

The Anatomy of Absurdity

Containing a brief confutation
of the slender imputed praises to feminine perfection,
with a short description of the several practices of youth,
and sundry follies of our licentious times.

No less pleasant to be read than profitable to be remembered,
especially of those who live more licentiously,
or addicted to a more nice stoical austerity.

Compiled by T. Nashe.

Ita diligendi sunt homines, ut eorum non diligamus errores.

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Street, under the sign of the Pope's head.

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To the right worshipful Charles Blount, knight, adorned with all perfections of honour or art, T. Nashe wisheth whatever content felicity or fortune may infer.

If (right worshipful) the old poet Persius thought it most prejudicial to attention for Verres to declaim against theft, Gracchus against sedition, Catiline against treason, what such *supplosus pedum* may sufficiently entertain my presumption, who, being an accessory to absurdity, have took upon me to draw her anatomy? But that little alliance which I have unto art will authorize my folly in defacing her enemy, and the circumstance of my infancy, that brought forth this embryon, somewhat tolerate their censures that would derive infamy from my unexperienced infirmities. What I have written proceeded not from the pen of vainglory, but from the process of that pensiveness which two summers since overtook me, whose obscured cause, best known to every name of curse, hath compelled my wit to wander abroad unregarded in this satirical disguise, & counselled my content to dislodge his delight from traitors' eyes.

Gentlemen that know what it is to encounter with ingratitude in the form of Cupid will soon aim at the efficient of my armed phrase; for others that cannot discern Venus through a cloud, they will measure each deformed fury by the Queen of Fairies, all birds by one phoenix, all beasts by one lion. For my part, as I have no portion in any man's opinion, so am I the pro-rex of my private thought, which makes me term poison poison, as well in a silver piece as in an earthen dish, and Proteus Proteus, though girt in the apparel of Pactolus. However the siren change her shape, yet is she inseparable from deceit, and however the devil alter his shadow, yet will he be found in the end to be a she-saint. I dare not prefix a *nigrum theta* to all of that sex, lest immortality might seem to have been taxed by my slander, and the purity of heaven bepuddled by my unhallowed speech. Only this shall my arguments infer, and my anger aver, that constancy will sooner inhabit the body of a chameleon, a tiger or a wolf than the heart of a woman, who, predestinated by the father of eternity even in the nonage of nature to be the iliads of evils to all nations, have never inverted their creation in any country but ours.

Whose heaven-born Elizabeth hath made majesty herself mazed, and the world's eyesight astonished. Time, well may'st thou exult, that in the evening of thy age thou conceived'st such a subject of wonder, & Peace, sing Io paean, for that in despite of dissension she hath patronized thee under her wings. Felicity saw her invested with royalty, and became young again in the beholding. Fortune, ashamed each sorrow should smile, and her face alonely be wrapped with wrinkles, suited poor Flanders and France in her frowns, & saluted England's soul with a smoothed forehead. Plenty and Abundance, that long had lived as exiles with the utmost Indians, were no sooner advertised of her advancement, but they made their passage through ten thousand perils to spend their prosperity in her presence. Why seeks my pen to break into the buildings of Fame, and echo my amazed thoughts to her brazen towers, whenas my tongue is too too base a Triton to eternize her praise, that thus upholdeth our happy days?

Wherefore since my words impoverish her worths, my fervent zeal shall be the uncessant attendant on her weal. I fear, right worshipful, lest the affection of my phrase present me as a foe to your important affairs, whose heart, exalted with the eyesight of such sovereignty as soars above human sight, could not but methodize this admiration in this digression of distinction. But from such intercourse of excuse, let my unschooled indignities convert themselves to your courtesy, and acquaint you with the counsel of my rude dedication.

So it was that not long since, lighting in company with many extraordinary gentlemen of most excellent parts, it was my chance (amongst other talk which was generally traversed amongst us) to move divers questions as touching the several qualities required in Castiglione's *Courtier*; one came in with that of Ovid, *Semper amabilis esto*; another stood

more strictly on the necessity of that affability which our Latinists entitle *facetus*, & we more familiarly describe by the name of discoursing; the third came in with his carpet devises and told what it was to tickle a cittern, or have a sweet stroke on the lute, to dance more delicately, and revel it bravely. The fourth, as an enemy to their faction, confuted all these as effeminate follies, and would needs maintain that the only adjuncts of a courtier were scholarship and courage, returning picked curiosity to paltry scribes and suchlike, affability to Aristippus and his crew, citterning and luting to the birthright of every sixpenny slave, and to conclude, dancing & revelling to every tailor's holiday humour. But as for those two branches of honour before mentioned, they distinguish a gentleman from a broking jack, and a courtier from a club-headed companion. This discourse thus continued, at length they fell by a jarring gradation to the particular demonstrations of their general assertions. One would have one thing preferred because some one man was thereby advanced; another, another thing because some nobleman loves it; every man shot his bolt, but this was the upshot, that England afforded many mediocrities, but never saw anything more singular than worthy Sir Philip Sidney, of whom it might truly be said, *Arma virumque cano*. In this heat of opinions, many hopes of nobility were brought in question, but nothing so generally applauded in every man's comparisons as your Worship's most absolute perfections, whose effectual judicial of your virtues made such deep impression in my attentive imagination as ever since there hath not any pleasure mixed itself so much with my secret vows as the undefinite desire to be suppliant unto you in some subject of wit. From which, howsoever this my undigested endeavour declineth, yet more earnestly I beseech you, by that entire love which you bear unto arts, to accept of it in good part. And as the foolish painter in Plutarch, having blurred a ragged table with the rude picture of a dunghill cock, willed his boy in any case to drive away all live cocks from that his worthless workmanship, lest by the comparison he might be convinced of ignorance, so I am to request your Worship, whiles you are perusing my pamphlet, to lay aside out of your sight whatsoever learned invention hath heretofore bred your delight, lest their singularity reflect my simplicity, their excellence convince me of innocence. Thus hoping you will every way censure of me in favour, as one that doth partake some parts of a scholar, I commit you to the care of that sovereign content which your soul desireth.

Your most affectionate in all,

Usque aras,

T. Nashe.

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Zeuxes, being about to draw the counterfeit of Juno, assembled all the Agrigentine maids, whom, after he pausing had viewed, he chose out five of the fairest, that in their beauty he might imitate what was most excellent; even so it fareth with me, who, being about to anatomize absurdity, am urged to take a view of sundry men's vanity, a survey of their folly, a brief of their barbarism, to run through authors of the absurder sort assembled in the stationer's shop, sucking and selecting out of these upstart antiquaries somewhat of their unsavoury duncery, meaning to note it with a *nigrum theta*, that each one at the first sight may eschew it as infectious, to show it to the world that all men may shun it. And even as Macedon Philip, having finished his wars, builded a city for the worst sort of men, which he called [], *malorum civitas*, so I, having laid aside my graver studies for a season, determined with myself, being idle in the country, to begin in this vacation the foundation of a trifling subject which might shroud in his leaves the abusive enormities of these our times. It fareth now-a-days with unlearned idiots as it doth with she-asses, who bring forth all their life long; even so, these brainless buzzards are every quarter big with one pamphlet or other. But as an egg that is full, being put into water, sinketh to the bottom, whereas that which is empty floateth above, so those that are more exquisitely furnished with learning shroud themselves in obscurity, whereas they that are void of all knowledge endeavour continually to publish their folly.

Such and the very same are they that obtrude themselves unto us as the authors of eloquence and fountains of our finer phrases, whenas they set before us naught but a confused mass of words without matter, a chaos of sentences without any profitable sense, resembling drums, which, being empty within, sound big without. Were it that any moral of greater moment might be fished out of their fabulous folly, leaving their words we would cleave to their meaning, pretermittting their painted show we would pry into their propounded sense, but whenas lust is the tractate of so many leaves, and love passions the lavish dispense of so much paper, I must needs send such idle wits to shrift to the vicar of St. Fools, who, instead of a worser, may be such a Gothamist's ghostly father. Might Ovid's exile admonish such idlebies to betake them to a new trade, the press should be far better employed. Minerals, stones and herbs should not have such cogged natures and names ascribed to them without cause; Englishmen should not be half so much Italianated as they are; finally, love would obtain the name of lust, and vice no longer mask under the vizard of virtue.

Are they not ashamed, in their prefixed posies, to adorn a pretence of profit mixed with pleasure, whenas in their books there is scarce to be found one precept pertaining to virtue, but whole quires fraught with amorous discourses, kindling Venus' flame in Vulcan's forge, carrying Cupid in triumph, alluring even vowed vestals to tread awry, enchanting chaste minds and corrupting the continen'ts? Henceforth, let them alter their posies of profit with intermingled pleasure, inserting that of Ovid instead.

*Si quis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi,
Me legat & lecto carmine doctus amet.*

So shall the discreet reader understand the contents by the title, and their purpose by their posy; what else, I pray you, do these babble bookmongers endeavour, but to repair the ruinous walls of Venus' court, to restore to the world that forgotten legendary licence of lying, to imitate afresh the fantastical dreams of those exiled abbey-lubbers from whose idle pens proceeded those worn-out impressions of the feigned nowhere acts of Arthur of the Round Table, Arthur of Little Britain, Sir Tristram, Huon of Bordeaux, The Squire of Low Degree, The Four Sons of Aymon, with infinite others. It is not of my years nor study to censure these men's foolery more theologically, but to show how they, to no commonwealth

commodity, toss over their troubled imaginations to have the praise of the learning which they lack. Many of them, to be more amiable with their friends of the feminine sex, blot many sheets of paper in the blazing of women's slender praises, as though in that generation there reigned, and always remained, such singular simplicity that all posterities should be enjoined by duty to fill and furnish their temples and towns and streets with the shrines of the saints. Never remembering that, as there was a loyal Lucretia, so there was a light-a-love Lais; that as there was a modest Medullina, so there was a mischievous Medea; that as there was a steadfast Timoclea, so there was a traitorous Tarpeia; that as there was a sober Sulpicia, so there was a deceitful Scylla; that as there was a chaste Claudia, so there was a wanton Clodia.

But perhaps women, assembling their senate, will seek to stop my mouth by most voices, and as though there were more better than bad in the bunch, will object unto me Atlanta, Architumna, Hippo, Sophronia, Leaena; to these will I oppose proud Antigone, Niobe, Circe, Flora, Rhodope, the despiteful daughters of Danaus, Biblis and Canace, who fell in love with their own brothers, Myrrha with her own father, Semiramis with her own son, Phaedra with Hippolytus, Venus' inconstancy, Juno's jealousy, the riotous wantonness of Pasiphae, with whom I will knit up this packet of paramours. To this might be added Mantuan's invective against them, but that pity makes me refrain from renewing his worn-out complaints, the wounds whereof the former forepassed feminine sex hath felt. Aye, but here the Homer of women hath forestalled an objection, saying that, Mantuan's house holding of our lady, he was enforced by melancholy into such vehemency of speech, and that there be, amongst them as amongst men, some good, some bad; but then let us hear what was the opinion of ancient philosophers, as touching the female sex.

One of them, being asked what estate that was which made wise men fools and fools wise men, answered, *Marriage*. Aristotle doth counsel us rather to get a little wife than a great, because always a little evil is better than a great, so that he counted all women, without exception, evil and ungracious. Another of them, being asked what was the greatest miracle in the world, said, *A chaste woman*. One, requiring Diogenes' judgement when it was best time to take a wife, answered, *For the young man, not yet, and the old man, never*. Pythagoras said that there were three evils not to be suffered, fire, water, and a woman. And the forenamed cynic deemed them the wisest liars in the world which tell folk they will be married, and yet remain single, accounting it the less inconvenience of two extremities to choose the less. The selfsame man affirmeth it to be the only means to escape all evils, to eschew women's counsel, and not to square our actions by their direction. The old sages did admonish young men, if ever they matched with any wife, not to take a rich wife; she will not be content to be a wife, but will be a master or mistress in commanding, chiding, correcting & controlling. Another philosopher compared a woman richly apparelled to a dunghill covered with grass. Socrates deemed it the desperatest enterprise that one can take in hand, to govern a woman's will.

What shall I say of him that, being asked from what woman a man should keep himself, answered, *From the quick & from the dead*, adding moreover that one evil joins with another when a woman is sick. Demosthenes said that it was the greatest torment that a man could invent to his enemy's vexation to give him his daughter in marriage as a domestical fury to disquiet him night and day. Democritus accounted a fair chaste woman a miracle of miracles, a degree of immortality, a crown of triumph, because she is so hard to be found. Another, being asked who was he that could not at any time be without a wife, answered, *He that was always accurst*, and what doth this common proverb, *He that marrieth late, marrieth evil*, insinuate unto us but that, if a man mean to marry, he were as good begin betimes as tarry long, and, being about to make a virtue of necessity and an art of patience, they are to begin in their young and tender age. Moreover, amongst the things which

change the nature and conditions of men, women and wine are set in the forefront as the chief causes of their calamity.

Plutarch, in his precepts of wedlock, allegeth a reason why men fail so often in choosing of a good wife, because, saith he, *The number of them is so small. There be two especial troubles in this world, saith Seneca, a wife and ignorance.* Marcus Aurelius compared women to ships, because to keep them well and in order there is always somewhat wanting, and Plautus saith that women deck themselves so gorgeously, and lace themselves so nicely, because foul deformed things seek to set out themselves sooner than those creatures that are for beauty far more amiable. For my part, I mean to suspend my sentence, and to let an author of late memory be my speaker, who affirmeth that they carry angels in their faces to entangle men, and devils in their devices. Valerius in *Epist. ad Ruf.* hath these words of women's treacherous works, *Amice ne longo dispendio te suspendam, lege aureolum Theophrasti, & Medeam Iasonis, & vix pauca inuenies impossibilia mulieri: Amice det tibi Deus omnipotens faeminae fallacia non falli.* My friend, lest I should hold thee too long with too tedious a circumstance, read but the golden book of Theophrastus, and Jason's Medea, and thou shalt find few things impossible for a woman. My sweet friend, God Almighty grant that thou beest not entrapped by women's treachery. Furthermore, in the same place he saith, *Quis muliebri garrulitati aliquid committit, quae illud solum potest tacere quod nescit, Who will commit anything to a woman's tattling trust, who conceals nothing but that she knows not?* I omit to tell with what phrases of disgrace the ancient fathers have defaced them, whereof one of them saith, *Quid aliud est mulier nisi amicitiae inimica, &c. What is a woman but an enemy to friendship, an unevitable pain, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desired calamity, a domestical danger, a delectable detriment, the nature of the which is evil shadowed with the colour of goodness? Therefore if to put her away be a sin, to keep her still must needs be a torment.* Another saith, *Illud aduerte quod extra paradisum vir factus est, &c. Consider this, that man was made without Paradise, woman within Paradise, that thereby we may learn that everyone winneth not credit by the nobility of the place, or of his stock, but by his virtue. Finally, man made better is found without Paradise, in a place inferior, and, contrariwise, she which was created in a better place, namely Paradise, is found to be worser.* Another hath these words: *Diligit mulier ut capiat, decipit ut rapiat: amat quod habes, non quod es.* A woman loves, that she may entrap; she deceives, that she may spoil; she loves that thou hast, not that thou art. Another writeth after this manner: *Nulla est uxoris electio, &c. There is no choice to be had of a wife, but even as she comes, so we must take her; if teatish, if foolish, if deformed, if proud, if stinking-breathed, or whatsoever other fault she hath, we know not till we be married. A horse, an ox, or an ass, or a dog, or whatsoever other vile merchandise, are first proved, and then bought; a man's wife alone is never thoroughly seen before, lest she displease before she be married. Viros ad unumquodque maleficium singulae cupiditates impellunt (saith Tully) mulieres ad omnia maleficia cupiditas una ducit: muliebrium enim vitiorum omnium fundamentum est auaritia. Men's several desires do egg them to each kind of evil, but one only affection leads women to all kind of wickedness, for covetousness is the foundation of all women's evil inclinations.* Seneca also saith thus in his *Proverbs: Aut amat, aut odit mulier, nil tertium est, dediscere flere faeminam, mendacium est, &c. A woman either loves, or hates; there is no third thing. It is an untruth to say that a woman can learn to forget to weep; two kinds of tears are common in their eyes, the one of true sorrow, the other of deceit. A woman meditates evil when she is musing alone.*

Thus you see how far their wickedness hath made authors to wade with invectives in their dispraise, wherefore I shall not need to urge their inconstancy more vehemently, resembling them to Battus, who was won with a cow and lost with a bull, nor stand to repeat that of Plato, who doubted whether he should put women among reasonable or unreasonable creatures, who also gave thanks to nature especially for three things, whereof the first and

chiefest was that she had made him a man and not a woman. I omit that of Aristotle, who, alleging the inconveniency of too timely marriages, expresseth this as the especial incommodity, that it is the author of superfluities, & good for nothing but to fill the world with women. Read over all Homer, and you shall never almost see him bring in Juno but brawling and jarring with Jupiter, noting thereby what an irksome kind of people they are. In some countries, therefore, the bride, at the day of her marriage, is crowned by the matrons with a garland of prickles, and so delivered to her husband, that he may know he hath tied himself to a thorny pleasure. The Massagetes told Pompey they lay with their wives but once a week because they would not hear their scoldings in the day, nor their pulings in the night.

But what should I spend my ink, waste my paper, stub my pen in painting forth their ugly imperfections and perverse peevishness, whenas how many hairs they have on their heads, so many snares they will find for a need to snarl men in; how many voices all of them have, so many vices each one of them hath; how many tongues, so many tales; how many eyes, so many allurements. What shall I say? They have more shifts than Jove had sundry shapes, who in the shape of a satyr inveigled Antiope, took Amphitrio's form when on Alcmena he begat Hercules, to Danae he came in a shower of gold, to Leda in the likeness of a swan, to Io like a heifer, to Aegine like a flame, to Mnemosyne like a shepherd, to Proserpina like a serpent, to Pasiphae like a bull, to the nymph Nonacris in the likeness of Apollo. For cruelty, they seem more terrible than tigers; was not Orpheus, the excellentest musician in any memory, torn in pieces by women because, for sorrow of his wife Eurydice, he did not only himself refuse the love of many women, and lived a sole life, but also dissuaded from their company? Did not merciless Minerva turn the hairs of Medusa, whom she hated, into hissing adders? Therefore see how far they swerve from their purpose, who, with green colours seek to garnish such Gorgon-like shapes. Is not witchcraft especially upholden by women? Whether men or women be more prone unto carnal concupiscence, I refer them to Theban Tiresias, who gave judgement against them long ago. What their impudency is, let antiquity be arbiter. Did not Calphernia's impudency (who was so importunate and unreasonable in pleading her own cause) give occasion of a law to be made, that never woman after should openly plead her own cause in courts of judgement?

Sabina may be a glass for them to see their pride in, who usually bathed herself in the milk of five hundred asses to preserve her beauty. Galeria also, that gallant dame, which scorned the golden palace of the emperor Nero as not curious enough to shroud her beauty; yea, Cleopatra, according to Xiphilinus' judgement, was not slain with venomous snakes, but with the bodkin that she curled her hair. To conclude, what pride have they left unpractised, what enticement to lust have they not tried?

Did they imagine that beauty to be most commendable which is least coloured, and that face most fair which seldomest comes into the open air, they would never set out themselves to be seen, ne yet would they covet to leave impressions of their beauties in other men's bodies, nor the form of their faces in other men's fancies. But women, through want of wisdom, are grown to such wantonness that upon no occasion they will cross the street to have a glance of some gallant, deeming that men, by one look of them, should be in love with them, and will not stick to make an errand over the way to purchase a paramour to help at a pinch, who, under her husband's (that hoddypeak's) nose must have all the distilling dew of his delicate rose, leaving him only a sweet scent, good enough for such a senseless sot.

It was a custom in Greece that every married woman, as soon as she was betrothed to her husband, should touch fire and water, that as the fire purgeth & purifieth all things, and the water is clean, and of nature fit to clarify every part of the body, and to set the face free from any spot, except it be an Ethiopian blot, so she would reserve herself chaste and undefiled to her husband, her head. In Boetia, they will not suffer a new-married wife at first to go over

the threshold, because she should seem unwilling to enter in there where she should leave and lay by her chastity. In the same place also they burn the axle-tree of a cart before the door of the bride, after she is married, signifying that she ought not to gad abroad, as though that were removed which might move her to make any errands unto any other place.

In Rome, the bride was wont to come in with her spindle and her distaff at her side at the day of her marriage, and her husband crowned and compassed the gates with her yarn, but now-a-days tow is either too dear or too dainty, so that if he will maintain the custom, he must crown his gates with their scarves, periwigs, bracelets and ouches, which imports thus much unto us, that maidens and matrons now-a-days be more chary of their store, so that they will be sure they will not spend too much spittle with spinning; yea, their needles are nettles, for they lay them aside as needless, for fear of pricking their fingers when they are painting their faces; nay, they will abandon that trifling which may stay them at home, but if the temperature of the weather will not permit them to pop into the open air, a pair of cards better pleaseth her than a piece of cloth, her beads than her book, a bowlful of wine than a handful of wool, delighting more in a dance than in David's Psalms, to play with her dog than to pray to her God, setting more by a love-letter than the law of the Lord, by one pearl than twenty paternosters. She had rather view her face a whole morning in a looking-glass than work by the hourglass, she is more sparing of her Spanish needle than her Spanish gloves, occupieth oftener her setting-stick than shears, and joys more in her jewels than in her Jesus.

Is this correspondent to the modesty of maidens, and the manners of matrons? Nay, rather it seems that law is turned to liberty, and honest civility into impudent shamefastness. Ancient antiquity was wont to be such a stoical observer of continency that women were not permitted so much as to kiss their kinsmen till the Trojan dames first attempted it in Italy, for whenas by the force of tempestuous storms they were cast upon the Italian coast, and each man landed upon whom the salt sea-foam had not seized, the women, being weary of their irksome travel and long and tedious toil, abhorring the sight of the seas, set the ships on a light fire, by reason of the which deed, they, dreading the displeasure of their husbands, ran every one to their kinsman, kissing most kindly, and embracing most amiably, everyone that they met; from that time forth to this present, it hath been taken up for a custom not to be sparing in that kind of courtesy.

But now crafty Cupid, practising the wonted sleights and shuffling his shafts, meditates new shifts which each amorous courtier, by his venereal experience, may conjecturally conceive. Menelaus' hospitality moved young Paris to adultery. I say no more, you know the rest; the wiser can apply it. Well worthy are the Essenians to be extolled for their wisdom, who abhor the company of women and detest the possession of gold and silver, and they to be deemed as soothing flatterers who spend so much paper about a proposition of praise set apart from any apparance of probability. Peradventure they think that, as the poets invent that Atlas upholds the heavens with his shoulders, because by an excellent imagination he found out the course of the stars, even so they, by compiling of pamphlets in their mistress' praises, to be called the restorers of womankind. But idle heads are usually occupied about such trifling texts, wanton wits are cumbered with those wonted fits, such busy brains sow where they reap small gains. When wit gives place to will, and reason to affection, then folly with full sail launcheth forth most desperately into the deep. Did they consider that that praise is only privileged in wise men's opinion which only proceeds from the pen of the praised, they would have paused awhile upon the worthless inputation of such prodigal commendation, and consulted for their credit in the composition of some other more profitable contrary subject.

I leave these in their folly, and hasten to other men's fury, who make the press the dunghill whither they carry all the muck of their melancholy imaginations, pretending, forsooth, to

anatomize abuses and stub up sin by the roots, whenas their waste-paper, being well viewed, seems fraught with naught else save dog-days' effects, who, wresting places of scripture against pride, whoredom, covetousness, gluttony and drunkenness, extend their invectives so far against the abuse that almost the things remains not whereof they admit any lawful use. Speaking of pride as though they were afraid somebody should cut too large pennyworths out of their cloth, of covetousness as though in them that proverb had been verified, *Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes*, of gluttony as though their living did lie upon another man's trencher, of drunkenness as though they had been brought up all the days of their life with bread and water, and, finally, of whoredom as though they had been eunuchs from their cradle, or blind from the hour of their conception. But as the stage-player is ne'er the happier because he represents oft-times the persons of mighty men, as of kings & emperors, so I account such men never the holier because they place praise in painting forth other men's imperfections.

These men resemble trees, which are wont eftsoons to die if they be fruitful beyond their wont; even so they, to die in virtue if they once overshoot themselves too much with inveighing against vice, to be brainsick in works if they be too fruitful in words. And even as the vultures slay nothing themselves, but prey upon that which of other is slain, so these men inveigh against no new vice which heretofore by the censures of the learned hath not been sharply condemned, but tear that piecemealwise which long since by ancient writers was wounded to the death, so that out of their forepassed pains ariseth their pamphlets; out of their volumes, their invectives. Good God, that those that never tasted of anything save the excrements of arts, whose threadbare knowledge, being bought at the second hand, is spotted, blemished and defaced through translators' rigorous rude dealing, should prefer their fluttered suits before other men's glittering gorgeous array, should offer them water out of a muddy pit who have continually recourse to the fountain, or dregs to drink who have wine to sell. *At scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter*. Thy knowledge boots thee not a button, except another knows that thou hast this knowledge. Anacharsis was wont to say that the Athenians used money to no other end but to tell it; even so, these men make no other use of learning but to show it. But as the panther smelleth sweetly but only to brute beasts, which she draweth unto her to their destruction, not to men in like manner, so these men seem learned to none but to idiots, who, with a coloured show of zeal, they allure unto them to their illusion, and not to the learned in like sort. I know not how, it delighteth them to put their oar in another man's boat, and their foot in another man's boot, to incur that proverbial check, *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, or that oratorical taunt, *Quam quisque norit artem in ea se exerceat*, with the elephant to wade and wallow in the shallow water when they would sooner sink than swim in the deep river; to be conversant in those authors which they cannot understand but by the translator, their interpreter; to vaunt reading when the sum of their divinity consists in twopenny catechisms, and yet their ignorant zeal will presumptuously press into the press, inquiring most curiously into every corner of the commonwealth, correcting that sin in others wherewith they are corrupted themselves. To prescribe rules of life belongeth not to the ruder sort; to condemn those callings which are approved by public authority argueth a proud contempt of the magistrate's superiority. Protogenes knew Apelles by one line, never otherwise seen, and you may know these men's spirit by their speech, their minds by their meddling, their folly by their phrase. View their works and know their vanity, see the books bearing their name and smile in thy sleeve at their shame. A small ship in a shallow river seems a huge thing, but in the sea a very little vessel; even so, each trifling pamphlet, to the simpler sort, a most substantial subject, whereof the wiser lightly account, and the learned laughing contemn. Therefore more earnestly I aggravate their fault because their crime is crept into credit, and their doings deemed devotion whenas purposely, to some man's despite, they bring into act their choleric motions.

A common practice it is now-a-days, which breeds our common calamity, that the cloak of zeal should be unto an hypocrite, instead of a coat of mail, a pretence of purity, a penitence for iniquity, a gloze of godliness, a covert for all naughtiness. When men shall publicly make profession of a more inward calling, and shall wax cold in the works of charity and fervent in malice, liberal in nothing but in lavish backbiting, holding hospitality for an eschewed heresy, and the performance of good works for papistry, may we not then have recourse to that caveat of Christ in the Gospel, *Cauete ab hipocritis?* It is not the writhing of the face, the heaving up of the eyes to heaven, that shall keep these men from having their portion in hell. Might they be saved by their book, they have the Bible always in their bosom, and so had the Pharisees the law embroidered in their garments. Might the name of the church enfeoff them in the kingdom of Christ, they will include it only in their coventicles, and bound it even in barns, which many times they make their meeting-place, and will shamelessly face men out that they are the church militant here upon earth, whenas they rather seem a company of malcontents, unworthy to breathe on the earth. Might the boast of the spirit pinned to their sleeves make them elect before all other, they will make men believe they do nothing whereto the spirit doth not persuade them, and what heretics were there ever that did not arrogate as much to themselves? These they be that publicly pretend a more regenerate holiness, being in their private chambers the express imitation of Howliglass. It is too tedious to the reader to attend the circumstance of their several shifts, the loathsomeness of their guileful wiles, the tractpath of their treachery; you know them without my discourse, and can describe their hypocrisy though I be not the notary of their iniquity. Seeing their works, shun their ways.

Another sort of men there are, who, though not addicted to such counterfeit curiosity, yet are they infected with a farther improbability, challenging knowledge unto themselves of deeper mysteries, whenas, with Thales Milesius, they see not what is under their feet; searching more curiously into the secrets of nature, whenas, in respect of deeper knowledge, they seem mere naturals; coveting with the phoenix to approach so nigh to the sun that they are scorched with his beams and confounded with his brightness. Who made them so privy to the secrets of the Almighty that they should foretell the tokens of his wrath, or terminate the time of his vengeance? But lightly some news attends the end of every term, some monsters are booked, though not bred, against vacation-times, which are straightway dispersed into every quarter, so that at length they become the ale-house talk of every carter; yea, the country plowman feareth a Calabrian flood in the midst of a furrow, and the silly shepherd, committing his wandering sheep to the custody of his wap, in his field naps dreameth of flying dragons, which, for fear lest he should see, to the loss of his sight, he falleth asleep; no star he seeth in the night but seemeth a comet; he lighteth no sooner on a quagmire, but he thinketh this is the foretold earthquake whereof his boy hath the ballad.

Thus are the ignorant deluded, the simple misused, and the sacred science of astronomy discredited, &, in truth, what leasings will not makeshifts invent for money? What will they not feign for gain? Hence come our babbling ballads and our new-found *Songs and Sonnets*, which every red-nose fiddler hath at his finger's-end, and every ignorant ale-knight will breathe forth over the pot as soon as his brain waxeth hot. Be it a truth which they would tune, they interlace it with a lie or two to make metre, not regarding verity, so they may make up the verse, not unlike to Homer, who cared not what he feigned, so he might make his countrymen famous. But as the straightest things, being put into water, seem crooked, so the crediblest troths, if once they come within compass of these men's wits, seem tales. Were it that the infamy of their ignorance did redound only upon themselves, I could be content to apply my speech otherwise than to their Apuleian ears, but sith they obtain the name of our English poets, and thereby make men think more basely of the wits of our country, I cannot but turn them out of their counterfeit livery, and brand them in the forehead, that all men may know their falsehood. Well may that saying of Campanus be applied to our English poets, which he spake of them in his time: *They make* (saith he)

poetry an occupation; lying is their living, and fables are their movables; if thou takest away trifles, silly souls, they will famish for hunger. It were to be wished that the acts of the venturous and the praise of the virtuous were, by public edict, prohibited by such men's merry mouths to be so odiously extolled, as rather breeds detestation than admiration, loathing than liking. What politic counsellor or valiant soldier will joy or glory of this, in that some stitcher, weaver, spendthrift or fiddler hath shuffled or slubbered up a few ragged rimes in the memorial of one's prudence, or the other's prowess? It makes the learned sort to be silent, whenas they see unlearned sots so insolent.

These buzzards think knowledge a burden, tapping it before they have half tunned it, venting it before they have filled it, in whom that saying of the orator is verified: *Ante ad dicendum quam ad cognoscendum veniunt, They come to speak before they come to know.* They contemn arts as unprofitable, contenting themselves with a little country grammar knowledge, God wot, thanking God with that abecedary priest in Lincolnshire, that he never knew what that Romish popish Latin meant. Very requisite were it that such blockheads had some Albadanensis Appolonius to send them to some other mechanical art, that they might not thus be the stain of art. Such kind of poets were they that Plato excluded from his commonwealth, and Augustine banished *ex ciuitate Dei*, which the Romans derided, and the Lacedaemonians scorned, who would not suffer one of Archilochus' books to remain in their country, and amiss it were not if these which meddle with the art they know not were bequeathed to Bridewell, there to learn a new occupation, for as the basilisk with his hiss driveth all other serpents from the place of his abode, so these rude rimers with their jarring verse alienate all men's minds from delighting in numbers' excellence, which they have so defaced that we may well exclaim with the poet, *Quantum mutatus ab illo.*

But lest I should be mistaken as an enemy to poetry, or at least not taken as a friend to that study, I have thought good to make them privy to my mind by expressing my meaning. I account of poetry as of a more hidden & divine kind of philosophy, enwrapped in blind fables and dark stories, wherein the principles of more excellent arts and moral precepts of manners, illustrated with divers examples of other kingdoms and countries, are contained, for amongst the Grecians there were poets before there were any philosophers, who embraced entirely the study of wisdom, as Cicero testifieth in his *Tusculans*, whereas he saith that of all sorts of men, poets are most ancient, who, to the intent they might allure men with a greater longing to learning, have followed two things, sweetness of verse and variety of invention, knowing that delight doth prick men forward to the attaining of knowledge, and that true things are rather admired if they be included in some witty fiction, like to pearls that delight more if they be deeper set in gold. Wherefore, seeing poetry is the very same with philosophy, the fables of poets must of necessity be fraught with wisdom & knowledge, as framed of those men which have spent all their time and studies in the one and in the other. For even as, in vines, the grapes that are fairest and sweetest are couched under the branches that are broadest and biggest, even so, in poems, the things that are most profitable are shrouded under the fables that are most obscure; neither is there almost any poetical figment wherein there is not something comprehended taken out either of histories, or out of the physics or ethics, whereupon Erasmus Rotterdamus very wittily terms poetry a dainty dish seasoned with delights of every kind of discipline. Now whether riming be poetry, I refer to the judgement of the learned; yea, let the indifferent reader divine what deep mystery can be placed under plodding metre. Who is it that, reading *Bevis of Hampton*, can forbear laughing, if he mark what scrambling shift he makes to end his verses alike?

*The porter said, by my snout,
It was Sir Bevis that I let out.*

or this,

*He smote his son on the breast,
That he never after spoke with clerk or priest.*

or this,

*This alms, by my crown,
Gives she for Bevis of South-hampton.*

or this,

*Some lost a nose, some a lip,
And the King of Scots hath a ship.*

But I let these pass as worn-out absurdities, meaning not at this instant to urge (as I might) the like instance of authors of our time, lest in laying forth their nakedness I might seem to have discovered my malice, imitating Ajax, who, objecting more irefully unto Ulysses' flattery, detected himself of folly.

As these men offend in the impudent publishing of witless vanity, so others overshoot themselves as much another way, in senseless stoical austerity, accounting poetry impiety, and wit, folly. It is an old question, and it hath been often propounded, whether it were better to have moderate affections, or no affections. The Stoics said, *None*. The Peripatetians answered, *To have temperate affections*, and in this respect I am a professed Peripatetian, mixing profit with pleasure, and precepts of doctrine with delightful invention. Yet these men condemn them of lasciviousness, vanity and curiosity, who, under feigned stories, include many profitable moral precepts describing the outrage of unbridled youth having the rein in their own hands, the fruits of idleness, the offspring of lust, and how available good educations are unto virtue. In which their preciser censure they resemble them that cast away the nut for mislike of the shell, & are like to those which loathe the fruit for the leaves, accounting the one sour because the other is bitter. It may be some dreaming dunce, whose bald affected eloquence making his function odious, better beseeming a privy than a pulpit, a misterming clown in a comedy than a chosen man in the ministry, will cry out that it breeds a scab to the conscience to peruse such pamphlets, being indeed the display of their duncery, and breeding a mislike of such tedious dolts' barbarism by the view of their rhetorical invention. Such trifling studies, say they, infect the mind and corrupt the manners, as though the mind were only conversant in such toys, or should continually stay where the thoughts by chance do stray. The sunbeams touching the earth remain still from whence they came; so a wise man's mind, although sometimes by chance it wandereth here and there, yet it hath recourse in stayed years to that it ought. But grant the matter to be fabulous, is it therefore frivolous? Is there not under fables, even as under the shadow of green and flourishing leaves, most pleasant fruit hidden in secret, and a further meaning closely comprised? Did not Virgil, under the covert of a fable, express that divine mystery which is the subject of his sixth *Éclogue*.

Iam noua progenies coelo demittitur alto.

I could send you to Ovid, who expreseth the general deluge, which was the old world's overthrow, in the fable of Deucalion and Pyrrha, under which undoubtedly it is manifest (although divers authors are of contrary opinion) he meaneth Noah's flood, insomuch as there is a place in Lucian, in his book *De Siria Dea*, by the which it appeareth that by Deucalion's deluge is understood, not (as some will) that inundation whereby in times past Greece and Italy was overflowed, and the isle Atlanta destroyed, but that universal flood which was in the time of Noah. For thus Lucian writeth in that place, that it was received for a common opinion among the Grecians that this generation of men, that now is, hath not

been from the beginning, but that it which first was, wholly perished, and this second sort of men which now are, be of a new creation, growing into such a multitude by Deucalion and Pyrrha's means. As touching the men of the first world, thus much (saith he) is committed to memory, that whenas they began to be puffed up with pride of their prosperity, they enterprised all iniquity, privileged by impunity, neither regarding the observation of oath nor the violation of hospitality, neither favouring the fatherless nor succouring the helpless, whereupon, in lieu of their cruelty, they were plagued with this calamity: the springs brake forth and overflowed their bounded banks, the watery clouds, with pashing showers uncessantly sending down their unreasonable moisture, augmented the rage of the ocean so that whole fields and mountains could not satisfy his usurping fury, but cities with their suburbs, towns with their streets, churches with their porches, were now the walk of the waves, the dens of the dolphin, and the sporting places of the huge leviathan; men might have fished where they sold fish, had they not, by the sudden breaking forth of the showers, been made a prey unto fish; the child in the cradle could not be saved by the embracings of the dying mother; the aged cripple, removing his weary steps by stilts, was fain to use them instead of oars, till at length his dismayed grey hairs despairing of the sight of any shore, gave place to death, and was swallowed up in the deep, and so the belly of the whale became his grave.

The earth after this sort being excluded from the number of the elements, there was no memory left of mankind in this watery world, but only in Deucalion's ark, who in regard of his prudence and piety was reserved to this second generation, who, having made a great ark wherein he put his wife and children, took two beasts of every kind, as well lions as serpents, hawks as partridges, wolves as lambs, foxes as geese, amongst which there was such mutual concord that, as they were harmless towards him, so they were hurtless one towards another, all which sailed with him till the waters ceased.

Hitherto Lucian, an heathen poet. Plutarch also recordeth in his treatise *De industria animalium*, that a dove being sent out of Deucalion's ark showed the waters ceasing. By these proofs it is evident that by Deucalion's deluge is understood Noah's flood, because the very like things are set down in Genesis, of brute beasts received by Noah into the ark, and the dove sent forth by him also. I trust these probabilities being duly pondered, there is no man so distrustful to doubt that deeper divinity is included in poets' inventions, and therefore not to be rejected as though they were void of all learning and wisdom.

I would not have any man imagine that, in praising of poetry, I endeavour to approve Virgil's unchaste *Priapus*, or Ovid's obscenity; I commend their wit, not their wantonness; their learning, not their lust; yet even as the bee out of the bitterest flowers and sharpest thistles gathers honey, so out of the filthiest fables may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected. Nevertheless, tender youth ought to be restrained for a time from the reading of such ribaldry, lest, chewing over wantonly the ears of this summer corn, they be choked with the haune before they can come at the kernel.

Hunters, being ready to go to their game, suffer not their dogs to taste or smell of anything by the way, no carrion especially, but reserve them wholly to their approaching disport; even so, youth, being ready to undertake more weightier studies, ought in no case be permitted to look aside to lascivious toys, lest the pleasure of the one should breed a loathing of the profit of the other. I would there were not any, as there be many, who in poets and historiographers read no more than serveth to the feeding of their filthy lust, applying those things to the pampering of their private Venus which were purposely published to the suppressing of that common wandering Cupid. These be the spiders which suck poison out of the honeycomb, and corruption out of the holiest things, herein resembling those that are troubled with a fever, in whom divers things have divers effects, that is to say, of hot things they wax cold, of cold things hot, or of tigers, which by the sound of melodious instruments

are driven into madness, by which men are wont to expel melancholy. He that will seek for a pearl must first learn to know it when he sees it, lest he neglect it when he finds it, or make a nought-worth pebble his jewel, and they that covet to pick more precious knowledge out of poets' amorous elegies must have a discerning knowledge before they can aspire to the perfection of their desired knowledge, lest the obtaining of trifles be the repentant end of their travail.

Whoso snatcheth up follies too greedily, making an occupation of recreation, and delight his day-labour, may haps prove a Witham whiles he fisheth for finer wit, and a fool while he finds himself laughing pastime at other men's follies, not unlike to him who, drinking wine immoderately, besides that he many times swallows down dregs, at length proves stark drunk.

There is no extremity either in active or contemplative life more outrageous than the excessive study of delight, wherewith young students are so besotted that they forsake sounder arts to follow smoother eloquence, not unlike to him that had rather have a new-painted box, though there be nothing but a halter in it, than an old barred hutch with treasure invaluable, or Aesop's cock, which parted with a pearl for a barley-kernel. Even as a man is inclined, so his studies are bended: if to vainglory, to eloquence; if to profound knowledge, to Aristotle; if lascivious, good in some English devise of verse; to conclude, a passing potman, a passing poet.

I might have fitted men's several affections with their sundry studies, but that I am afraid there be many ashamed of their studies, which I will not repeat lest some should blush whenas they read their reproach.

It is a thing of no pains or experience to aim at the practices of the proud, the secret inclinations of the covetous, the imaginations of the incestuous, the hooded hypocrisy of those that pretend purity, which things, being practised in youth, become trades of profit in age. An usual thing it is that the flower of our years should be the fountain of folly, which, by the conduit-pipe of continual custom's conveyance, causeth the greyheaded to carry corruption, their soul's infection, unto their graves. When the endeavour of youth shall prove naught else but the exercise of all abuses, is it like that a man's after-life shall be without blemish?

There is almost no man now-a-days who doth not, in his secret thought, estimate vice after his vileness, yet security hath so blinded many that, losing the habit of virtue, they covet to restrain wisdom only to their wicked ways, concluding that in the imitation of their actions consists the highway to happiness because their humour is such, condemning that state of life which is an enemy to their vicious appetites. It is impossible for these men, either by hearing or reading, to profit in integrity of life whiles in the one and in the other they will regard no more than availeth to their advantage. The covetous careth for no more scripture than that which privilegeth him to provide for his family, the proud sort are conversant continually in this text: *They that are in kings' courts wear soft raiment*, and thieves read with delight how the Egyptians in Egypt were by the Israelites robbed of their jewels. Thus everyone maketh that sacred preservative a pernicious poison unto his sinful soul, nourishing his vanity with sacred verities, increasing his damnation by the ordained means to salvation.

If men in their youth's best lust, and in the prime of prosperity, would but cast their eye on the one side to future alterations, and think of a further felicity, beholding adversity on the other side clad with folly's repentant robes, compassed about with contempt instead of a girdle, guarded with fiends, not accompanied with friends, having for momentary pleasure

endless pain, death without date for a dissolute life repented too late, they would then so behave themselves here upon earth as they might have a Saviour in heaven.

Pausanias, King of the Lacedaemonians, bidding Simonides to a sumptuous banquet, instantly entreated him to speak something notable which savoured of learning; *Why then* (quoth he) *remember thou art a man*. Which saying Pausanias scornfully despised; afterward, being in prison in Chalciaeco, was almost famished ere he died, where, remembering Simonides' speech, with a loud lamentable voice he cried, *O my friend of Caeos, would God I had regarded thy words*.

Good counsel is never remembered nor respected till men have given their farewell to felicity, and have been overwhelmed in the extremity of adversity. Young men think it a disgrace to youth to embrace the studies of age, counting their fathers fools whiles they strive to make them wise, casting that away at a cast at dice which cost their dads a year's toil, spending that in their velvets which was raked up in a russet coat, so that their revenues racked and their rents raised to the uttermost is scarce enough to maintain one's ruffling pride which was wont to be many poor men's relief. These young gallants, having lewdly spent their patrimony, fall to begging of poor men's houses over their heads as the last refuge of their riot, removing the ancient bounds of lands to support their decayed port, rather coveting to enclose that which was wont to be common than they would want to maintain their private prodigality.

The temple of Terminus Deus amongst the Romans, who was supposed to have the pre-eminence over the bounds of lands, had ever a hole in the roof, forasmuch as they thought it unlawful for the bounds of lands to be covered, and that rich men might learn to know their lands from poor men's grounds. A strange thing it is that these men cannot learn to thrive before all be gone, and that they, in the midst of their plenty, should be more needy than those that, saving their day-labour, are naught but poverty. But as the brook Achelous carrieth whole trees and huge stones with hideous roaring noise down his streams, so the court is, as it were, a devouring gulf of gold, and the consumption of coin. It fareth with them as it did with Calchas, that cunning soothsayer, who died for sorrow because Mopsus surpassed him in science, so if they see any excel them in bravery, in whose steps at every inch they are not able to tread, they hang the head as they were half dead.

How far are these fondlings from imitating Crates the philosopher, who, to the intent that he might more quietly study philosophy, threw all his goods into the sea, saying, *Hence from me, you ungracious appetites; I had rather drown you than you should drown me*. By this that hath been already set down, it may plainly appear that, where pride beareth sway, hospitality decays; nay, this kind of men will never be saved by their works, insomuch as the poor always miss, as often as they seek to them for alms; yea, they seem only to be born for themselves, and not to benefit any else; who, with the wooers of Penelope, will, by their porters, prohibit the poor from having access unto their porches, terming them the marrers of mirth and procurers of sadness. But what end do they propound to themselves in their prodigal expenses but the feeding of their mistress' fancy and the fostering of their lawless lusts, shrouding under their purple robes and embroidered apparel a heart spotted with all abuses, wherefore they may be aptly resembled to the Egyptian temples, which without are goodly and great, their walls arising unto a huge height, with stately marble turrets, but if you go in and look about you, you shall find for a god either a stork, a goat, a cat, or an ape. Did they consider that no *vestis sed virtus hominem euehit*, they would reject all superfluity as sinful, and betake themselves to a more temperate moderation in each degree of excess.

Whenas the outward garment, not the inward virtue, must be fain to commend a man, it is all one as if a man should love the snake for his grey-coloured skin, or poison because it is in a silver piece, or pilgrim-salve because it is in a painted box. It is learning and knowledge

which are the only ornaments of a man, which furnisheth the tongue with wisdom and the heart with understanding, which maketh the children of the needy poor to become noble peers, and men of obscure parentage to be equal with princes in possessions, with whom, if you talk of lineal descents, they will lay before you the pence, being able to fetch their pedigree from no ancient house except it be from some old hogsty, deriving their kindred from the coffer, not from the Conquest, neither can they vaunt any notable service of their ancestry in the field, but can tell you how their grandsire used to set his fold; neither do I speak this to the disgracing derision of virtuous nobility, which I reverence in each respect, but only endeavour summarily to show what goodly buildings fortune doth raise on virtue's slender foundations. I am not ignorant that many times the covetous ignorant scrapeth that from the tail of the plow which maketh all his after-posterity think scorn to look on the plow, they overseeing that by a servant on which their father was as tillsman attendant, being translated by his toil from the parish, Goodman Webbe in the country to a pertly gentleman in the court, bestowing more at one time on the herald for arms than his father all his lifetime gave in alms. No matter though such vaunting upstarts, which have as little virtue as antiquity to honest their posterity, become the scoff of a scholar and the stale of a courtier, which will make them, if they fail hereafter in nobility of birth, to seek it by learning.

In times past, ignorance in each sex was so odious that women as well as men were well seen in all liberal sciences. Was not Gracchus, who was counted a most excellent orator, instructed by his mother Cornelia in eloquence? What should I speak of Aripithis, the king of Scythia's son, whom his mother Istrina likewise instructed in the elements of the Greek tongue? But lest in praising of learning in so learned an age I should bring manifest truths into question, and so swerve from the logicians' prescriptions, or by dilating on so affluent an argument, might seem to gather stones on the sea-shore, I will cease to prosecute the praise of it, and will propound unto you the special plague that is imminent unto it.

Science hath no enemy but the ignorant, who contemn it as vile because their gross capacity perceives nothing in it divine. Such an ignorant was Valentinianus the emperor, who was a professed enemy to all excellent arts, or Licinius, who likewise termed learning the plague and poison of the weal public. Such covetous ignorance doth creep amongst the cormorants of our age, who, as the chameleon, which is fed with the air, stands always with his mouth wide open, so these men which live upon alms have always their mouths open to ask, and having felt the sweetness of abbey-lands, they gape after college living, desiring to enrich themselves as much with the silver of the one as their ancestors got by the gold of the other, much like to him that, having bathed his hands in the blood of wild beasts, proceedeth to the slaughter of men, the one no more satisfied with money than the other with murder. If such goodly buildings were again to arise by the common cost, a man may easily guess how backward they would be in giving, who are now so forward in detracting. Can commonweals flourish where learning decays? Shall not felicity have a fall whenas knowledge fails? Yea, peace must needs perish from amongst us whenas we rather seek to choke than cherish, to famish than feed, the nurses of it, depriving them of all outward ornaments (as much as in us lieth) who are the only ornaments of our state; but I hope their needy enmity shall return to them in vain, and not prove the procurement of our common plague and pain, that the more they oppugn our prosperity, the greater shall be our welfare, like to the trees in whom those parts are stronger that are opposite to the north, than those which bend toward the south, or west, wind.

I will not stand to amplify their discredit which endeavour to turn our day into night and our light into darkness, nor yet will compare them to those that are called Agrippae, who, being preposterously born with their feet forward, are said to enter into the world with ill fortune, and to the great mischief of mankind, as Marcus Agrippa, and Nero; only this I will wish, that, being dead, the learned may give them such epitaphs of disgrace as they deserve, and

that the chronicles may record their reproach unto all ages. *Amen*, say all they that are friends to the muses.

How can we hope for any further exhibition whenas we see men repine at that we have already? It fareth with finer wits as it doth with the pearl which is affirmed to be in the head of the toad; the one being of exceeding virtue is enclosed with poison, the other, of no less value, compassed about with poverty. Learning now-a-days gets no living if it come empty-handed. Promotion, which was wont to be the free propounded palm of pains, is, by many men's lamentable practice, become a purchase. Whenas wits of more towardness shall have spent some time in the university, and have, as it were, tasted the elements of art, and laid the foundation of knowledge, if by the death of some friend they should be withdrawn from their studies, as yet altogether raw, and so consequently unfit for any calling in the commonwealth, where should they find a friend to be unto them instead of a father, or one to perfect that which their deceased parents begun; nay, they may well betake themselves to some trade of husbandry for any maintenance they get in the way of alms at the university, or else take upon them to teach, being more fit to be taught, and perch into the pulpit, their knowledge being yet unperfect, very zealously preaching, being as yet scarce grounded in religious principles. How can those men call home the lost sheep that are gone astray, coming into the ministry before their wits be staid? This green fruit, being gathered before it be ripe, is rotten before it be mellow, and infected with schisms before they have learned to bridle their affections, affecting innovations as newfangled, and enterprising alterations whereby the church is mangled.

But some may object that I go beyond my anatomy in touching these abusive enormities. I answer that I discourse of these matters as they are become the follies of our time and the faults of our age, wishing the redress of such rashness and the suppression of the forenamed ravenous rabble, these abuses being as intolerable as the worst, and therefore to be condemned with the first. I trust there is no man so simple, who can discern wisdom from a folly and knowledge from ignorance, but his mother wit will afford him so much understanding that there is necessary use of learning in every calling, bringing praise to them that possess it, and shame to them that want it, without the which no external ornament is any whit available to advancement, but seemeth rather a disgracing deformity, having dislike his attendant. Reject then pride, to embrace it to your profit; neglect vainglory, and strive to attain to the knowledge of arts, the pathway to honour. Let the lives of the philosophers be the direction of youth's imitation, who wore no more clothes than would keep away cold, and eat no more meat than would expel hunger; yea, many of them, the more to keep down their bodies, being placed in the midst of plenty, have contented themselves with a thin hungry diet, the companion of scarcity. Diogenes chose rather to lick dishes at Athens than to live daintily with Alexander. Plato had rather bid Dionysius adieu than he would be driven from his philosophical diet. Porus, that peerless Indian prince, contented himself with bread and water as his accustomed cheer. Agesilaus, King of the Lacedaemonians, passing through the country of Thasius, being lovingly met by the nobles, and entirely welcomed by the common sort into the country with diversity of dainties and bravery of banquets, would not taste anything save bread and water, notwithstanding earnest entreaty to the contrary; but their importunity increasing, to put by all suspicion of ingratitude, he willed his slave and footmen to take their repast with their provision, saying that abstinency and temperancy, not variety of viands and delicacy, beseemeth him that is placed in chair of authority. Constantius kept himself so hungerly that many times he would crave a crust of bread of a poor woman to expel hunger. The priests of Egypt abstained from flesh & wine. The Persians were satisfied with bread, salt and water. In Rhodes he was reputed a gross-brained man which fed on anything but fish. So warily in times past hath temperate moderation been observed in all nations that by Zaleucus' law he was put to death which drank wine without the physician's advice. The matrons and ladies of Rome were expressly prohibited the taste of it; indeed, by this counsel squaring their

decrees that wine is the efficient of heat, heat lust, lust of murder. Eg. Maecenius slew his own wife (as Pliny recordeth) for that she loved wine too much, and was by Romulus' law saved from death, in which place of Pliny it is also specified that a certain matron of Rome was adjudged to die because she closely kept the key of a cellar of wine. Censorial Cato was so curious in the observation of this ordinance that he customably caused certain men to kiss the women, to know whether their breath smelled of wine, in whose time no man whatsoever, whether he were consul, senator, tribune or dictator, might drink any wine before he was thirty and five years of age. I do not allege these examples to the end I might condemn the moderate use of wine as unlawful, but to show by the comparison how far we exceed them in excess whose banquets are furnished with such wasteful superfluity.

It is a common complaint that more perish with the surfeit than with the sword, which may have followed so far that, to the recovering remedy of this surfeiting malady, they have restrained a healthful diet to two or three dishes, deeming our digestion would be better if our dishes were fewer. Which opinion, although Sir Thomas Elyot, a man of famous memory, in his book called *The Castle of Health*, in some politic respects doth seem to favour, yet I do think in his private judgement he did acknowledge the diversity of meats not to be so incommodious as he there pretends. But that I may answer what they urge: first, say they, what say you to brute beasts, who, being nourished but with one kind of meat, and only after one manner, are far more healthful and sound of body than men, that diet themselves with sundry dishes? To this I answer that either of these assertions are untrue, for neither do they use only one kind of nourishment, neither are diseases more distant from them than from us. The first is proved by the choice of pastures wherein they graze, where there is grass both bitter and savoury, sour & sweet, some nourishing cold, some nourishing hot, juice. Is then the substance of their meat simple, who feed upon boughs and weeds, besides so many sundry kind of field herbs, no less diverse in nutriment than in name? To prove that diseases are no less incident to beasts than to men, I will stick to Homer's authority, who reporteth the pestilence to be begun by brute beasts. To show how great the infirmities are of other creatures, the short life of some of them may sufficiently serve, except you have recourse to those recorded fables of crows and ravens, who commonly seize upon all kind of carrion, pick up each sort of new-sown seed, and are at host with every kind of fruit in the orchard. Secondly, they add that there was never physician so confidently careless of his patient that he would prescribe the use of divers meats at once to him that is distressed with a fever, whereby (say they) it may be gathered that one kind of meat is more available to a speedy digestion than many, because that physicians prescribe but one kind of meat to them whose digestion is weakest.

This objection is thus taken away. First, there is not the same proportion to be observed in diet in sickness & in health. Secondly, inasmuch as they are wont to set before them only one sort of meat, it is not because it is more easy of digestion, but lest the sight of much meat should breed in the weak stomach a loathing of it. Thirdly, they object that the nourishment of divers meats is no less noisome than the drinking of divers kinds of wines is dangerous. Everyone knows that he that washeth his brains with divers kinds of wines is the next door to a drunken man, and he like (say they) to be endangered by diseases who affecteth variety in his diet. Here do I deny the coherence of the comparison. For what is he that, by eating overmuch, doth incur the like inconvenience that he doth that drinketh much? He that hath overloaded his stomach with sundry meats is pained a little, perhaps, in his belly; he that hath overcharged his brain with wine is no better than a madman for the time. Which the rather seems to me because the grossness of the meat, remaining in one place, expecteth the administration of digestion, and, being thoroughly consumed, is suddenly voided, but wine, being by nature lighter, ascendeth higher and tickleth the brain placed in the top with the inflammation of a hot fume, and therefore diversity of wines at once is shunned of them that are wise, lest the matter which is ready to possess the head on a sudden, in a moment overturn the seat of reason, which danger in the diversity of meats no

reason can be rendered why we should dread. But they will perhaps say that the diversity of juice framed of the diversity of meats agrees not with our bodies, as though our bodies were not compounded of qualities, as of hot and cold, dry and moist. But he which feedeth only on one kind of meat sendeth forth but the juice of one quality; the spring is hot and moist, the summer dry and hot, autumn dry and cold, winter both moist and cold together, so also the elements which are our beginnings. What reason is it then that our bodies should be restrained to one kind of meat? Thus then we see that diversity is not so incommodious but that one kind of meat may be as dangerous, for gluttony may as well be committed by one dish as twenty. May not a man as soon surfeit by eating a whole sheep with Phago, or an ox with Milo, as by the sipping taste of sundry dainties?

But why stand I so long about meats, as though our life were naught but a banquet? Or why am I so large in disputing of the diet of our bodies, as though thereby we should purchase quiet to our souls? What is this but to imitate the foolish tender mother, which had rather her child should be well fed than well taught? Wherefore, to make use of my anatomy as well to myself as to others, I will prescribe, as near as I can, such a rule for students that, thereby squaring with their actions, they shall not be easily attached of any notable absurdity.

There be three things which are wont to slack young students' endeavour: negligence, want of wisdom, and fortune. Negligence, whenas we either altogether pretermit, or more lightly pass over, the thing we ought seriously to ponder. Want of wisdom, when we observe no method in reading. Fortune is in the event of chance, either naturally happening, or whenas by poverty or some infirmity or natural dullness we are withdrawn from our studies, and alienated from our intended enterprise, by the imagination of the rareness of learned men. But as touching these three, for the first, that is to say, negligent sloth, he is to be warned; for the second, he is to be instructed; for the third, he is to be helped. Let his reading be temperate, whereunto wisdom, not weariness, must prescribe an end, for as immoderate fast, excessive abstinence, and inordinate watchings are argued of intemperance, perishing with their immoderate use, so that these things never after can be performed as they ought in any measure, so the intemperate study of reading incurreth reprehension, and that which is laudable in his kind is blameworthy by the abuse. Reading two ways is loathsome to the mind and troublesome to the spirit, both by the quality, namely if it be more obscure, and also by the quantity, if it be more tedious, in either of which we ought to use great moderation lest that which is ordained to the refreshing of our wits be abused to the dulling of our sense. We read many things lest, by letting them pass, we should seem to despise them; some things we read lest we should seem to be ignorant in them; other things we read, not that we may embrace them, but eschew them. Our learning ought to be our life's amendment, and the fruits of our private study ought to appear in our public behaviour.

Read that sitting which may be thy meditation walking, shun as well rude manners as rude phrase, and false dealing as much as false Latin, & choose him to be thy teacher whom thou mayest more admire when thou seest than when thou hearest. *Quid faciendum sit, a faciente discendum est.* Learn of all men willingly that which thou knowest not, because humility may make that common to thee which nature hath made proper to everyone. Thou shalt be wiser than all if thou wilt learn of all. Heed what Chrisippus saith in his proverbs, *That which thou knowest not, peradventure thy ass can tell thee.* If thou be desirous to attain to the truth of a thing, first learn determinate conclusions before thou dealest with doubtful controversies; he shall never enter into the reason of the truth who beginneth to be taught by discussing of doubts. Think not common things unworthy of thy knowledge, of which thou art ignorant; those things are not to be contemned as little without the which great things cannot stand. Post not rashly from one thing to another, lest thou mayest seem to have seen many things and learned few. *Nil assequitur qui omnia sequitur.* I am not ignorant that far more ardent is the desire of knowing unknown things than of repeating

known things; this we see happen in stage-players, in orators, in all things; men haste unto novelties, and run to see new things, so that whatsoever is not usual, of the multitude is admired, yet must all students wisely prefer renowned antiquity before new-found toys, one line of Alexander's master before the large invective *Scolia* of the Parisian King's professor.

Many there be that are out of love with the obscurity wherein they live, that, to win credit to their name, they care not by what discredit they increase others' shame, and lest by their contention their vaunted victory might be destitute of all glory, they encounter with them on whose shoulders all arts do lean, as on Atlas' the heavens, thinking that men should thus imagine that none, except he knew himself sufficiently furnished with the exquisite knowledge of all excellent arts, durst undertake such a task, as though any were more ready to correct Apelles than the rude cobbler, to contend with Apollo than contemptible Pan. But these upstart reformers of arts respect not so much the indagation as the aim of their pride, and, coveting to have new opinions pass under their names, they spend whole years in shaping of sects. Which their puddled opinions are no sooner published, but straightway some proud-spirited princ Cox, desirous to differ from the common sort, gets him a livery coat of their cloth, and slaves it in their servile suits, enlarging the wilful errors of their arrogance. Nothing is so great an enemy to a sound judgement as the pride of a peevish conceit, which causeth a man both in life and belief either to snatch up or hatch newfangles. This one thing also deceiveth many: forsooth, they will seem wise before their time, that now they both begin to counterfeit that which they are not, and to be ashamed of that which they are, and therein they are most distant from wisdom wherein they think themselves to be thought wise. Others there be that think so well of themselves that no word can so much as scape by chance but they think it worthy of a penman's pains, and, striving to speak naught but proverbs, they make their bald eloquence a common byword, cockering themselves in their own conceits till they be scorned as coxcombs. These they be that, knowing not how to speak, have not learned to hold their peace, teaching many times the things they understand not, and persuading what they know not, becoming the masters of the ignorant before they be the scholars of the learned. There is no such discredit of art as an ignorant artificer, men of meaner judgement measuring oft-times the excellency of the one by the ignorance of the other. But as he that censureth the dignity of poetry by Cherillus' paltry pains, the majesty of rhetoric by the rudeness of a stutting Hortensius, the subtlety of logic by the railing of Ramus, might judge the one a fool in writing he knew not what, the other tipsy by his stammering, the third the son of Zantippe by his scolding, so he that estimates arts by the insolence of idiots, who profess that wherein they are infants, may deem the university naught but the nurse of folly, and the knowledge of arts naught but the imitation of the stage. This I speak to show what an obloquy these impudent incipients in arts are unto art.

Amongst all the ornaments of arts, rhetoric is to be had in highest reputation, without the which all the rest are naked, and she only garnished, yet some there be who would separate arts from eloquence, whose censures we oppugn because it abhors from common experience. Who doth not know that, in all tongues' task, eloquence is odious if it be affected, and that attention is altogether wanting where it is rejected? A man may bawl till his voice be hoarse, exhort with tears till his tongue ache and his eyes be dry, repeat that he would persuade till his staleness doth secretly call for a cloak-bag, and yet move no more than if he had been all that while mute, if his speech be not seasoned with eloquence and adorned with elocution's assistance. Nothing is more odious to the auditor than the artless tongue of a tedious dolt, which dulleth the delight of hearing and slacketh the desire of remembering, and I know not how it comes to pass, but many are so delighted to hear themselves that they are a cumber to the ears of all other, pleasing their auditors in nothing more than in the pause of a full point, whenas by their humming and hawking respite they have leisure to gesture the mislike of his rudeness. To the eschewing therefore of the loathing hatred of them that hear them, I would wish them to learn to speak many things in

few, neither to speak all things which to their purpose they may speak, lest those things be less profitably spoken which they ought to speak; neither would I have them overshoot themselves with an imitation of brevity, so that, striving to be very short, they should prove very long, namely, whenas they endeavour to speak many things briefly. Persuade one point throughly rather than teach many things scatteringly; that which we think, let us speak, and that which we speak, let us think; let our speech accord with our life. Endeavour to add unto art, experience; experience is more profitable void of art than art which hath not experience. Of itself art is unprofitable without experience, and experience rash without art. In reading, thou must, with wary regard, learn as well to discern thy loss as thy gain, thy hurt as good, lest being won to have a favourable like of poets' wanton lines, thou be excited unto the imitation of their lust. It is very unseemly that nobler wits should be discredited with baser studies, and those whom high and mighty callings do expect, should be hindered by the enticements of pleasure and vanity. Young men are not so much delighted with solid substances as with painted shadows, following rather those things which are goodly to the view than profitable to the use; neither do they love so much those things that are doing as those things that are sounding, rejoicing more to be strowed with flowers than nourished with fruit. How many be there that seek truth, not in truth, but in vanity, and find that they sought, not according to truth, but according to vanity, and, that which is most miserable, in the words of life they toil for the merchandise of death. Hence cometh it to pass that many make toys their only study, storing of trifles whenas they neglect most precious treasures, and, having left the fountains of truth, they follow the rivers of opinions. I can but pity their folly who are so curious in fables and excruciate themselves about impertinent questions, as about Homer's country, parentage and sepulchre, whether Homer or Hesiodus were older, whether Achilles or Patroclus more ancient, in what apparel Anacharsis the Scythian slept, whether Lucan is to be reckoned amongst the poets or historiographers, in what month in the year Virgil died, with infinite other, as touching the letters of the hyacinth, the chestnut tree, the children of Niobe, the trees where Latona brought forth Diana, in all which idle interrogatories they have left unto us, not things found, but things to be sought, and peradventure they had found necessary things if they had not sought superfluous things. Innumerable such unnecessary questions, according to philosophy, are made as touching the soul, as whence it is, what manner of one it is, when it doth begin to be, how long it may be, whether it passeth not from his first mansion elsewhere, and so alter his abiding, or shift into other forms of brute beasts, whether one soul serveth no more but once and one, what it shall do whenas by us it shall cease to do anything, how it shall use his liberty whenas it is escaped out of this dungeon, or whether it be forgetful of former things? What do all these things avail unto virtue? Wherefore, even as he that enterpriseth to sail over the endless ocean, whiles he cannot pass any further is constrained to return by the way he came, so these men, beginning to sound the infinite depth of these mysteries in ignorance, are fain to cease in ignorance; let them therefore refrain from such folly, and not seek that which is not to be found, lest they find not that which is to be found. Socrates, who reduced all philosophy unto the manners, said that this was the greatest wisdom, to distinguish good & evil things. Unto which discerning distinction is required deliberative meditation, insomuch as in it consists our life's virtuous direction. Neither is it to live well one day's work, but the continual exercise of our whole life, being the best effect that ever knowledge did afford. Whenas we duly consider whither every way leadeth, or wisely ponder with ourselves to what end we refer each one of our actions, and exact of our straying thoughts a more severe account of their wandering course, we shall find no victory so great as the subduing of vice, nothing so hard as to live well, no such unestimable jewel as an honest conversation; let him that is inclined but to one extreme, secretly try by himself with what facility or difficulty he may suppress it in himself, and his own practice will teach him that he is led captive by his own inclinations, and overcome by his wicked cogitations. If then so difficult a thing in accomplishment seems one sin's suppression, how laborious would be the reformation of altogether evil conversation? Since then the only end of knowledge ought to be to learn to live well, let us propound this use and end unto ourselves, lest after so many years' pains we

miss of the mark whereat our parents in our education aimed. Turning over histories, and reading the lives of excellent orators and famous philosophers, let us with Themistocles set before our eyes one of the excellentest to imitate, in whose example insisting, our industry may be doubled, to the adequation of his praise.

I know the learned will laugh me to scorn for setting down such rams' horn rules of direction, and even now I begin to bethink me of Mulcaster's *Positions*, which makes my pen here pause, as it were at a full point, which pause hath changed my opinion, and makes me rather refer you to Ascham, the ancients of the two, whose praises, seeing Master Grant hath so gloriously garnished, I will refer you to his works, and more especially to his *Schoolmaster*, where he hath most learnedly censured both our Latin and Greek authors. As for lighter studies, seeing they are but the exercise of youth to keep them from idleness, and the preparation of the mind to more weighty meditations, let us take heed, lest whiles we seek to make them the furthering helps of our final profession, they prove not the hindering harms of our intended vocation, that we dwell not so long in poetry that we become pagans, or that we make not such proceedings in Aristotle that we prove proficient in atheism. Let not learning, which ought to be the level whereby such as live ill ought to square their crooked ways, be the occasion unto them of farther corruption, who have already sucked infection, lest their knowledge weigh them down into hell, whenas the ignorant go the direct way to heaven.

And thus I end my anatomy, lest I might seem to have been too tedious to the reader in enlarging a theme of absurdity, desiring of the learned pardon, and of women patience, which may encourage me hereafter to endeavour in some other matter of more moment, as well to be answerable to the expectation of the one as to make amends to the other. In the meantime, I bid them both farewell.

FINIS.