

SUMMARY: Dedicatory epistle by Oxford in *Cardanus' Comfort*, a translation by Thomas Bedingfield of Girolamo *Cardano's De consolatione libri tres* (1542). The epistle is followed by verses by Oxford.

To my loving friend Thomas Bedingfield, esquire, one of her Majesty's Gentlemen-Pensioners

After I had perused your letters, good Master Bedingfield, finding in them your request far differing from the desert of your labour, I could not choose but greatly doubt whether it were better for me to yield you your desire, or execute mine own intention towards the publishing of your book, for I do confess the affections that I have always borne towards you could move me not a little. But when I had throughly considered in my mind of sundry and divers arguments, whether it were best to obey mine affections or the merits of your studies, at the length I determined it better to deny your unlawful request than to grant or condescend to the concealment of so worthy a work, whereby, as you have been profited in the translating, so many may reap knowledge by the reading of the same, that shall comfort the afflicted, confirm the doubtful, encourage the coward, and lift up the base-minded man to achieve to any true sum or grade of virtue, whereto ought only the noble thoughts of men to be inclined. And because, next to the sacred letters of divinity, nothing doth persuade the same more than philosophy, of which your book is plentifully stored, I thought myself to commit an unpardonable error to have murdered the same in the waste bottoms of my chests, and better I thought it were to displease one than to displease many, further considering so little a trifle cannot procure so great a breach of our amity as may not, with a little persuasion of reason, be repaired again. And herein I am forced, like a good and politic captain, oftentimes to spoil & burn the corn of his own country lest his enemies thereof do take advantage, for rather than so many of your countrymen should be deluded, through my sinister means, of your industry in studies (whereof you are bound in conscience to yield them an account), I am content to make spoil and havoc of your request, and that that might have wrought greatly in me in this former respect, utterly to be of no effect or operation. And when you examine yourself, what doth avail a mass of gold to be continually imprisoned in your bags, and never to be employed to your use? I do not doubt even so you think of your studies and delightful muses. What do they avail if you do not participate them to others? Wherefore we have this Latin proverb, *Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter*. What doth avail the tree unless it yield fruit unto another? What doth avail the vine unless another delighteth in the grape? What doth avail the rose unless another took pleasure in the smell? Why should this tree be accounted better than that tree but for the goodness of his fruit? Why should this vine be better than that vine unless it brought forth a better grape than the other? Why should this rose be better esteemed than that rose unless in pleasantness of smell it far surpassed the other rose? And so is it in all other things as well as in man. Why should this man be more esteemed than that man but for his virtue, through which every man desireth to be

accounted of? Then you, amongst men, I do not doubt but will aspire to follow that virtuous path to illustre yourself with the ornaments of virtue. And in mine opinion, as it beautifieth a fair woman to be decked with pearls and precious stones, so much more it ornifieth a gentleman to be furnished in mind with glittering virtues. Wherefore, considering the small harm I do to you, the great good I do to others, I prefer mine own intention to discover your volume before your request to secret the same. Wherein I may seem to you to play the part of the cunning and expert mediciner or physician who, although his patient in the extremity of his burning fever is desirous of cold liquor or drink to qualify his sore thirst (or rather kill his languishing body), yet for the danger he doth evidently know by his science to ensue, denieth him the same; so you being sick of too much doubt in your own proceedings, through which infirmity you are desirous to bury and enseel your works in the grave of oblivion, yet I, knowing the discommodities that shall redound to yourself thereby (and, which is more, unto your countrymen), as one that is willing to salve so great an inconvenience, am nothing dainty to deny your request. Again we see, if our friends be dead, we cannot show or declare our affection more than by erecting them of tombs whereby, when they be dead indeed, yet make we them live, as it were, again through their monument. But with me, behold, it happeneth far better, for in your lifetime I shall erect you such a monument that, as I say, [+in] your lifetime you shall see how noble a shadow of your virtuous life shall hereafter remain when you are dead and gone. And in your lifetime, again I say, I shall give you that monument and remembrance of your life whereby I may declare my goodwill (though with your ill will, as yet) that I do bear you in your life. Thus earnestly desiring you in this one request of mine (as I would yield to you in a great many) not to repugn the setting forth of your own proper studies, I bid you farewell.

From my new country muses at Wivenhoe, wishing you, as you have begun, to proceed in these virtuous actions, for when all things shall else forsake us, virtue yet will ever abide with us, and when our bodies falls into the bowels of the earth, yet that shall mount with our minds into the highest heavens.

By your loving and assured friend,
E. Oxenford

The Earl of Oxford to the Reader.

The labouring man that tills the fertile soil
And reaps the harvest fruit hath not indeed
The gain, but pain, and if for all his toil
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed.

The manchet fine falls not unto his share,
On coarsest cheat his hungry stomach feeds;
The landlord doth possess the finest fare;

He pulls the flowers, the other plucks but weeds.

The mason poor that builds the lordly halls
Dwells not in them; they are for high degree.
His cottage is compact in paper walls,
And not with brick or stone as others be.

The idle drone that labours not at all
Sucks up the sweet of honey from the bee;
Who worketh most, to their share least doth fall;
With due desert reward will never be.

The swiftest hare unto the mastiff slow
Ofttimes doth fall to him as for a prey;
The greyhound thereby doth miss his game, we know,
For which he made such speedy haste away.

So he that takes the pain to pen the book
Reaps not the gifts of goodly golden Muse,
But those gain that who on the work shall look,
And from the sour the sweet by skill doth choose.

For he that beats the bush the bird not gets,
But who sits still and holdeth fast the nets.