. How [+this] may forewarn other, I leave to your own opinions, that see what extraordinary devises are now-a-days to beguile the simple and honest liberal-minded.

Of a notable knave who, for his cunning deceiving a gentleman of his purse, scorned the name of a cony-catcher, and would needs be termed a fool-taker, as master and beginner of that new-found art.

A crew of these wicked companions being one day met together in Paul's church (as that is a usual place of their assembly, both to determine on their drifts, as also to speed of many a booty), seeing no likelihood of a good afternoon, so they term it, either forenoon or after when aught is to be done, some dispersed themselves to the plays, other to the bowling alleys, and not past two or three stayed in the church. Quoth one of them: *I have vowed not to depart but something or other I'll have before I go; my mind gives me that this place yet will yield us all our suppers this night.* The other, holding like opinion with him, there likewise walked up and down looking when occasion would serve for some cash. At length they espied a gentleman toward the law entering in at the little north door, and a country client going with him in very hard talk. The gentleman, holding his gown open with his arms on either side as very many do, gave sight of a fair purple velvet purse which was half put under his girdle, which, I warrant you, the resolute fellow that would not depart without something had quickly espied. *A game,* quod he to his fellows, *mark the stand,* and so separating themselves walked aloof, the gentleman going

to the nether step of the stairs that ascend up into the choir, and there he walked still with his client. Oft this crew of mates met together, and said there was no hope of nipping the bung because he held open his gown so wide, and walked in such an open place. *Base knaves*, quoth the frolic fellow, *if I say I will have it, I must have it, though he that owes it had sworn the contrary*. Then looking aside he spied his trug or quean coming up the church. *Away*, quoth he to the other, *go look you for some other purchase; this wench and I are sufficient for this*. They go, he lessons the drab in this sort, that she should to the gentlemen, whose name she very well knew in that she had holp to cozen him once before, & pretending to be sent to him from one he was well acquainted with for his counsel, should give him his fee, for avoiding suspicion, and so frame some wrong done her as well enough she could; when her mate (taking occasion as it served) would work the mean, she should strike, & so they both prevail.

The quean, well enured with such courses because she was one of ye most skilful in that profession, walked up and down alone in the gentleman's sight that he might discern she stayed to speak with him, and as he turned toward her, he saw her take money out of her purse, whereby he gathered some benefit was toward him, which made him the sooner dispatch his other client, when she, stepping to him, told such a tale of commendations from his very friend, that he had sent her to him as she said, that he entertained her very kindly, and giving him his fee, which before her face he put up into his purse and thrust it under his girdle again, she proceeded to a very sound discourse whereto he listened with no little attention. The time serving fit for the fellow's purpose, he came behind the gentleman, and as many times one friend will familiarly with another, claps his hands over his eyes to make him guess who he is. So did this companion, holding his hands fast over the gentleman's eyes, said: *Who am I?* twice or thrice, in which time the drab had gotten the purse and put it up. The gentleman, thinking it [+had] been some merry friend of his, reckoned the names of three or four, when letting him go, the crafty knave, dissembling a bashful shame of what he had done, said: *By my troth, sir, I cry ye mercy. As I came in at the church-door I took ye for such a one (naming a man), a very friend of mine whom you very much resemble. I beseech ye, be not angry; it was very boldly done of me, but in penance of my fault, so please you to accept it, I will bestow a gallon or two of wine on ye*, and so laboured him earnestly to go with him to the tavern, still alleging his sorrow for mistaking him. The gentleman, little suspecting how 'Who am I?' had handled him, seeing how sorry he was, and seeming to be a man of no such base condition, took all in good part, saying: *No harm, sir, to take one for another, a fault wherein any man may easily err*, and so excusing the acceptation of his wine because he was busy there with a gentlewoman, his friend, the treacher with courtesy departed, and the drab (having what she would), shortening her tale, he desiring her to come to his chamber the next morning, went to the place where her copesmate & she met, and not long after, divers others of the crew, who hearing in what manner this act was performed smiled a-good thereat, that she had both got the gentleman's purse, her own money again, and his advise for just nothing. He that had done this tall exploit, in a place so open in view, so hardly to be come by, and on a man that made no mean esteem of his wit, bids his fellows keep the worthless name of a cony-catcher to themselves, for he henceforth would be termed a fool-taker, and such as could imitate this quaint example of his (which

he would set down as an entrance into that art) should not think scorn to become his scholars.

Night drawing on apace, the gentleman returned home, not all this while missing his purse, but being set at supper, his wife entreated a pint of sack, which he minding to send for, drew to his purse, and seeing it gone, what strange looks (beside sighs) were between him and his wife I leave to your supposing, and blame them not, for as I have heard there was seven pound in gold beside thirty shillings and odd white money in the purse. But in the midst of his grief he remembered him that said: *Who am I?*, wherewith he brake forth into a great laughter, the cause whereof his wife being desirous to know, he declared all that passed between him and the deceiver, as also how soon afterward the quean abbreviated her discourse and followed. *So, by troth, wife, quoth he, between 'Who am I?' and the drab, my purse is gone.* Let his loss teach others to look better to theirs.

Another tale of a cozening companion who would needs try his cunning in this new-invented art, and how by his knavery (at one instant) he beguiled half a dozen and more

Of late time there hath a certain base kind of trade been used, who though divers poor men & doubtless honest apply themselves to only to relieve their need, yet are there some notorious varlets to the same, being compacted with such kind of people as this present treatise manifesteth to the world, and what with outward simplicity on the one side, and cunning close treachery on the other, divers honest citizens and day-labouring men that resort to such places as I am to speak of only for recreation as opportunity serveth, have been of late sundry times deceived of their purses. This trade, or rather unsufferable loitering quality in singing of ballads and songs at the doors of such houses where plays are used, as also in open markets and other places of this city where is most resort, which is nothing else but a sly fetch to draw many together, who listening unto an harmless ditty afterward walk home to their houses with heavy hearts, from such as are hereof true witnesses to their cost do I deliver this example.

A subtile fellow, belike emboldened by acquaintance with the former deceit, or else being but a beginner to practise the same, calling certain of his companions together would try whether he could attain to be master of his art or no by taking a great many of fools with one train. But let his intent and what else beside remain to abide the censure after ye matter is heard, & come to Gracious Street, where this villainous prank was performed. A roguing mate, & such another with him, were there got upon a stall singing of ballads, which belike was some pretty toy, for very many gathered about to hear it, & divers buying as their affections served, drew to their purses & paid the singers for them. The sly mate and his fellows, who were dispersed among them that stood to hear the songs, well noted where every man that bought put up his purse again, and to such as would not buy, counterfeit warning was sundry times given by the rogue and his associate to beware of the cutpurse, and look to their purses, which made them often feel where their purses were, either in sleeve, hose or at girdle, to know whether they were safe or no. Thus the crafty copesmates were acquainted with what they most desired, and as they were scattered, by shouldering, thrusting, feigning to let fall something and other wily tricks fit

for their purpose, here one lost his purse, there another had his pocket picked, and to say all in brief, at one instant, upon the complaint of one or two that saw their purses were gone, eight more in the same company found themselves in like predicament. Some angry, others sorrowful, and all greatly discontented, looking about them knew not who to suspect or challenge in that the villains themselves that had thus beguiled them made show that they had sustained like loss. But one angry fellow, more impatient than all the rest, he falls upon the ballad-singer, and beating him with his fists well-favouredly, says if he had not listened his singing he had not lost his purse, and therefore would not be otherwise persuaded but that they two and the cutpurses were compacted together. The rest that had lost their purses likewise, and saw that so ma[n]y complain together, they jump in opinion with the other fellow, & begin to tug & hale the ballad-singers, when one after one the false knaves began to shrink way with ye purses. By means of some officer then being there present, the two rogues were had before a justice, and upon his discreet examination made, it was found that they and the cutpurses were compacted together, and that by this unsuspected villainy they had deceived many. The fine fool-taker himself, with one or two more of that company, was not long after apprehended, when I doubt not but they had their reward answerable to their deserving, for I hear of their journey westward, but not of their return. Let this forewarn those that listen singing in the streets.

Of a crafty mate that brought two young men to a tavern, where departing with a cup, he left them to pay both for the wine and cup

A friend of mine sent me this note, and assuring me the truth thereof, I thought necessary to set it down amongst the rest, both for the honest simplicity on the one side, and most cunning knavery used on the other, and thus it was. Two young men of familiar acquaintance who delighted much in music because themselves therein were somewhat expert, as on the virginals, bandora, lute and suchlike, were one evening at a common inn of this town (as I have heard) where the one of them showed his skill on the virginals to the no little contentment of the hearers. Now as divers guests of the house came into the room to listen, so among the rest entered an artificial cony-catcher, who as occasion served in the time of ceasing between the several toys and fancies he played, very much commended his cunning, quick hand, and such qualities praiseworthy in such a professor.

The time being come when these young men craved leave to depart, this politic varlet, stepping to them, desired that they would accept a quart of wine at his hand, which he would, most gladly he would, bestow upon them. Besides, if it liked him that played on the virginals to instruct, he would help him to so good a place as happily might advantage him forever. These kind words, delivered with such honest outward show, caused the young men, whose thoughts were free from any other opinion that to be as truly and plainly dealt withal as themselves meant, accepted his offer because he that played on the virginals was desirous to have some good place of service, and hereupon to the tavern they go, and being set, the wily companion calleth for two pints of wine, a pint of white and a pint of claret, casting his cloak upon the table and falling to his former communication of preferring the young man. The wine is brought, and two cups withal; as is the usual manner, when drinking to them of one pint, they pledge him, not

unthankful for his gentleness. After some time spent in talk, and as he perceived fit for his purpose, he takes the other cup, and tastes the other pint of wine, wherewith he finding fault, that it drank somewhat hard, said that rose-water and sugar would do no harm, whereupon he leaves his seat, saying he was well acquainted with one of the servants of the house, of whom he could have two pennyworth of rose-water for a penny, and so of sugar likewise, wherefore he would step to the bar unto him. So taking the cup in his hand, he did, the young men never thinking on any such treachery as ensued in that he seemed an honest man, and beside, left his cloak lying on the table by them. No more returns the younker with rose-water and sugar, but stepping out of doors unseen of any, goes away roundly with the cup. The young men not a little wondering at his long tarrying, by the coming of the servants to see what they wanted, who took no regard of his sudden departure, find themselves there left not only to pay for the wine but for the cup also, being rashly supposed by the master and his servants to be copartners with the treacherous villain, but their honest behaviour well known, as also their simplicity too much abused, well witnessed their innocency. Notwithstanding, they were fain to pay for the cup, as afterward they did, having nothing towards their charge but a threadbare cloak not worth two shillings. Take heed how you drink wine with any such companions.

Of an honest householder which was cunningly deceived by a subtile companion that came to hire a chamber for his master

Not far from Charing Cross dwelleth an honest young man, who being not long since married, and having more rooms in his house than himself occupieth, either for term-time, or the court lying so near, as divers do to make a reasonable commodity and to ease house rent, which as the world goeth now is none of the cheapest, letteth forth a chamber or two according as it may be spared. In an evening but a while since came one in the manner of a serving-man to this man and his wife, and he must needs have a chamber for his master, offering so largely as the bargain was soon concluded between them. His intent was to have fingered some booty in the house, as by the sequel it may be likeliest gathered, but belike no fit thing lying abroad, or he better regarded than happily he would be, his expectation that way was frustrate, yet as a resolute cony-catcher indeed, that scorneth to attempt without some success, and rather will prey upon small commodity than return to his fellows disgraced with a lost labour, he summons his wits together, and by a smooth tale overreached both the man and his wife. He tells them that his master was a captain late come from the sea, and had costly apparel to bring thither, which for more easy carriage, he entreats them lend him a sheet to bind it up in. They suspecting no ill because he required their boy should go with him to help him carry the stuff, the goodwife steps unto her chest where her linen lay finely sweetened with rose-leaves and lavender, and lends him a very good sheet indeed.

This success made him bold to venture a little further, and then he tells them his master had a great deal of broken sugar and fine spices that lay negligently abroad in his lodging as it was brought from the ship, all which he was assured his master would bestow on them, so he could devise how to get it brought thither. These liberal promises prevailing with them that lightly believed, and withal were somewhat covetous of the sugar and

spices, the woman demanded if a couple of pillow-beres would not serve to bring the sugar and spices in. *Yes marry*, quoth he, *so the sugar may best be kept by itself, and the spices by themselves*. And, quoth he, because there are many crafty knaves abroad (grieving that any should be craftier than himself), and in the evening the linen might quickly be snatched from the boy, for the more safety he would carry the sheet and the pillow-beres himself, and within an hour or little more return with the boy again because he would have all things ready before his master came, who (as he said) was attending on the Council at the court. The man and his wife, crediting his smooth speeches, sends their boy with him, and so along toward Ivy Bridge go they. The cony-catcher, seeing himself at free liberty, that he had gotten a very good sheet and two fine pillow-beres, steps to the wall as though he would make water, bidding the boy go fair and softly on before. The boy, doubting nothing, did as he willed him, when presently he stepped into some house hard by fit to entertain him, and never since was he, his master, the sugar, spices or the linen heard of. Many have been in this manner deceived, as I hear. Let this then give them warning to beware of any such unprofitable guests.

Of one that came to buy a knife, and made first proof of his trade on him that sold it

One of the cunning nips about the town came unto a poor cutler to have a cuttle made according unto his own mind, and not above three inches would he have both the knife and the haft in length, yet of such pure metal as possible may be. Albeit the poor man never made the like before, yet being promised four times the value of his stuff and pains he was contented to do this, and the day being come that he should deliver it, the party came, who liking it exceedingly, gave him the money promised, which the poor man gladly put up into his purse that hung at a button-hole of his waistcoat before his breast, smiling that he was so well paid for so small a trifle. The party, perceiving his merry countenance, and imagining he guessed for what purpose the knife was, said: *Honest man, whereat smile you? By my troth, sir*, quoth the cutler, *I smile at your knife because I never made one so little before, and were it not offensive unto you, I would request to know to what use you will put it to? Wilt thou keep my counsel?* quoth the nip. *Yea, on mine honesty*, quoth the cutler. *Then hearken in thy ear*, said the nip, and so rounding with him, cut the poor man's purse that hung at his bosom, he never feeling when he did it. *With this knife*, quoth the nip, *mean I to cut a purse*. *Marry, God forbid*, quoth the cutler, *I cannot think you to be such a kind of man. I see you love to jest*. And so they parted.

The poor man, not so wise as to remember his own purse when by such a warning he might have taken the offender doing the deed, but rather proud (as it were) that his money was so easily earned, walks to the ale-house, which was within a house or two of his own, and finding there were three or four of his neighbours with whom he began to jest very pleasantly, swears by cock-and-pie he would spend a whole groat upon them, for he had gotten it and more clearly by a good bargain that morning.

Though it was no marvel to see him so liberal, because indeed he was a good companion, yet they were loath to put him unto such cost. Notwithstanding, he would needs do it,

and so far as promise stretched was presently filled in and set upon the board. In the drinking time often he wished to meet with more such customers as he had done that morning, and commended him for a very honest gentleman, I warrant you. At length, when the reckoning was to be paid, he draws to his purse, where finding nothing left but a piece of the string in the button-hole, I leave to your judgment whether he was now as sorry as he was merry before.

Blank and alamort sits the poor cutler, and with such a pitiful countenance as his neighbours did not a little admire his solemn alteration, & desirous to know the cause thereof, from point to point he discourseth the whole manner of the tragedy, never naming his new customer, but with such a far-fetched sigh as soul and body would have parted in sunder. And in midst of all his grief, he brake forth into these terms: *I'll believe a man the better by his word while I know him. The knife was bought to cut a purse indeed, and, I thank him for it, he made the first proof of the edge with me.* The neighbours, grieving for his loss, yet smiling at his folly to be so overreached, were fain to pay the groat the cutler called in because he had no other money about him, and spent as much more beside to drive away his heaviness.

This tale, because it was somewhat misreported before, upon talk had with the poor cutler himself is set down now in true form and manner how it was done. Therefore is there no offence offered, when by better consideration a thing may be enlarged or amended, or at least the note be better confirmed. Let the poor cutler's mishap example others, that they brag not over-hastily of gain easily gotten, lest they chance to pay as dearly for it as he did.

Of a young nip that cunningly beguiled an ancient professor of that trade, and his quean
with him, at a play

A good-fellow that was newly entered into the nipping craft, and had not as yet attained to any acquaintance with ye chief and cunning masters of that trade, in the Christmas holidays last came to see a play at the Bull within Bishopsgate, there to take his benefit as time and place would permit him. Not long had he stayed in the press but he had gotten a young man's purse out of his pocket, which when he had, he stepped into the stable to take out the money and to convey away the purse. But looking on his commodity, he found nothing therein but white counters, a thimble and a broken threepence, which belike the fellow that ought it had done of purpose to deceive the cutpurse withal, or else had played at the cards for counters, and so carried his winnings about him till his next sitting to play. Somewhat displeased to be so overtaken, he looked aside, and spied a lusty youth entering at the door, and his drab with him. This fellow he had heard to be one of the finest nippers about the town, and ever carried his quean with him for conusiance [sic for 'conveyance'?] when the stratagem was performed. He puts up the counters into the purse again, and follows close to see some piece of their service.

Among a company of seemly men was this lusty companion and his minion gotten, where both they might best behold the play, and work for advantage, and ever this young nip was next to him, to mark when he should attempt any exploit, standing as it were more than half between the cunning nip and his drab, only to learn some part of their skill. In short time the deed was performed, but how the young nip could not easily discern, only he felt him shift his hand toward his trug to convey the purse to her, but she being somewhat mindful of the play because a merriment was then on the stage, gave no regard, whereby thinking he had pulled her by the coat he twitched the young nip by the cloak, who taking advantage of this offer, put down his hand and received the purse of him. Then counting it discourtesy to let him lose all his labour, he softly plucked the quean by the coat, which she feeling, and imagining it had been her companion's hand, received of him the first purse with the white counters in it. Then fearing lest his stay should hinder him, and seeing the other intending to have more purses ere he departed, away goes the young nip with the purse he got so easily, wherein (as I have heard) was 27 shillings and odd money, which did [+not?] so much content him as that he had beguiled so ancient a stander in that profession. What the other thought when he found the purse and could not guess how he was cozened, I leave to your censures, only this makes me smile, that one false knave can beguile another, which bids honest men look the better to their purses.

How a gentleman was craftily deceived of a chain of gold and his purse in Paul's church
in London

A gentleman of the country, who (as I have heard since the time of his mishap whereof I am now to speak) had about half a year before buried his wife, & belike thinking well of some other gentlewoman whom he meant to make account of as his second choice, upon good hope or otherwise persuaded he came up to London to provide himself of such necessaries as the country is not usually stored withal. Besides silks, velvets, cambrics and suchlike, he bought a chain of gold that cost him 57 pounds and odd money, whereof because he would have the maidenhead or first wearing himself, he presently put it on in the goldsmith's shop, and so walked therewith about London as his occasions served. But let not the gentleman be offended, who if this book come to his hands can best avouch the truth of this discourse, if here by the way I blame his rash pride or simple credulity, for between the one and other, the chain he paid so dear for about ten of the clock in the morning, the cony-catchers the same day ere night shared amongst them, a matter whereat he may well grieve, and I be sorry, in respect he is my very good friend.

But to the purpose. This gentleman, walking in Paul's with his chain fair glittering about his neck, talking with his man about some business, was well viewed and regarded by a crew of cony-catchers whose teeth watered at his goodly chain, yet knew not how to come by it, hanging as it did, and therefore entered into secret conspiracy among themselves if they could not come by all the chain, yet how they might make it lighter by half a score pounds at the least. Still had they their eyes on the honest gentleman, who little doubted any such treason intended against his so late bought bargain, and they having laid their plot, each one to be assistant in this enterprise, saw when the gentleman

dismissed his servant to go about such affairs as he had appointed him, himself still walking there up and down the middle aisle.

One of these mates that stood most on his cunning in these exploits followed the serving-man forth of the church, calling him by divers names, as John, Thomas, William &c, as though he had known his right name but could not hit on it, which whether he did or no I know not, but well I wot the serving-man turned back again, and seeing him that called him seemed a gentleman, booted and cloaked after the newest fashion, came with his hat in his hand to him, saying: *Sir, do ye call me? Marry, do I, my friend, quoth the other, dost not thou serve such a gentleman?*, and named one as himself pleased. *No, truly, sir,* answered the serving-man, *I know not any such gentleman as you speak of. By my troth,* replied the cony-catcher, *I am assured I knew thee and thy master, though now I cannot suddenly remember myself.* The serving-man, fearing no harm, yet fitting the humour of this treacherous companion, told right his master's name whom he served, and that his master was even then walking in Paul's. *O God's will,* quoth the cony-catcher, repeating his master's name, *a very honest gentleman, of such a place is he not?*, naming a shire of the country, for he must know both name, country and sometimes what gentlemen dwell near the party that is to be overreached ere he can proceed. *No, indeed, sir,* answered the serving-man, with such reverence as it had been to an honest gentleman indeed, *my master is of such a place, a mile from such a town, and hard by such a knight's house,* by which report the deceiver was half instructed, because though he was ignorant of the fellow's master, yet well he knew the country, and the knight named. So craving pardon that he had mistaken him, he returns again into the church, and the serving-man trudgeth about his assigned business.

Being come to the rest of the crew, he appoints one of them (whom he knew to be expert indeed) to take this matter in hand, for himself might not do it lest the serving-man should return and know him. He schooled the rest likewise what every man should do when the pinch came, and changing his cloak with one of his fellows, walked by himself attending the feat, and everyone being as ready, the appointed fellow makes his sally forth, and coming to the gentleman, calling him by his name, gives him the courtesy and embrace, likewise thanking him for good cheer he had at his house, which he did with such seemly behaviour and protestation as the gentleman (thinking the other to be no less) used like action of kindness to him. Now as country gentlemen have many visitors, both with near-dwelling neighbours and friends that journey from far whom they can hardly remember, but some principal one that serves as countenance to the other, so he, not discrediting the cunning mate's words, who still at every point alleged his kindred to the knight, neighbour to the gentleman, which the poor serving-man had (doubting no ill) revealed before, and that both there and at his own house in hawking-time with that knight and other gentlemen of the country he had literally [sic for 'liberally'] tasted his kindness, desiring pardon that he had forgotten him and offered him the courtesy of the city. The cony-catcher excused himself for that time, saying at their next meeting he would bestow it on him. Then, seeming to have espied his chain, and commending the fairness and workmanship thereof, says: *I pray, ye, sir, take a little counsel of a friend; it may be you will return thanks for it. I wonder,* quoth he, *you dare wear such a costly jewel so open in sight, which is even but a bait to entice bad men to adventure time and*

place for it, and nowhere sooner than in this city, where (I may say to you) are such a number of cony-catchers, cozeners and suchlike that a man can scarcely keep anything from them, they have so many reaches and sleights to beguile withal, which a very especial friend of mine found too true not many days since. Hereupon he told a very solemn tale of villainies and knaveries in his own profession, whereby he reported his friend had lost a watch of gold, showing how closely his friend wore it in his bosom, and how strangely it was gotten from him, that the gentleman by that discourse waxed half afraid of his chain, and giving him many thanks for this good warning, presently takes the chain from about his neck and tying it up fast in a handkerchief, put it into his sleeve, saying: *If the cony-catcher get it here, let him not spare it.* Not a little did the treacher smile in his sleeve, hearing the rash security, but indeed simplicity, of the gentleman, and no sooner saw he it put up but presently he counted it sure his own by the assistance of his complices that lay in an ambuscado for the purpose.

With embraces and courtesies on either side, the cony-catcher departs, leaving the gentleman walking there still, whereat the crew were not a little offended that he still kept in the church and would not go abroad. Well, at length (belike remembering some business) the gentleman, taking leave of another that talked with him, hasted to go forth at the furthest west door of Paul's, which he that had talked with him and gave him such counsel perceiving, hied out of the other door, and got to the entrance ere he came forth, the rest following the gentleman at an inch. As he was stepping out, the other stepped in, and let fall a key, having his hat so low over his eyes that he could not well discern his face, and stooping to take up the key, kept the gentleman from going backward or forward by reason his leg was over the threshold. The foremost cony-catcher behind, pretending a quarrel unto him that stooped, rapping out an oath and drawing his dagger, said: *Do I meet thee, villain? Nay, he shall not scape me now,* and so made offer to strike him.

The gentleman, at his standing up, seeing it was he that gave him so good counsel and pretended himself his very friend, but never imagining this train was made for him, stepped in his defence, when the other following, tripped up his heels so that he and his counsellor were down together, and two more upon them, striking with their daggers very eagerly. Marry, indeed the gentleman had most of the blows, and both his handkerchief with the chain, and also his purse with three and fifty shillings in it, were taken out of his pocket in this struggling, even by the man that himself defended.

It was marvellous to behold how, not regarding the villain's words uttered before in the church, nor thinking upon the charge about him (which after he had thus treacherously lost unwittingly), he stands pacifying them that were not disconte[n]te[d] but only to beguile him. But they, vowing that they would presently go for their weapons, & so to the field, told the gentleman he laboured but in vain, for fight they must and would, and so going down by Paul's Chain, left the gentleman made a cony going up toward Fleet Street, sorry for his new counsellor and friend, and wishing him good luck in the fight, which indeed was with nothing but wine-pots for joy of their late-gotten booty. Near to Saint Dunstan's church the gentleman remembered himself, and feeling his pocket so light, had suddenly more grief at his heart than ever happen[ed] to him or any man again.

Back he comes to see if he could espy any of them, but they were far enough from him. God send him better hap when he goes next a-wooing, and that this his loss may be a warning to others.

How a cunning knave got a trunk well stuffed with linen and certain parcels of plate out of a citizen's house, and how the master of the house help the deceiver to carry away his own goods

Within the city of London dwelleth a worldly [sic for 'worthy'] man who hath very great dealing in his trade, and his shop very well frequented with customers, had such a shrewd mischance of late by a cony-catcher as may well serve for an example to others lest they have the like. A cunning villain that had long time haunted this citizen's house, and gotten many a cheat which he carried away safely, made it his custom when he wanted money to help himself ever where he had sped so often. Divers things he had which were never missed, especially such as appertained to the citizen's trade, but when any were found wanting, they could not devise which way they were gone, so politicly this fellow always behaved himself. Well knew he what times of greatest business this citizen had in his trade, and when the shop is most stored with chapmen. Then would he step up the stairs (for there was and is another door to the house besides that which entereth into the shop), and what was next hand came ever away with.

One time above the rest, in an evening about Candlemas, when daylight shuts in about six of the clock, he watched to do some feat in the house, and seeing the mistress go forth with her maid, the goodman and his folks very busy in the shop, up the stairs he goes as he was wont to do, and lifting up the latch of the hall portal door, saw nobody near to trouble him, when stepping into the next chamber, where the citizen and his wife usually lay, at the bed's feet there stood a handsome trunk wherein was very good linen, a fair gilt salt, two silver French bowls for wine, two silver drinking-pots, a stone jug covered with silver, and a dozen of silver spoons. This truck he brings to the stairs-head, and making fast the door again, draws it down the steps so softly as he could, for it was so big and heavy as he could not easily carry it. Having it out at the door, unseen of any neighbour or anybody else, he stood struggling with it to lift it up on the stall, which by reason of the weight troubled him very much. The goodman coming forth of his shop to bid a customer or two farewell, made the fellow afraid he should now be taken for altogether, but calling his wits together to escape if he could, he stood gazing up at the sign belonging to the house as though he were desirous to know what sign it was, which the citizen perceiving, came to him and asked him what he sought for. *I look for the sign of the blue bell, sir, quoth the fellow, where a gentleman, having taken a chamber for this term-time, hath sent me hither with this his trunk of apparel.* Quoth the citizen: *I know no such sign in this street, but in the next (naming it) there is such a one indeed, and there dwelleth one that letteth forth chambers to gentlemen.* Truly, sir, quoth the fellow, *that's the house I should go to. I pray you, sir, lend me your hand but to help the trunk on my back, for I, thinking to ease me awhile upon your stall, set it short, and now I can hardly get it up again.* The citizen, not knowing his own trunk, but indeed never thinking on any such notable deceit, helps him up with the trunk, and so sends him away roundly

with his own goods. When the trunk was missed, I leave to your conceits what household grief there was on all sides, especially the goodman himself, who remembering how he helped the fellow up with a trunk, perceived that hereby he had beguiled himself, and lost more than in haste he should recover again. How this may admonish others, I leave to the judgment of the indifferent opinion, that see when honest meaning is so craftily beleaguered as good foresight must be used to prevent such dangers.

How a broker was cunningly overreached by as crafty a knave as himself, and brought in danger of the gallows

It hath been used as a common byword: *A crafty knave needeth no broker*, whereby it should appear that there can hardly be a craftier knave than a broker. Suspend your judgments till you have heard this discourse ensuing, & then, as you please, censure both the one and the other.

A lady of the country sent up a servant whom she might well put in trust to provide her of a gown answerable to such directions as she had given him, which was of good price, as may appear by the outside and lace, whereto doubtless was every other thing agreeable, for the tailor had seventeen years of the best black satin could be got for money, and so much gold lace, beside spangles, as valued thirteen pound. Was else was beside, I know not, but let it suffice thus much was lost, and therefore let us to the manner how.

The satin and the lace being brought to the tailor that should make the gown, and spread abroad on the shop-board to be measured, certain good-fellows of the cony-catching profession chanced to go by, who seeing so rich lace and so excellent good satin, began to commune with themselves how they might make some purchase of what they had seen, and quickly it was to be done, or not at all. As ever in a crew of this quality there is someone more ingenious and politic than the rest, or at leastwise that covets to make himself more famous than the rest, so this instant was there one in this company that did swear his cunning should deeply deceive him but he would have both the lace and satin, when having laid the plot with his companions how and which way their help might stand him in stead, this way they proceeded.

Well noted they the serving-man that stood in the shop with the tailor, and gathered by his diligent attendance that he had some charge of the gown there to be made, wherefore by him must they work their treachery intended, and use him as an instrument to beguile himself. One of them sitting on a seat near the tailor's stall could easily hear the talk that passed between the serving-man and the tailor, where among other communication it was concluded that the gown should be made of the selfsame fashion in every point as another lady's was who then lay in the city, and that measure being taken by her, the same would fitly serve the lady for whom the gown was to be made. Now the serving-man intended to go speak with the lady, and upon a token agreed between them (which he carelessly spake so loud that the cony-catcher heard it), he would, as her leisure served, certify the tailor, and he should bring the stuff with him to have the lady's opinion both of the one and the other.

The serving-man being gone about his affairs, the subtle mate that had listened to all their talk acquaints his fellows both with the determination and token appointed for the tailor's coming to ye lady. The guide and leader to all the rest for villainy, though there was no-one but was better skilled in such matters than honesty [sic for 'himself?'], he appoints that one of them should go to the tavern, which was not far off, and laying two faggots on the fire in a room by himself, and a quart of wine filled for countenance of the treachery, another of that crew should give attendance on him as if he were his master, being bare-headed, and 'sir' humbly answering at every word. To the tavern goes this counterfeit gentlemen [sic for 'gentleman'] and his servant waiting on him, where everything was performed as is before rehearsed, when the master knave, calling the drawer, demanded if there dwelt near at hand a skilful tailor that could make a suit of velvet for himself; marry, it was to be done with very great speed.

The drawer named the tailor that we now speak of, and upon the drawer's commending his cunning, the man in all haste was sent for to a gentleman for whom he must make a suit of velvet forthwith. Upon talk had of the stuff, how much was to be bought of everything appertaining thereto, he must immediately take measure of this counterfeit gentleman because he knew not when to return that way again. Afterward they would go to the mercer's. As the tailor was taking measure on him bare-headed, as if he had been a substantial gentleman indeed, the crafty mate had cunningly gotten his purse out of his pocket, at the one string whereof was fastened a little key, and at the other his signet-ring. This booty he was sure of already, whether he should get anything else or no of the mischief intended. Stepping to the window, he cuts the ring from the purse, and by his supposed man (rounding him in the ear) sends it to the plot-layer of this knavery, minding to train the tailor along with him, as it were to the mercer's, while he in the meantime took order for ye other matter.

Afterward, speaking aloud to his man: *Sirrah*, quoth he, *dispatch what I bade you, and about four of the clock meet me in Paul's; by that time I hope the tailor and I shall have dispatched.* To Cheapside goeth the honest tailor with this notorious dissembler, not missing his purse for the space of two hours after, in less than half which time the satin and gold lace was gotten likewise by the other villain from the tailor's house in this order.

Being sure the tailor should be kept absent, he sends another mate home to his house who abused his servants with this devise, that the lady's man had met their master abroad, and had him to the other lady to take measure of her, and lest they should delay the time too long, he was sent for the satin and lace, declaring the token appointed and withal giving their master's signet-ring for better confirmation of his message. The servants could do no less than deliver it, being commanded (as they supposed) by so credible testimony, neither did the leisure of anyone serve to go with the messenger, who seemed an honest young gentleman, and carried no cause of distrust in his countenance. Wherefore they delivered him the lace and satin folded up together as it was, and desired him to will their master to make some speed home, both for cutting out of work and other occasions.

To a broker fit for their purpose goes this deceiver with the satin [+and] lace, who knowing well they could not come honestly by it, nor anything else he bought of that crew, as often before he had dealt much with them, either gave them not so much as they would have, or at least as they judged they could have in another place, for which the ringleader of this cozenage vowed in his mind to be revenged on the broker.

The master knave, who had spent two hours and more in vain with the tailor & would not like of any velvet he saw, when he perceived that he missed his purse, and could not devise how or where he had lost it, showed himself very sorry for his mishap, and said in the morning he would send the velvet home to his house, for he knew where to speed of better than any [+he] had seen in the shops. Home goes the tailor very sadly, where he was entertained with a greater mischance, for there was the lady's serving-man swearing and stamping that he had not seen their master since the morning they parted, neither had he sent for the satin and lace, but when the servants justified their innocency, beguiled both with the true token rehearsed and their master's signet-ring, it exceedeth my cunning to set down answerable words to this [sic for 'the?'] exceeding grief and amazement on either part, but most of all the honest tailor, who sped the better by the broker's wilfulness, as afterward it happened, which made him the better brook the loss of his purse.

That night all means were used that could be, both to the mercers, brokers, goldsmiths, gold-finers and suchlike where happily such things do come to be sold, but all was in vain. The only help came by the inventor of this villainy, who scant sleeping all night in regard of the broker's extreme gaining both by him and those of his profession, the next morning he came by the tailor's house, at what time he espied him with the lady's serving-man coming forth of the doors, and into the tavern he went to report what mishap he had upon the sending for him thither the day before. As he was but newly entered his sad discourse, in comes the party offended with the broker, and having heard all (whereof none could make better report than himself), he takes the tailor & serving-man aside, and pretending great grief for both their causes, demands what they would think him worthy of that could help them to their good again. On condition to meet with such a friend, offer was made of five pound, and after sundry speeches passing between them alone, he, seeming that he would work the recovery thereof by art, and they promising not to disclose the man that did them good, he drew forth a little book out of his bosom (whether it were Latin or English it skilled not, for he could not read a word on it), then desiring them to spare him alone awhile, they should perceive what he would do for them. Their hearts encouraged with some good hope, kept all his words secret to themselves, and not long had they sitten absent out of the room but he called them in again, and seeming as though he had been a scholar indeed, said he found by his figure that a broker in such a place had their goods lost, and in such a place of the house they should find it, bidding them go thither with all speed, and as they found his words, so (with reserving to themselves how they came to knowledge thereof), to meet him there again in the evening, and reward him as he had deserved.

Away in haste goes the tailor and the serving-man, and entering the house with the constable, found them in the place where he that revealed it knew the broker always laid

such gotten goods. Of their joy again, I leave you to conjecture, and think you see the broker with a good pair of bolts on his heels, ready to take his farewell of the world in a halter when time shall serve. The counterfeit cunning man and artificial cony-catcher, as I heard, was paid his five pounds that night. Thus one crafty knave beguiled another. Let each take heed of dealing with any such kind of people.

FINIS